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# INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

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## Our Community Is Thriving!



Jay Brijpaul expresses heartfelt gratitude on behalf of TCCF to the audience during the celebration of the group's 25th anniversary. See page 16



Dignitaries attending Mississauga's Diwali Nagar were, left to right, Councillor Rod Power, MPP Charmaine Williams, CG Simone Young, HC Mani Singh, Deputy CG Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, and Pandit Roopnauth Sharma. Photo by Russell Lutchman See page 14



A young devotee lights up the room at the Consulate General for Trinidad and Tobago, Toronto, during its annual Diwali celebration last month. See page 11

## Diaspora responds to the humanitarian crisis in Jamaica

— A large-scale humanitarian relief effort led by Atlas Cargo in Mississauga is underway across the GTA to support Jamaica following the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa. Coordinated by Dr Ken Singh, the operation involves corporate, community, and volunteer partners working together to ship essential supplies to the impacted island.

**By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Special Report**

**Mississauga** – Atlas Cargo has launched a coordinated humanitarian relief operation to support communities in Jamaica affected by Hurricane Melissa.

Under the direction of Dr Ken Singh, Chief Executive Officer of the Atlas Humanitarian Relief Program, the company is receiving donated goods and providing free transportation to approved relief organisations and recovery agencies. The initiative is being supported by community and corporate partners across the GTA.

Atlas Cargo is receiving and shipping all relief donations free of charge, including building and reconstruction materials, medical and hospital supplies, hygiene and personal care products, non-perishable food items, and protective gear.

"At a time of tremendous need, we are mobilising our resources and our network to stand with



Staff at Atlas Cargo were this week preparing emergency supplies for shipment to Jamaica following the devastation of Hurricane Melissa

the people who are suffering," said Singh, adding, "This is not just transportation – this is solidarity, compassion, and responsibility. We are calling on our corporate partners, community organisations, and individuals across Canada to help in any way they can."

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* yesterday, Singh said the response from the community has been swift and encouraging.

"The response is absolutely incredible; all of my business friends and family have jumped in to

help. I think our community's response has been very good. The container loading and the speed in which it is happening has been very responsive," he stated.

He added that earlier this week, Atlas Cargo shipped 40,000 pounds of food, along with air-freighted generators and medical supplies, and that another 120,000 pounds of food, medicines, tools, and other materials are being prepared for shipment.

"One transport company, Viridi Trucking, is transporting donated items from the smaller collection points to Atlas Cargo free of charge," he said, noting how businesses have stepped up to help.

Ten containers have been sponsored by Singh's business, colleagues, friends, and family, while Atlas Cargo is donating an additional ten.

Singh said the relief operation is being coordinated with Jamaica's High Commissioner Marsha Coore Lobban, who is guiding the company on the logistics, while Jamaica's Director of Customs is tracking the containers and ensuring duty- and tax-free entry for the humanitarian effort.

Reflecting on his lifelong work for humanitarian

**See Page 11: Community groups**

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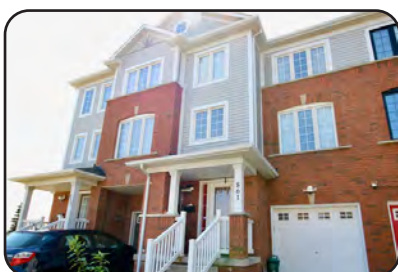
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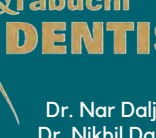
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A portrait photograph of a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing glasses, a brown batik shirt, and a grey tie. He is resting his chin on his right hand. The photo is set against a light background and framed by a yellow border.

# VEDIC BOOKS

- 



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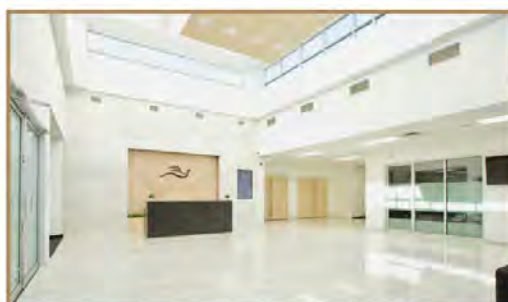
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# CCAT reaffirms diplomatic focus

— The Consular Corps Association of Toronto held its Annual Grand Ball last month, drawing representatives from approximately 30 nations. The event blended diplomacy, cultural expression, and international networking, highlighted by an inspiring keynote address from Canadian MP Ahmed Hussen and a coveted door prize to visit Grenada.

**Toronto** – The Consular Corps Association of Toronto (CCAT) reaffirmed its global reach and diplomatic purpose during its 2025 Annual Grand Ball, which took place on October 18 at the Churchill Ballroom at the Chelsea Hotel in Toronto.

With over 70 countries registered as members, CCAT stands as the world’s second-largest grouping of consular representatives in a single city, a reflection of Toronto’s international stature and multicultural foundation.

The evening brought together consuls, diplomats, and political figures from across the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. The event offered a rare opportunity to network, exchange ideas, and strengthen bilateral ties in a setting defined by elegance, cultural appreciation, and mutual respect.

A major highlight of the evening was the feature address by the Honorable Ahmed Hussen, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

MP Hussen’s remarks, later described by attendees as both unifying and encouraging, underscored the enduring importance of diplomacy and collaboration in addressing global challenges and fostering mutual understanding among nations.

Grenada’s contingent played a prominent role throughout the evening. Consul General Gerry Hopkin, a CCAT Board Member, attended alongside Executive Administrator Jana Colville, former Honorary Consul General Dawne Francois, and community leader Simon Samuel.

Their participation underscored Grenada’s active engagement within the consular community and commitment to advancing diplomatic relations.

Other Caribbean nations were well represented,

with consular officials attending from Barbados, The Bahamas, Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago. The Consul General of the Dominican Republic was also among those present, further emphasising regional solidarity and cooperation.

African representation included delegates from Ghana, Mali, Côte d’Ivoire, and Rwanda. Canadian protocol and intergovernmental affairs were represented by Veronica Panton, Chief of Protocol in Ontario; Kimberly Judd, Deputy Chief of Protocol; and Alicia Carr, Senior Protocol Officer at the Ontario Public Service.

Together, their attendance signaled the strong partnership between provincial institutions and the international diplomatic corps operating within Ontario.

The night’s festivities were enhanced by cultural performances, notably from a Dominican Republic dance group, adding vibrancy and elegant dance steps to the celebratory ambiance.

Attendees were also captivated by the evening’s door prizes, notably led by a three-night stay at Grenada’s Blue Horizons Garden Resort, offered by the Consulate General of Grenada and the Grenada Tourism Authority, with compliments from the resort’s owners.

Other notable prizes included two limited-edition bottles of Mount Gay Rum from the Consulate General of Barbados, and a gift basket from the Consulate of Saint Kitts and Nevis, among additional contributions from various donors.

In total, representatives from approximately 30 nations attended, joined by Canadian elected officials, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

Honorary Consul Mani Singh from the Consulate General for Guyana in Toronto was among those present, reinforcing the diverse Caribbean presence within the CCAT.

More than a gala, the Annual Consular Ball served as a living expression of diplomacy through confluence of friendship, culture, and cooperation that transcended national borders. It embodied the spirit of dialogue and respect that marks the work of consular representatives across nations and continents.



Community leader Simon Samuel (left to right); Grenada Consulate’s Executive Administrator Jana Colville; former Honorary Consul General Dawne Francois; and Consul General Gerry Hopkin. Photos: Grenada Consulate General FB



Consuls General from the Caribbean and Ghana with spouses, staff members, community leaders, and a protocol officer from Ontario



Consul General Gerry Hopkin from Grenada’s Consulate General, Toronto



MP Ahmed Hussen (left) meets Guyana’s Honorary Consul Mani Singh



Chairperson of the Caribbean Consular Corps, Trinidad and Tobago’s Consul General, Simone Young (second from right), with Grenada’s Consul General, Gerry Hopkin (right), and the winners of the three-night stay at Blue Horizons Garden Resort in Grenada, the Spice of the Caribbean

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Editorial

Hurricane Melissa

Our Caribbean Sea simmered all summer. Then Hurricane Melissa became its vessel, and its vehicle. A juggernaut of heat and moisture, it tore into Jamaica with winds nearing 185 mph, tied for the strongest hurricane ever to strike land in the Atlantic.

This was more than a weather event; it was a verdict, a test of thermodynamics and conscience alike. Its energy drew from waters about 1.4 Celsius warmer than usual, a warmth scientists say was made hundreds of times more likely by human-driven climate change.

Hurricane Melissa left behind a trail of devastation in our Caribbean homelands. Experts confirmed that its explosive intensification from 70 mph to 140 mph in one day, then 140 mph to 175 mph the next, was tied to unusually hot seas. It was, in the words of one scientist, “nature reaffirming the basic laws of thermodynamics”.

In September, UN Secretary-General António Guterres had lamented that “the truth is that we have failed”, warning that surpassing the 1.5 degrees Celsius target would unleash “devastating consequences”. For our Caribbean, Hurricane Melissa’s landfall was as eloquent a warning as any speech from the podium of the United Nations.

Hurricane Melissa exposed the widening gulf between scientific certainty and political retreat.

Kerry Emanuel of MIT noted this was the third Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic this year, and evidence that “the proportion of global tropical cyclones reaching high intensity is increasing”. Jim Kossin, formerly of NOAA, was even clearer: “The very warm water almost certainly has a human fingerprint on it, and there is no question that this warm water played a key role in Melissa’s intensity.”

These are not speculative claims; they are the physics of a planet out of balance.

Across the region, Caribbean editorial boards have recognised what global leaders continue to sidestep: that every storm season now doubles as climate testimony. *Stabroek News* was more forthright, noting that the world’s largest economies are “backtracking on climate pledges”, pursuing oil profits while our homelands bear the cost.

Brazil’s auctioning of 47 offshore blocks near the mouth of the Amazon, the US decision to open 1.56 million acres of Alaska’s Arctic refuge to drilling, and Guyana’s paradoxical position as both carbon-negative and an oil-producing nation reveal the same conflicting: extraction persists even as extinction takes its first steps onto the shore.

From our Caribbean diaspora in the GTA and beyond, the anguish is both scientific and personal. For our communities whose ancestral homes lie in hurricane paths, each event is not an abstract indicator, it is kinship undone by heat. While the physics of warming are global, the grief it brings arrives at a postal code. Hurricane Melissa, vessel and vehicle of this truth, reminds our diaspora that what begins in the Caribbean basin does not stop at its shores.

Meanwhile, some like Bill Gates are urging the world to move on, insisting that “although climate change will have serious consequences... it will not lead to humanity’s demise”. That may comfort those living far from the tropics. But survival is not justice. Thriving “in most places on Earth” excludes those whose coastlines no longer exist.

Scientists acknowledge that not every aspect of Hurricane Melissa, such as its slow drift, can be directly attributed to warming. Yet the consensus remains: warmer oceans amplified its power and nourished its rainfall. Its signature may be meteorological, but its propulsion, that juggernaut momentum, is fueled by politics.

Hurricane Melissa’s churned waters are both mirror and messenger, vessel and vehicle of our planet’s rising fever. It carried the heat we continue to store, the choices we delayed, and the debts we continue to deny.

As delegates prepare for COP 30 this month in Belém, Brazil, a host nation itself expanding oil frontiers, Hurricane Melissa’s wrecking ball should stand as the first agenda item. Hurricanes like Melissa are not seasonal anomalies; they are the human index of our warming world.

We do not need another pledge, but integrity; the kind that measures leadership through lives saved. Meanwhile, our Caribbean simmers, awaiting the next juggernaut.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.  
Letters to be published will be edited where necessary.  
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One big family, one heartbeat – Jamaica needs our help now

Lyrics from *Togetherness* by Bajan Soca singer, Alison Hinds, are a perfect visual of the Caribbean experience: “Jump and let dem see love and unity, one big family, togetherness. Wine and let dem see love and unity, one big family, togetherness.”

Expansive, diverse, and intricate, there are no limits to being Caribbean.

We come from various origins, we might have variations on our food, and we might even call the same items slightly different names. But we are one community.

Through my work with the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association, I’ve acquired a deep appreciation for the bond that holds together our broader Caribbean community.

Whilst we have been engaging with other Caribbean-Canadian organisations, from Windsor to Montreal to Vancouver, my calls feel like chats with family rather than meeting a stranger.

And we need to recognise this connectivity in good times and difficult periods.

This is why we must all be aware of, and respond to, the tragedy wrought by Hurricane Melissa, which has devastated many Caribbean nations, including Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Bermuda, and the Bahamas.

Hurricane Melissa unleashed catastrophic damage across the Caribbean, inflicting widespread devastation on multiple island nations.

The full scale of damage is still emerging, but it is clear that the hurricane has left economic losses, displacement, infrastructure collapse, and shattered communities in its wake.

In Haiti, heavy rainfall and flooding, despite the storm not making direct landfall, led to at least 25 deaths, including children, and the destruction of dozens of homes, particularly in the coastal town of Petit-Goâve.

Meanwhile, in Cuba, over 735,000 people were evacuated as the hurricane marched into its eastern provinces, where roofs, communications, and roads suffered major damage.

Making landfall in Jamaica as a Category 5 storm with sustained winds of up to 185 mph, it became the strongest hurricane ever to directly strike the island.

The beautiful island nation that many know as a scenic and hospitable vacation location is the home of close to three million people, and many of them have lost everything, and their daily



Ryan Singh

lives have forever changed. The impact in Jamaica was enormous: up to 77 percent of the island lost power, countless roofs were ripped off homes, major roads were blocked by landslides, and more than 25,000 people were forced into shelters.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa, Jamaica faces an urgent need for comprehensive disaster relief to address widespread destruction and humanitarian challenges.

Immediate relief priorities include shelter and non-food items, such as tarpaulins, mattresses, blankets, and repair kits for families whose homes were destroyed.

Clean water and sanitation are also critical. Flooding and landslides have damaged water systems, creating risks of water-borne diseases. Relief agencies are distributing hygiene kits, water purification tablets, and portable sanitation units. Food assistance remains a top need as crops and supply chains were devastated; emergency food packages and nutrition support for children are vital.

Healthcare access has been severely disrupted, with hospitals reporting shortages of medicine, fuel, and medical supplies.

Mobile clinics and emergency medical shipments are being deployed to fill gaps. Restoring power, communications, and road access are equally urgent to reconnect isolated communities and allow relief delivery.

In the longer term, Jamaica requires cash assistance, livelihood support, and rebuilding programs to restore homes, farms, and small businesses. International and local partnerships will be crucial in helping the island recover and build resilience against future storms.

Our Caribbean diaspora community must come together and respond. We need to do our part to support each other.

In the spirit of coming together, the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association is raising funds to provide to disaster relief efforts. We will match your donation (up to \$500 from funds raised at our upcoming Buss Yuh BrainFundraiser).

If possible, please consider [donating to our GoFundMe](#) page by e-transfer to [finance@indocaribcdn.com](mailto:finance@indocaribcdn.com).

The Caribbean spirit of love and unity must always prevail, and it must guide us in times of tragedy. This is how our community will stay strong.

Time when love and discipline shared the same sharp edge

My nemesis growing up back home was young Davey, whose visits to our front gate always put me in trouble with the parental constabulary within. I recall the afternoon he arrived like a sudden squall, his words pounding down on the pitch-black road, torrential, saturating, and energised.

He said, “My father gone down the road to bring home a dog!” As evidence, he held up a length of rope with no dog at its end.

I was on our verandah, within my mother’s invisible perimeter of chores, conscience, and containment. What came unfiltered out of my mouth was not happiness for Davey’s good fortune; instead, a darker text: “Steups! He gone to drink in the rumshop with his friends!” Envy, insolence, and a touch of rebellion flew out as sparks to fall on the fuel that was my mother’s surveilling disapproval.

Justice was swift, without due process, her pronouncement indomitable, final, and punitive.

“Kneel!” She withdrew the grater from among its snickering companions in the cupboard, the *belna*, the *chimta*; the hollow *phukni* rolled with baritone schadenfreude.

This time the kitchen was the courtroom. In that republic of raging *chulha* fire and order in the military lineup of cups hanging from long nails pounded into the wall, my mother presided as judge, jury, and jailer.

Of course, I was a repeat ‘three-strikes’ offender; this time, guilt was determined through association with discourtesy and envy, both capital kneeling offences.

A last minute mitigation of the sentence came with a pot-cloth layered on the grater, the reprieve following my silent, wide-eyed appeal for my grandmother’s senior, judicial intervention. But still, the grater’s teeth bit into my knees, laying down on the surface of the skin contours of its sharp geography.

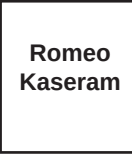
Later in life, I would learn to decode the script that was written into each ridge and indentation etched into my knees.

Outside, Davey whooped and ran, looping the rope, lashing it on the pitch roadway, preparing it for leashing and the imperatives of ownership.

“Sit, dog! Run, dog! Beg, dog!” he sang, rehearsing the canons of forthcoming canine domestication and control.

Our village women, returning from the well with tall tins of water perched precariously on their heads, navigated carefully around the boy as he lashed the roadway heavily with the rope.

The grater was itself a relic from these tins, which imported from abroad with cooking oil, were repurposed to “full” water. When aged, dented, and leaking, pieces of the container were further repurposed for the kitchen, pierced with a thousand cuts



using hammer and nail, fashioned into a razor-toothed grater.

And a corollary instrument of torture to bear my kneeling weight. Here was an empire’s exported tin of oil, a product of organic extraction inside its closed, extractive colonial grasp, shipped from the mother country, repurposed for an afterlife as instruments of cuisine, containment, and correction of a child by a caring, mother’s hand.

Years later, reading Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, I came to understand how parts of my childhood were marbled into this text. Foucault wrote of punishment migrating from the public spectacle of the scaffold to the home, from the body to be internalised by the soul. I noted my early residence in this migration; that the empire had merely changed from colony to kitchen.

In our house, the lash was replaced by a maternal, negatively critical look; the overseer became that unwavering, disapproving, and panoptic eye. The kitchen grater was more than utensil; it was also continuity, a reminder that even in maternal love, age-old, colonial practices of control through fear of body pain could find residence inside a household cupboard.

While the painful knees passed, the teaching moment has lasted longer. I came to understand that to be immobilised and hobbled was part of the control; that unrestricted movement could be stepping stones to rebellion. That contrition was part of the performance of recovery; and that the art of governing and disciplining oneself was an act of preemptive self-containment so authority did not take control.

My youthful body became the first text I ever read, totally grasped its grammar, wrote and passed the comprehension test, and acquired a vocabulary questioning the order of things, which has since accompanied me across the decades.

But my mother never saw her discipline and punishment as anything else but teaching me “manners”. I think her generation, growing up in the heyday of empire, believed in the equation of correction, that its arithmetic of discipline and punishment always totaled out in even, round numbers; that goodness could be grated into me the way a green mango could be seasoned to become a flavourful chutney.

But I was a saucy young boy. The child in me wanted to run onto the roadway to caution Davey that tugging at the resisting puppy, the rope straining as a leash in a choke-hold of pain, would bring his pet to its knees in submission; that obedience forged from the fear of pain would only break its youthful spirit.

Such was the logic that shaped my early years back in the homeland: imported, systemised, and normalised violence deployed via caring hands. Already, I was understanding the turbulent world I was inheriting.



Good move by Guyana’s govt to embrace innovation, sustainability in agriculture sector

Dear Editor,

Guyana’s agricultural sector is on the brink of a transformation, one that blends tradition with innovation. The Ministry of Agriculture’s push toward crop diversification through the introduction of climate-smart technologies is a progressive and timely move that deserves national recognition and support.

For too long, our agricultural output has relied heavily on a narrow range of crops, such as rice and sugar. While these industries have served us well, climate change has exposed their vulnerabilities: rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and increased flooding threaten productivity and farmers’ livelihoods.

The Agriculture Ministry’s strategic focus on diversification, introducing crops such as corn, soya, coconuts, spices, and high-value vegetables, represents not just an economic adjustment, but also a climate-adaptation imperative.

What makes this initiative even more forward-thinking is its integration of climate-smart technologies. Across Guyana, we are seeing the establishment of shade houses, drip-irrigation systems and other controlled-environment farming methods.



**A hydroponic farm growing lettuce in Guyana**

These technologies allow farmers to better manage water use, protect crops from extreme weather and increase yields year round. They are also fostering a new generation of young agri-entrepreneurs, who view farming not as backbreaking labour, but as a viable, tech-driven business.

Under programmes such as the Agriculture and Innovation Entrepreneurship Programme, hundreds of shade houses have

been established, giving small and medium-scale farmers access to modern tools that were once out of reach. The adoption of these innovations is not only improving productivity, but is also enhancing food security and creating new value-added opportunities in agro-processing and exports.

Guyana’s leadership in this regard is positioning the country as a model for sustainable agricultural development in the Caribbean. The ministry’s progressive approach signals a clear understanding that resilience in agriculture comes from flexibility and foresight.

By supporting farmers in diversifying crops and adopting smart technologies, Guyana is building a sector capable of withstanding climate shocks, while sustaining livelihoods and boosting rural economies.

As a nation, Guyana must continue to back these initiatives through public awareness, investment, and community participation. The future of agriculture in Guyana lies not in doing more of the same, but in embracing innovation to grow differently and more sustainably.

**Jaishree Tilaknauth, Guyana, via email.**

In the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa, Jamaica must now focus on preparedness and resilience

Dear Editor,

Jamaica has found itself on the precipice of a natural disaster with *Hurricane Melissa*, and now we must reflect on our preparedness and resilience in the face of such a challenge.

While the forces of nature are beyond our control, it is within our capacity to implement thorough and effective plans that can significantly mitigate the impacts we suffer during and after these crises.

The arrival of *Hurricane Melissa* called to mind our experiences with *Hurricane Beryl*, illustrating that the robustness of our emergency response systems was tested in the wake of this event. The press releases and briefings disseminated before Hurricane Melissa’s arrival indicate that Jamaica’s government has established certain protocols aimed at addressing the challenges that emerge in the aftermath of such disasters.

However, there remains a lingering sense of apprehension among the populace, as these communications often echo familiar sentiments expressed during previous calamities.

We must seize the opportunity presented by *Hurricane*



*Melissa* to critically evaluate not only our resilience, but also the effectiveness and efficiency of our preparedness strategies. Given the escalating severity of natural phenomena exacerbated by climate change, emphasising disaster planning has never been more urgent.

The anticipation surrounding the restoration of essential services such as electricity and water following *Hurricane Melissa* is palpable among the people of Jamaica. It is a reasonable expectation that effective systems and resources should be in place to facilitate a prompt return to normalcy, ideally within days, as opposed to the drawn-out periods of weeks or even months, which have, sadly, become all too familiar after earlier disasters.

Jamaica has long been celebrated for its resilience, and I firmly believe we will emerge from the adversities posed by *Hurricane Melissa* with renewed strength and determination.

However, we must adopt a more proactive and comprehensive approach to disaster preparedness well in advance of any natural calamity. Our first responders, essential service workers, and community-based organisations require adequate training, resources, and support to act swiftly and effectively when disaster strikes.

Finally, as we prepare for the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa, let us collectively commit to enhancing our preparedness measures and fostering a culture of resilience that empowers our nation to not only weather the storms, but also to thrive in their aftermath.

**Ricardo Smith, Jamaica, via email.**

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**Ricardo Smith, Jamaica, via email.**



• IMPORTANT PUBLIC NOTICE •  
Re: New Guyana Passports

October 4, 2025

The Consulate General of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in Toronto, Canada wishes to advise that effective October 6, 2025 all nationals desirous of applying for a new Republic of Guyana Passport are required to make an appointment online at <https://guyanaconsulatetoronto.com> or by calling the Consulate General via telephone number **416-494-6040** to secure an appointment to begin their application for a new Republic of Guyana Passport.

Please note that after securing an online appointment all applications must be submitted in person at the Consulate General of Guyana. These modifications are vital to support the processing of the new Biometrics Passports.

The Consulate General thanks you for your co-operation and understanding.



**Mani Singh**  
Honorary Consul, Toronto, Canada

Consulate General of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Toronto, Canada  
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Call for due process with speedboats in Caribbean waters

Dear Editor,

This is an Open Letter to Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

My sister, congratulations on your victory at the polls. However, I was alarmed and disappointed, to hear your rather bloodthirsty rallying cry at the beginning of your new term: "Yes! Kill them violently!"

This is language that does not become a person of your calibre, even if you are sure that the nameless people in the little boats are guilty as assumed, *post mortem*, of drug trafficking and terrorism.

Has Trinidad and Tobago done its own investigations and come up with guilty verdicts all around?

The tally of people killed while sailing in open boats in the Caribbean Sea is rising, and the issue is gaining more attention

Need for TT Opposition to end the political grandstanding

Dear Editor,

I strongly condemn the Trinidad and Tobago Opposition's uproar over the visit of the *USS Gravelly* and the 22nd US Marine Expeditionary Unit. The Opposition's reaction is not only misguided and irresponsible, it is also deeply unpatriotic.

The government has made it abundantly clear that this visit forms part of joint training exercises with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. Exercises that are specifically designed to sharpen Trinidad and Tobago's tactical readiness, boost operational efficiency, and ensure our Defence Force continues to meet highest international standards of excellence.

Can the Opposition present a single shred of evidence that this visit involves anything other than legitimate military co-operation aimed at advancing regional security, strengthen defence partnerships, and build mutual trust?

If there is no evidence to the contrary, then why this fear-mongering, misinformation, and attempt to destabilise public confidence?

Such behaviour is not only reckless, it is dangerous! Perhaps the Opposition simply does not want to see the TTDF become stronger, more capable, and more respected on the international stage?

This is not the first time the US and Trinidad and Tobago

from the US media.

The issue is process. These people are being executed without trial, without even identification. Can we expect, during your tenure, to see this kind of justice dispensed within our country?

Why can't these suspects be approached in the water, with small boats speedier than theirs, rather than this blasting them from on high (as in declared warfare between countries) with no investigation whatsoever?

So, what happens now to the fishing industry in the southern Caribbean? Do our fisherfolk have to hang up their boats and fishing gear or run the risk of being blown up in our sea by the US military, backed, with enthusiasm, by our government?

Let us not be led by the nose.

Merle Hodge, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

have engaged in constructive defence co-operation. Earlier this year, from April 26 to May 8, US SouthCom co-hosted the Tradewinds 2025 exercise with the TTDF and US Army South, bringing together 24 nations in joint training in regional security and disaster response.

Then, from August 5 to August 11, the US Navy's hospital ship *USNS Comfort* visited Trinidad and Tobago bringing free surgeries, dental, eye, and other medical care to hundreds of nationals.

These actions clearly demonstrate the positive and mutually beneficial nature of our defence partnership with the US.

So again, what exactly is wrong with the *USS Gravelly* visiting Trinidad and Tobago for joint exercises with the TTDF?

This manufactured hysteria by the Opposition is a blatant attempt to undermine national security progress and erode public trust. It distorts our foreign policy, and disrespects the hard-working men and women of the Defence Force who serve this nation with pride, day in and day out.

The Opposition must stop its reckless political grandstanding and start supporting initiatives that strengthen our national security, build global partnerships, and safeguard the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Leisha S. Dhoray, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

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# Glitter of Guyana's gold tarnished by corruption, smuggling, and crime

Smuggling gold in Guyana is a decades old problem that has never been seriously addressed by various governments in the past and the present. It is plagued by corruption in a well-organised network of individuals that has enabled smuggling to continue unabated.

However, recently the intervention of the US administration has placed gold smuggling under increased scrutiny, with the potential for multiple arrests of both smugglers and corrupt government officials.

Evidently, commitments to deal with smuggling are hampered by execution risks, wherein corrupt government officials have been deliberately supporting smuggling activities, thereby circumventing official efforts to curb the problem.

Sanctions imposed by the US government last year on one of Guyana's wealthiest families for smuggling gold served as warning that the US was intent on stepping in where the Guyana government has failed to act.

In this case, the father-son duo, Nazar Mohamed and Azruddin Mohamed, and their affiliated company, Mohamed's Enterprises, were sanctioned by the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) for failing to declare some 10,000 kilograms of gold and evading more than US \$50 million in taxes between 2019 and 2023.

The US investigation claimed that Mohamed's Enterprise bribed customs officials to falsify import and export documents, as well as to facilitate illicit gold shipments. It paid bribes to Guyanese government officials to ensure the uninterrupted flow of inbound and outbound personnel that move currency and other items on behalf of the Azruddins and Mohamed's Enterprise.

More recently, the US announced in June that it is actively probing a gold smuggling operation that threads through Colombia, Venezuela, and Guyana. It stated that in recent years, Brazilian police have busted two alleged smuggling schemes that funneled millions of dollars worth of Venezuelan gold across the border into the Pakaraima, and out of South America to the US, Asia, and the Middle East.

Local officials have said they suspect that Venezuelan-sanctioned gold is being mixed with gold mined in Guyana, and then passed off as local production and sold to markets in the US, Canada, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Guyana has since pledged to crack down on gold smuggled across the border from neighbouring Venezuela at the urging of the US government. Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali said in late June that the government is dedicating "enormous resources" to thwart the smuggling, which has long been a problem. He said authorities have increased border patrols and improved monitoring in mining regions.

According to Ali, the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs has initiated ongoing efforts to enhance law enforcement and security cooperation among Washington, Georgetown, and countries in the Caribbean, through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in March of this year when US Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited the region.

Meanwhile, the US Embassy in Guyana has suspended the visas of several miners suspected of smuggling Venezuelan gold overseas.

Gold is Guyana's second most important export after oil, generating nearly \$1 billion last year. Some 434,000 ounces of gold were produced last year, up from 432,000 ounces the previous year, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

In 2019, the sector produced 634,905 troy ounces of gold, below its peak year in 2016, when production was 710,706 ounces, almost four times greater than production of 182,216 ounces in 2006. Since then, production has

steadily declined to 432,034 ounces in 2023.

It is estimated that actual gold production is even significantly higher, with as much 60 per cent of all production going unreported. A significant portion of such production is believed to be illegally funnelled through the country's porous borders, and supports a range of illegal activities, including money laundering, tax evasion, and the drug trade.

Historical evidence of arrests indicates that small scale smugglers are typically arrested, but large-scale operators tend to evade arrests, apparently because of corruption among government officials that are complicit with the smugglers.

According to Guyana's 2017 *National Risk Assessment* (NRA) report, a major gold smuggling racket was unearthed through the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, which provided Guyana's authorities with a list of persons who had taken gold to the JFK Airport, New York, and then declaring it there. It is not known whether any action was taken on the list of persons identified.

The report stated that "the smuggling was made possible because Customs and other Gold Board documents were recycled along with seals. Hundreds of millions of dollars of profits were being made but little for Guyana".

Perhaps the most scathing criticisms of the failure to curb smuggling comes from the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA), which in a release last year stated that illegal mining, illegal shops, and the unregulated trading of gold within the interior, are the "pillars" upon which the illicit gold smuggling enterprises survive.

The GGDMA inferred that the government's regulatory agency, the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), as well as public servants associated with the industry, are also to blame for gold smuggling. It stated that lax enforcement by GGMC has allowed illegal activities to flourish, noting that over the years, it has turned "a blind eye" to repeat offenders, merely slapping them on the wrist, which in turn has fostered a culture of "unabashed lawlessness".

According to the release, these illegal operators openly disregard the orders of GGMC officers, and brazenly make violent threats against anyone trying to stand in their way.

"An illegal operation is shut down one day but by the very next day they return to contravening the orders of the GGMC as if nothing had ever happened," the release stated.

The GGDMA complained that every year for the past ten years it has been calling on the GGMC to step up its enforcement against illegal activities in the gold sector, but to no avail. It stated that in the past, there were a number of areas in the interior that were gazetted to permit trade to take place; however, this has degenerated into persons simply setting up itinerant trading posts, also known as 'landings' at will.

The GGDMA further stated, "We have repeatedly called for the reduction of the vast number of these hubs and for the ones that remain to be properly regularised, but to date no meaningful action has been taken. If the avenues through which illegal miners and illegal buyers are connecting is significantly reduced, then there would undoubtedly be an increase in gold declarations."

The release also asserted that "a blind eye" is turned by certain individuals appointed by the State to safeguard its interest in these areas to facilitate illegal mining, for which they are no doubt handsomely rewarded, and which prompts the following questions: "How much gold is produced in these areas that goes undeclared? How many illegal operations in these areas are being funded by smugglers?"

The claim was also made that many miners have made repeated appeals to the GGMC



Dwarka Lakhan



Guyana gold

about illegal activities, but very little gets done. And miners who make reports often find themselves targeted by the officers, and have such resorted to joining the "stay-quiet gang".

The GGDMA acknowledged that while overall gold production may be down for several factors, it remains convinced that reduced gold declaration is "inextricably linked to the proliferation of illegal mining".

Also, it iterated that illegal mining, coupled with the establishment of illegal shops that facilitate the purchase and sale of gold without effective oversight, are among the chief reasons the government fails to get its revenue.

The release also touched on the issue of civil servants connected to the industry, who are enjoying lifestyles beyond what their salaries can support.

It added all of this must be investigated, as it was of the firm belief that the government agencies have the relevant tools and procedures at their disposal to put all the pieces of this puzzle together, and consequently take action condignly against the "masterminds" who currently reside in the shadows.

Evidently gold smuggling has been rampant since the 1990s. Way back in 1997 the government discovered through the US that billions of dollars of gold were being smuggled to the US, dating back to the mid-1980s, but promises of taking action never really materialised.

For instance, in January 2016, former Natural Resources Minister Raphael Trotman stated in the local press that some 15,000 ounces of raw gold were being transported out

See Page 12: Corruption mother lode

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# Culture meets confidence as new constellation of Star Gyals shine

— The Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association has launched *Star Gyal*, a mentorship program for Indo-Caribbean girls aged 8-18. Its inaugural workshop at the McMichael Canadian Art Gallery blended culture, creativity, and mentorship in a day that celebrated sisterhood, identity, and the shared heritage of our growing diaspora.

By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Report

**Toronto** – Under the gentle light of a September morning at the McMichael Canadian Art Gallery in Kleinburg, 29 Star Gyals arrived eager, curious, and ready to paint their own stories of belonging and pride.

And so, the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association (ICCA) unveiled *Star Gyal* as its newest youth initiative, complementing the established and thriving *Star Bhai* program for boys. Designed for Indo-Caribbean girls navigating largely non-Indo-Caribbean spaces, the program provides a supportive network to build confidence, leadership, and friendship through monthly workshops and community engagement. Workshops feature guest mentors from the Indo-Caribbean community sharing their life-skills, academic advice, and stories of perseverance.

In the build-up to the day of the event, Hanso Sheopaul, Chair of the ICCA Youth Mentorship Program, said, “My daughter sits on the *Star Gyal* committee and my son is an active member of *Star Bhai*. We work hard to plan valuable and fun workshops for our youth.”

Parent and committee member Lisaan Mohammed indicated her daughter could hardly wait to join, declaring, “My ten-year-old son joined *Star Bhai* in January and fell in love with it. I see the *Star Gyal* program offering just the same. My daughter can’t wait to apply!”

It came together on September 14, when ICCA hosted the first *Star Gyal* workshop at the McMichael Canadian Art Gallery in Kleinburg. Twenty-nine registered participants entered a space where every brushstroke told a story and every symbol carried a legacy. That morning, parents and participants were greeted by members of the *Star Gyal* Committee, and were escorted to the Education Centre for the day’s program.

The morning began with introductions and a land acknowledgment read by the first registered *Star Gyal*, Kiara Pariag.

Ryan Singh, ICCA founder and Chair, welcomed participants and parents. He spoke about the hard work of earlier genera-



**Group photo of the *Star Gyal* and *Star Bhai* participants at the recent ICCA mentorship event**

tions who came to Canada to create opportunities for their children. Also, he reminded the young participants of their role in carrying that legacy forward.

“The launch of *Star Gyal* was a huge step forward for Canada’s Indo-Caribbean community. Building on the programs by the ICCA, there is now a regularly recurring program for young girls from the community. Based on the turn-out and response, I am confident that we will inspire many young women who will become the leaders of tomorrow,” he said afterwards.

In her welcome, Sheopaul urged the girls to pull up a seat at the table, articulate their voices, and make their opinions heard. She also noted the program was about supporting, guiding, and teaching our youth how to take those opportunities, use them wisely, and build futures for themselves and their families.

Committee members introduced themselves as professionals in law, medicine, education, finance, government, retail, and digital media, presenting living examples of diaspora achievement and aspiration.

Participants then divided into ten groups for a guided tour of the gallery. For many, it was their first time in such a space. They explored the legacy of Indigenous communities along the Humber River Valley, and paused before an exhibit on the Essequibo River in Guyana showing both Indigenous peoples and colonisers. It was an image that resonated deeply, and provoked questions about history and belonging.

After a fruit-and-donut snack break, the girls moved to hands-on art sessions. Inspired by the morning’s gallery tour,

they created water-colour pencil sketches on canvas, interpreting Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit perspectives through their own imagination. The education wing buzzed with conversation, laughter, and concentration as new friendships took root.

At midday, participants rejoined *Star Bhai* counterparts for a catered lunch from Indar’s Roti & Doubles. Also, they received a reusable ICCA cup, shopping bag, and donated school supplies. As the day ended, girls returned their name badges and reunited with waiting parents, many still chatting about their artwork and new friends.

“When’s the next event?” became the question of the hour, a clear sign that *Star Gyal* had struck a bright chord.

The McMichael venue, known for its collection of Canadian and Indigenous art, offered more than a setting; it was a statement of intent. By situating Indo-Caribbean youth within an Indigenous narrative of land, culture, and spirit, ICCA affirmed the interconnected histories of migration, resilience, and creativity that shape Canada’s multicultural identity.

The event also repositioned Indo-Caribbean girls at the heart of that national story, no longer peripheral, but confident participants in its unfolding chapters. Where our previous generations laboured in fields across the Caribbean, descendants now interpret heritage through brush, colour, and a youthful, articulated voice.

The ICCA’s mentorship model is intentionally intergenerational. Youth committees work alongside professionals and parents to design workshops that blend life-skills with cultural expression. Each session reinforces empowerment, empathy, and self-knowledge, values that have been passed down from our ancestors who crossed oceans in search of better futures.

For *Star Gyal*, the name itself evokes brightness and pride. Every participant becomes a symbol of what happens when culture, confidence, and opportunity intersect; and of course, the sky is the limit.

As the September sun suffused Kleinburg, the inaugural workshop ended with anticipation. The girls left carrying their artwork, ICCA tote bags, and a spark of shared purpose.

For ICCA organisers, it marked the birth of a movement, one committed to nurturing a generation of Indo-Caribbean girls who will define leadership on their own terms.

In the words of Sheopaul, “We all have opportunities; it’s up to us to take advantage of them.”

[Click here to register for upcoming \*Star Gyal\* workshops.](#)

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Diwali celebration at the TT Consulate General. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo

## Diwali at TT's Consulate General

**Toronto** – The Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto hosted its Diwali celebration on October 20 at its Sheppard Avenue office, in collaboration with the *Satya Jyoti Cultural Sabha*, under the theme, *Three Generations*.

The celebration captured the continuity of Trinidad and Tobago's heritage through inspiring performances, religious observance, and recognition of cultural excellence.

The grounds of the Consulate glowed with electronic *diyas* artistically curated by community ambassador Hinano Beekhoo, while *bhajans*, tassa drumming, and prayers resonated within, creating an atmosphere that united sacred tradition and contemporary expression.

Consul General Simone Young and Deputy Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette led proceedings, highlighting the community's enduring contribution to preserving Indo-Caribbean identity in Canada.

Among those honoured for their lasting cultural impact were Happy and Pinky Bridgemohan, founders of the *Ground Shakers Tassa Movement*.

Reading a commendation from CG Young, Ramsubagh-Mannette lauded the couple for their "outstanding contribution in preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago through the vibrant rhythms of Tassa drumming".

The citation further recognised how, for over 35 years, their family legacy has carried "the heartbeat of tassa across Canada", ensuring

the art form's survival across generations. Ashok Yankarran was also recognised for his "extraordinary contributions as a cultural icon and musical ambassador, whose melodious voice and unique artistry have graced stages of Trinidad and Tobago, Canada, the US, and India".

The commendation traced his journey from learning beside his father Isaac Yankarran to performing *bhajans* and folk music before world leaders, underscoring his lifelong role in uplifting hearts and honouring tradition.

The Consulate General also extended warm congratulations to Leelawatie Phakera for her "dedicated service and invaluable contribution to preserving our rich cultural heritage through the traditional art form of ritualistic folk singing".

Her 35-year devotion to sacred songs sung at births, weddings, and other rites of passage, rooted in Bhojpuri, Hindi, and Trinbagonian dialects, was praised as a bridge between ancestral legacy and present community life.

Charan 'Bobby' Armoogam received recognition for his "outstanding contribution to music and culture", and his "unwavering dedication to uplifting the community through the universal language of song".

The citation highlighted his career of more than three decades as a singer, multi-instrumentalist, and director of the acclaimed Sound Sensation Band, as well as his leadership in the *Satya Jyoti Cultural Sabha* and his tireless support of charitable and cultural events.



Getting a shipment ready at Atlas

Canned food for the JCA

JCA supplies. Photos One Love Table

Atlas staffers ready supplies

## Community groups issue call to diaspora to support hurricane-hit Jamaica

From Page 1

causes, Singh said his background and faith taught him to give back.

"Our background, teaching from our parents, and Hindu philosophy, teach us to give," he explained.

Additionally, "Back in 1977, when I first came to Canada, on Sundays we would work in a warehouse packing medicines for shipment to Africa through the Catholic Mission. I continued when the company I worked for started paying for the shipment of those containers to Africa. We had space in those containers, so we started shipping books."

The effort "grew into working with the Samaritan Purse", he recalled, adding, "We were the first to have a container painted with Operation Christmas Child. We have been doing this for more than 40 years. If you don't have you can't give. This is our way

of giving back."

Across the GTA this week, diaspora organisations are continuing with community drives to collect supplies, which are being sent to Atlas Cargo's Mississauga depot for shipment to Jamaica.

Among these groups are the *Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association*, the *Jamaican Canadian Association*, *One Love Table*, the *Jane and Finch Unity Organisation*, and the *Lions Club Malton One Destiny*, a sampling of the many groups now mobilising across the GTA to get urgent relief to Jamaica.

In their extensive social media reach, *One Love Table* and its president Habeeb Alli issued an urgent call for donations to help support immediate needs, such as emergency food boxes, clean drinking water, and hygiene kits.

On their *Facebook* page, the group called for support to ensure that parents do not have to

choose between a secure shelter and feeding their children in the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Melissa.

Alli also told *Indo-Caribbean World* that hurricane relief supplies already received by *One Love Table*, including foodstuff and water, had already been given to groups working to collect supplies for Jamaica. Among the groups that have received supplies are the *Jane and Finch Unity Organisation*, the *Jamaican Canadian Association*, and the *Lions Club Malton One Destiny*, he said.

Earlier this week the *Jamaica Gleaner* reported that 25 communities remain marooned in the parishes of Westmoreland, St Elizabeth, St James, Trelawny and Hanover.

Labour and Social Security Minister Pearnel Charles Jr said every effort is being made to deliver food, water and tarpaulins, though blocked roads and weather continue to delay

operations. He noted that no country could respond fully "in one day or one week", and that the Jamaica Defence Force has been airlifting care packages and carrying out medical evacuations for the elderly and disabled.

Up to 77 percent of the island lost power, thousands of roofs were damaged, and more than 25,000 people remain in shelters. Relief agencies continue to prioritise clean water, food assistance, and medical supplies as the island works to restore basic services.

Ryan Singh, President of the *Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association*, wrote in his Page 6 column in this edition that three million Jamaicans have been affected, and many have lost everything. He called on the Caribbean diaspora to come together to support relief efforts, and announced that the ICCA will match donations up to \$500 from its upcoming *Buss Yuh Brain Fundraiser*.



## Caribbean leaders express concern

**Kingston** – Ten former Caribbean heads of government have issued a joint statement voicing “grave concern” about the increasing US military build-up across the region. The leaders cautioned that the presence of nuclear vessels and aircraft risks drawing Caribbean nations into conflicts not of their making.

The statement, reported by *The Jamaica Gleaner* last month, was endorsed by former Jamaican Prime Ministers P. J. Patterson and Bruce Golding, along with Baldwin Spencer of Antigua and Barbuda; Belize’s Said Musa and Dean Barrow; Freundel Stuart of Barbados; Edison James of Dominica; Tilman Thomas of Grenada; Donald Ramotar of Guyana; and Kenny Anthony of Saint Lucia.

According to the leaders, “the safety and security of the Caribbean Sea and the territorial integrity of small states are of inestimable value”. They urged a pull-back of external military activity to safeguard peace, stability, and sustainable development throughout the Caribbean archipelago.

The former leaders reaffirmed that the

idea of a “zone of peace” remains central to Caribbean sovereignty and diplomacy. They emphasised that this principle has long guided the region’s relationships with hemispheric and global powers.

“Our region has maintained that established international law and conventions, rather than war and military might, should prevail in finding solutions to seemingly intractable problems,” the statement read.

They also cited the United Nations Charter’s foundation that “all disputes can and must be resolved through negotiations and dialogue”, adding that these values have underpinned Caribbean foreign policy since independence.

The joint declaration warned that any erosion of these principles could expose the region to “collateral damage and economic harm”.

They appealed to both Caribbean governments and external powers to respect the hemisphere’s commitment to peace, asserting that sovereignty, dialogue, and international law remain “the fundamental tenets of the region”.



P.J. Patterson

## Corruption mother lode to gold problem

From Page 9

of Guyana weekly. He then disclosed that the FBI and US Homeland Security were looking into the issue.

Trotman stated that some of the gold came directly from Guyana, while some of it was sourced from other South American nations. The former Minister indicated the gold leaves via several ports making its way to the US, Brazil, Suriname, and Europe. It was also reported that Guyana’s gold finds its way to the Middle East and China.

In addition, *Demerara Waves Online News* reported in 2015 that more than G \$40 billion of the precious metal had been smuggled to the US as “scrap gold” between late 2014 and early 2015.

According to local media reports, Venezuelan gold is purchased by local miners and eventually ends up at the Guyana Gold Board, or at licensed gold exporters as quantities presumably mined in Guyana, resulting in an overstatement of Guyana’s annual gold declarations.

Apparently, there is no paper trail for gold miners to prove the source of the gold that they sell to the Guyana Gold Board, or intend to export. All that is apparently needed is proof that the person is a legitimate miner.

In 2020, allegations that one of Guyana’s largest gold exporters, El Dorado Trading was involved in filtering Venezuelan gold into the local market led to the Royal Canadian Mint suspending purchases of gold from the company.

The NRA noted that in 2017 it was reported that a major gold smuggling racket was unearthed through the FBI, which provided Guyana’s authorities with a list of persons who had taken gold to the JFK Airport, New York, and declaring it there.

“The smuggling was made possible because Customs and other Gold Board documents were recycled along with seals. Hundreds of millions of dollars of profits were being made but little for Guyana. Considering these factors, smuggling including gold smuggling represents a High Threat of money laundering in Guyana,” the report stated.

Arguably, there are measures in place to identify legitimate sources of gold, but whether they are diligently implemented remain questionable. Incidentally, official monitoring and supervision of production activities remain challenging.

Local reports claim that the US and Guyanese law enforcement agencies, including those responsible for fighting financial crimes, have been keeping their eyes on certain gold mining operations. Dossiers have been report-

edly compiled on a number of miners, and data shared with international partners.

In one apparent smuggling incident in 2012, 476 pounds of gold, believed to have originated from Guyana, were stolen from the Guyanese fishing boat *Summer Bliss*, which was docked in the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao. The vessel was apparently on its way to Miami, but made a stop in Curaçao. The gold was valued at approximately US \$11.5 million.

In another smuggling incident, it was reported that Brazil was conducting an investigation involving a Guyanese businessman, who was said to be part of a smuggling ring where some US \$16.4 million of illegally mined gold was laundered through shell companies in the food and medical supply industries.

In June 2024, Vice-President Dr Bharrat Jagdeo’s announced intensified actions against smuggling, stating that gold smuggling in Guyana is not merely an issue of lost revenue – that it strikes at the heart of national integrity and economic fairness.

Jagdeo said smugglers are not acting on a whim; they are part of well-organised networks that manipulate market dynamics to their advantage. He said some gold dealers were offering rates higher than the international market price, which suggests a deeply entrenched black market where gold is trafficked, not for legitimate economic activities, but for purposes that likely include money laundering and other forms of financial crime.

He noted that the government must ensure that its efforts are sustained and systemic. This means not only pursuing the foot soldiers but also targeting the masterminds behind these operations. It requires a multifaceted approach that includes legal reforms, enhanced border controls, and international cooperation.

Evidently, gold smuggling is entrenched in Guyana. Besides targeting individuals, the government must engage all affiliated agencies/institutions within its ambit to deal with the problem, including GGMC, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Special Organised Crime Unit, the Guyana Revenue Authority, local banks, and affiliated public servants.

Moreover, the government needs to take steps to deal with corruption, which appears to be the source of the problem.

...

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](http://winningways101.com). He can be reached at [dlakhan@rogers.com](mailto:dlakhan@rogers.com).



## Ask Jay...

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

### FROM RENTING TO OWNING: TURNING THE WAITING GAME INTO A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

**R**ecently, a young couple sat across from me, both looking frustrated. They had been renting a small condo in Mississauga for nearly five years, and although they had good jobs and a decent income, the dream of owning their own home still felt just out of reach.

Their story is one I hear often these days. Across Canada, home prices are falling, and mortgage rates, both fixed and variable, are beginning to ease. The market has cooled, giving buyers more negotiating power. Still, many first-time buyers are staying on the sidelines, uncertain if now is the right time to buy.

In my book, *The Road to Homeownership: A Canadian Blueprint*, I emphasise the importance of preparation. Homeownership isn’t just a financial milestone: it is a mindset shift. It requires discipline, patience, and a strategic approach.

If you’re currently renting, this could be a good opportunity to establish a solid financial footing and save for your downpayment. Think of it as practice before the big game. In Canada, the minimum down payment varies depending on the price of your home.

- Five percent for homes valued up to \$500,000
- Ten percent on the amount over \$500,000 (up to \$1.5 million)
- 20 percent for homes valued over \$1.5 million

If your down payment is less than 20%, you’ll need mortgage loan insurance, which is an extra cost that protects the lender, not you. That’s why many buyers aim to save enough to reach the 20 percent threshold.

Here are four innovative ways to save for your down payment:

1. **Open a First Home Savings Account (FHSA).** The FHSA is one of the top tools available to Canadians today. You can contribute up to \$8,000 annually, with tax deductions similar to an RRSP and tax-free withdrawals like a TFSA. Over time, it can grow into a significant part of your down payment.
2. **Tap into your RRSP with the Home Buyers’ Plan (HBP).** If you’ve been contributing to an RRSP, you can withdraw up to \$60,000 (or \$120,000 for couples) tax-free for your first home — as long as you repay it over 15 years.
3. **Automate Your Savings.** Arrange an automatic transfer to move money into a separate “home fund” with each payday. Treat it as a bill you pay yourself. Over time, it becomes natural — and your savings grow quietly in the background.
4. **Redirect Windfalls and Extras.** A tax refund, bonus, or even a side gig can be directly added to your future home savings. It’s much easier to save from unexpected gains than to cut from your regular budget.

The government has also eased some regulations. Starting December 15, 2024, first-time buyers with insured mortgages can choose a 30-year amortization, which reduces their monthly payments. If you’re buying in Ontario, you might also qualify for up to \$4,000 back through the Land Transfer Tax Rebate, along with a \$1,500 First-Time Home Buyers’ Tax Credit to help cover closing costs.

The market remains unpredictable. Prices could fall further, or they might stabilise and rise again. No one knows for certain. What’s clear is this: being prepared gives you control.

Use this time to reduce debt, improve your credit, and grow your savings. Get preapproved for a mortgage so you know what you can comfortably afford. Visit open houses, research neighbourhoods, and continue learning.

The couple I mentioned earlier decided to take action. They opened an FHSA, automated their savings, and created a plan to pay off their car loan within six months.

Owning a home might seem far off, but it’s nearer than you believe, especially if you see this waiting time as part of your journey, not a setback.

Take small, steady steps. Learn the system. Use the tools available to you. And most importantly, believe it’s possible, because it is. Your dream home isn’t out of reach. You’re simply preparing to claim it.

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In photos are Deputy Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, Vashi Doorga, Consul General



Simone Young, MP Charmaine Williams, Councillor Rod Power, Ram Mandir's Pandit Roopnauth Sharma,



Honorary Consul Mani Singh, and guests. Photos by Russell Lutchman and Ramesh Ramkalawan

# Divali Nagar Canada unites diaspora in celebration of light, heritage

— A radiant glow of light, music, and multicultural pride swept through Mississauga on October 17 when Doorga Entertainment and the Divali Nagar Canada Team brought to life Divali Nagar Canada 2025 under the theme 'Just Like Back Home'. The celebration recreated Trinidad and Tobago's Divali Nagar and Guyana's Motorcade, uniting generations in a luminous act of remembrance and renewal.

Mississauga shimmered on October 17 in the light of a shared heritage as Divali Nagar Canada 2025 emerged as a radiant celebration of Indo-Caribbean culture, blending Trinidad's Divali Nagar and Guyana's Motorcade into one unforgettable expression of diasporic pride, nostalgia, and unity.

Divali Nagar has long stood as one of the largest Indo-Caribbean cultural events in central Trinidad, and its Canadian counterpart carried that tradition forward with grace and grandeur. According to a release from the organising team, it was noted that "many have fond memories of Diwali back home", and that Divali Nagar Canada sought to "replicate that nostalgia right here in Canada, creating new memories *Just Like Back Home*".

Presented by Doorga Entertainment and the Divali Nagar Canada Team in collaboration with the Mississauga Ram Mandir, the event welcomed hundreds of visitors from New York, Ottawa, Hamilton, Shelbourne, Scarborough, Cambridge, Ajax, Pickering, and beyond for celebration in an atmosphere of "light, music, and unity".

The celebration was a model of partnership and shared purpose. According to the release, it marked "the first time that all levels of government, together with the Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago and the Consulate General of Guyana, lit *diyas* together". It was a symbolic act, which the organisers described as historic.

Among those attending were Consul General Simone Young, from the Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto, who delivered the opening address. Also in attendance was Deputy Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette; community leader Alisa Cheddi; and Councillor Rod Power's project manager, Sally Poliah.

The event also welcomed Honorary Consul Mani Singh from the Consulate General of Guyana in Toronto; the federal government's Treasury Board President MP Shafqat Ali; Ontario's Minister of Women, Social and Economic Opportunity MPP Charmaine Williams; and Brampton Councillor Rod Power.

In what was a unifying and symbolic act of unity and pur-

pose, they all participated in the ceremonial lighting of the *diya*.

Their symbolic act was a touchstone that encapsulated the syncretism and blending of the cultural worlds of Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Canada, with Divali Nagar Canada reimagining and actualising what unity could look and feel like abroad.

Organisers shared that the event sought to combine "the popular Guyana Motorcade together with Trinidad's Divali Nagar" along with "a touch of culture from both and Canada, to create a sense of unity and make it our own".

The event also saw participation by Toronto Caribbean Carnival, with its Executive Chair Jennifer Hirlehey and members of her team joining the Diwali Motorcade "with lights and splendour". TCC's participation featured its Queen costume to the accompaniment of *Om Shanti Om*, a well-known composition by the late Trinidad and Tobago bard, Lord Shorty.

Aryan Doorga delivered the TCC's ancestral acknowledgments, which recognised "those who came as settlers, migrants, and generations past in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery, and Indentured workers", honouring ancestors across all journeys. The event saw prize for Best Dressed Male, Best Dressed Female, and Best Child Deity.

Legacy was both theme and undercurrent. Camille Seunarin Singh, daughter of one of Trinidad and Tobago's original Divali Nagar founders, shared that her participation felt like "carrying the torch in his name".

Children too were central to the festivities through the *Cradle of Culture*, where they crafted *murtis* from clay, painted *diyas*, and made Diwali cards, each effort a small act of continuity in ensuring the flame of culture burns bright in new generations.

Despite wet weather, the mood was joyous. Many in attendance described feeling "just like back home". As *diyas* flickered to the strains of *Ragupati Raghav Raja Ram* played on steelpan, hearts warmed to a collective sense of belonging.

The release reflected on that moment, declaring, "Even though it was cold and rainy, our community came out in hundreds united with their light over darkness."

That sentiment, echoed throughout the day, turned the festival into something larger than spectacle; it became a living reminder of resilience and our shared identity.

Every corner of the festival carried the texture and taste of the homelands. The Food Pavilion recreated culinary memories with pepper roti, a live *D Doubles Stand*, and a *Chokha Station* serving ten types of *chokhas*, from coconut to plantain. *Seven Curry* was served in *purain*, or Lotus leaves, while a traditional

Caribbean Sunday Lunch was served on a Friday.

Visitors also explored *Darshan: A Sacred Exhibit of Art & Light, a History Untold*, an education portal on Indentureship, and the *Wellness Realm*, which offered Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation.

More than 400 bags of sweets and *prasad* with *barfi*, *kurma*, and sugar cakes were shared, generously sponsored by community partners including Raj Singh and the Rameshwar Mandir family, Doorga Entertainment, and Caribbean Treasures.

The stage came alive with a blend of devotional, classical, and contemporary artistry.

"International artistes included the heavenly voice of Neval Chatelal and the melodious Queen Nirmala Sesnarayan," the release noted, recalling their celebrated performances at Trinidad's Divali Nagar.

They were joined by Indar Kanhai, Leeann Dass of 411 Dance Theatre, and musicians Veerendra Persad, Devin Ramoutar, Steven Rupchand, and Keshav and Ashish Maraj.

The senior group of *Nritya Kala Mandir* presented a *Ram Katha*, while the *Bal Vihar* children of Ram Mandir performed alongside Chatelal. Aaron Seunarine's steelpan and the Champion Boyz Tassa Group filled the night with rhythm and reverence.

The closing reflection tied the festival to our broader historical journey, with the statement, "Indentured labourers left India and migrated for a better life in other parts of the world including the West Indies and beyond. They held on to their traditions while creating a new culture. Canada is now our home."

Organisers added that this was "the start of a new legacy", where generations "united as one global family and the voices of our ancestors echoed in the heart of Canada".

The day's success rested not only in its scale, but also in its craftsmanship. Organisers extended gratitude to President of the Mississauga Ram Mandir Pundit Roopnauth Sharma and Indira Sharma.

Thanks also went out to Russell Lutchman, moderator of the thriving Facebook group, *Under the Mango Tree*; Ramesh Ramkalawan of R&R Productions for his professional camera work; and to community ambassador Hinano Beekhoo for her originality and creativity in re-enacting "our back home ambience with a beautiful *diya* display".

With the successful homecoming of the spirit of Diwali, the festival of light rekindled across oceans, the organisers concluded, "The Legacy Continues – stay tuned for updates on Divali Nagar Canada 2026."





# Where his hands touched, music, family, and gardens flourished

— A gentle virtuoso whose melodies once echoed across Guyana's golden age of Indian music, David Singh was equally a man of soil and family, cultivating both harmony and garden with patient care and practiced hands. Self-taught, steadfast, and self-effacing, he left behind not only music, but the steady rhythm of a life devoted to family, work, and sacrifice.

...

**David Singh (1943–2025)**  
A Tribute by Romeo Kaseram  
LJI Writer and Reporter

Music enthusiasts who lived in Guyana between the mid-1960s and early 1970s, and who followed local Indian performing artistes, will readily recall David Singh. There are many among us who would also recognise the face of this accomplished self-made musician, a regular presence on some of the biggest stages in Guyana, and who featured regularly on what was then the most popular radio station, *Radio Demerara*.

If not in Guyana, then those following the local Indian music scene in Toronto in the 1980s and 1990s would have seen David performing on stage, in mandirs, and at other entertainment venues. If somehow David's face did not leave its imprint behind, it may be because he was a quiet, unassuming, humble, and self-effacing performer, one who in spite of his eminent achievements in the field of music, remained unintrusive, and was not given to showmanship.

He was born on June 6, 1943 to parents Baldeo and Dhanwanti Singh of Canal Number 1, West Bank, Demerara. In his eulogy, son Sadesh remembered him as "a fine example of what a father should be. Caring, devoted, responsible and loving". Those words frame the heart of a man whose family always stood at the centre of his purpose.

David married Rukhmani, known affectionately as Jasso, and together they raised three children – Sadesh, Geeta, and Vishal; later, the couple welcomed grandchildren Matthew, Maya, Meera, and Deven.

In their home, affection and discipline moved together; as Sadesh said, "He was a dedicated family man who would go to the ends of the Earth, and do anything necessary to provide for us."

Early in life and newly married, David took a job that required extensive travel in Guyana's interior.

"His journey started from Canal #1 to Georgetown, up and down the Mazaruni River to places like Mahdia where he camped with co-workers. He visited places like Kurupakari, Annai, Lethem, Kurupung, and Rupununi, among many others," Sadesh recalled.

Stories from those journeys of fishing and hunting became treasured tales for his children.

"During his travels he would buy quality fruit and vegetables, and later plant the seeds at our home in the South Ruimveldt Gardens," Sadesh revealed.

What grew from those seeds was more than produce; it was his way of making home fertile again, a craft he continued until his final days.

"He was an avid gardener, planting *poi bhaji*, okro, herbs, and produced the best avocado and White Lady guava I have ever tasted; he cultivated coconuts, cherries, bora, seim, and butter beans."

In his casket was a purple flower, a bloom taken from this season's butter beans that thrived from his handiwork and care.

Migration came later, demanding the same endurance and commitment he had shown in Guyana's hinterlands.

"Starting out in life with a wife and three children in Canada was not easy," Sadesh said. They stayed with family, among them "Chacha Edward, Chacha Kenneth and their families, Uncle Mulchand and Mahase Mamoo". The web of kin sustained them as



David Singh with his iconic mandolin they rebuilt from scratch.

Before leaving Guyana, David's professional journey was grounded in study and service. He attended McGillvary Canadian Mission Primary School in Canal No 1, then Guyana Oriental College in Georgetown, followed by the Land Surveying Program at the Government Technical Institute.

His work history spanned 20 years with the government of Guyana as a Highway Design and Land Surveying Technician; two years in Trinidad and Tobago as an Engineering Technician working on the Claude Noel Highway in Tobago; two years as a Research Technician at the University of Toronto; three years at Federal Pioneer as a Draftsman; and 23 years at Toronto Hydro as an Engineering Technician.

Sadesh remembered those early Canadian years vividly: "He had to provide for his family, and although he designed and built roads in Guyana and Tobago, he couldn't find work in his field here. Talking about sacrifices, he had a full-time factory job while attending Seneca College as a full-time student for two years." That effort led to his career at Toronto Hydro.

David's musical journey began in his teens. As he said in a 2023 interview, "I got my first mandolin from my Mamoo [maternal uncle] Udaipal in Canal No. 1, West Bank, Demerara. He got it from his brother-in-law Freddie Roopchand, who got it as a present from his Venezuelan friend. I am totally self-taught."

From that first mandolin, David built an enduring reputation. In 1962 he joined the *Indian Hot Shots Orchestra* led by Tafazool Baksh. Two years later, he founded the *Indian Merry Makers Orchestra*. With the *Merry Makers* he played for the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, the Gandhi Youth Organisation, and later the Hindu Dharmic Sabha for the crowning of many Miss Diwali Queens, and other cultural programmes, spearheaded by the late Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud and other national leaders.

He contributed to the album *Bhakti Bhajans* recorded around 1972 at *Radio Demerara*, produced by Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud. His music also reached cinema: *Anmol Bandhan* and *Sounds of the Sugar Cane*. On stage, he performed for visiting Indian playback singers and film stars as Mukesh, Manna Dey, Hemant Kumar, Kishore Kumar, Rajendra Kumar, Asha Parek, and Rahul Roy.

After migrating to Canada in 1983, he joined the *Gems Orchestra of Toronto* and several Hindu organisations, later recording *Mandolin Serenade Instrumentals* in 2013.

Throughout his life David's home remained open, with Sadesh reminiscing, "Our house in South Ruimveldt was like a little hotel where some of his siblings lived."



Gems Orchestra included (left to right) Pradip Bulsara, James Acosta, Kennard Ramnarace, Roy Persaud, Chardanand Ramnarace, David Singh, Dennis Sankar, Dheraj Ramnarace, Darshan Prashad, & Ricky Ramnarace

His friendships were many, sustained by warmth and music. Sadesh added, "Daddy made lots of friends because of his easy-going personality and his music, such as Uncle Kampta and Auntie Iris. But one who stands out, and went beyond the call of duty, is a gentleman who passed away a few years ago, Uncle Harry Panday, along with his wife Auntie Savitri, who also took in our family over their own."

After retirement in March 2012, David devoted time to religious and community groups, among them the *Indo-Caribbean Golden Age Association*; he continued to tend his garden, a space that joined his love of the earth and his creative, nurturing hands with quiet reflection.

Sadesh recalled his father's final months: "Dad was in the hospital for seven months; he had many rough patches, but never lost his mental acuity. I was able to thank him for res-

cuing me as a little boy, and told him that [we] will always be together, and that we will take care of mommy."

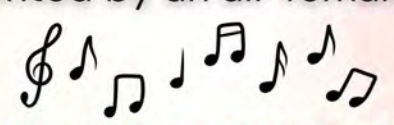
He described his father as "a gentle soul, a wonderful dad and husband, and dedicated to his family". That gentleness, he said, lives on through his children and grandchildren: "Indeed, through my brother Vishal, sister Geeta, and myself, grandchildren Deven, Maya, Meera and Matthew – his memory, his legacy, his name, will live on."

David's life was melody, movement, and devotion intertwined. A gifted artist whose life's journey started out with building roadways, he raised a family with the nurturing hands of a gardener, filled rooms with his ethereal music, and now leaves behind a legacy that is as gentle, yet evocative and resonant, as the soft sounds now lifting up from the strings of his eternal mandolin.

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‘When you save a child, you touch a generation!’

— Marking a quarter century of service to children across the Caribbean, The Caribbean Children Foundation commemorated its 25th anniversary on October 25 with reflections on its humanitarian work, community partnerships, and continued commitment to providing medical care for critically ill children through volunteer-driven outreach and collaboration.

By Romeo Kaseram  
LJI Community Reporter

**Toronto** – The Caribbean Children Foundation (TCCF) celebrated its 25th anniversary on October 25, highlighting 25 years of humanitarian service providing life-saving medical care to critically ill children from the Caribbean.

Founded in 1999, TCCF has supported over 475 children requiring specialised treatment through partnerships with hospitals such as SickKids and organisations including Gift of Life International (GOLI).

The milestone celebration reflected on TCCF’s achievements and ongoing mission to expand healthcare support throughout the Caribbean region.

During his address, TCCF President Jay Brijpaul shared a letter received from one of the children who underwent life-saving surgery with assistance from TCCF.

The letter read, “Dear TCCF – thank you for paying for my surgery. My parents couldn’t afford it, and without your help, I wouldn’t be here to write this letter. I’m about to finish my first degree at the University of Guyana and plan to study medicine. Because you, TCCF, inspire me. The enclosed \$20 is all I can afford. Please use it to save another child’s life.”

Addressing the gathering, Brijpaul declared, “That letter and that \$20 are worth more than gold. Because when you save a child, you touch a generation!”

That epistle of gratitude and humble generosity served as a reminder of the group’s impact since inception, as TCCF continues to make a difference in young lives in providing access to complex medical care for children whose families are unable to meet the cost of treatment.

Brijpaul noted that the foundation’s success over the past 25 years has been made possible through the consistent support of volunteers, donors, and community members.

“As we celebrate the 25th anniversary, let’s remember TCCF is not just an organisation. TCCF has grown into a movement of compassion – a family that provides when a community stands together means miracles do happen,” he affirmed.

He expressed gratitude to those who have contributed to the charity’s mission.

“I want to say thank you to everyone who donated, volunteered, or supported us. You are the heartbeat of TCCF,” Brijpaul stated to applause from the close to 800 persons gathered at the Woodbine Banquet Hall.

He also paid tribute to the children who have benefited from the foundation’s humanitarianism, describing them as central to its legacy.

“And to our children we have helped: you are our legacy. Your courage continues to inspire us every single day. Here’s to the next 25 years of hope, healing, and humanity. Happy 25th anniversary, TCCF. I’m proud to be a volunteer.”

Since its founding, TCCF has worked with medical institutions in Canada and abroad to facilitate treatment for children requiring complex surgeries, particularly cardiac procedures, while also supporting local training initiatives in the Caribbean.

Through partnerships such as the ongoing collaboration with GOLI, TCCF has helped establish sustainable paediatric cardiac programs in countries including Guyana and the Dominican Republic, expanding regional access to critical care.

Vice-president Jankie Dolaram and the group’s dedicated team of volunteers continue to uphold the organisation’s principle that every donation is directed to medical care, with no administrative deductions. This model has enabled TCCF to maintain transparency and ensure that community contributions translate directly into treatment for children in dire need.

The anniversary celebration also recognised the foundation’s ongoing partnerships and the generosity of donors who have sustained its work for over two and a half decades. Brijpaul emphasised that while the organisation has grown in reach, its foundation remains rooted in volunteer service, collective goodwill, and deep community engagement.

Also notable in Brijpaul’s address, and as was evidenced by other speakers that evening, was as TCCF looks ahead, its focus will continue to be on strengthening regional healthcare networks, increasing awareness, and supporting local medical practitioners through training and resource sharing.

Also noted by key speakers was that TCCF’s vision continues to align with its founding mission, which is to provide critically ill Caribbean children with access to the medical care they need to live healthy, fulfilling lives.





# Witness to a nation’s renewal: My journey as an election observer

By Dhanpaul Narine

People keep telling me, “You write about everything else, except about Guyana”, adding, “Why don’t you write something about your country? Let us know what is going on there. Tell the stories.”

I reply that I know little about Guyana to write with certainty or accuracy about it. However, the 2025 elections in Guyana gave me the chance to visit, and to observe at first hand the hopes and expectations of the country.

I made it my business to meet with people from all walks of life, political persuasion, and different backgrounds. I engaged people, asked questions, and listened to the answers. By the time I was ready to leave, I had a fair sense of the direction in which Guyana was heading.

I felt I had to be in Guyana when the date of the elections was announced. There was a chorus of voices that tried to dissuade me. They pointed to election violence and were worried about my personal safety. But I was determined.

My last election experience was in 1978 when they had a referendum to change the Constitution of Guyana. At that time, the choice on the ballot paper was between a house and a mouse. The mouse lost and Forbes Burnham manufactured a two-thirds majority, and changed the Constitution, a document that is used to this day. There have been promises to reshape, reconfigure and revamp it, but it has never happened. The ruling party of the day seems to be happy with it.

I knew there was one person I needed to contact to make my trip hassle-free. He was Joe Yussuff. I explained to Joe that I wanted to be in Guyana for the elections, and to be able to move around safely. Joe had a brilliant idea. I could be an accredited observer. I would be part of a group of over 70 persons that would observe the elections. This would give me access to the polling stations. I would be able to see from the inside how the elections were conducted. This was more than I expected.

I was asked to present myself at the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) headquarters at the Guyana Marriott Hotel on August 30, 2025 for an orientation.

There were other considerations before a trip of this nature could be attempted. The Ramada Hotel was already booked, but what about reliable transportation? I mentioned in passing to Rakesh Prashad about the transportation problem. He immediately called his friend Navin Singh in Lusignan, and the transportation was organised.

My son Lionel and I landed in Georgetown at midnight and met with Navin at CJIA. My first impression of Navin was of a young man that was well-spoken and with a keen interest in the affairs of the country. I figured that this was a good thing since he would appreciate the running around that an observer would entail.

Navin brought us up-to-date on the latest situation in Guyana. He said the country was making rapid progress as we traversed the East Bank roads. It was important that the road networks be completed, as this would ease congestion. We could see heavy trucks carrying sand and bricks. We were told that this went on for 24-hours non-stop.

Sunshine greeted us the following day, and it was time to tour Georgetown. I presented a copy of my latest book *Ramraj: An Amazonian Fantasy* to the public free library.

One could see the congestion in the city, the new buildings that were being constructed, and the rapidly changing skyline. But the land that once housed the *Globe* and *Astor* cinemas lay bare in the grasses.

We journeyed to Kingston and took Water Street to return to the city centre. The memories came flooding back. I journeyed back in time: the 7:20 a.m. boat landing at Georgetown Stelling, and the brisk walk to my 8:00 a.m. job in Kingston. After a busy day of clerical work, it was time to retrace my steps.

Then, a more leisurely walk took one past the Kingston Milk Plant, the Abattoir, and Weiting and Richter that made the ice. Sandbach Parker was stocked with cars, and its travel service invited travelers to experience a plane ride in the sunny skies. I recalled on the opposite side of the street were two commercial giants, Bookers (later Guyana Stores) and Fogarty’s. They were a shopper’s delight before the ban on essential goods.

But now, on this day, in 2025, the deterioration was sad to behold. The Milk Plant had long gone, and some of the other buildings were old, abandoned, and left for wear. Guyana Stores, the once proud flagship, was no longer welcoming, while Fogarty’s looked a poor shadow of itself. Their deterioration reinforced the idea that it was possible to have progress in the past. It did something else.

It showed that out of neglect there was opportunity and optimism. These are waterfront properties, and are ripe for revitalisation. The administration of President Dr Irfaan Ali is aware of their value, and has included the old Water Street in their plans for redevelopment.

It was now Friday, and we met at the Marriott for the briefing session for the upcoming elections. A keen sense of anticipation was in the air. It was time to connect with other observers, and



Narine in Guyana as an observer



A once proud edifice, the Fogarty’s building is a shadow today



Tents at the Paradise Playfield polling station

to meet with officials from the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). There were charts, diagrams, tally sheets, and pictures of Statements of Polls.

The officials were knowledgeable and patient, and took time to explain what was expected from the observers. We were there to observe, and not to engage people into discussions about the elections, or to throw our weight around.

During question time, I raised my hand: “This election will be held on Monday, September 1 – can you guarantee, that all things being equal, we can have a result by Tuesday night?”

Suddenly, there was quiet. There were some in the room who may have thought the same thing. The Deputy Commissioner took a while, and then answered, “Yes, I think we can do that.” Some were relieved, others quizzical.

The weekend was spent talking to people from various places, and canvassing their views about the elections. The stories were the same from the West Coast of Demerara to the West Coast of Berbice. The government was doing a great job, one could see the progress. The schools, roads, hospitals, with state-of-the-art facilities, were impressive.

But something had to be done about the cost of living. Navin was practical, saying: “If they had reduced the price of gas, the results of the elections would have been a foregone conclusion.”

Sunday night came with some degree of nervousness and doubts. I had never covered an election before. What if I went and messed up the whole thing? What if I said something inappropriate and was asked to leave? It would be embarrassing to all, and to me, who had taken all this effort.

But I told myself that I was thinking several steps ahead. I needed to wake up on time the following day and take it from there. I had made arrangements with a colleague, Sam Persaud, to meet him in the foyer at 4:00 a.m. I hardly slept and kept looking at the time. It turned out that Sam had a friend who was also an observer, and who had a car. We arrived in good time at the Marriott, and I was assigned a driver for the day.

Joel, the driver, was an affable young man who cared deeply for the welfare of the country. I explained to him that our job was to help secure a fair and free election. We were not there to engage in political questions, but to observe whether the process was smooth.

Our first stop was at Golden Grove Primary School. The polls opened at 6:00 a.m., but the lines were long before that time. I was given a seat next to two polling agents and the voting began. There was a process to be followed: the voter showed an ID card to one of the officers, who read the name, address and ID number to the polling agents. The name was then checked off from the voter’s list.

When all criteria were satisfied, the person received a ballot paper, and was instructed to vote in secret in a designated area.



Voters at Golden Grove Primary School

The ballot was folded and placed in a box; a stain was then applied to the forefinger.

Two or more polling stations could be in the same building, which made it easy for the observers to move around. There were three centres at Golden Grove Primary School, five at Golden Grove Secondary School, two at Haslington Nursery School, five at Enmore Community Center, and eight at Paradise Playfield tents. The latter was outside in a playfield under white tents.

The staff at the various stations were professionally trained. They were courteous and respectful, and some knew the voters from the local communities. The presiding officers and polling agents could make an on-the-spot decision in the event of a discrepancy. There was a slow period in the voting between 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. But it picked up afterwards, and there were lines at some polling stations after 6:00 p.m.

I decided to close out the day at Golden Grove Primary School. This meant that I would observe the counting of the ballots, and the transfer of the data from the tally sheets to the Statements of Poll.

The staff at Golden Grove Primary School worked efficiently to account for every vote that was cast. Documents were clearly displayed for us to see, and in the end, they were placed in a box and sealed before being sent to GECOM.

I must admit that a part of me wanted to find out how the election could be rigged. The count was thorough and at times painstaking. The officials had to get the numbers right, and they had to match with the voter’s list before the presiding officer could sign off on it. It became clear that as the count proceeded there was little scope for rigging; that it would take a superhuman effort even to attempt rigging.

The voter’s list, ballot papers, tally sheets, and Statements of Polls would have to be redone, the seals broken, and the numbers inflated for rigging to take place. It would be impossible for this to happen, with the deadlines to meet. This explains why the count and recount showed little change in the numbers.

Bruce Golding, the former Jamaican Prime Minister, headed the OAS Election Observer Mission to Guyana. He said he was impressed with the professionalism and discipline that went into the 2025 elections. He suggested that the Statements of Poll could have been declared earlier.

He has a point. In the tabulation process the Statements of Polls is the final document that is signed, and this could only happen when all the numbers matched. It might be a good idea to send in a second shift of professionals in mid-afternoon to begin to work on the preliminary tabulation to speed up the process.

My experience as an observer was amazing. I learned a lot about election procedures. Thanks to all at AmCham for their wonderful courtesies, and for making our stay memorable.



# Across continents and turbulence: Dr Ray's journey of healing, resilience

**Krishna Das Ray: *Echoes Across Continents: A Memoir of Resilience Through Tumultuous Times* - The Three Tomatoes Publishing**

**A Review by the Honourable Beth Allen, Retired Judge of the Ontario Superior Court**

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Dr Krishna Das Ray's account of his life's journey on four continents. His colourful account takes the reader along with him on this journey at different times in his life and across different continents. His story is truly relatable to those who have first-hand experience with colonialism and racial marginalisation, and enlightening to those who have not.

This is a story about a young man born of modest beginnings in India who was indefatigable in his pursuit of a medical career, first in India, then in England, and later in Nigeria and Canada. It is a story about how racist English colonial and exclusionary policies on three continents sought to extinguish Dr Ray's burning desire to offer himself in the service of saving lives wherever he was located.

The chapters describe the intricacies of the familial, social, and cultural lives of Dr Ray's family and friends in the Hindu communities in India where he lived, interwoven with colourful tapestries of the other cultures and religions in India – Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and others.

Dr Ray's ventures first take root in the social, political and cultural history of India during the early 1930s amid its struggle against British colonial rule. His father, a judge, inherited a politically charged criminal case brought by the Indian Congress Party against the British colonial administration for its brutal response to pro-Independence civil protest in India.

Dr Ray's words are profound in describing his father's perseverance in writing the difficult verdict, and his courage in deciding the case in favour of the popular movement against British colonial rule. The stress of the decision was blamed as a factor in his father's death, which occurred shortly after he delivered his brave and controversial judgment. Dr Ray never stopped feeling the heartache engendered in him by the doctors' helplessness in saving his beloved father's life.

Dr Ray fixed his dream to become a doctor in the tumultuous and violent conditions in 1940s India before Independence, when death around him was abundant. His path to a medical career was propelled by his father's death, which occurred in the midst of the social and personal strains on judges during the maelstrom of anti-colonial fervour.

Dr Ray's words at that time were poignant and prophetic: "From that day, I wanted to try to save other lives... and I promised to work hard if I got a chance."

Against this backdrop, Dr Ray spoke with sweetness and admiration for a young Jewish nurse, Rachel, whom he met in India, and fell in love with when he was a surgeon at the same hospital.

At age 28, Dr Ray took abroad his inspiration to advance in medicine, when in 1955 he moved to England, where Rachel had already moved, and where he joined the Royal College of Surgeons of England, studied surgery, became a fellow of the College, and where Rachel obtained a position as a staff midwife.

Dr Ray and Rachel married in England, and she became the most ardent supporter of his medical career. After years of progress in his career as a surgeon in England, his superiors decided in their discriminatory wisdom that he would likely not succeed in attaining a specialty in surgery in England. This became a significant obstacle to his career in England. They suggested he seek a position in the Colonies, where the winds of Independence were blowing.

Dr Ray had no choice but to accept that further advancement in India, as England was not in the stars for him. He was commissioned to serve in Northern Nigeria as the first Indian surgeon in the region. There, he and Rachel



**Dr Krishna Das Ray**

encountered unfamiliar colonial, cultural, and social conditions marked by a religious divide between Muslims and Christians, rooted in the local traditions of the various sectors of Nigerian peoples. Dr Ray attained a position as a surgeon to the Prime Minister, local emirs, and expatriate colonial officers.

Behind the story of Dr Ray's life in Nigeria brewed a groundswell of tensions between the ruling Muslim Northerners and oil-rich Christian Ibos of the Eastern Region. Dr Ray and Rachel had much to learn from their new African cultural and political realities, and from the strictures of the expatriate colonial hierarchy.

Rachel was pregnant when they arrived in Nigeria, and shortly thereafter gave birth to their first daughter, Sheila, and a few years later to their second daughter, Monica.

There were more obstacles in Nigeria. Despite being much acclaimed in his early days for saving family members of an expatriate official from the deadly grip of malaria, and notwithstanding his career successes in India, and the grant of an esteemed fellowship in surgery in England, Dr Ray encountered disrespect from his expatriate colonial superiors – professional jealousy, contrived discriminatory obstacles, and unethical deceptive practices aimed at discrediting him, and stifling the exercise of his level of skill and expertise.

He was confined to the lesser work of a medical officer, a non-permanent position, a manifestation of the colonial practice of relegating Indian doctors to inferior positions.

Dr Ray was warned to be careful because many of the British doctors were jealous of his resumé. Those restrictive sentiments ran counter to his calling to work hard to save lives if given a chance. Most disturbing to Dr Ray was an investigation launched by one of his expatriate superiors. He was suspicious that Dr Ray must have broken some rules in his first placement because people protested his departure from the hospital there.

Fortunately, Dr Ray enjoyed the support of the Nigerian Minister of Health and other Nigerians and another of his expatriate superiors, so nothing much came of that complaint.

There were many involuntary transfers. In subsequent placements to other areas of Northern Nigeria, Dr Ray, in spite of his many medical successes, faced continued unfair, false, and arbitrary professional criticisms, allegations of non-compliance with the colonial hierarchy, and being posted to unfavourable hospitals. He had to be constantly vigilant for fear of continued challenges to his professional competence by British officers. Although he was cleared of the injurious claims, he was never at ease.

Dr Ray astutely perceived when it was critical to keep any contrary views to himself. To survive professionally, he realised he had to obey his colonial superiors. However, he comforted himself with the knowledge that Nigerians showed him much love and admiration.

Dr Ray held the view that his problems

lay with what he described as the "narrow-minded British", whose racial bias-inspired envy caused resentment toward him because he was from India.

It was not until years after Independence, once the last of the British doctors left Nigeria, that Dr Ray was promoted to the permanent position of medical Chief of Northern Nigeria. He earned a comfortable salary and commanded an experienced staff until he was once again dogged by the demeaning machinations of a British regional pathologist.

This pathologist added unnecessary and frivolous protocols, putting himself in charge of laboratory requests from Dr Ray's hospital, which Dr Ray, as Chief of the hospital, refused to comply with. This led to an incident that upon investigation put an end to the expatriate doctor's newly imposed rule.

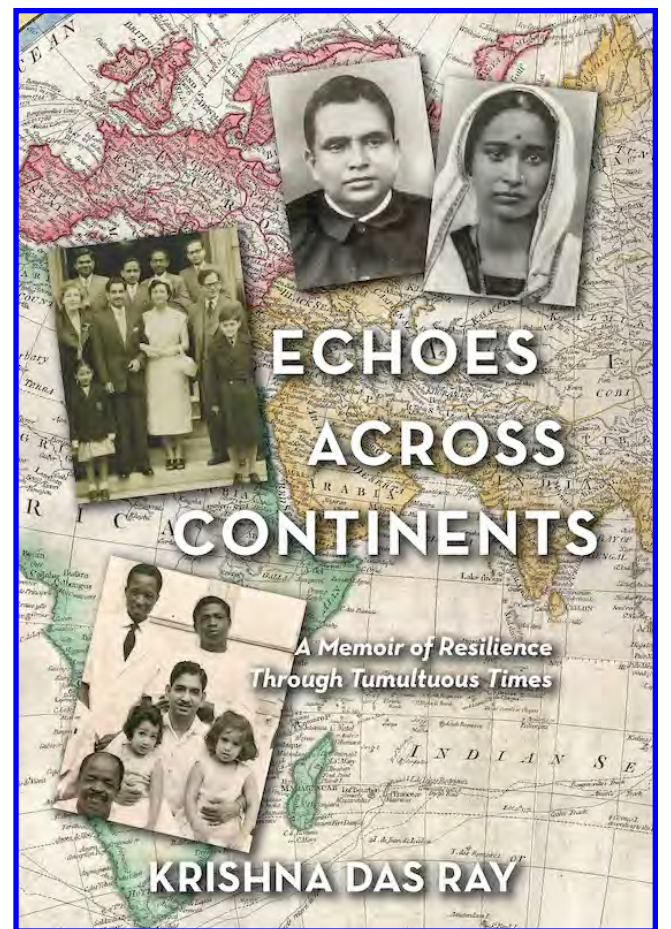
The political tensions between the Northerners and Ibos peaked, ultimately leading to a military *coup d'état* by the Ibos against the Northern Muslim government. Dr Ray found himself caught in the uncertainty of having a long history among Northern colleagues, friends, politicians, and religious leaders, and a history of amicable relations with Ibo people.

This put him and his family in the precarious place of being perceived as enemies, depending on which people Dr Ray was perceived to ally himself with after the *coup d'état*. True to his calling, though, Dr Ray began to serve at the military hospital, treating both Muslim and Ibo patients.

Once the Ray family learned they were on an Ibo hit list targeted for murder because of their relationship with Northerners, the family

then decided to move to Canada when Dr Ray was 44 years of age. He practised medicine in Nova Scotia, where, after 17 years, the Nova Scotia Medical Society bestowed upon him yet another esteemed designation as a Senior Member of the Society.

Dr Krishna Das Ray had a long and storied life, dying in America in 2014 at 91 years of age. What Dr Ray describes in his memoir is, at times, a perilous journey, but a life well-lived with his family. His story serves as a graphic portrayal of the vicissitudes of British colonial rule, and its failed deterrence of a dedicated doctor who knew he had much to offer humanity, and never allowed racially motivated colonial obstacles to delay or deter his dream.



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Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar visits a government warehouse with relief supplies for Jamaica  
Govt, nationals in humanitarian response to Jamaica

— Government ministries, business chambers, NGOs and citizens across Trinidad and Tobago have united in a sweeping humanitarian response to assist Jamaica, which is grappling with devastation left by Hurricane Melissa. The coordinated national effort underscores the region's deep commitment to solidarity and shared resilience in moments of crisis.

**Port-of-Spain** – Trinidad and Tobago has mounted a comprehensive humanitarian response to support Jamaica following the destruction caused by Hurricane Melissa on October 28, which left widespread damage and displacement across the island.

Acting on Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar's directive, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government launched a national collection drive on October 30, set to conclude tomorrow. The initiative, coordinated through an inter-ministerial committee, forms part of a larger regional relief framework engaging civil society, business, and non-governmental partners.

In its October 30 statement, the ministry announced that Local Government Minister Khadijah Ameen and several Cabinet colleagues had met with permanent secretaries "to advance and align activities to ensure the swift and effective mobilisation of national support".

Each disaster management unit has been designated as an official drop-off site, while citizens can contribute financially through the Trinidad and Tobago National Disaster Relief Fund at First Citizens Bank.

"The national response reaffirms Trinidad and Tobago's unwavering commitment to regional co-operation and humanitarian support," the ministry stated.

The Office of the Prime Minister echoed that message, urging citizens to donate through official channels.

"In this moment of crisis, Trinidad and Tobago stands with our Jamaican brothers and sisters after being severely affected by Hurricane Melissa," its release said.

The private sector has also mobilised quickly. Four major business chambers – the Energy Chamber, Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA), AmCham Trinidad and Tobago, and the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce — jointly opened a relief fund and began coordinating shipments of essential supplies.

"We join with the rest of the Caribbean and our local business community in expressing our solidarity with Jamaica following the passage of Hurricane Melissa," the Energy Chamber said in a statement.

Corporate drop-offs are being managed through the Plipdeco Port at Point Lisas, now designated as the official logistics centre for containerised donations. The government has waived port fees, and several shipping lines are transporting containers free

of charge.

TTMA CEO Dr Ramesh Ramdeen confirmed that government and business partners had already begun loading multiple containers of supplies, including TT \$1 million in goods donated by National Flour Mills. Companies such as Blue Waters, SM Jaleel, Advance Foam and others have also contributed food, water, and essential materials.

"It's a collaborative effort from the manufacturing sector, thanks to the ministerial committee the government has put together, so the private sector can really bring relief to Jamaica," the TTMA said.

Among NGOs, Sewa TT has partnered with Sewa USA to deliver emergency relief directly to affected communities. The organisation said it plans to deploy mobile water systems, off-grid communication hubs, emergency food supplies, and hygiene stations in areas where infrastructure has been severely compromised.

Donations from abroad are being accepted through Sewa USA's website, while local contributions can be made via the Sewa TT page.

"Our goal is to bypass logistics and get critical help directly to those who need it most," the organisation said.

Massy Stores has joined Sewa TT to expand the initiative, offering customers the opportunity to contribute at any store. Donations will be used to assemble TT \$400 relief buckets containing food, hygiene, and health items for families who have lost everything. "Every contribution counts towards providing staples like grains, oil, soap and basic medicine. Let's show the power of Caribbean solidarity," Massy Stores said.

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) announced it had activated its disaster-response role within CARICOM's Rapid Response Mechanism.

"The Caribbean Public Health Agency stands in firm solidarity with the government and people of Jamaica, who continue to endure the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Melissa," CARPHA said.

The agency confirmed it is working closely with CDEMA, Jamaica's

Ministry of Health and Wellness, PAHO and other partners to deliver essential medical and public-health assistance. Teams will provide rapid testing kits, vector-control materials, and equipment to prevent outbreaks of dengue, leptospirosis, and gastroenteritis.

Beyond immediate relief, CARPHA committed to helping Jamaica strengthen its public-health infrastructure, disaster preparedness, and resilience.

"In moments like these, the Caribbean's greatest strength is its unity. CARPHA stands resolutely with Jamaica, not only in words, but in sustained partnership and shared action," the agency said.



Khadijah Ameen



Ramesh Ramdeen

US-Venezuela tension sees heightened anxiety in TT

— Panic gripped Trinidad and Tobago on October 31 as false international reports of an imminent US military strike on Venezuela spread rapidly online and throughout the country. The government sought to calm the nation amid gridlocked roads, supermarket lineups, and social media speculation, stressing there was no intelligence confirming a regional threat.

**Port-of-Spain** – A wave of anxiety swept through Trinidad and Tobago on October 31 after international media reports claimed a US military strike on Venezuela was imminent, triggering panic-buying, traffic gridlock, and widespread public confusion.

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and senior officials urged calm, dismissing the reports as unverified and emphasising there was no intelligence suggesting military action in the region.

"Be calm, there's nothing to fear at this time," Persad-Bissessar told reporters outside Parliament.

She added, "At this point in time, we have no cause for concern. If and when that happens, I will share it with you as soon as it comes to me."

Fears intensified early Friday when reports circulated that Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF) personnel had been ordered to report to base. Social media was soon flooded with reports of an alleged Defence Force circular that read, "Please Be Prepared To (PBT) report to the office if required today. Pending confirmation from Detachment Commander Regimental Headquarters."

Supermarkets filled quickly, lineups grew at gas stations, and traffic gridlocked. The panic deepened as similar claims surfaced that Coast Guard personnel were recalled and police leave had been restricted.



Donald Trump

Opposition MP Marvin Gonzales raised the issue in Parliament under "urgent questions", asking Defence Minister Wayne Sturge whether Defence Force members were being recalled. Sturge declined to answer, citing Standing Order 27(g), which allows ministers to withhold information if its release is contrary to the public interest.

Later, in a short video alongside Government Senator Phillip Edward Alexander, Sturge reassured citizens: "No need to panic."

In Washington, US President Donald Trump said he had made no decision to launch strikes on Venezuela.

His statement was followed by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio condemning the Miami Herald story as "fake". As he stated, "Your 'sources' claiming to have 'knowledge of the situation' tricked you into writing a fake story."

The US Embassy in Port-of-Spain also sought to dispel fears, sharing a video of Trump's denial through its official social media channels.

Persad-Bissessar confirmed her government was monitoring the situation closely, but reiterated that no credible intelligence suggested an imminent threat.

"We have been receiving intelligence reports and thus far, I have none that there is an imminent strike anywhere in the region," she said.

Later in the day, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs released an official statement acknowledging "heightened anxiety in the public domain", and rejecting "fake news" reports. The statement quoted White House spokesperson Anna Kelly as confirming that the US was not preparing military action, noting that any official announcement "would come directly from the president".

The ministry said it remained in close contact with the US Embassy in Port-of-Spain and had received "no information suggesting cause for concern".

It emphasised that the US Southern Command (SouthCom) was focused on assisting Jamaica's disaster recovery efforts.

"All citizens are therefore urged to remain calm," the release added.

Minister of Homeland Security Roger Alexander described the Defence Force alert as "normal", and assured that "all was well".

Persad-Bissessar also urged citizens to continue their daily routines, saying, "The public should be going about their business, keep safe, keep strong and always put your faith in the Almighty and they will be fine, we will be fine."



# Dancing to the camera: How evolution, economics drive item numbers

— From Helen's smoky cabarets to Malaika Arora's choreographed confidence, the Bollywood item song has travelled a dazzling arc from moral taboo to mass spectacle. Behind every sway of the hip lies a story of language, commerce, and control in how two words turned desire into dialogue, and dance into currency.

...

By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Feature Series

Under the kaleidoscope glare of Bollywood lights, bodies have always told stories. Sometimes of love, sometimes of longing; and sometimes of commerce. But in the item song, those stories collide: dance becomes dialogue, rhythm becomes currency, and the camera's gaze turns both mirror and market.

And the women at its centre, once courtesans, later vamps, and now brands, have carried the burden and brilliance of spectacle, their movements choreographing the history of how India is evolving to see itself.

"In Indian cinema, an item number or special song is a musical number inserted into a film that may or may not have any relevance to the plot", *Wikipedia* tells us.

It adds, "Up to the 1970s, Hindi cinema often relied on a female 'vamp' character ...to provide musical entertainment deemed more *risqué*. While film heroines also sang and danced, it was the vamp who wore more revealing clothes, smoked, drank, and sang sexually suggestive lyrics."

In Bollywood, and in older global cinema, the "vamp" is a stock female figure who embodies temptation, rebellion, and moral danger. She is the foil to the virtuous heroine: while the heroine is demure, domestic, and tied to family or love, the vamp owns her sexuality, moves through bars or nightclubs, and often dances in Western clothes.

Helen, the Anglo-Burmese cabaret queen, embodied that shimmering contradiction. Her dances in *Piya Tu Ab To Aaja* (*Caravan*, 1971) and *Yeh Mera Dil* (*Don*, 1978) codified the grammar of the item song long before the term existed.

As *Wikipedia* notes, "In addition to her skillful dancing, her anglicised looks too helped further the vamp image."

Helen's choreography transformed colonial mimicry into national fantasy. Her sequined dresses, Western rhythms, and cosmopolitan allure turned the colonial "other" into India's cinematic pleasure.

The camera's fragmentation of the feminine body, and its fascination in lingering on hips, veils, and veiled transgression, made her body the screen's most visible text. She was spectacle and scapegoat, liberated and punished, both necessary and expendable.

Sociologist, professor, and author Rita Brara traces how the item number first existed as language before it morphed into choreography.

"The item number shaped up as a discursive form and congealed into a cinematic concept over time. In contrast to the portmanteau term 'Bollywood', the item number as an expression is, cinematically speaking, homegrown. Its usage is subcontinental and straddles the otherwise linguistically differentiated streams of Indian cinema", Brara writes in *The Item Number: Cinesexuality in Bollywood and Social Life*.

She pinpoints how appetite and attraction intertwine: "When in street language, an attractive girl, especially one who is viewed as provocatively dressed, is termed an item, some of the connotations that spill over from food items served in eateries outside the home are carried across ... bringing out intersemiotic associations between these domains. And so the sense of an item number ... gathers its meaning from associational fields that [commodifies] sex and eating."

Brara adds: "The word item also denotes each discrete cultural performance staged at urban variety or cultural programmes ... understood as a distinct segment within the film. The word 'number' too lent itself particularly well ... to express ... the blending of song and dance".

The terminology fuses sensuality and segmentation: 'item' as consumable desire, 'number' as marketable unit. Together they signal a post-liberalisation aesthetic where sexuality becomes a branded, monetising performance.

Brara dates its crystallisation to the *MTV* era, stating, "The specific use of the term item number is attributed to ... sensuous dance-performances ... popularised by *MTV* in the late 1990s. The appellation item girl was first associated with Malaika Arora ... and Shilpa Shetty's performance in *Shool* (1999)", as she writes.

The phrase was India's own invention, a cultural shorthand for its new appetite economy, where language, body, and branding moved in rhythm.

As *Wikipedia* tells us, "The main aim of an item number is to entertain movie-goers and lend support to the marketability of the film ... It is thus a vehicle for commercial success that ensures repeat viewing".

By the turn of the millennium, the item song had become a self-contained advertisement: a trailer within the film, opti-



Helen



Malaika Arora

mised for repetition to further the acquisition of revenue.

Film anthropologist Tejaswini Ganti situates this logic within India's neoliberal film economy, arguing that Bollywood's transformation was inseparable from the rise of market-driven ideals and global capital in the 1990s.

In her text, *Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry*, she notes that Hindi-film producers now imagine success through spectacle and cross-platform profit, in songs selling music rights, generating television exposure, and feeding promotional loops.

Put another way, songs and dances are not narrative ornaments; instead, they are deliberately scripted to become revenue engines. Within this system, the item number becomes the most visible interface between art and commerce, a cinematic commodity designed for virality long before social media coined the word.

British film theorist Laura Mulvey, whose 1975 essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* introduced the concept of the male gaze, argues that mainstream film positions women as images to be looked at, rather than agents who shape the narrative.

In Bollywood, that gaze was localised, musicalised, and glamourised. The camera did not merely watch, it fragmented and privileged body parts.

Feminist scholars such as Brinda Bose, writing in *The Desiring Subject* and *The Audacity of Pleasure*, extend this to South Asia, describing women's desire in cinema as a negotiation between self-assertion and constraint. The item number sits precisely in that tension: a woman performing freedom while framed within structures of the gaze, consumption, and capital acquisition.

Thus, the song's surface celebration of empowerment coexists with a subtext of containment. The camera allows movement, but dictates its meaning.

Few figures embody that evolution more directly than Malaika Arora, often credited as the first "item girl".

Reflecting on her career, she told *The Hollywood Reporter India* that such songs "have evolved a lot since [she] began".

Additionally, "Earlier, they were mostly about glamour and spectacle, often detached from a woman's individuality. Today, filmmakers are more conscious ... they integrate these numbers into stories with stronger character context. It's less about being provocative and more about performance and presence. I see it

as an evolution where women can own their space," she told *The Hollywood Reporter India* last year.

She also acknowledged the criticism: "Yes, item songs have often been linked to the male gaze, but I've always looked at them differently. For me, dance is about confidence and expression. When I perform, I focus on enjoying the moment and bringing my own energy to it ... As long as I feel comfortable and in control, that's what matters most."

After three decades of being before the cameras, Malaika Arora frames her performances as continuity and reclamation, saying, "Returning to dance numbers feels like embracing a part of my identity – but now I do it with much more confidence and experience. Personally, it's about celebrating my journey and showing that you can stay relevant and passionate at any stage".

Her voice humanises the spectacle. If Helen performed desire scripted by others, Malaika Arora performs authorship itself, owning the gaze even as it watches.

In 2013, India's Central Board of Film Certification declared that "item songs will now be rated as adult content and will not be allowed to be shown on television channels", *Wikipedia* notes. Such rulings acknowledges the sexualised charge of these performances; however, it also validates the commercial intent.

Across our diaspora, item songs inhabit sites of ambivalent celebration. Here in the GTA, and in our homelands as Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname, parties held on the evening before a wedding celebration pulse to the same beats that once scandalised Bombay audiences.

The songs blasting in banquet halls in North America, and under bamboo tents in the Caribbean, function as both nostalgia and currency, mnemonics of India's exported modernity.

Add to this landscape the Internet's extended reach, such as in Nora Fatehi's 2018 remake of *Dilbar*, which became "popular across Southern Asia and the Arab world, with all versions of the song having received more than one billion views on YouTube", as *Wikipedia* details.

For our diaspora, these rhythms do more than entertain; they retrieve a sense of belonging from the distance across the *kala pani*.

In banquet halls across the GTA, at wedding receptions in Queens, NY; under temporary tents in Paea, Tunapuna in east Trinidad, at Mashramani celebrations in Berbice, Guyana, the familiar choreography folds continents into community. The sway of hips and the shimmer of sequins become shorthand for home, a reminder that our Indo-Caribbean linkages still travel in melody even when ancestral memory falters.

Yet the pulsating beats also carry contradiction. What once provoked moral unease in India is now consumed abroad as cultural affirmation. The same gestures Helen once performed for a voyeuristic camera are re-enacted by some of our second-generation daughters, who see no conflict between tradition, display, and performance.

However, in these performances the gaze is reversed; our diaspora now watches itself watching India, with both simultaneously celebrating and critiquing the spectacle.

In Guyana and Trinidad, where Bollywood's echoes share space with chutney and soca, the item song becomes a point of fusion, a new pathway of negotiating colonial inheritances and creole identities.

Here in the GTA, and in New York, its spectacle merges with the global language of pop feminism, where confidence and choreography speak louder than context. The item number thus becomes not just entertainment but a portable ritual of identity, asserting cultural continuity in North America's spaces where belonging is always provisional.

For many of us in the diaspora, to dance to these songs is to reconcile fragments: inherited modesty with inherited rhythm, ancestral memory with global modernity. The performance is no longer India's alone; it is also a component of our diaspora's self-portrait in motion, a choreography of remembering, reinvention, and adaptation.

Brara shows us that the item number's language was born from the menu and the male gaze; Mulvey exposes how cinema constructs pleasure through looking; Bose interprets that pleasure as a negotiated freedom. Together they outline a continuum in which the item song functions as both display and discourse.

Economically, as Ganti observes, Bollywood's reliance on spectacle is no accident of taste, but a structural necessity. The song-dance sequence remains the industry's most durable export, which is its premeditated grammar of profit.

Artistically, it has become a mirror for how some in India imagine modern womanhood: glamorous, self-possessed, but still framed within a camera's discipline. Malaika Arora's own words capture that contradiction perfectly when she cites celebration that is tempered by awareness and agency.

The item song's beat continues because it resolves nothing. It is at once emancipatory and exploitative, a stage where commerce meets expression, and where women turn the act of being seen into a performance of seeing back.

From Helen to Malaika, the dance remains the same; only the choreography of control has changed.



## Two stars, one conscience the new Bollywood ethic

— In a film industry recalibrating after the Covid-19 pandemic, two voices, Aamir Khan and Ayushmann Khurrana, are speaking to the ongoing debate about what Bollywood owes itself as remuneration. Between Aamir's austerity and Ayushmann's humility lies a cautionary parable about entitlement, accountability, and the cost of excess.

The bright lights of Bollywood often conceal the cost of keeping them on. As productions swell and returns shrink, the question is not only how much stars earn, but how much their lifestyles cost everyone else. Now, two of Hindi cinema's most credible actors are offering answers that are contrasting, yet curiously aligned.

When Aamir Khan speaks, the industry tends to listen. The actor-producer, long admired for pairing perfectionism with frugality, recently used his appearance on Komal Nahta's *Game Changers* to challenge what he calls the "entourage epidemic".

He admitted he found it "strange" that producers now routinely pay for actors' personal drivers, spot boys, trainers, and even live-kitchen vans.

"Stars should get recognition, but not to a point where they start to trouble the producers," he declared. It was not an abstract complaint.

He added, "I hear that stars of today don't care to pay their drivers. They ask their producers to pay them. They make the producer pay for their trainers, cooks. They even demand multiple vanity vans for kitchens and gyms."

The frustration behind those sentences is less about extravagance and entitlement, and more about fairness.

He wondered about the corollary cast, stating, "How are they contributing to the film? They are working for me. It is my responsibility to pay them, especially when I am earning well."

Aamir's declaration comes from long habit. As he stated, "From day one, I was very clear that no producer of mine will pay for my driver or help. It's been 37 years now."

For him, self-reliance is both principle and praxis: "Even today, when I take my family for an outdoor shoot, I always pay from my pocket."

His point lands in an industry still reeling from post-Covid-19 under-performance, where a star's name alone no longer guarantees a hit. If the box office falters, inflated personal costs can sink an already fragile budget.

When Aamir calls it "very sad and harmful for the industry," he is diagnosing a moral imbalance as much as a financial one.

"These stars are earning in *crores*, and yet not capable of paying for their needs? I find this extremely strange," he stated.

In his exasperation is a plea in the call to remember the dignity of earning one's keep, not outsourcing it. For Aamir, the idea that "soon these actors will expect the producer to pay for their new flat" is only half-joke, perhaps a half-warning.

Enter Ayushmann Khurrana, representing a newer generation with old-school instincts into the debate. Asked in a recent

conversation with Komal Nahta on how many times he has raised his fee, he shrugged: he did not know, and did not care to count.

What he does remember is refusing payment altogether for *Andhadhun*, his 2018 thriller that became an international success.

"In *Andhadhun*, I told Sriram sir directly on his face that I don't want to talk about money at all," he recalled, adding, "This is a passion project. I want to do this film, just give me [one Rupee]. You can give the rest of the money after the film is a success."

It was a gamble that paid off – *Andhadhun* turned into a sleeper hit in India and a surprise blockbuster in China.

Yet Ayushmann kept the anecdote understated, almost quaintly evasive, stating, "For me, Saraswati comes before Laxmi. I am a producer-friendly actor. I never go all out while asking for my rate. My first priority is for the film to work. If the film earns well, then one should be paid more."

The contrast to Aamir's critique is striking. One speaks from the vantage of discipline after success; the other from humility before it. However, both views converge on a shared ethic that the health of the film should outweigh personal privilege.

Meanwhile, between both stars is a generational bridge. Aamir belongs to the star-driven eighties, when producers still deferred to marquee names, while Ayushmann is in the multiplex era, where content and collaboration dictate survival. Yet their philosophies resonate as rhyming couplets.

Aamir's example of *Dangal*, where producers covered the cost of wrestling coaches because it was essential to the story, underscores his guiding test: if it serves the film, it is justified; and a big "No" to anything else.

Ayushmann's one Rupee gesture is the same test but inverted: if the film needs me, I'll come even without a price tag.

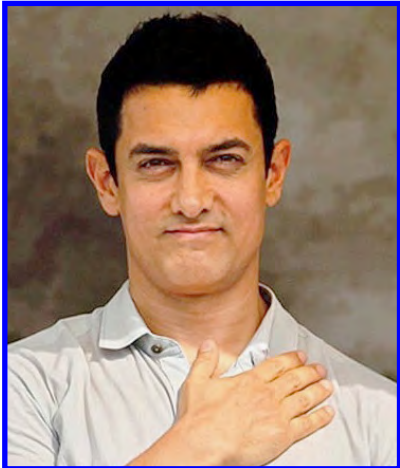
Both reveal, perhaps unintentionally, that Bollywood's long-standing star system may be giving way to something subtler:

professional ethics as the new glamour.

The entourage debate is not just about drivers and vanity vans; it is about what kind of industry Bollywood wants to be in the post-Covid-19 pandemic world. For decades, stars embodied aspiration, palpable as silk curtains between artist and audience. Now, when transparency rules and budgets are tight, that curtain hangs heavier.

Aamir warned of reputational risk: "Stars today are taking advantage of their status. Their demands only project them in the wrong light." In contrast, Ayushmann turns humility into strategy: his back-end deals make him a partner, not a burden, in a film's success.

What unites them is not money but mindfulness in the call for proportionality in an ecosystem that often confuses glamour with worth. Both stars remind their peers that success cannot be measured only in *crores* but in conscience.



Aamir Khan



Ayushmann Khurrana



Satish Shah

## Film fraternity mourns passing of Satish Shah

**Mumbai** — The Indian film and television fraternity is in mourning following the death of veteran actor Satish Shah, who passed away on October 25 at Mumbai's P. D. Hinduja Hospital after a sudden illness. He was 74. The hospital confirmed that despite immediate CPR and continued efforts by its medical team, Shah could not be revived.

Known for his quick wit, expressive range, and impeccable comic timing, Shah was best recognised for his role as Indravadan Sarabhai in the cult sitcom *Sarabhai vs Sarabhai*. His portrayal of the sarcastic patriarch made him a fixture in Indian living rooms, and cemented his status as one of television's most endearing icons.

He also starred in classics such as *Ye Jo Hai Zindagi* and films including *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*, *Hum Saath Saath Hain*, *Main Hoon Na* and *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, among more than 250 feature films.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi led national tributes, stating on X, "Deeply saddened by the passing of Shri Satish Shah Ji. He will be remembered as a true legend of Indian entertainment. His effortless humour and iconic performances brought laughter into countless lives."

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis described him as "a versatile artist who left an indelible mark on Indian cinema and theatre", adding that his departure was "an irreparable loss to the Indian art sector".

Actor Rajesh Kumar, who played Shah's son Rosesh in *Sarabhai vs Sarabhai*, told reporters, "This is the worst hour for me. I still cannot process that Satishji is no more – it feels I have lost my father."

Filmmaker Farah Khan shared, "Rest in peace, dearest Satish. You were a joy to know and work with. Will miss u sending me memes n jokes every day."

Veteran comedian Johny Lever, a long-time friend, wrote, "Feeling extremely sad to share that we've lost a great artist and my dearest friend of over 40 years. It's hard to believe – I had spoken to him just two days ago."

Actor R. Madhavan posted, "The heavens will be merrier and a happier place now. Thank you for being such a solid wind beneath my wings early on in my career."

Born on June 25, 1951, in Mandvi, Kutch, Shah graduated from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, and later attended the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune. He made his debut with *Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastaan* (1978), and rose to prominence with Kundan Shah's satirical masterpiece *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983), where his portrayal of the corrupt commissioner D'Mello became a benchmark for political comedy.

His career spanned over four decades, bridging the eras of Doordarshan, Bollywood blockbusters, and the OTT revival of *Sarabhai vs Sarabhai* in 2017.

He was married to designer Madhu Shah, his long-time companion, who survives him. In 2015, he was appointed a member of the FTII Society, a nod to his continuing influence on India's cinematic education and craft.

The Cine and TV Artists' Association (CINTAA) offered condolences, recalling him as "a beloved artist whose remarkable contribution to Indian cinema and television will always be remembered".

From co-stars like Ameesha Patel and Genelia Deshmukh to younger actors such as Rakul Preet and Priyanka Chopra, messages of grief and gratitude filled social media, each underscoring how his humour and warmth touched generations.



Bollywood's first family, the Kapoors, are coming together for a rare on-screen reunion in Netflix's upcoming documentary-style special *Dining with the Kapoors*, premiering on November 21. Created by Armaan Jain, it is described as a "heartfelt celebration marking 100 years of the legendary Raj Kapoor and close to a century of the Kapoor family", Netflix has said. Shot in a "fly-on-the-wall" format, it features Randhir Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor, Rima Jain, Ranbir Kapoor, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Karisma Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, and others as they gather for the family's legendary annual lunch.



# Shreyas Iyer discharged from Sydney hospital after serious on-field mishap

— India's batter Shreyas Iyer has been discharged from hospital in Sydney after suffering a lacerated spleen in a fielding accident during the third ODI against Australia. The quick intervention of medical staff averted a potentially life-threatening situation, and Iyer is now recovering steadily under continued supervision.

India's Shreyas Iyer was discharged from hospital in Sydney on November 1 after suffering a spleen laceration and internal bleeding from a fielding mishap during the third ODI against Australia on October 25.

What appeared to be a standard piece of fielding quickly turned alarming when Iyer collapsed after completing a diving catch to dismiss Alex Carey.

The 29-year-old sprinted backward from point, launched himself full length, and landed hard on his ribs and elbow. At first, teammates thought he had winded himself, but moments later his blood pressure dropped, and medical staff rushed to his aid.

He was immediately taken off the field and transported to St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, accompanied by team doctor Dr Rizwan Khan. Initial scans showed rib bruising, but a subsequent CT scan revealed a more serious grade-two splenic

injury causing internal bleeding, a condition that can be fatal if untreated.

Doctors performed a minor procedure to stop the internal bleeding. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) later confirmed, "Shreyas Iyer sustained a blunt injury to his abdomen, resulting in a laceration of his spleen with internal bleeding. The bleeding was promptly arrested. His condition is stable, and he continues to be under observation."

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said Iyer's recovery was "better than initially expected", crediting the prompt medical response that stabilised his condition. During his hospitalisation, he was cared for by the BCCI Medical Team in collaboration with Sydney specialists, who remained satisfied with his progress.

Reports from the BCCI over the weekend stated Iyer was "recovering well". He has since been able to take phone calls, manage daily chores, and enjoy home-cooked meals arranged by friends in Sydney. His sister, Shresta Iyer,

joined him during his recovery, and team doctor Rizwan remained in Sydney to monitor his condition.

Captain Suryakumar Yadav provided an update ahead of the T20I series, saying, "It is unfortunate what happened but the doctors are taking care of him. He'll be monitored for the next few days but nothing to be worried about."

In an official statement, the BCCI extended its gratitude to Dr Koroush Haghighi and his team at St Vincent's Hospital, as well as Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala in India, for ensuring Iyer received the best possible treatment.

Though discharged, Iyer will remain in Sydney for follow-up consultations before returning home once cleared to fly.

India went on to win the match by nine wickets, though Australia had already sealed the three-match series with victories in Perth and Adelaide. Iyer, who underwent surgery shortly after the incident, has been advised to rest for at least five days, possibly longer, before resuming training.



Iyer after his injury

# Motie out, Forde in as recalibrated West Indies team heads to New Zealand



Gudakesh Motie

— Cricket West Indies has announced a reshaped 15-player squad for the upcoming five-match T20I series in New Zealand, recalling pacer Matthew Forde from injury while dropping spinner Gudakesh Motie for remedial work on his action.

In a decisive recalibration ahead of their tour of New Zealand, Cricket West Indies (CWI) has named a 15-member squad for the T20I leg beginning November 5, headlined by Matthew Forde's return and Gudakesh Motie's omission. Captain Shai Hope will continue at the helm, fresh from his series win in Bangladesh, as the regional side seeks early momentum before the ODI and Test stages starting this week.

Forde, the right-arm quick who last featured in July before a shoulder injury sidelined him, reclaims his place after completing rehabilitation. His recall strengthens a seam unit hit by the absence of Ramon Simmons and Jediah Blades, both ruled out through injury. He joins Jayden Seales as one of two out-and-out fast bowlers, supported by all-rounders Jason Holder, Romario Shepherd, and returning seamer Shamar Springer.

Springer's inclusion marks his first T20I call-up in over a year. The 26-year-old all-rounder, who has two wickets from as many international outings, was described by selectors as part of a "strategic strengthening" of the pace department. His ability to contribute with both bat and ball offers valuable balance, especially on New Zealand's lively wickets.

The notable absentee, left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie, has been dropped for technical adjustments following what CWI termed "a recent dip in form". His figures in Bangladesh were 0

for 44, 3 for 65, and 1 for 53, and prompted selectors to opt for remedial work on his bowling action with specialists from the Royals Sports Group. However, Motie remains part of CWI's long-term plans and is expected to feature prominently at the 2026 T20 World Cup.

CWI also confirmed that Motie's exclusion was influenced by New Zealand's pace-friendly conditions, which traditionally offer limited assistance to spin. The spin duties on tour will instead fall to Roston Chase, Akeal Hosein, and Khary Pierre.

Off the field, the squad will travel with a new addition to the management team – clinical psychologist Krisnan Hurdle, appointed as Mental Skills and Performance Coach. The position, first introduced after a board review earlier this year, aims to strengthen players' mental resilience through a packed international calendar.

Hope will again lead an experienced core featuring Jason Holder, Roston Chase, Brandon King, Rovman Powell, Sherfane Rutherford, and Romario Shepherd. The batting line-up also includes Alick Athanaze, Ackeem Auguste, and Amir Jangoo, blending youthful flair with seasoned stability.

The tour opens with back-to-back T20Is at Auckland's Eden Park on November 5 and 6, moves south to Nelson's Saxton Oval for matches on November 9 and 10, and concludes at Dunedin's University Oval on November 13.

The white-ball series will be followed by three ODIs and three Tests, providing the Caribbean side with vital match exposure ahead of next year's T20 World Cup co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

# Hat-trick, strong batting take West Indies to series sweep against Bangladesh

— Romario Shepherd's hat-trick, backed by half-centuries from Roston Chase and Ackeem Auguste, powered the West Indies to a 3-0 T20I series sweep over Bangladesh in Chattogram late last month, sealing victory with emphatic authority.

West Indies capped their tour of Bangladesh in commanding fashion last month, completing a five-wicket win in the third and final T20I at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matriur Rahman Stadium on October 31.

Even without captain Shai Hope, the visitors were dominant, restricting the hosts to 151 before chasing down the target with 19 balls to spare to clinch a clean sweep.

Romario Shepherd provided the spark in the first innings with a hat-trick that dismantled Bangladesh's middle and lower order. His sequence, dismissing Nural Hasan, Tanzid Hasan, and Shoriful Islam in successive deliveries, made him only the second West Indian to achieve a T20I hat-trick, joining Jason Holder in the record books. Shepherd finished with 3-36 and seven wickets across the series, earning the Player-of-the-Series award.

Bangladesh's innings revolved around the defiant Tanzid Hasan, whose 89 from 62 balls featured ten boundaries and a pair of sixes. After the early dismissals of Parvez Hossain Emon



West Indies with the winner's trophy after the victory over Bangladesh

for nine and captain Litton Das for six, Tanzid combined with Saif Hassan (23) to add 77 for the third wicket.

But once Holder removed Hassan, Bangladesh's innings unraveled, losing eight wickets for 44 runs in the closing stretch. Khary Pierre (2-23) and Holder (2-32) tightened the screws as the home side struggled to finish their 20 overs with momentum.

Chasing 152, West Indies stumbled early to 52 for three as Alick Athanaze, Brandon King, and Amir Jangoo fell cheaply. But stand-in captain Roston Chase and youngster Ackeem Auguste steadied the innings with a 93-run stand that

flipped the contest. Auguste announced himself with a six flicked off Taskin Ahmed's first delivery of the ninth over, signalling intent. Chase bided his time before opening up in the 12th over with back-to-back boundaries off Nasum Ahmed.

Auguste then unleashed a brutal assault, hammering leg-spinner Rishad Hossain for three sixes in one over after being dropped at cover, and reached his maiden T20I 50 from just 24 balls. Chase soon followed, bringing up his own half-century from 28 deliveries. By the 15th over, the West Indies had cruised to 143 for three, all but sealing the result.

Hossain briefly revived Bangladesh's hopes with two quick googlies that dismissed both set batters in the same over, Auguste and Chase each departing for 50. Yet the chase was already beyond reach. With eight runs needed from 27 balls, Rovman Powell and Gudakesh Motie completed the formalities, Powell driving the winning single off Taskin Ahmed to seal a 3-0 series triumph.

For Bangladesh, Hossain finished with 3-43, but their fielding errors and inability to capitalise on early breakthroughs undermined their efforts. Meanwhile, West Indies showed depth and balance throughout the series, mixing disciplined bowling with measured aggression in the chase to extend their momentum ahead of their tour of New Zealand starting this week.



# India hold firm to take Women’s World Cup title

— India etched their name into cricket history on November 2, defeating South Africa by 52 runs before a packed Navi Mumbai crowd to capture their first-ever ICC Women’s World Cup title.

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**Mumbai** – In a match soaked in suspense, delayed by rain yet undiminished in spectacle, India held firm under immense expectation to beat South Africa by 52 runs and claim a long-awaited global crown at the DY Patil Stadium in Mumbai. The hosts’ 298-7 and a late surge from Deepti Sharma and Shafali Verma delivered the country’s first Women’s World Cup victory, sparking scenes of joy that rippled across India.

Shafali Verma, drafted into the side only for the semi-final, produced a dazzling 87 from 78 balls that set the tone for India’s innings. Alongside Smriti Mandhana’s breezy start and Deepti Sharma’s steady 58, India’s top order kept a sold-out crowd of 45,000 roaring through the evening.

The South African attack, normally disciplined, faltered under pressure with bowling too wide and grassing five catches, including a costly spill of Verma on 56. Even so, Laura Wolvaardt’s side fought to keep the target within reach, limiting India to 69 runs in the final ten overs.

Yet, as the night deepened, it was India’s composure that stood out. Jemimah Rodrigues added 24, and Richa Ghosh’s 34 off 24 balls provided late fireworks to lift the total to 298-7, a formidable challenge, though not unassailable given the form of Wolvaardt, whose batting mastery had carried South Africa through their semi-final win over England.

The South African chase began with a flash of brilliance: Amanjot Kaur’s direct hit from mid-wicket dismissed Tazmin Brits, setting the tone for India’s fielding intensity. When Shree Charani trapped Anneke Bosch lbw for a duck, the pendulum swung India’s way, only for Wolvaardt and Sune Luus to rebuild



India celebrate the World Cup win

with patience and flair. At 211-6, needing 88 from ten overs, South Africa still had a chance, until Wolvaardt’s mis-timed pull found Amanjot Kaur again, this time juggling three times before gluing down a decisive catch at deep mid-wicket.

“Every India player sprinted towards Amanjot,” one commentator gasped, and the crowd erupted, sensing the moment that sealed history.

Deepti Sharma finished with 5-39, her off-spin slicing through the lower order while Verma’s occasional seamers (2-36) added another layer to her fairytale night. Wolvaardt’s 101 from 98 balls was valiant yet in vain; when she fell, South Africa’s resistance crumbled to 246 all out, marking their third straight defeat in a world-final.

For India, this was redemption long deferred. The heartbreaks of 2017 and 2020 lingered, but the rise of the Women’s Premier League had forged depth, temperament, and belief.

Their semi-final victory over Australia had already tilted the balance of power; this win confirmed a new order. As chants of “India! India!” echoed through the humid night, it was impossible not to recall Kapil Dev’s men of 1983 and sense a similar generational turning point.

Captain Harmanpreet Kaur captured the emotion, declaring, “After every World Cup we came together as a team and discussed what we needed to do. The expectations out of us were that we needed something special. This is the start ... this is just the beginning.”

Her opposite number, Laura Wolvaardt, accepted defeat with grace: “I couldn’t be prouder of this team for the campaign that we’ve had. We’ve played some brilliant cricket throughout but we were outplayed today.”

## Australia’s top women players hit new financial ground

— Australia’s top women cricketers are breaking new financial ground, with five players now surpassing \$1 million in annual earnings. As the Indian Women’s Premier League prepares for its next mega auction, the balance of global women’s cricket continues to shift toward lucrative franchise opportunities.

...

**F**ive members of Australia’s Women’s World Cup squad have crossed the \$1 million annual earnings mark, underscoring the rapid rise of women’s cricket as global leagues rival national contracts for financial value.

The surge reflects the expanding financial reach of women’s cricket, as the Indian Women’s Premier League prepares for a “mega auction” later this month. Each of the five franchises holds around \$2.6 million to spend for the month-long tournament, and Australian players are expected to attract major bids.

Australian Cricketers’ Association chief executive Paul Marsh said he anticipated women’s salaries to continue climbing.

“It’s healthy, it can offer more and more players those sorts of opportunities, because that means we’ve got a better chance of securing the best athletes in the country,” Marsh said.

While individual contracts remain private, Ellyse Perry continues to lead the way through a mix of national contracts and brand endorsements with Adidas, Commonwealth Bank, Fox Sports, and Weet-Bix. Perry earned about \$300,000 from her stint with Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the 2025 WPL and another \$130,000 from the Hundred in England.

Ash Gardner followed as the second-highest paid player in the WPL, earning roughly \$550,000 for her nine matches with Gujarat Giants. Annabel Sutherland received close to \$350,000 with Delhi Capitals, while Captain Alyssa Healy and Beth Mooney are also nearing the million-dollar annual threshold.

Emerging players Phoebe Litchfield and Georgia Voll are expected to join them soon; Voll’s score of 99 earlier this year

matched the WPL’s highest. When Cricket Australia negotiated its latest pay deal in 2023, projections suggested the top women’s player, then Meg Lanning, would earn \$800,000 by 2027, with several others around \$500,000. Those figures are already being eclipsed. By comparison, men’s captain Pat Cummins earns about \$3 million from Cricket Australia, supplemented by roughly \$3.7 million from his contract with Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League.



Ellyse Perry



Ash Gardner

doesn’t happen, it doesn’t happen, because her priority, absolutely 100 percent, is to her country.”



Charlotte Edwards

## Edwards ready for change

— Charlotte Edwards’ first major campaign as England’s head coach began with promise and ended in pain, a 125-run semi-final defeat to South Africa in the Women’s World Cup that underscored both the distance still to travel and her determination to lead the team’s recovery.

...

**C**harlotte Edwards’ first major campaign in the Women’s World Cup as England head coach ended in a bruising semi-final defeat, but her message was one of resolve, not resignation. After South Africa’s 125-run victory sent England crashing out of the Women’s ODI World Cup in Guwahati, Edwards admitted the rebuild “won’t change overnight”, yet insisted she is “more hungry now” to shape the team’s future.

Appointed in April, the former England captain inherited a side still smarting from a 16-0 Ashes whitewash and an early T20 World Cup exit.

Her initial goal in reaching the semi-finals was met, but the gulf in execution was clear as South Africa, led by Laura Wolvaardt’s commanding 169 and Marizanne Kapp’s five-wicket burst, stormed into their first-ever World Cup final.

England’s reply never found rhythm: 1-3 after seven balls, and all out for 194 in the 43rd over.

“I came into this role knowing it would not change overnight,” Edwards told *Sky Sports* after the game.

She added, “We have performed well under pressure, and some moments we have not seized. Overall, we are making progress, but you are defined on your results. We all hoped we could make the final. I don’t like losing, but I knew what I took on, and it would not be a quick fix.”

Under her stewardship, England won five of their eight games, which were gritty rather than spectacular, but with a trajectory that saw the emergence of upward momentum.

As captain Nat Sciver-Brunt noted, the team had transformed in the six months since Edwards took over.

“We’ve come a long way since the summer,” she said, noting, “We’re a different side from then and we’ve learnt a lot. This will hurt, but hopefully in time we’ll be able to take the [lessons] from it and move forward, because we’ve made some great strides so far in quite a short space of time.”

Edwards’ impact has been as much cultural as tactical. She has emphasised patience, player development, and accountability.

“At the start we said we could beat anyone, but we had to play at our best. We weren’t at our best today and South Africa were,” she said.

“There have been so many positives, some of our younger players have really stepped up, and some of our older ones as well. It’s been a real team effort.”

The defeat, which was England’s first semi-final loss since 2013, was softened by glimpses of renewal. Edwards highlighted the progress of emerging players, and promised greater focus on technical consistency.

“We need to improve our batting; it hasn’t been consistent enough, and equally our bowling, particularly our death stuff,” she said.

Additionally, “There’s lots to go away and work on, which is exciting from a coaching perspective.”

Edwards’ winter plan underscores that vision. A series of training camps in Oman and South Africa will give the next generation, including Freya Kemp, Dani Gibson, and rising Hundred star Davina Perrin, a chance to stake their claim.

“We’ve targeted 13 to 15 players who we’re going to work really, really hard with,” she explained, adding, “It’s exciting now. We’ve got a new group of players coming through. We’ll go home and reassess. We won’t make too many rash decisions, but we’ve got to look at the future now.”

Despite the defeat, Edwards’ competitive instinct burned through.

As she declared, “I’m a winner. I don’t like losing,” she said, adding, “When I came into this role, I knew it wasn’t going to change overnight. I’ve seen some really positive things to come out of this trip... but ultimately, you’re defined on your results.”



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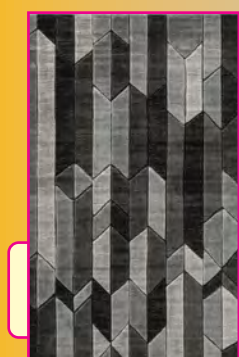


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