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INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

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Our Community Is Thriving!



Devotion resonates on the faces of the two young ladies marking Janmashtami at Triveni Mandir last month. See Page 5



Celebrating Dr Budhendranauth Doobay's (centre) 85th birthday were Triveni's Pandit Yudhishtir Dhanraj (right) and Gauri Dhanraj at the Peace Park last month. Story, photos on Page 15



Theresa and Glenton Bridgmohan recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with family and friends. Ramesh Ramkalawan photo. See Page 14

PPP/Civic on course for decisive electoral victory in Guyana

– The PPP/Civic was projected to secure a second consecutive term with the GECOM's published Statements of Polls indicating the governing party on course for electoral victory. With the SOPs indicating a decisive PPP/Civic win, and a dramatic realignment of opposition politics, Guyana appears set for another five years under the incumbent government, pending GECOM's official certification of results.

...

Georgetown – As of yesterday, 96 percent of the SOPs for Guyana's 2025 Regional and General Elections had been published on GECOM's website, with the number of votes pointing to a decisive lead for the PPP/Civic across much of Guyana.

Preliminary analysis also suggested the party was poised to win Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica) for the first time in history, a district historically controlled by the People's National Congress-Reform (PNC-R) and its later iteration A Partnership for National Unity.

The PPP/Civic was also projected to retain majorities in Regions One, Two, Three, Five, Six, Eight, and Nine, further consolidating the electoral advance and fortifying its national dominance.

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* yesterday from Georgetown, Honorary Consul Mani Singh at the Guyana Consulate General in Toronto said the SOPs were showing clear indicators of the governing party's taking the lead.

"We are confident the PPP/Civic will return for another term, and from the looks of it at this time, there will be an increase in the number of seats," Singh stated.

Singh described the outcome as "a surprise for many people" given APNU's poor showing, noting that the party had lost ground to the We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) party, led by US-sanctioned businessman, Azruddin Mohamed.

"With its background and history, with the PNC being a part of Guyana's politics, to be unseated by an outsider is certainly a reawakening for that party," Singh added.

WIN's rise to prominence was among the most significant developments of the polls. Early reports out of Guyana yesterday were indicating the party had



Dr Ali on the campaign trail in the lead-up to the September 1 polls made significant inroads into Region 10 (Upper Demerara-Berbice), a traditional APNU stronghold.

APNU presidential candidate Aubrey Norton admitted to the *Guyana Chronicle* that the party was "taken aback" by its poor performance in Linden, alleging that money had been used to sway voters.

The shift in their political fortunes left APNU facing heavy losses across

See Page 10: PPP/Civic

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A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a green sleeveless dress with a tropical pattern, is smiling and playing a large steel drum. To her right, a man in a red polo shirt is seated and playing a conga. The background features a stone wall and large windows with white curtains. A black speaker on a stand is visible on the left.



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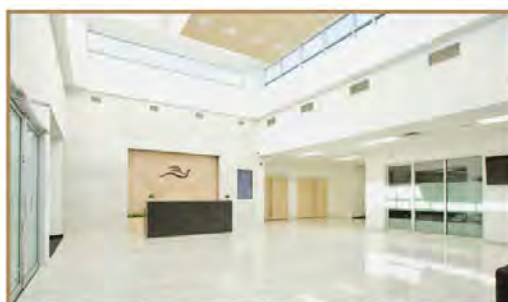
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A young prince, dressed as Baby Krishna, with flute in hand seems to prefer making music for the milkmaids, rather than the secure hands of Triveni's Pandit Dr Yudhishtir Dhanrajh during Janmashtami celebrations. Facebook photos



Inclusivity, unity at Triveni celebration

– The Brampton Triveni Mandir and Community Centre marked Janmashtami last month with a vibrant gathering of devotees that reflected the temple's inclusive spirit and long-standing commitment to uniting generations through faith and culture.

...
Brampton Triveni Mandir and Community Centre celebrated Janmashtami last month with an energised congregation of devotees, ranging from children to elders, who joined in the festivities with devotion and joy.
The event underscored the mandir's role as a spiritual home for Hindus and like-minded souls. At the mandir, attendees participate in Puja, Kirtan, Sewa, and listen to Pravachan. Last month's holy celebration reinforced the mandir's guiding mission of inclusivity, drawing worshippers of all ages, including the very young and the young at heart.

According to the mandir's website, the founders of the Brampton Triveni Mandir are great devotees of Ganga Mata. In naming the stately Brampton edifice Mandir Triveni, they honoured the spiritual resonance of Prayag, symbolising sacred confluence.
The resplendent mandir's founders have also lived at their own Triveni Sangam in Bartica, Guyana, where the Essequibo, Cuyuni, and Mazaruni rivers converge. With the blessings, or Aashirvad of Bhagwati Ganga, the mandir is today a beacon for Hindus, and is dedicated to enlightening devotees and guiding them closer to Paramatmaa.
Through Janmashtami and other observances, Triveni Mandir continues to embody its foundational mission: a spiritual and communal gathering place that sustains faith, fosters unity, and reflects its lineage from sacred rivers abroad to its present-day sanctuary in Brampton, itself a city of many confluences.

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Editorial

Our Caribbean roads

The most dangerous curve on a holiday back in our homelands is not always a dark alley; it is often the bend in a familiar road taken with borrowed confidence. Our diaspora knows how to protect wallets and passports when visiting back home; now it is time we treat the roadways with similar vigilance.

A home baseline helps. Canada recorded 1,964 road deaths in 2023, the highest in a decade but within a long-term downward arc; Ontario's fatality rate stood at 3.9 per 100,000 people. The City of Toronto logged 49 traffic fatalities, and Peel Region 28 deaths, both in 2024.

Across the Caribbean, the picture is more volatile. In Jamaica, by July 30 there were 229 deaths year-to-date, with 40 fatalities in July alone; the Dominican Republic reported a remarkable 824 deaths as of June 28.

Our immediate homelands are also sounding alarms. In Trinidad and Tobago, five fatalities were recorded over the August 9-11 weekend, putting 2025's tally to 71 deaths as of August 11. In Guyana, police reported 68 deaths by July 22; by late August, 15 fatalities occurred that month alone.

We are revisiting what we have stated before in this space: road risk, like crime, must become a first-order safety habit for our diaspora back in our homelands. The data, paired with media editorials back home, show why.

Guyana's newspapers are quite candid. *Stabroek News* has argued for sustained, data-driven strategies, noting 2023's spike, a reactive 2024 pullback, and modelling that projects fatalities hovering near 118-119 annually. It links the problem to vehicle imports outpacing infrastructure, the drag on productivity and healthcare, and the need for police accountability.

Guyana Times has cited the road culture. Guyanese "toe the line overseas", but revert to lawlessness at home; the publication warns that this behaviour undermines public order and tourism's national image.

Meanwhile, the media in Trinidad and Tobago are issuing similar sharp calls. Last month the *Trinidad Express* pressed the new Transport and Civil Aviation Minister for swift, coordinated enforcement, reminding readers that earlier policing delivered international recognition, but momentum has slipped. Law enforcement visibility must return to the roads, it declared. Following this editorial, *Newsday* reported the year-to-date toll had hit 71 fatalities.

For our diaspora journeying to the Caribbean, especially to Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana, what we have noted above demands behavioural change. Expect different enforcement intensity, mixed road conditions, active construction zones, and varied driving norms. The numbers in fatalities above are not abstractions; they describe the risk environment we re-enter when stepping off Caribbean Airlines.

We have heard it said in Caribbean food stores in the GTA, "But I drive carefully; the problem is those 'other drivers.'" Care is necessary, but insufficient where systemic risks amplify exposure; risks such as speeding being the norm; mixed and erratic traffic such as minibuses, maxi-taxis, motorcycles, and inconsistent road design.

We have heard in Caribbean restaurants, "There are always policemen present in Stabroek Market when I visit". Enforcement helps; but that alone cannot correct infrastructure and culture gaps. Both *Stabroek News* and *Guyana Times* argue for structural, long-horizon measures and civic norms, not only police presence as a deterrent.

At a Carnival fete in Malvern it was stated, "Canada's roads are dangerous in winter and we manage". We adjust to winter driving; but Canada's 1,964 deaths in 2023 are still cold, hard, and incontrovertible data.

So yet again we offer realism in vigilance. As visitors to our homelands, we need to apply the street smarts we engage against crime to the roadway. To invoke a metaphor, stay in your lane; arrive with humility when merging onto the roadway: slow down, buckle up, pick safer routes, do not contest bad drivers who flagrantly dismiss the law.

As the sober editorials of the region's newspapers remind us, from Kingston to Port-of-Spain, from Georgetown to Santo Domingo, the cost of complacency is counted in family members left behind; not in DOA headlines.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
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ICCA building momentum as community programs expand

The unofficial end of summer is upon us. Earlier sunsets, cooler temperatures, we are entering the end of the year. As the days become darker for longer periods, we look forward to festive events to bring brightness: Diwali, Halloween, and even Christmas.

Just because we inch closer to counting down to a new year, doesn't mean that there isn't plenty of time to accomplish more.

The last eight months at the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association (ICCA) have been busy. We have provided more programs, raised more funds than before, and more importantly, we have built a foundation for the next four months and the year ahead.

Personally, I'm excited about what we have to offer, and I am confident that the community will appreciate everything we will deliver.

To kick off September, we are hosting our next SPICE (Single Parents Indo-Caribbean Exchange) event. On September 4, renowned Guyanese-American chef and social media personality, Althea Brown, will be our guest for a special virtual workshop. We'll discuss after-school snacks and participate in a live virtual cooking demo just in time for back-to-school season.

SPICE was established to provide a safe and supportive space for mothers, fathers, guardians, and children of single-parent households. ICCA looks forward to continuing this program, and will soon announce two more SPICE events before the end of the year.

September is going to be extra special for us as we welcome Star Gyal!

Based on our success of Star Bhai, a youth mentorship program for boys and young men from the Indo-Caribbean community, we are proud to launch Star Gyal.

After months of planning, organising, and coordinating, our newest program will be ready to go.

Star Gyal will provide monthly workshops for Indo-Caribbean girls and young women, encouraging learning, networking, and personal growth.

Our youth programming is vital to our organisation. We know that we must provide opportunities for future generations to succeed, and importantly, know and be proud of their culture.

On September 14, both Star Gyal and Star Bhai will host workshops with a focus on Truth and Reconciliation as we learn and pay tribute to Canada's Indigenous People.



Ryan Singh

Star Gyal and Star Bhai workshops will be hosted in October and November as well.

Before we close out September, we will continue our push for the federal government to introduce legislation for July to become Caribbean Heritage Month.

To date, we have brought together 12 Caribbean-Canadian organisations in support of this proposal. We aim to achieve 500 signatures on our petition before the return of Parliament on September 15.

We will move into the next phase, engaging with parliamentarians to seek support for our proposal, and enter the legislative phase toward this milestone for our community.

Caribbean Heritage Month is made for everyone in Canada who is from, or has family ties to the Caribbean.

If we are successful, this month's recognition will provide opportunities for us to come together and formally celebrate the Caribbean community here in Canada.

All of this... and that's only September!

For the final quarter of the year, expect more events and more strategic programming. Our fund-raising team is working on a special event that will bring us together for a fulfilling evening celebrating our community and culture.

Our team at EPIC (Equality and Pride for Indo-Caribbeans) are also working to design and host more safe space for the community. Look out for meaningful programming and a new event to celebrate the holidays.

Before the end of the year, we are planning on expanding the Share Yuh RICE (Raising Indo-Caribbean Essentials) Food Drive for the holiday season.

Food insecurity is prominently impacting more and more individuals and families. We will continue on the success of our six permanent locations and operate an expanded drive ahead of the Christmas season.

On behalf of the volunteers at ICCA, we are excited to continue the work we do for our community. We look forward to connecting, serving, and amplifying all of you.

Look out for our programs and events, and please consider getting involved. Join us at an event, make a donation to the food drive, or even consider joining the team.

As we end the year, we are ready to launch a new season of delivering something special for Canada's Indo-Caribbean community.

Back then it was mosquitoes and laughter by the bucketful

My parsimonious aunt became more tolerable during my early years back in the homeland following her second marriage. This time she did not just marry any man off the street; when her newer husband first arrived at our house, he came as an entertainment system that quickly recharged with infusions of the spirit of the time.

Right away he became known as 'Uncle B'; to us children, he was more than kin via marriage: he was cinema, circus, and the culture of rumshop-talk all rolled into one. Here was a welcome reprieve from an aunt who would find savings even with a strand of hair: "Your hair too long. Get it cut so you don't waste soap!"

Uncle B was spared this cajoling; for the absence of a comb in his back pocket, he compensated with lengthy, flowing, and intricately-braided narratives.

Now back then, entertainment was two black and white television channels. The first was preferable for its occasional light flurries; the second was worse for reception, and an accompanying blizzard of snow.

But with Uncle B in the house, as my Auntie noted, we did not "waste the current" sitting in front of the television. Instead, he touched up the setting sun of our evenings with hilarious brush strokes of humour, and softer shades of scandal – all to the soundtrack of mosquitoes, and occasional thunderclaps whenever an adult scored a resounding hit with an open palm on an exposed arm, leg, or incredulously, the back of a head.

Soon Uncle B dethroned my uncles, both my mother's brothers gladly abdicating their enforced mandates to "mind" our brood during adult absences. Replacing their grudging attention was Uncle B, who always had a story ready on the edge of his breath, unlike the scent of rum, which he kept under his breath with dinner mints whenever my aunt bustled into the room.

He also dethroned my grandmother and my parents. Ma was affectionately renamed "Mother-in-law"; my mother, "Sister-in-law"; and surprisingly, my acquiescing old man, who tolerated "Brother-in-law" and its quick, friendly belly-rub. Authority and the hierarchy in our household melted faster than a doomed ice-cube dropped into a shot-glass of warm Demerara rum.

In Uncle B's company, everyone became an attentive listener, quickly enraptured whenever he cast his narrative net.

Later in life I understood his tales grew out of the fermentation in rumshops, our own Caribbean universities where lectures were delivered in slurred syllabi, the chalkboard pointer a wagging, crooked forefinger, and tuition fees paid by the round. It was in these rumshops – those half-pejorative, half-sacred

temples, where the fettered, colonised tongue could break out of its bonds and out-talk an empire.

Uncle B brought to our eager ears the tall tales homespun out of the spinning ceilings in these rumshops. He also brought its atmospheric in the cadences of a conspiratorial lift, the contagious *joie de vivre* that had us in stitches as he spun his yarns; we laughed, slapping our sides – for the mosquitoes, until the half-luminous flame on the lamp's wick spluttered to become embers, fractured and broken like grains of rice.

His stories were not palimpsests layered for longevity on the legacy of parchment; instead, each tale strode forward with a staggering gait, with a wink added for the *double entendre* moments, and a half-slur when his tongue stumbled out of the rumshop's heaving, double doors.

Take, for instance, the night he took us wandering along the paths in a tropical rainforest.

"Down in the deep, deep south," he intoned, "where the trees grow so close you couldn't squeeze a sneeze between the trunks. Here the mosquitoes were so thick you could dip a bucket in the air and then pour them out on your head. All you needed was a piece of soap and a branch with two leaves to scrub your back."

And then, the core of his walk in the woods: an encounter with a crying child, her white gown caught in a thorny bush, hands outstretched for an adult to comfort her. But there was a hard-wired flaw, a near fatal capture with trickery and betrayal.

"But this was no child; her face was aged, and feet turned backwards," he intoned, showing the whites of his eyes.

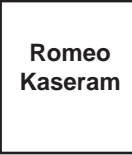
Uncle B then sprinted to the end of the story, shifting into high gear as he retreated from the mournful, wailing spirit.

"I run so fast I overtake a deer cruising in fourth gear, then mash the clutch down hard, and call deep in the box to break out the fifth for my legs!" His voice grated, voicebox gravely and grinding with gravitational acceleration to onomatopoeic speed.

Decades later, I still return to that forested path, noting Uncle B's tales were more than a *raconteur* entertaining the family with swaying rumshop tales. That these narratives were colonial counter-myths, brewed in the rumshop, sweetened with exaggeration, and soured with a twist of dread.

Sometimes his stories had to be chased with a quick gulp of soothing water; other times, the depth of Ma's silent laughter could only be measured via the ropes that held her hammock up, in their resonant vibrating, like the base strings on a guitar.

By the time Uncle B died, I knew he had poured me an eye-opener: that our own narratives live beyond books, are among us, and are valid; at times with feet that point backwards.



Romeo Kaseram

Govt's progressive tax plan seeks to expand Guyanese spending power

Dear Editor,

I had the distinct pleasure of listening to Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali's articulating how his government is pointing Guyana's taxation system in a progressive direction. He themed his message as a conversation at the Herstelling rally, and gave a lengthy explanation how his government intends to place more disposable income in the hands of every household.

Besides increasing the exempt income tax threshold, the household will be able to combine their exemptions. This means that families will have double exempt disposable income. In a hypothetical scenario, with an increased personal allowance of (G) \$200,000, plus overtime allowance of \$50,000, second job allowance of \$50,000, and \$10,000 allowance per child, a family with three children can earn \$630,000 per month without paying any income tax.

That is what President Ali described as disposable or spending money in the hands of each family. He also spoke about the single parent family. I am sure he will implement policies so that single parent family disposable incomes will increase by doubling up the personal allowances.

In many tax jurisdictions, the family spending power is increased by transferring unused personal tax allowances from one spouse to the other, and to doubling up single parent personal tax allowance through the equivalent to spouse method. Guyana's trajectory in this direction augurs well for a progressive system. President Ali was right when he explained that while what you earn is important, what you take home is what matters most.

As a chartered accountant and an international business lawyer, I was most impressed with President Ali's laying out the trajectory of Guyana's development by incentivising investments through the taxation system. He made special mention of encouraging small and medium sized businesses through tax breaks and other incentives, such as providing land zoned for their operation.

The distinction of small business tax rates from large business tax rates recognises that small and start-up businesses are the engine of the economy, and need special breaks to withstand the pressures of getting established.

President Ali pointed out that the taxation system needs to be purposeful. While generating internal revenues, it must be affordable so that taxpayers will be left with sufficient spending



President Ali with Tamesh Lilmohan

power. This in turn will boost the economy. Giving businesses appropriate tax incentives will increase investment, growth, and job creation.

His conversation dedicated much time to point out how the PPP/Civic government will examine and attend to the varying needs of the people. He made special mention of people with permanent disabilities, social assistance, free education, universal health care, senior allowances, and community improvement.

For me, it was an accountant and tax lawyer's feast to note that President Ali was displaying a sound grasp of the needs of the various aspects of the society. I admired how he was able to identify each area, how he outlined the issues, and provided



President Ali addresses the rally at Herstelling

solutions.

However, most impressive was how he holistically contextualised the nuances into the national and regional framework.

I have no doubt that President Ali will stand true to his promises, and that the track record will demonstrate that his government was faithful to its 2020 manifesto, to the point of over-achieving the targets in many cases. What matters is not what you promise but what you deliver. The mantle of true leadership lies in serving and empowering the people. I believe that President Ali demonstrates this quality and I wish him well in the upcoming elections.

Tameshwar N. Lilmohan, Toronto, via email.



In the days before the elections, Guyana was swept with a tide of red supporters for the PPP/Civic

Minority govt talk in Guyana makes for interesting times

Dear Editor,

Although opposition parties and groups have expressed optimism that the 2025 elections could produce a minority government in Guyana, they are overlooking their own challenges. Additionally, while the results of the recent so-called scientific poll (August 27) offered them encouragement, their confidence was quickly tempered by critical assessments of the poll's methodology and findings by Professor Narayan Persaud, Professor Randy Persaud, and others.

The Opposition prefers a minority government, hoping to check the PPP/Civic's power and oversee the nation's treasury, which they believe is overflowing with oil revenues. In a country without a dominant ethnic group, it is unclear why any political party that is genuinely committed to development and territorial integrity would aim only for the Opposition and not seek full leadership in Parliament and in the government.

The main opposition, APNU, has lost several leaders to the PPP/Civic and to the new WIN party; both (APNU and WIN) aim to form a minority government. Like APNU, the WIN party seeks to undermine the PPP/Civic's efforts at re-election, while its controversial leader, Azruddin Mohamed, refers to himself "as your President".

The idea of minority government has been advanced by former ANUG members as a political strategy to weaken the PPP/Civic in its governmental functions. In the pursuit of this objective, Nigel Hughes, who became leader of the AFC, immediately went on a mission to challenge the PPP's support base in

the Amerindian communities. He felt that if AFC could get two or three seats from Amerindian communities, they would come closer to achieving a minority government status.

Hughes' political message failed to gain traction, and his party did not succeed in this regard. Alongside APNU, he supported Azruddin Mohamed's involvement in politics, believing his financial resources could influence Amerindian communities and the PPP/Civic base. Aligning with the opposition, Chris Ram glorifies WIN's leader, Azruddin Mohamed, and compares him with eminent scholar and politician Dr Walter Rodney. Needless to say, that position of Ram stunned most Guyanese. Ram also asserts that Azruddin Mohamed would split Muslim and Amerindian votes, making religion a divisive factor in politics.

The Opposition parties' political calculation did not work. Azruddin's WIN party has instead energised the PPP/Civic and its base while disrupting APNU's support. Instead, WIN's growing influence has increased APNU's political distress, positioning WIN as a rival to APNU among opposition parties. It remains uncertain whether APNU has managed to halt WIN's momentum in the final days of campaigning.

There will be no minority government. The PPP/Civic is projected to win 36 seats, aligning with figures from Professor Narayan Persaud, Dr Ganga Ramdas, and Ravi Dev.

APNU, WIN, and AFC (with one seat) will form the Opposition, while FMG and ALP are not projected to secure any seats. Interesting days are ahead.

Dr Tara Singh, New York, via email.

Choice made for TT's safety

Dear Editor,

It is completely perplexing to hear some of the responses to the position taken by Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar on US assets in Caribbean waters.

It seems those reporting either did not properly understand what Persad-Bissessar said, or worse, they have chosen to be deliberately ignorant in order to cause mischief and fear-mongering among the population.

Persad-Bissessar was crystal clear. She supports the presence of American military assets in the Caribbean to dismantle terrorist drug cartels. These cartels are responsible for drug, human, and firearms trafficking that continue to devastate Caribbean societies, especially Trinidad and Tobago.

What is truly baffling is the hypocrisy of former Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, who now claims that Persad-Bissessar's position "telegraphs that Trinidad and Tobago has chosen its side".

What message was being telegraphed, when in 2016, during the height of Venezuela's worst crisis in modern history, Rowley was photographed in a group dancing along with Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro?

What message was sent when, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago were stranded abroad while Venezuelan Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez was allowed to enter our country freely in 2020?

What did it mean when the then-minister of energy Stuart Young visited Venezuela so often that he began boasting about his frequent trips?

The matter is simple. Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar's message was clear and consistent. Anyone opposing the structural dismantling of these violent gangs, is in effect, standing on the side of the heinous crimes they commit.

At a time when crime rates are at historic highs, every possible effort to reduce their impact must be welcomed. This is not about choosing sides. It is about choosing what is best for Trinidad and Tobago.

We are all citizens of this nation, and we all live with the consequences of crime.

Perhaps some of these so-called "international relations experts" have the luxury of debating theory, but the average citizen knows what it feels like to suffer from the lawlessness.

The people have made their decision on who they want to lead. It is time to let Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar lead.

Jamal Joseph, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

Scholarship allure abroad draws TT talent away from local pathways

Dear Editor,
With CAPE results recently released, thousands of Upper Six students across Trinidad and Tobago are facing a pivotal decision: either pursue opportunities at home, or seek education and careers abroad.

Recent scholarship programmes from China, and established pathways to Canada are drawing top students overseas, signaling a growing migration trend among our nation's youth.

Over the past year, scholarships and study opportunities from Canada and China have dominated national headlines. The Chinese Government Scholarship Programme, long established, continues to offer students from Trinidad and Tobago full tuition and living support. In 2022, the Chinese Ambassador's Scholarship was introduced locally to reward outstanding secondary students, expanding access to international education. Canada, too, remains a major destination, with thousands of Caribbean students using study permits as a pathway to long-term residence. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) reports that over 10,000 Trinidad and Tobago nationals currently live in Canada, many of them former students.

This growing migration trend exposes a deeper challenge, the so-called "brain drain". A 2024 World Bank report found that roughly one in three tertiary-educated Caribbean youth leaves within five years of graduation, often seeking higher salaries, better job security, and international experience. Many students who could contribute to Trinidad and Tobago's emerging digital economy are instead leaving, drawn abroad by these opportunities.

At the same time, Trinidad and Tobago has been investing in technology and digital infrastructure. Initiatives such as the National Broadband Strategy, e-government systems, and early-stage innovation hubs signal ambition, according to the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. But these systems need people, trained, skilled, and motivated professionals who are available locally. Without talent retention policies, our digital future risks being built by others while our own youth are overseas.

International education opportunities are not inherently negative. Students gain valuable skills and networks abroad. The problem is the lack of structured pathways for return or local

engagement. Too often, leaving is permanent rather than temporary. Without deliberate policy measures, such as competitive career pathways, research funding, or government-backed start-up support, we risk hollowing out our workforce just as our nation's tech systems are growing.

So what can be done? First, scholarships could include bonded return programmes, encouraging graduates to spend a set number of years contributing to local industries.

Second, diaspora engagement platforms could allow students abroad to mentor, invest, or work remotely in Trinidad and Tobago, keeping them connected.

Third, local investment in tertiary education and digital

Time to end the cycle of poverty, dependency in TT

Dear Editor,
Have Trinidad and Tobago nationals realised yet that make-work programmes such as CEPEP and URP were never intended to provide permanent employment? These initiatives were meant to be short-term relief; however, over time, they were hijacked, corrupted, and transformed into political tools. They were used to buy loyalty, secure votes, and keep the most vulnerable trapped in cycles of poverty and dependency.

While loudly criticising the government for terminating make-work contracts and demanding support for displaced workers, the Opposition PNM is noticeably silent on the many ills of these programmes: starvation wages, no job security, no severance, no opportunity for training or upward mobility, rampant nepotism, corruption, and even ties to criminal activity.

How can keeping citizens trapped in such conditions ever be described as 'helping' them? Is the payment of minimum-wage compensation all our people are worth?

As a society, have we become so morally bankrupt that we accept corruption, nepotism, and dead-end jobs as the norm? Are we truly content to watch the most vulnerable exploited, while comforting ourselves with the illusion that we are doing them a favour?

careers must match or exceed the appeal of international options, providing clear, competitive pathways at home.

For students finishing Upper Six this year, the choice is deeply consequential. CAPE results should be a celebration of achievement, but for many families, they now mark the beginning of a countdown to departure. If Trinidad and Tobago wants to ensure a thriving future, it must create an environment where staying is just as viable, rewarding, and respected as leaving.

Otherwise, in a few years, we may find ourselves asking, 'Who will remain to build the Trinidad and Tobago of tomorrow?'

Khaelon Dickson, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

Last month, at the UNC's *Monday Night Report* in Couva South, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar made a bold promise, "We have a mandate to fill all the vacancies across the Public Service, to create more meaningful jobs, to allow the average citizen to earn more, to advance your education, your skills and careers."

On the general election campaign trail earlier this year, young people spoke out clearly: they do not want CEPEP or URP jobs; instead, they want 'real' jobs. Jobs that provide dignity, stability, good wages, and opportunities for advancement. The fact remains that make-work programmes like CEPEP and URP are not delivering these goals. They are not uplifting the vulnerable, and are instead exploiting them.

Trinidad and Tobago's new government has taken a courageous and decisive step by beginning the transformation of these broken programmes early in its term. It is a bold move towards creating genuine opportunities and meaningful employment for our citizens.

Trinidad and Tobago deserves better than being trapped in cycles of poverty, dependency, and exploitation. It is time we not only expect better; it is time we demand better.

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



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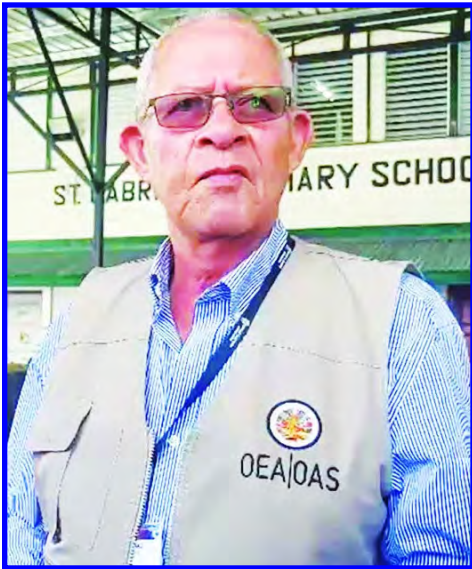
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Jason Carter (left) with the Carter Team



Bruce Golding



Robert Biedroń (second right) and the European Union team

Observers praise Guyanese for peaceful, orderly 2025 elections

– International observer missions have described Guyana’s September 1 General and Regional Elections as peaceful and orderly, with polling stations opening largely on time, officials demonstrating professionalism, and voters exercising patience. Missions from the OAS, EU, and Carter Center emphasized transparency, vigilance, and confidence in the electoral process.

...

Georgetown – Head of the Organisation of American States (OAS) Electoral Observation Mission, Bruce Golding, reported that voting in Guyana’s 2025 elections proceeded smoothly on polling day, September 1, with no signs of the tabulation issues that marred the 2020 process.

Golding, a former Prime Minister of Jamaica, told reporters that the first half of polling day was conducted in an orderly manner. He reminded that the challenges of 2020 arose not during voting but in the Region Four tabulation.

“I am hoping, and I would put it even stronger than that; I don’t anticipate a recurrence of that problem,” Golding stated.

GECOM counters election misinformation

Georgetown – GECOM on Monday night rejected widespread misinformation about the 2025 General and Regional Elections, assuring that the voting process was conducted transparently and without evidence of fraud.

At its first press conference after polls closed, GECOM’s Public Relations Officer Yolanda Ward stressed that the elections were “smoothly, peacefully, and transparently” carried out across the country.

“For us, the voting process has proceeded smoothly and peacefully across the country. Where issues have arisen, they have been addressed promptly and transparently, in accordance with the law,” Ward said.

With polls concluded, GECOM remained focused on tabulating and verifying results. More than 757,000 registered voters were eligible to cast ballots at 2,790 polling stations staffed by over 10,000 polling day workers. Six parties contested the elections: the People’s Progressive Party/Civic, A Partnership for National Unity, We Invest in Nationhood, the Alliance For Change, the Forward Guyana Movement, and the Assembly for Liberty and Prosperity.

Ward addressed rumours that deceased persons had voted in communities along the East Coast Demerara, including Foulis and Enmore. She explained that names may remain on the Official List of Electors if death certificates are not submitted to the General Register Office.

“[Without the submission of the death certificate], names may remain until the next list revision cycle. This is a legal safeguard to prevent wrongful removal,” she said.

Ward emphasised that allegations of votes

The OAS mission, comprising 27 experts and observers from 18 countries, visited 342 polling stations in seven of the ten regions by midday Monday. Golding said they were satisfied with how the process began.

“All of the polling stations that we visited, with the exception of one, opened promptly on time, and that one had a difficulty because when they started out, they didn’t have the screen for the polling compartment, but that was quickly corrected,” he explained.

Golding also expressed confidence in polling staff, stating, “I was particularly impressed at how professional, how well-trained the polling officials appeared to be. They knew what they were doing. They were not hesitant in applying the relevant rules and guidelines and all poll things have been going well,” he said.

The OAS Chief Observer noted that agents of the political parties contesting the elections were vigilant and active in scrutinising the process. Voters appeared patient, even at polling stations where lines reached about 20 persons.

Golding pointed out some variations in how voting compartments were set up. In some sta-

cast in the names of deceased persons were unverified. She noted that GECOM does not have investigative powers, but is confident that “multiple safeguards” exist to prevent impersonation. These include flagging names during the legal Claims and Objections period.

Responding to misinformation about Commonwealth nationals, including Bangladeshi citizens, Ward reaffirmed that the National Registration Act entitles those legally resident in Guyana for at least one year to register and vote.

“Under Guyana’s laws, Commonwealth citizens residing legally in Guyana for over one year are eligible to vote. The identification cards issued reflect the legal residency status, and are valid for electoral purposes,” she said.

Ward stressed that this provision has long been part of Guyana’s electoral laws.

Ward clarified that while the national identification card is commonly used, it is not mandatory to cast a ballot.

“Persons without an ID card can still vote, once their name is on the Official List of Electors. It is important to note that, in such cases, there is a procedure that must be followed: They must answer security questions, and may be required to sign an oath,” she explained.

Ward also addressed concerns about multiple voters registered at the same address, noting that GECOM has no authority over individuals’ living arrangements.

“There are instances where companies or agencies house employees at one location. What matters is that the registration process is followed in compliance with the law,” she said.



Yolanda Ward

tions, compartments faced the wall, while in others, they faced outward. He said the adjustment appeared linked to prevent voters from using their camera on the smart phones.

“In some of the polling stations, we noticed that it was the opposite where it was turned around... I gather it was in relation to this effort to prevent voters from photographing their ballots,” Golding said, noting that such changes were out of caution rather than any effort to compromise the process.

Following the close of polls, OAS observers monitored ballot counts and tabulation. Golding praised the electorate: “I think the people of Guyana deserve to be congratulated on the peaceful, disciplined way in which they have gone out to cast their ballots... And I expect that the rest of the process will attract the same kind of discipline, orderliness, and professionalism.”

Other international observer groups also reported on their activities. Robert Biedroń,

Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission, confirmed that 50 EU observers were present across the country.

“In all regions our observers are present today, observing this important part of Guyanese democracy,” Biedroń said. He stressed the mission’s impartiality: “We are here not to interfere in any processes. I want to stress this.”

The EU will issue its first comments on the electoral process today in Georgetown.

Jason Carter of the Carter Center noted that its team has been present in every region, and had been in Guyana for weeks. He said observers were monitoring from the opening of polls to tabulation.

“We’re not going to draw any conclusions, of course, until after the day is over, and then after the tabulation process is complete,” Carter explained. A preliminary statement was expected the day following polling, with a full report to come later.

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Honorary Consul Mani Singh after voting on Monday
PPP/Civic projected for 2nd term

From Page 1
multiple regions. Singh suggested this weakened the opposition landscape, saying, “WIN has neither the capacity nor political education. However, what is important is that the people voted for continued economic development, for continuation on the path that the PPP/Civic has taken.”

The indications in the numbers in the SOPs meant that President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali is projected to begin a second term, with Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips and Vice President Dr Bharrat Jagdeo continuing in government.

Singh singled out Jagdeo, crediting him for his unwavering and patriotic leadership, stating: “Our nation is grateful to Jagdeo for staying on, and for his immense contribution to moving Guyana forward.”

Noting that official declaration of results by GECOM was still pending as of yesterday, Singh voiced satisfaction with the outcome.

“I am very happy for the PPP/Civic, for the Guyanese people, and for the nation of Guyana. I am satisfied it went the way we wanted it to go. It took a lot of hard work, which was ably done by the people and the party,” he concluded.



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Lives of sick kids transformed as TCCF, GOLI give from the heart

– The TCCF, working with GOLI, has brought hope to families across the Caribbean. In Guyana and the Dominican Republic, recent missions have given dozens of children lifesaving heart surgeries and procedures, while also facing the heartbreak of losing two young lives.

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Thirty-six children in Guyana and the Dominican Republic have received lifesaving heart surgeries and treatments during recent missions by The Caribbean Children Foundation (TCCF) and Gift of Life International (GOLI), led by Pediatric Cardiac Surgeon Dr Rodrigo Soto.

From open-heart surgeries to less invasive procedures using thin tubes called catheters, the missions provided critical care for children who otherwise would have had no access to specialised treatment. While most young patients recovered and returned home, sadly two children did not survive.

Founded in 2000, TCCF assists children from the Caribbean suffering from life-threatening ailments for which no treatment is available in their home countries. These children receive treatment at hospitals in and outside Canada, including The Hospital for Sick Children here in Toronto.

The foundation is managed entirely by volunteers. Absolutely no one is paid a salary or wage, and every donation goes directly to the cause.

On its website, TCCF president Jay Brijpaul shared the early story of Nirvana Garib, a child from Trinidad diagnosed with a brain tumour at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Her family needed \$90,000 for her surgery, and the Caribbean community rallied to raise the funds.

“It was indeed a miraculous recovery and we thank God and the TCCF every day,” Nirvana’s brother Avinash said. Since then, countless poor but deserving children from Guyana and the Caribbean have received lifesaving surgeries they could not otherwise afford.

James Wright, Chairman of the Herbie Committee, described TCCF as an extraordinary organisation, and in 2014, TCCF received the Spirit Award from The Herbie Foundation in recognition of its outstanding commitment to helping critically-ill children.

“As we move forward, TCCF is bringing health care closer to the Caribbean by partnering with other international charities

such as Gift of Life International and SpineHope,” Brijpaul stated.

He added, “TCCF is the vehicle designed to help children, and you are the driver. With your generous donations, TCCF will continue to achieve the goal of helping one child at a time to live a healthy life. Thank you for your support. Every dollar counts when saving lives.”

TCCF’s life-saving interventions have seen the group working with GOLI. According to the GOLI website, the organisation’s mission is to develop sustainable pediatric cardiac centres of excellence and empower doctors and nurses to treat children in their home countries or regions of birth.

With like-minded partners, such centres have already been established in Uganda and El Salvador, with ongoing work in Jamaica and Bolivia, and support extending to Eastern Africa, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

“Our global network of caring consists of 84 affiliated Gift of Life programs spanning five continents across 80 countries. The strength of our global network enables us to maximise our impact and provide care to as many children as possible throughout the world. Through the power of our network, we are able to treat a child in need every 99 minutes,” the organisation notes on its website.

GOLI delivers hope to children with heart disease and their families by providing doctors and nurses with training, tools, funding, and support to treat children in their countries of birth. Its work is rooted in partnerships with charities, hospitals, healthcare professionals, Rotarians, and volunteers worldwide.

As Clinical Consultant and Pediatric Cardiac Surgeon with GOLI, Dr Soto has dedicated two decades to treating children with congenital heart disease in developing nations. After completing his medical training in Chile and furthering his expertise in Australia and France, he established pediatric heart surgery and heart-lung support programs in Santiago, Chile.

Dr Soto previously volunteered with the International Children’s Heart Foundation (ICHF), later becoming its CEO, before joining GOLI in 2019. Today, he leads training visits in the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, and Guyana, bringing a wealth of global experience to each mission.

From August 4-8, TCCF and GOLI completed another transformative pediatric cardiac training visit at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC). This was the second visit of the year and the seventh since the program’s revival in 2023.

For the first time since the program’s restart, the visiting team

performed less invasive heart treatments called catheterisations alongside open-heart surgeries. Over five days, the 25-member international team, led by Dr Soto, worked with local medical professionals to perform 11 catheter-based procedures and seven open-heart surgeries, directly benefiting 16 children with congenital heart disease.

The collaboration also included 80 patient screenings to identify urgent cases and reassure families whose children did not require intervention. By August 13, 15 of the 16 children had been discharged, with the last expected to return home shortly after.

Currently, no hospital in Guyana independently offers specialised pediatric cardiac surgery, underscoring the importance of international partnerships. Each mission not only treats children, but also empowers local physicians, nurses, and anaesthesiologists with training, case discussions, and hands-on skills.

Earlier this year, from May 31 to June 7, GOLI and TCCF supported a clinical team led by Dr Soto during its second visit of the year to CEDIMAT Hospital in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Over the past five years, the two organisations have supported the hospital’s pediatric cardiac program, enabling progress in handling complex cases and improving protocols for patient care.

During this visit, 20 children received treatment through surgeries and heart procedures done with thin tubes called catheters. Some of the children had very complex heart problems. These included babies born with no opening for blood to flow from the heart to the lungs (Pulmonary Atresia) and children born with only one working pumping chamber in the heart instead of two (Single Ventricle). For these cases, doctors carried out the Fontan procedure, a final surgery that helps redirect blood flow so children with one pumping chamber can live more stable lives.

Despite many successes, there were also two losses. One child passed away because a main blood vessel from the heart (the aorta) was badly damaged after a long-lasting infection. Another child needing an ECMO (a machine that takes over the work of the heart and lungs), sadly passed away a week after the visit.

Dr Soto noted that without the partnership between TCCF and GOLI, most of these procedures would not have been possible. He emphasised the measurable improvements in the local team’s performance and outcomes due to consistent visits and training.



Crystal



Elisha



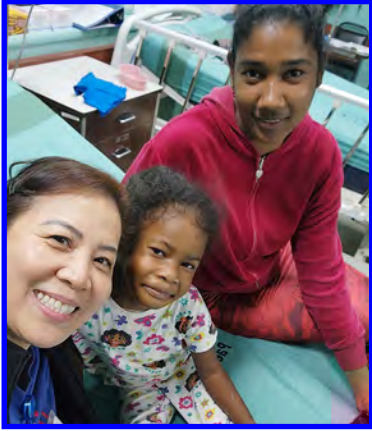
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Kamla Persad-Bissessar

Caribbean experts issue caution to TT govt

– Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar’s endorsement of US naval deployments in the Caribbean has sparked a wave of regional commentary, with experts and regional leaders warning that her position risks escalating tensions with Venezuela, dividing Caricom, and exposing Trinidad and Tobago to retaliation.

International relations expert Dr Andy Knight last month warned that Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar’s support for US military operations against Latin American cartels could divide Caribbean countries at a time when the region can least afford disunity.

Knight argued that the naval mission, though framed as a counter-narcotics effort, could fracture Caribbean unity and destabilise regional security.

“What we will witness is an escalation of tensions between Venezuela and the US,” he said, adding, “It could also risk driving wedges between Caribbean countries... Regional unity is critical at this point in our history, when we as Caribbean people are trying to address shared challenges and promote our own economic development.”

He linked Persad-Bissessar’s position to wider electoral shifts, saying: “There are elections coming up in Guyana and Jamaica. We have seen Trinidad and Tobago elect a pro-Trump political party to office for the next five years. What happens if both Guyana and Jamaica elect political parties that succumb to Trumpism? This could have the effect of dividing the Caribbean countries and splitting Caricom.”

Knight further noted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro’s response: “This could be seen as both genuine defence and political theatre. It signals a domestic show of strength to deter foreign intervention, but it also serves internal propaganda, consolidating Maduro’s support base. What is worse is that Maduro might call on his allies, Russia, China, Iran, to counter what the US military is trying to do, particularly if the US Navy enters into Venezuelan territorial waters.”

Persad-Bissessar, in a strong defence of her government’s support, declared: “Trinidad and Tobago has been helplessly drowning in blood and violence for the last 20 years; Vice President JD Vance spoke the truth when he mentioned our high murder and crime rates. Therefore, no amount of Trump derangement syndrome tantrums and anti-American propaganda will prevent my government from welcoming assistance to combat the terrorist drug cartels.”

She dismissed suggestions that Trinidad and Tobago had been pressured by Washington: “No requests have ever been made by the American government for their military assets

to access Trinidadian territory for any military action against the Venezuelan regime.”

While affirming “good relations with the Venezuelan people,” she added: “The only persons who should be worried about the activity of the US military are those engaged in, or enabling, criminal activity. Law-abiding citizens have nothing to fear.”

Persad-Bissessar also highlighted the scale of the problem, noting, “Due to drug, human and firearms trafficking, Caribbean countries, and in particular Trinidad and Tobago, have experienced massive spikes in crime, gang activity, murders, violence and financial crimes.”

She further noted, “Record murder rates, gang activity, drug addictions, violent crime and increasing poverty throughout the Caribbean and especially in our country certainly do not paint a peaceful existence.”

For Dr Anthony Gonzales, retired director of the Institute of International Relations, the implications are clear.

“We could be a target here,” he cautioned, adding, “I have no difficulty supporting Guyana in any conflict with Venezuela, but do we have to get involved and offer a base? When you’re offering a military base, it means that you are a military ally of the country, which means that in case... if America gets involved in any war, we could be a target here.”

Dr Christopher Charles, political and social psychologist at UWI Mona, warned that Persad-Bissessar’s approach risked weakening regional solidarity.

“I think the Trinidadian Prime Minister and the government, in general, are really playing up to Trump to ensure that whatever he does, Trinidad and Tobago comes out on the side that is much better than others,” he said.

Additionally, “What I’ve noticed in the last, say, 15 years with the UNC in Trinidad and Tobago and the JLP in Jamaica, the leaders, what they have done is to move away from working with a collective voice. And this is not good for the region because major powers have no permanent friends. All they have is permanent national interest.”

Charles added: “When we work with them to facilitate their interest in our region and to antagonise and possibly destabilise or overthrow any government in the region or in South America or Central America, we are opening ourselves to further aggression.”

Meanwhile, Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr Ralph Gonsalves, said the matter should be considered within Caricom.

“I want to deal with [the arrival of US ships] in a Caricom perspective,” he stated.

Also, “I don’t really want us to go one side against the other. I don’t want to say anything as St Vincent. This is a matter we should deal with in the context of Caricom.”



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
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DREAM HOMES OR DECEPTION? HOW TO STAY PROTECTED

Fraud in GTA is becoming more advanced and widespread, especially in the real estate sector. We’ve heard of fraudsters stealing home titles, remortgaging properties, and fleeing with their profits. There are also cases where scammers pose as landlords, collecting rental deposits from many unsuspecting tenants before disappearing. Recently, I came across one involving false pre-construction home sales.

Moiz Kunwar, a 28-year-old man, allegedly impersonated a real estate agent by offering fake homes, false financing options, and misleading promises while pretending to be a trusted developer. He reportedly operated under a company name that closely resembles a well-known builder, Paradise Development Homes Limited. Notice how similar it sounds to the legitimate Paradise Developments Inc.?

Police are currently investigating over 40 cases involving alleged fake pre-construction sales, in which Kunwar allegedly collected more than half a million dollars in deposits from unsuspecting buyers. Kunwar advertised the properties at low prices and offered very low mortgage rates. It has been reported that Kunwar would take prospective buyers to the development sites and show them specific properties, which were later completed and sold to legitimate buyers.

Kunwar’s buyers only realised they had been scammed when their original closing date passed and they did not own the property. One buyer paid a \$170,000 deposit, expecting to close on a five-bedroom home by January 1, 2025. According to victims, Kunwar provided all the paperwork, including purchase and sale agreements, and introduced them to an unregistered financial firm, Empire Financing, where he was listed as the president.

The allegations have not yet been tested in court. Kunwar has said he intends to defend himself against all the charges, and denies all the allegations.

As the number of victims exceeds 40, this case serves as a warning that not all real estate deals are as they appear, especially in a market where desperation meets deception. Many families have saved for years and then believed they had found a great deal, complete with exclusive VIP access and early pricing. They signed the paperwork, handed over the deposit, and then it disappeared. How can you protect yourself? Here are six red flags every buyer should watch for.

1. The company name might look correct, but it isn’t. Always verify the developer’s name with official records. A single word, letter, or number can differentiate a legitimate home from a scam. The developer will also have a sales office that you can visit.
2. The agent is not registered. In Ontario, all real estate professionals must be licensed with RECO — the Real Estate Council of Ontario. [Verify their registration here](#).
3. You’re being asked to send money directly to an individual or a numbered company. That’s a major red flag. Deposits should always be made into a brokerage or builder’s trust account. If you have the account number, you can visit the bank to verify if it is a trust account.
4. There’s pressure to sign immediately, leaving no time for a lawyer to review the agreement. Every buyer deserves adequate time to consider and verify.
5. It sounds too good to be true – VIP pricing, guaranteed approvals, no competition. Be cautious of any deal that skips due diligence. Remember, the bigger the bait, the bigger the hook.
6. The paperwork is minimal – there are no floor plans, no Tarion warranty, no builder license details. Legitimate builders will provide all of this up front.

Scams like these are becoming more sophisticated. But with some knowledge, buyers in Canada can stay protected.

So here’s what you can do to protect yourself.

- Confirm the builder’s registration with Tarion and the Ontario Home Builders’ Directory;
- Verify credentials of agents, brokers, and lawyers;
- Never hand deposits directly to individuals;
- Consult your lawyer for review;
- And most importantly, take your time. Ask questions – *Google* the company. Look for complaints or lawsuits.

Protecting your investment starts well before making an offer. Today, many buyers face uncertainty, legal costs, and emotional stress, but you don’t have to be among them.

In real estate, doing your homework isn’t optional – it is essential. Stay sharp, stay safe, and remember, the best deal is the genuine one.

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In photos, VCC celebrates its elevator upgrade, India's Independence, and performs a Gayatri Yajna; in photo above left is VCC President Adit Kumar



VCC holds uplifting event to mark new elevator, India's Independence

The Vedic Cultural Centre (VCC) was filled with celebration on August 15 when the community gathered to mark the 78th anniversary of India's Independence. The occasion was made even more special with the inauguration of a new custom-built elevator at the Centre.

For nearly three decades, the VCC, located at 4345 14th Avenue in Markham, has stood as a cultural landmark, serving the community as a place of worship, festivals, and cultural events.

Federal Minister of Energy, Tim Hodgson, and Markham Councillor Isa Lee joined members of Arya Samaj Markham (ASM) and Toronto Arya Samaj (TAS) for the dual celebration. The event began with the Canadian and Indian national anthems performed by VCC members, followed by a stirring rendition of patriotic songs by Hemant Panwar of the Panwar Dance Academy and the VCC members.

ASM President, Yash Kapur, expressed gratitude to the federal government, Minister Hodgson, and his predecessor for

their support of the *Improving Accessibility Project* – the largest renovation initiative since the VCC's official opening in 1996.

The year-long project, with a budget of approximately \$600,000, focused on making the Centre more accessible and compliant with modern building codes and accessibility standards. A key feature of the upgrade is the new elevator, providing direct street-level access to the building. This improvement ensures greater convenience for seniors, offering a safe drop-off and pick-up zone, complemented by a welcoming waiting area with clear visibility to the parking lot.

Additional enhancements to the front of the VCC included a new waiting area, a canopy over the grand staircase, upgraded railings, refreshed signage, and newly-painted parking lines. Combined with interior improvements, these upgrades create a more functional and aesthetic environment for all visitors.

The project was overseen by the VCC Project Governance Team led by Rabi Nauth, with members Dennis Henry and

Sunil Chandna, and advisory support from Devender Arora. VCC Board sponsors included Yash Kapur and Amar Umadas. Collectively, the team brought experience from managing over 300 projects in telecommunications and construction.

Reflecting on the effort, Rabi Nauth remarked, "This was a very complex project involving more than 30 different contractors and trades. Careful sequencing of work was essential to avoid scheduling conflicts and to ensure that VCC events continued without disruption."

TAS President, Adit Kumar, emphasised the importance of the upgrades, saying, "This project is a vital step in making the mandir more welcoming and accessible for our seniors, encouraging them to attend more frequently. We thank our members and the wider community for their patience throughout the year of construction. This will also allow easier access for vendors, caterers, musicians, and event planners to transport equipment and materials to both the upper and lower halls of the building".



In photos, family and friends celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary. Photos by Ramesh Ramkalawan

Celebrating 50 years of marriage

The golden glow of love radiated through the J&J Swagat Buroak Banquet Hall in Markham on August 23, when Theresa and Glenton Bridgmohan were joyously surrounded by their children, grandchildren, extended family, lifelong friends, and well-wishers to mark an extraordinary milestone, their 50th wedding anniversary.

From the moment guests stepped into the elegantly adorned venue, the atmosphere pulsed with warmth, laughter, and heartfelt celebration. It turned out to be more than a significant wedding anniversary; instead, the evening ascended to become a jubilant reunion, a multi-generational tribute, and a living testimony to five decades of shared dreams, trials, and triumphs.

It was an evening that blossomed like a flower watered with smiles and fond memories. Family members offered touching tributes, expressing profound gratitude to Theresa and Glenton for the solid foundation they built together in a home that is today rooted in love, generosity, and unshakable devotion.

Guests were treated to a vibrant program filled with joy and levity. Lively games brought bursts of laughter, heartfelt speeches drew lengthy applause, and the spirit of celebration lingered well beyond the last dance.

Every detail of the event, from the exquisite and delectable cuisine to the glowing ambience of the banquet hall became symbols of the love and care evident in Theresa and Glenton's journey together.

There was dancing, there was storytelling, and then more dessert. The stories shared among the tables spoke not just of a marriage, but of a migration, a building of an enduring life in Canada, and the weaving of a tapestry of resilience, hard work, and togetherness across oceans and decades.

As the night came to a close, one thing was clear: the love that Theresa and Glenton cultivated for over 50 years had blossomed into a legacy. Today, it is a legacy that lives on in their family's laughter, in the suffusing warmth felt that evening, and in the shimmering memory of an anniversary celebration that will not soon be forgotten.



Birthday celebration recognises Dr Doobay’s august life of ‘firsts’

– In the month of August, fittingly aligned with an august event, over 300 guests gathered at Vishnu Mandir’s Peace Park to celebrate Dr Budhendranauth Doobay’s 85th birthday for an evening of sacred reflection, gratitude, and recognition of a singular life of service.

On the evening of August 26, the sacred grounds of Vishnu Mandir’s Peace Park became the stage for a celebration that transcended a birthday, as more than 300 guests assembled to honour Dr Budhendranauth Doobay’s 85 years of life, faith, and service to community.

The event unfolded in the open-air sanctity of Peace Park, where twilight descended softly over murtis of Lord Shiva, Lord Hanuman, and Lord Krishna with Radha. The golden glow of evening lights bathed a red carpet that welcomed dignitaries, family, friends, and devotees, all drawn by reverence and affection.

And as if nature herself wished to consecrate the moment, a gentle drizzle fell, not a disruptive one, but sacred, a cool benediction from the skies.

Guests moved gracefully into decorated dinner tents where delectable food and religious music flowed with the same nourishing generosity that has marked Dr Doobay’s own life.

The evening’s tributes spoke not in the language of accolades, but of thanksgiving. Roy Doobay, in one of the most heartfelt speeches, reminded guests that the occasion was “about thanking God for blessing our community with someone as extraordinary as Dr Doobay”, and about “praying for many more years of his wisdom and presence”.

It was, as he affirmed, a celebration grounded in “joy, reverence, and community spirit”.

Despite a legacy that spans decades of ground-breaking work, Dr Doobay has always embodied humility. When inviting Roy to the stage, he lightened the mood by calling him “the rich Doobay”.

Enriched by the comment, Roy seized the moment to capture the essence of Dr Doobay’s eminence with the unstated evocation, “I may have a few dollars in the bank, but the real treasure is Dr Doobay.”

These currencies of enrichment and nour-

ishment grew into a riff, and a motif, that were woven into the tributes throughout the evening, reflecting how great wealth lies not in material accumulation, but in a lifetime of service, vision, and generosity of spirit.

To measure Dr Doobay’s life is to encounter a series of “firsts” that have shaped the cultural and spiritual landscape of Canada, Guyana, and the wider diaspora, Roy noted. Quoting West Indies’ cricket legend Sir Clive Lloyd, namely, “There can only be one first”, Roy reminded guests of many unique milestones.

Among them were first Hindu temple in Canada, established at the gateway of Richmond Hill; the first major Diwali celebration at Toronto’s Roy Thomson Hall, bridging sacred tradition with cultural recognition; the first affordable dialysis centre in Guyana, bringing life-saving care to thousands.

And the very ground where the birthday celebration was being held, itself became the first Peace Park, a consecrated space for reflection, integration, and harmony.

Also, Dr Doobay was also first Guyanese-born Canadian to hold both the Order of Ontario and the Order of Canada.

Each “first” represents not only institutional achievement, but a human act of vision, sacrifice, and compassion, Roy declared.

That the celebration occurred in August seemed providential. It was the perfect month to mark the august presence of a man who has stood as a towering figure of faith, service, and humanity. His birthday celebration became less an individual milestone than a communal reflection on the largeness of his life, one that has been, time and again, devoted to others.

As the evening closed under the peaceful canopy of stars, it was evident that the celebration had become more than a birthday – it was recognition of a legacy that was still actively unfolding and in motion.

In fact, Dr Doobay continues to inspire new beginnings, still initiating more “firsts” in the building of temples, the healing of patients, and the integration of culture and faith. He stands as a bridge across communities, cities, and nations, a testament to what service, humility, and vision can achieve.



A red-carpet and friendly welcome met Dr Budhendranauth Doobay when he arrived to celebrate his 85th birthday at the Peace Park on August 26. In photos, attendees having a celebratory time at the marquee event





Having a great time at the Brampton fête, were left to right above, Trinifest founder George Maharaj; sponsor Daniel Gildharry; and Acting Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette and Pharez Mannette. Photos by Russell Lutchman and Hinano Beekhoo

Trini vibes take over Brampton

Tassa drums rolled, cricketers appealed to the umpire, and curry duck bubbled as Andrew McCandless Park transformed into one big Trini lime on August 23. Marking Trinidad and Tobago's 63rd anniversary of Independence, Trinifest 2025 brought peppery chow, tassa rhythms, and straight from the Caribbean to Brampton.

The main dish of the day was cricket, served with sides of chow, curry duck, and All Fours card battles. The crowd swayed between wickets and riddims, savouring a celebration that blended sport, music, food, and fashion into one jubilant Caribbean fête.

At the heart of it all was the much-anticipated Independence Cricket Match between Trinbago XI and Windward Islands XI, where every appeal to the umpire was punctuated by tassa drumming and a booming riddim section that electrified the park.

Beyond the boundary, taste buds sizzled in the Curry Duck Cooking Competition, while the Chowfest Chow Contest hosted by Chownation set tongues tingling with pepper, lime, half-ripe mango, and any fruit that could be paired with the fiery scotch bonnet. An All Fours showdown carried the card-sharp traditions of the islands, while trivia contests, giveaways, and prizes for Best Dressed Male and Female added extra splash and style.

Now in its 12th year, Trinifest has grown into a cultural anchor for the Caribbean diaspora, weaving cricket, food, music, and fashion into one must-attend Independence celebration. Founded by cultural icon George Maharaj, the festival has grown to become more than just an annual cricket lime: it is a homecoming for Trinis and all members of the diaspora in the GTA, a reminder that the rhythm of the islands still beats strong abroad.

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* earlier this week, Maharaj noted the growing success of this year's staging, with the corollary events similarly headlining alongside the marquee cricket match.

"Everything went well. We estimate around 3,000 people at the event," he said, adding, "I saw the attendees sharing food, and having a good time. There were 300 tents at the venue, so imagine the camaraderie."

Among the many sponsors making the day possible were Metro Infrastructure, Mississauga Travel, Grace Foods, and Caribbean Airlines, while the DJs and three tassa bands filled the park with music, drumming, and nonstop Trini island vibes.





Consul General Simone Young (left) with Scarborough Centre Councillor Michael Thompson at the 50Plus flag-raising. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo



TT 50Plus raises red, white, and black

– The Trinidad & Tobago 50Plus and Seniors Association of Canada celebrated the homeland’s 63rd Independence anniversary with a flag-raising ceremony in Scarborough on August 29, where Consul General Simone Young hailed our diaspora as cultural warriors who are sustaining pride and heritage abroad.

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Scarborough’s Albert Campbell Square came alive with red, white, and black on August 29, as the Trinidad & Tobago 50Plus and Seniors Association of Canada hosted a flag-raising ceremony marking the twin-island nation’s 63rd Independence anniversary.

The gathering drew a strong turnout, with Consul General Simone Young of the Consulate General for Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto, Acting Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, and June Straker of the 50Plus Association among the dignitaries. Local officials, including Scarborough-Guildwood MPP Andrea Hazell, and Scarborough Centre Councillor Michael Thompson, joined board members, 50Plus association members, and nationals from across the diaspora to witness the patriotic moment.

Taking the podium, Consul General Young described her presence at the ceremony as “an honour, and with a deep sense of personal joy”, noting that this was her first Independence celebration in Toronto since assuming the post.

The occasion represented “in many ways, a full-circle journey”, she said, recalling that “over 18 years ago, I served in this same city as Deputy Consul General... And so now, to return in this capacity, among so many familiar faces and many new ones, it feels very much like coming to a second home”.

Young also declared she was “filled with pride, not only in the achievements of our twin-island nation, but also in the vibrant and ever-growing diaspora that continues to uphold and extend the spirit of Trinidad and Tobago far beyond our shores”.

Nearly two decades earlier, she remembered the diaspora as being “a force, dynamic, engaged, and deeply committed to both our homeland and the adopted country of Canada”, adding that she was heartened to see that “force

has grown only stronger today”.

Young spoke directly to our community’s role abroad, calling us “an even more powerful engine of cultural celebration, economic empowerment, academic achievement, social activism, and national pride”.

She emphasised that within the diaspora are “business owners, artists, scholars, educators, public servants, community organisers, and yes, cultural warriors, who keep the rhythm of our steel pan, the flavour of our *roti*, and the joy of our Carnival alive in the streets of Toronto and beyond”.

Turning to the broader meaning of the day, Young urged reflection on the ideals of liberty, equality, self-determination, and unity in diversity.

“Our national motto, *Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve*, resonates just as powerfully today across the Atlantic, across generations, and across identities,” she said.

The act of raising the flag, she reminded her attentive listeners, “is not just a ceremonial act, it is a reminder of who we are and who we continue to become. It is a tribute to our forebears who dared to dream of a sovereign nation, and to each one of you who dares to dream of a better tomorrow for Trinidad and Tobago, and for our people wherever they reside”.

Young closed by affirming her commitment to building stronger links between Trinidad and Tobago and its diaspora.

“As your Consul General, I am therefore committed to working alongside you to strengthen the bonds between our homeland and our diaspora, and to build partnerships to support our youth, to celebrate our heritage, and to advance the interests of Trinidad and Tobago on this side of the Atlantic,” she declared.

She further affirmed that no matter how long nationals have lived in Canada, “whether you have been here for 50 years or five months”, Young stressed that “you are a vital part of the Trinidad and Tobago story”.

With voices raised in song and hearts lifted in pride, she invited our community to “dedicate ourselves to the vision of a nation that continues to thrive, to be creative, strong, and, of course, more than united”, concluding with a blessing: “Happy Independence Day to every one of you, and may God always bless our nation.” (With files by Hinano Beekhoo)





Then Prime Ministers, Jamaica's Portia Simpson and the UK's David Cameron



British Prime Minister Tony Blair

Sir Hilary Beckles renews the Caribbean's call for reparatory justice

— Sir Hilary Beckles has long been one of the Caribbean's most forceful advocates for reparatory justice. In a keynote address at Medgar Evers College in New York he pressed the case with the urgency of a moral summons, tracing the wounds of slavery, Indentureship, and native dispossession to the present day, arguing that Britain and other colonial powers must return to the "scene of impoverishment and enslavement" and help build a world of justice and sustainability.

...

By Dhanpaul Narine

Sir Hilary Beckles was like Moses on the mountaintop. He was making a passionate case for justice for the descendants of natives, slaves and the Indentured. It was simple and compelling. But then British Prime Minister David Cameron was not buying into it. He said that reparations were not the answer. When he addressed Jamaica's Parliament in September 2015, Cameron admitted that slavery was "abhorrent" and that the "wounds run very deep", but he did not give much hope to the pro-reparation argument.

In fact Cameron wanted the Caribbean to move on and put the past behind. According to the British Prime Minister, "I hope that as friends who have gone through so much together since those darkest of times, we can move on from this painful legacy and continue to build for the future."

Cameron's "building for the future" included money to upgrade the Jamaican prisons so that criminals can be sent from British prisons to serve out their sentences in Jamaica. There is also a \$600 million grant to develop infrastructure in the Caribbean.

While some welcomed these proposals, there were those that saw the British package as a band aid treatment to forget what is a major wound to the psyche of the Caribbean. In other words the British response did not go far enough.

It is no secret that slavery and Indentureship uprooted families and imposed a culture that was alien to the victims.

The statistics show that around six million Africans were transported to America and the West Indies during the period 1610 to 1865. When slavery ended East Indians, Chinese, Portuguese, and poor whites were taken to the Caribbean to supply labour on the plantations.

Native Indians too faced the wrath of the masters as their culture and economy were disrupted. Many Indians were ordered to hunt runaways and spent months away from their communities. There was no program in place to attend to their welfare.

The idea of reparations has never really included slaves or their descendants. In 1852, US President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill ending slavery in the District of Columbia that called "for immediate emancipation and compensation to former owners who were loyal to the Union for up to \$300 for each freed slave".

This emancipator of slaves cared little about the future of Blacks. By the end of 1862 a total of 930 petitions were approved from former slave owners. When the Civil War ended General William Sherman proposed 40 acres and a mule apiece for former slaves, but nothing materialised.

In 1825 Haiti agreed to pay France 125 million francs with interest in compensation for lost property that included slaves. The sum was finally repaid in 1947, which helps to explain why Haiti has remained poor. In 2010, France's President Nicolas Sarkozy visited Haiti and said that Haitians "have been wounded but they are standing". No offer of reparations was made.

Over the years the call for reparations has been intensified. Ta-Nehisi Coates argues that the system has made it difficult for Blacks to move up the ladder, and that America has a duty to repay its debts to Blacks. In 1998 Representative John Conyers introduced a bill HR 40 in Congress to discuss reparations, but that bill is still to be passed.

In 2007 British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that slavery was "shameful", and a year later William Hague called the system "inhuman". These statements fell short of an apology, and added little to the debate.



Sir Hilary Beckles

In 2014, Caribbean governments unveiled proposals to demand reparations for the sufferings inflicted by the slave trade. Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, became one of the principal spokespersons for the pro-reparations lobby.

Sir Hilary spoke at the House of Commons, on behalf of Caribbean governments and made a passionate plea for reparations. He pointed out that British slave ships "brought 5.5 million enslaved Africans into their Caribbean colonies and when slavery was abolished there were just 800,000 remaining".

He called for the terrible wrongs to be corrected as it was the same House of Commons, in which he was speaking, that enacted legislation to enslave millions.

Sir Hilary also made a case for the East Indians and Amerindians, who along with Africans "were three acts of a single play", a trifecta in chains in an imperial domination. They were part of a process in which the British extracted wealth through exploitation. As in the case of America, slave owners were compensated by the British Parliament, and not a penny was given to the enslaved, since they were seen as property. In fact the ex-slaves were required to work for free for four additional years after 1833 in what was called the system of Apprenticeship.

It was fitting then that Sir Hilary's sterling advocacy should take him to New York, a city that was also built by slave labour. The setting was Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn at the Caribbean Research Center. The Center was celebrating its 30th Anniversary, and some of the leading lights in education were present. They included college President Dr Rudy Crew, Dean Dr George Irish, and Provost Dr Augustine Okereke, and a wonderful singer Ayanna Irish.

Dr Crew, a former Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, hailed the work of the Center and supported the call for reparations. Dr Irish thanked Dr Crew for his magnificent work at Medgar Evers College, and said that reparations were long overdue. Dr Okereke said that he was pleased that visits were made to Nigeria, and referred to the important links between Nigeria and the Caribbean.

Sir Hilary Beckles gave the keynote address From Reparations to Sustainability. He described Medgar Evers as a place of com-

munion. He said that he was grateful for the support of Danny Glover, who has lent his voice for reparatory justice.

Sir Hilary praised the work of the Caribbean Research Center, and defined the Caribbean as a unifying civilisation of modernity. But the Caribbean is much more. He said that an anchor from Columbus' Santa Maria and a portrait of Toussaint L'Ouverture in the national museum in Haiti represented the beginning of a new world.

According to Sir Hilary, "this was the thesis and antithesis, the beginning of a world based on the genocide of our native peoples and the chattel enslavement of Africans".

He added, "This was a world constructed on those principles. The Caribbean is a civilisation dedicated in its intellectual energy, its cultural force, its philosophical mission to turn that world upside down and create a world of justice."

This position was impressive, and it set the tone for a healthy discussion on the role of the reparatory movement.

Sir Hilary pointed out that it was in the Caribbean that the idea of destroying slavery was first institutionalised to create a just society. In Haiti, for instance, the constitution of 1805 stated that any person of African or Native American descent that arrived in that country will be classed as free, and be given citizenship. This was ground-breaking in a hemisphere built on chattel slavery.

Sir Hilary added that whether one listens to the music of Bob Marley, or reads the works of Walter Rodney, one is bound to feel the energy of the Caribbean. The idea is to build sustainable societies. The ex-slaves are leaders of their countries, and are responsible for governance and this makes them unique.

The struggle continues for a just society, and it has taken hundreds of years to come to terms with genocide and apartheid. Conflict and struggle have become the hallmark of Caribbean societies in Haiti, Cuba, and the English-speaking Caribbean.

A number of leaders went to prison as part of the Independence struggle, including Dr Cheddi Jagan and Alexander Bustamante. One of the legacies of colonial rule was to keep the subjects in a state of dependency.

In Haiti, as we have seen, it was to repay a huge debt. In other countries, such as in Jamaica, only a fraction of the people were literate at Independence.

The colonial powers had extracted wealth from the colonies through a mercantile economy. But many countries have done well after Independence.

As Sir Hilary puts it, "Jamaica has done magnificently in converting a colonial mess into a nation state". It is fitting that Marlon James should win the 2015 Man Booker Prize and praise Jamaica's rich literary tradition.

The Caribbean has come a long way. It has shown resilience and fortitude despite the forces of history being against it. Sir Hilary discussed two concepts as part of reparatory justice. The first is that the Caribbean will take responsibility for its future. This means that the Caribbean does not want imperial donations.

Sir Hilary said that given the complicated nature of the global financial system, the Caribbean is moving ahead with building societies that celebrate human freedoms. He then proceeded to make the point that "all of those colonial and slave-owning powers who have extracted the wealth and enslaved the peoples of the Caribbean have a responsibility and a duty to return to the scene of this impoverishment and enslavement and participate in the process of human development".

This is a powerful statement that strikes at the heart of the problem. Sir Hilary has made the case for reparations. The Caribbean is not interested in pittance. Debt write-offs, the building of educational institutions, the setting up of viable industries, reconnecting with the motherlands and programs that foster a sense of pride within the region are good starting points for sustainability.

The Caribbean is lucky to have Sir Hilary to lend his vision to the reparatory justice movement.

Business leaders split on go-ahead for US support

– Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar's support for a US naval deployment in the southern Caribbean has drawn mixed responses from business leaders, who agree on the dangers of drug cartels and organised crime, but differ on whether military presence is the right solution for safeguarding peace and prosperity.

...

Port-of-Spain – Business organisations in Trinidad and Tobago have expressed differing views on Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar's August 23 statement supporting a US naval deployment in the southern Caribbean Sea.

Commenting on the government's move, Greater San Fernando Chamber of Commerce president Kiran Singh warned of the risks posed by conflict but acknowledged the growing influence of cartels.

"War is never good for business. We must remember that in our efforts to avert international conflict," Singh said.

Referring to Persad-Bissessar's comments about drug and arms trafficking, he noted, "The operation of drug cartels in the Caribbean region is expanding. Human trafficking and money laundering are significant international crimes within the network."

Singh stressed the growing reach of cartels into Caribbean societies.

"Banking, finance, money laundering and human trafficking are significant criminal activities that occur with growing prevalence," he said.

He added that "we need a superpower to ensure that the balance of power is not tipped to countries losing their sovereignty and geographical space to the military might of our southern neighbours".

Singh recalled Trinidad and Tobago signing a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the US in December 2024, which he said allows military-to-military engagement.

"That meant military action can be engaged through this country if the US deems it necessary," he said.

American Chamber of Commerce CEO Nirad Tewarie emphasised that while the Caribbean has long been seen as a "zone of peace," new threats are undermining stability.

"Trans national drug and terrorist organisations are undermining that as they operate outside both national and multi-national rules, norms and laws," Tewarie said.

He added that a safer region would mean greater economic opportunity: "Military assets from several countries routinely patrol the international waters of the Caribbean Sea on drug-interdiction missions. Hopefully these extra assets will result in greater success in terms of disruption of these criminal, terrorist networks and, ideally, lead to the apprehension of some of the leaders of these networks."

Tewarie welcomed US collaboration in law enforcement, noting, "Recent assistance by the US government to train and

screen police officers for a specially vetted unit in the police service is a good example of how we can collaborate with our international partners in this regard and leverage those partnerships."

Confederation of Regional Business Chambers co-ordinator Jai Leladharsingh described US-Venezuela tensions as troubling, but not surprising.

"This is not surprising given the tense relationship between both countries," he said, while agreeing that action was needed against cartels.

"I do agree that something has to be done to permanently shut down these drug cartels and bring these criminals to justice," he said.

Leladharsingh argued that poor governance in Latin America has worsened the crisis. "This has become impossible given the horrible governance taking place in Latin America," he said.

He criticised US policy toward Venezuela, saying, "The US should have dealt with Venezuela a long time ago. Since the time of Hugo Chavez. Successive US governments did nothing and kept kicking the can down the road."

Leladharsingh added that Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro and other leaders in the region had been accused of rigging elections in their countries.

Greater Chaguanas Chamber of Commerce president Baldath Maharaj stressed the need for stronger regional safeguards to counter organised crime.

"These criminal networks have, over the years, created serious challenges for small states like ours by fuelling violence, undermining institutions, and damaging the reputation of our economies," Maharaj said.

He warned that cartels' vast resources exceed the capacity of many Caribbean governments, creating risks of influence in sensitive areas of society.

"This is why the business community continues to call for stronger safeguards in governance, banking, law enforcement, and border control," he stated.

Maharaj linked organised crime directly to economic harm, noting, "From a business perspective, narco trafficking threatens legitimate commerce, discourages investment, and adds to the cost of doing business by fostering crime and insecurity," he said.

He added that the solution lies in collaboration and strong institutions: "Our region's stability and prosperity depend on ensuring that transparency and accountability remain at the heart of public and private decision making. We must remain

committed to building a Caribbean where business thrives on fair competition, innovation, and hard work not on the corrosive influence of cartels."



Baldath Maharaj



Kiran Singh



Nirad Tewarie



Dr Roodal Moonilal (second from left), with Grenada Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell (second from right), and other Grenada officials during an official visit in Grenada last month. Grenada OPM photo

TT-Grenada hold energy talks

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago's Energy Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal has pledged support for Grenada's oil and gas development following high-level meetings with Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell and senior officials in St George's.

The August 26 media release noted that Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar had mandated Moonilal at his swearing-in on May 3 to urgently engage Grenada and other regional partners in energy discussions. Persad-Bissessar also highlighted her interest in advancing gas talks with Grenada, Suriname, and Guyana.

"In fulfilment of this mandate, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries promptly initiated contact through formal correspondence, which culminated in recent in-person meetings between the respective parties," the release stated.

Moonilal met with Prime Minister Mitchell, Grenadian Attorney General Claudette Joseph, and Nazim Burke, chairman of Grenada's Hydrocarbons Technical Working Group, during the August 23-24 visit.

The discussions centred on opportunities for collaboration in oil and gas, while also reaffirming a 2012 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two countries on energy cooperation.

"This renewed engagement builds upon that MoU and signals Trinidad and Tobago's readiness to share its oil and gas expertise in support of Grenada's energy development," the statement said.

Moonilal emphasised Trinidad and Tobago's extensive experience as a long-standing hydrocarbon producer and highlighted its robust energy infrastructure, noting it remained open and accessible for regional use.

Prime Minister Mitchell, who holds the cabinet portfolio for energy, welcomed the opportunity for deepened collaboration. He said Grenada is at the early stages of assessing its hydrocarbon potential and highlighted the importance of Trinidad and Tobago's support in building the necessary services and capacity.

Moonilal assured Grenadian officials that Trinidad and Tobago's infrastructure remains a feasible option for regional neighbours to monetise hydrocarbon resources, underscoring the shared benefits of skills transfer, job creation, and technology exchange.

Home invasions trigger public outcry, calls for tougher govt action

– Two recent home invasions, the first targeting criminologist Professor Ramesh Deosaran and the other leaving a Claxton Bay shopkeeper hospitalised, have heightened national alarm, with residents voicing support for tougher self-defence laws and the police promising decisive measures to curb what many describe as a spiralling public safety crisis.

...

Port-of-Spain – The growing unease over home invasions was underscored last week after two separate incidents left one victim traumatised and another severely injured, prompting fresh demands for stronger legislation and firmer law enforcement.

Criminologist and former chair of the Police Service Commission Dr Ramesh Deosaran reported an attempted home invasion at his Champs Fleurs residence on his Facebook account. He included a CCTV image showing a man in a grey hoodie carrying a cutlass prowling outside the house during the midmorning on August 14.

Deosaran said the suspect redirected his CCTV cameras, but failed to disable one.

"He twisted the cameras upside down, but he missed one, and that one caught him as he was walking around the house. Even with cameras they have they are still in danger," he said.

He noted the intruder was unable to gain entry since doors and windows were secured, adding that otherwise, the encounter could have turned into a "stand-your-ground situation".

He warned that the incident illustrates the vulnerability of households even with modern security.

"You have to ask the question, 'What else can you do to be



Screen shot of the intruder at the Deosaran residence safe? You have cameras they can interfere with, you have burglar-proofing, but they have equipment they can use to break into your home. So it places the whole country in a fright, and the government has to take note of that," Deosaran said.

Shortly after Deosaran's incident, a brutal home invasion in Claxton Bay left a 68-year-old shopkeeper hospitalised with severe injuries. Neighbours said she was left with a brain bleed, fractured ribs, and facial swelling, and remains in serious condition at the San Fernando General Hospital.

The viciousness of the attack stunned residents.

"This crime situation is crazy. You are making innocent people into criminals. Looking at her suffering in that hospital bed, the thought comes: Why couldn't she just gun him down?" a neighbour said.

The neighbour added that communities must protect one

another, warning that today's victim could easily be tomorrow's neighbour. While some security measures are already in place, she expressed support for the government's proposed stand-your-ground legislation, which would make home invasion a specific crime and allow for deadly force in self-defence.

Police later detained a 29-year-old suspect in connection with the attack.

Speaking to the recent rise in southern home invasions, Acting Commissioner of Police Wayne Myster assured the public that additional measures are being deployed.

"We are actively pursuing individuals and criminal groups believed to be involved in these home invasions. Let me be clear: we will locate them, we will arrest them, and we will ensure they are brought before the courts to face the full weight of the law," Myster said.

He added that the Southern Division has boosted intelligence gathering, patrols, and emergency response, alongside targeted walkabouts and house-to-house visits. Special attention is being given to elderly citizens, who he noted have been disproportionately affected by home invasions.

"I am also calling on the public to remain vigilant and to continue partnering with the Police Service. Your timely reports, surveillance footage, and community alerts have already proven instrumental in recent arrests and interventions," Myster said.

For Deosaran, the attempted break-in underscored how ordinary citizens remain at risk even with security systems.

"An incident like this can happen anytime, anywhere, to anybody. Therefore, the country is almost in a crisis state when it comes to public safety," he said.

Persad-Bissessar defends TT govt’s decision, holds course for US support

– Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has doubled down on her defence of US military collaboration against drug cartels, dismissing criticisms from Dr Keith Rowley, and asserting that Trinidad and Tobago’s national interest, and Guyana’s sovereignty, take precedence over Caricom unity.

Port-of-Spain – Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar last week declared she makes “no apology” for supporting the US in its mission to dismantle regional drug cartels, rejecting criticisms from former Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley.

Persad-Bissessar, responding to media questions following Rowley’s accusation that she had “lit a match in the Caribbean” with “reckless” foreign policy, maintained that drug and arms trafficking had already engulfed the region in violence.

“The truth is the Caribbean is already on fire, engulfed by the flames of illicit drug, gun, and arms trafficking,” she said, adding, “So why is the PNM against dismantling the cartels? Guns and drugs don’t materialise out of thin air. They move through powerful regional trafficking networks, run by billion-dollar cartels that are stronger, better armed, and better organised than many States.”

Persad-Bissessar accused Rowley of siding with Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, saying he was “trying to defend his friend with baseless attacks against the Guyanese people”.

She argued the drug cartel crisis had long threatened to destabilise the region, and regional accords had produced “not much”.

She dismissed Rowley’s Caricom concerns, pointing out that “several Caricom nations, namely St Lucia, St Vincent, Grenada, and Dominica, are ALBA signatories, and openly backed Maduro and condemned the US.

Smith rejects Mottley’s AI colonisation concern

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago’s Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence Dominic Smith has rejected assertions that artificial intelligence could usher in a new form of colonisation in the Caribbean.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley recently raised concerns that without education reform, stronger regional governance, and safeguards for democracy, the Caribbean risks “being recolonised again” through AI.

“The first thing we must recognise is that the Armada is not coming. The flotillas are not coming. They’re not dropping people in the centre of the careenage there to be distributed in Barbados and other islands as slaves. They are coming straight into your heads and your minds,” Mottley said.

She recalled raising the issue at the last Caricom Heads of Government meeting, where she urged regional leaders to collectively control how information is generated and disseminated through the creation of an education transformation commission. Without such measures, she warned, the region could again become subject to outside dominance.

To counter these risks, Mottley announced Barbados will partner with the University of the West Indies to establish a Caribbean Institute for Democracy and Political Governance at the Cave Hill campus.

While acknowledging Mottley’s concerns, Smith urged the region to view AI as a neutral tool rather than an agent of colonisation.

“The reality is that information inputs in the digital space – whether on the Internet, social media, or AI systems – are often dominated by the most developed countries,” Smith said. “That is a fact of the global digital economy.”

He cautioned against ascribing human



Keith Rowley

Caricom unity had already been fractured before my comments.”

On the territorial dispute between Venezuela and Guyana, Persad-Bissessar said: “Where is the peace and stability in our proclaimed ‘Zone of Peace’, when one country wants to invade and claim more than two-thirds of its neighbour’s territory? My government would not stand by and allow that horrendous violation of Guyana’s sovereignty while some talk vacuously of our ‘Zone of Peace’? Because after Guyana we could very well be next.”

She insisted, “I make no apology for standing firm against narco-trafficking and gun smuggling. I make no apology for defending a Caricom neighbour Guyana, who is under threat. And I make no apology for putting the interests of Trinidad and Tobago first.”

Political analyst Derek Ramsamooj cautioned that Trinidad and Tobago’s position could carry risks for both the country and Caricom if tensions between the US and Venezuela are not handled diplomatically.



Nicholás Maduro


“This is a movement which is over 50 years old that allows non-interference in the internal political matters of our Caricom and regional neighbours as well as global neighbours,” Ramsamooj said, recalling Trinidad and Tobago’s contribution to the Non-Aligned

Movement. He added: “Clearly a change of this position will not augur well for the reputation of the state of Trinidad and Tobago, especially in the geopolitics and the global economy where accessing common resources for the development of our respective states require a level of respect for nations’ sovereignty.”

Ramsamooj warned that failure to balance diplomacy could impose “an economic and social cost to the well-being of our population in Trinidad and Tobago”. He noted that the nation’s non-aligned standing had long provided access to essential food, medicine, and energy resources.

“What is required is the skilful negotiation to calm the frustration or to reduce the level of discomfort,” he said, urging solutions that would secure regional safety and resources for all, including Venezuelans.

He also cautioned against “freely granting the US military access to Trinidad and Tobago’s territory should Venezuela launch a military incursion into Guyana”.



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Mia Mottley

motives to technology.

“AI is a tool. It does not have an intention of its own, nor can we ascribe human motives to the nature of technology,” Smith said. “What matters is how people choose to use it, whether for good or for harm.”

Smith called for a balanced approach that embeds Caribbean cultural values into AI’s regulation and development.

“If we empower and educate our citizens, AI can strengthen, not weaken, our independence, resilience, and innovation,” he added.


Trinidad-born physicist Professor Stephon Alexander of Brown University and CEO of Sound+Science echoed Mottley’s concerns, warning that AI-driven disinformation is already a reality.

“AI-driven disinformation campaigns are not only possible but already happening,” Alexander said. He stressed the risks of Small Island states becoming passive consumers of information produced elsewhere, which could distort cultural narratives, historical knowledge, and public opinion.

“I agree with the Prime Minister that it’s something we have to be very vigilant about and have that awareness,” Alexander said. “I also believe the intervention of that is both keeping true to our culture and our foundations as well as elevating the education system.”

Alexander urged Caribbean governments to leverage local and diaspora expertise.

“Some of the best AI researchers and minds out there actually are from our diaspora... we could partner with them and partner with other like-minded global organisations to construct very smart and wise legislation that benefits us and puts us in a winning position into the future,” he added.



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Narine's book explores Guyana's hinterland, harmony, and history

Narine, Dhanpaul: *Ramraj: An Amazonian Fantasy*
A review by Abel Peters

To my fellow Guyanese, who, like me, grew up on the Atlantic coast and have never ventured more than a few miles inland, I extend an invitation to you to learn more about our country's vast, beautiful interior, including the great, indigenous, Amerindian folks who were its original inhabitants; the countless rivers, creeks, and waterfalls that are the source of the label, *The Land of Many Waters*.

Also, our beautiful, varied wildlife, including different species of monkeys, reptiles, insects; the profusion of fruits and vegetable, and multiple herbs with natural healing powers that help with a variety of ailments, obviating the need to seek medical attention.

And while there are much more to learn, and taking a trip into Guyana's hinterland would involve much planning, and advisably, traveling there with a group, much can be gathered from the pages of Dr Dhanpaul Narine's recently published novel, *Ramraj: An Amazonian Fantasy*.

The book chronicles an adventure forced upon the protagonist, Ramraj, after he was recruited as a cook by an organisation, presumably with ties to the government, intent on constructing a hydropower project, its location in the Amazonian jungles of Guyana, thousands of miles from the capital, Georgetown.

He shockingly realised he was the first and only staff member of the organisation to arrive at the supposed destination – there was absolutely no-one to welcome him, no news about the others, and zero lines of communication with Georgetown.

He suddenly found himself alone in a strange new world, initially having to seek refuge from the elements in what looked like a rest house, with not a soul or amenity for cooking or other household needs.

From the transformation of a ruthlessly depraved young man, originally bent on wanton disregard for the welfare of wildlife; to his later burst of conscience and conversion to being a strong advocate for wild animals, especially endangered species; to his leadership role in the remote interior village of Saikan, the author portrays the many hurdles faced by Ramraj as he is forced to remain in Amazonia, and its beautiful, and

at times dangerous surroundings, awaiting word from his Georgetown 'bosses'.

Then, when those 'bosses' finally showed up after about 12 months, they promised a better life for all while outlining plans that included a man-made lake to provide enough water to spin the turbines. This would have involved relocation of residents from their life-long habitats, thus causing undue hardships and disruption of their mode of living.

At the same time, they openly tried to grease the palms of the residents with monetary handouts so they could sign up to indicate they approved of the project. That was when Ramraj boldly stepped forward to call their bluff, risking his life by convincing the residents of the difficulties in store for them if they supported the plans.

Dr Narine, one with intimate knowledge of Guyana's hinterland, having spent a few years there as part of a research project while he was attending the University of Guyana, shifts the focus to politics and attempted interference by outside forces aligned with the hydropower planners.

He deftly builds up the story, with Ramraj boldly stepping forward to expose the chicanery resorted to by foreigners bent on ownership of huge swaths of Guyana's interior territory; and with the President, who was facing re-election, making use of technology, with the help of one of his closest confidantes, to turn the tables against an attempt to link him to bribery, and to use blackmail against him to influence the results of the pending elections if he failed to accede to their devious plans.

As the title suggests, *Ramraj* is a work of fiction with some elements of fantasy, and makes for good, interesting reading. It depicts, for instance, how some wild animals, normally dangerous, could sense good deeds and empathy towards them by their human counterparts, including Ramraj; and how they end up

reciprocating that kindness and empathy with life-saving actions.

Also, it's a story with fantastical dream revelations mostly involving Ramraj and his friend and mentor, Shaman George, a highly respected elder in the village of Saikan. It was Shaman George who played a big part in guiding Ramraj in his adventures in Amazonia, including his discovery of the possible ruins of the lost City of Gold, Eldorado, which explorers like Sir Walter Raleigh had failed to locate.

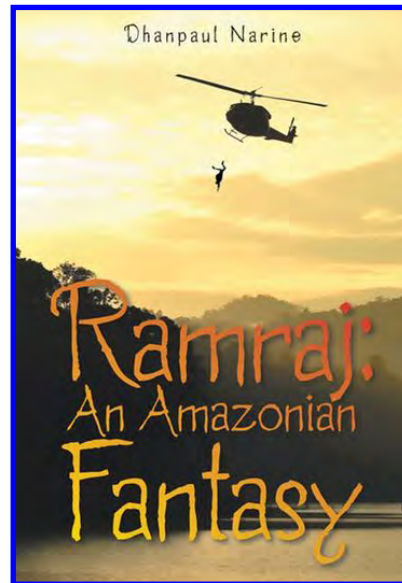
Of particular significance, the book notes the camaraderie between Guyana's two major races in various scenarios, including sports, but laments the unfortunate fact that come election time, voting follows a racial pattern: Indo-Guyanese for Dr Cheddi Jagan's party, Afro-Guyanese for the party led by Forbes Burnham. The book strongly advocates racial harmony to rid the country of this race factor, and clearly conveys a message for national unity to be the goal.

One of the high points in the book is how the President, following the suggestion of Ramraj in a dream, was able to convince the people of the need to relocate the Georgetown Prisons, and build a park on the location, which was aptly named the *Jagan-Burnham Park*, and which is enjoyed by the citizenry as a venue for relaxation.

The President obviously followed the advice of Ramraj, who in a letter from Saikan, advised him of how important it was to "make the people happy", and was the brain-child behind the park.

I am highly impressed with Dr Narine's vivid descriptive acumen, including of life in and around the village of Saikan, and what is clearly a wealth of knowledge of Guyana's political, economic, and ethnic landscapes.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Ramraj: An Amazonian Fantasy*, and consider it a literary *tour de force*. I highly recommend it to all, including Guyanese eager to learn more of their country and its vast, rich hinterland, and especially lovers of good literature.



Behind the glamour, Bollywood women and men rewrite the script

– From bold smoking scenes to suppressed emotions, Bollywood actors are navigating an industry laden with societal expectations. In our latest exploration, we examine the gendered burdens that are faced by both women and men in Indian cinema, and how they are finally beginning to rewrite the script.

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Series for Our Caribbean Diaspora

In the curl of Zeenat Aman's cigarette smoke rises a rebellion. It is not the smoke alone that unsettles traditional viewers of *The Royals*, the Netflix drama featuring Aman as a pot-smoking queen mother. It is what the smoke implies: agency, self-possession, and a woman unapologetically enjoying a vice long reserved for the on-screen villainess or the rakish male.

The moment ripples beyond aesthetics; in fact, it signals a cultural reckoning. As director Priyanka Ghose told *News18 Showsha*, Aman's character was inspired by real women in Bengali society, where such expressions of autonomy are not scandalous, but simply part of living.

"Because there are women in power who are not judging women, there has been a sea-change in the way women are being represented," Ghose said.

That sea-change is only beginning to stir in Bollywood's depths. Beneath the glamour lies a cinema culture weighed down by gendered expectations, both on screen and off. Women must be perfect, pristine, and perennially young; men must be strong, stoic, and eternally dominant. But a quiet revolution is underway. Bollywood's brightest are resisting the roles the industry, and society, have long written for them.

Zeenat Aman's role is no anomaly. It is the latest expression of an ongoing push-back against reductive depictions of women in Indian cinema. As *The Times of India* reported, Priyanka Ghose emphasised the importance of female-led productions in bringing nuanced portrayals to screen. Her characters are not apologising for their desires, their habits, or their history.

This newfound boldness is echoed by actresses like Jacqueline Fernandez, who recently observed a positive shift in the roles offered to women, noting that older stereotypes are gradually being dismantled.

"Strong leading roles are now being written for women of all ages," she told the *Times of India*.

Still, the burden is far from lifted. Renowned fitness expert Yasmin Karachiwala, who has trained stars like Katrina Kaif and Deepika Padukone, laid bare the silent labour behind the scenes.

In an interview with the *Indian Express*, she explained that audiences are quick to criticise any bodily imperfection.



Zeenat Aman

"If Katrina had belly fat and she did *Chikni Chameli*, the media and the other trainers would be the first to point out and ask, 'Who's training her?'" Karachiwala said.

Additionally, she told the *Indian Express*, "We are so judgemental, and they need to be on their 'A-game' all the time."

The double bind is clear: be bold, but beautiful; be liberated, but likable; be powerful, but palatable.

While women battle appearance and virtue policing, male actors are caught in another trap: hyper-masculinity. For decades, Bollywood heroes have been sculpted in the mold of the aggressive, emotionally repressed saviour.

Films like *Kabir Singh* and *Animal* glorify toxic behaviour, reinforcing the ideal that a man must be powerful to be desirable.

This mythology is not without casualties. Actor Rohit Bose

Roy recently reflected on the toll such expectations take on men's mental health. In an interview with *Sputnik News*, he noted that men are often discouraged from expressing emotion or seeking help, leading to increased cases of depression and even suicide.

"We're always told to man up, to keep it together. But that's not human," said Jay Bhanushali in the same *Sputnik News* report.

As the *Times of India* noted, the tragic case of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, whose death by suicide in 2020 shook the industry, underscores the silence that still surrounds male vulnerability.

But some actors are leading the charge to disrupt these norms. Ayushmann Khurrana, named by *Time* as a trailblazer, has built a filmography around challenging gendered scripts. From *Vicky Donor* to *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan*, he plays men who defy machismo, choosing empathy, humour, and even queerness over bravado.

Among women, actors like Vidya Balan and Preity Zinta have long questioned the mold. Balan's roles in *The Dirty Picture* and *Kahaani* recast women as flawed, fierce, and free. Zinta's outspoken characters normalised agency and defiance in a film culture saturated with submissiveness.

More recently, *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* offered a refreshing portrayal of male tenderness, with male leads who cry, cook, and confess without shame, which according to *AP News*, is an anomaly in mainstream Hindi cinema.

Streaming platforms, rising female studio leadership, and global feminist conversations are slowly unspooling the old reels. Academic studies, like those published in the *International Journal of New Research and Development*, confirm that digital storytelling has enabled more authentic representations of both genders.

Director Priyanka Ghose's own experiences mirror this shift. Growing up in Calcutta, she saw women in her family balance careers and social lives without apology.

"Wanting to drink or smoke or have multiple relationships or exploring one's sexuality is not seen in a bad light because it should not be seen in a bad light," she insisted.

The same clarity is emerging among male actors who want more than just chiselled torsos and monosyllabic rage. They want room to breathe, and to grieve.

In the curl of Zeenat Aman's cigarette smoke is more than character; it is catharsis. In that moment, Bollywood lets its women be flawed, and allows its men be fragile. And in doing so, begins to unwrite the scripts that have confined them for so long.

Afghan captain appeals to fans to stay calm

- Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan has appealed to fans for calm ahead of his side's high-profile clash with Pakistan, urging supporters to remember cricket's power to unite rather than divide.

With memories of crowd clashes in Sharjah two years ago still fresh, Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan last week called on fans to treat the upcoming encounters with Pakistan as celebrations of the game, not flashpoints for rivalry.

Rashid's appeal comes as the tri-series involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates gathers momentum, with heightened attention on the marquee meetings between the neighbouring nations.

The reminder of cricket's spirit of unity follows the dramatic 2022 clash in Sharjah, where Pakistan's one-wicket victory in the final over was overshadowed by scuffles in the stands.

That incident led to the Pakistan Cricket Board writing to the ICC in protest, while then-chairman Ramiz Raja labelled the behaviour "hooliganism". Several Afghanistan supporters were detained by Sharjah police, though no arrests were made.

Since then, political tensions between the two countries have only deepened, raising concerns over the potential for renewed crowd trouble. Organisers have responded with tight-

er controls: separate sections for Afghanistan and Pakistan supporters inside the stadium, as well as increased vigilance from security personnel. Such segregation is not unprecedented; supporters were also divided when the sides played a bilateral series in 2023.

Sharjah, home to sizeable diaspora populations from both nations, has historically hosted packed stadiums whenever the two sides meet. However, for Rashid, the emphasis must remain firmly on the game itself.



Rashid Khan

"[My] message to everyone who comes and watches the games in the stadium is that cricket brings unity," he said.

He added, "It brings people and nations together. It sends a peaceful message. This game is all about enjoyment. We play this game to enjoy ourselves and give entertainment to the crowd and the fans. It's just a game of cricket. I ask people to come, enjoy themselves, support their

respective teams and enjoy every moment of the game."

On the field, Rashid believes the nature of the format ensures unpredictability.

"No team is favourite, especially in T20Is. You have to play good cricket. One or two players can totally change the game. Everyone will be trying to deliver their best performances," he said, framing the tri-series as an open contest.

Pakistan played back to back games against UAE last week. The final will be played on September 7.



Nuwanidu Fernando

Sri Lanka selectors turn to youth for Zimbabwe tour

- Sri Lanka's selectors have turned to youth and power-hitting for the Zimbabwe tour, handing a maiden call-up to 20-year-old Vishen Halambage as part of a revamped T20I squad signalling a shift toward modern, intent-driven batting.

Sri Lanka will begin their T20I series in Harare today with a squad notably reshaped from the one that faced Bangladesh in July, as emerging talents including Vishen Halambage, Nuwanidu Fernando, and Kamil Mishara headline five changes.

The selection marks a bold recalibration toward aggressive batting. Halambage, at just 20, was rewarded for his standout performances in the recent SLC T20 League, where he struck six sixes, equalling the tournament's best alongside teammates Pathum Nissanka, Charith Asalanka, and Bhanuka Rajapaksa.

Halambage is joined by fellow newcomers Nuwanidu Fernando and Kamil Mishara, both of whom were among the most prolific scorers at the domestic event.

Mishara, who finished with a strike rate of 172.72 and a boundary tally of 19, was second only to Nissanka in scoring speed. Halambage followed with a strike rate of 140.32, while Nuwanidu's 155 runs and 77.50 average underscored his consistency, positioning him as a strong contender for Sri Lanka's No 4 spot in the absence of Avishka Fernando and Dinesh Chandimal.

Notably absent is Niroshan Dickwella, who amassed 134 runs at 161.44 in the same

tournament. His omission reflects the selectors' forward-looking approach, given that his runs came primarily as an opener, roles that are already secured by Nissanka and Kusal Mendis. For the 32-year-old, opportunities now appear limited.

On the bowling side, legspin all-rounder Dushan Hemantha steps in for the injured Wanindu Hasaranga. Although Vijayakanth Vijayakanth claimed more wickets in the domestic league, Hemantha's all-round package in his fielding and ability to clear the ropes with the bat proved decisive in his selection. Meanwhile, Vandersay was not invited to play in the SLC League, signalling a diminishing role in the T20I set-up.

Among seamers, Dushmantha Chameera makes his return at the expense of Eshan Malinga, who endured a torrid domestic campaign. Despite a strong IPL showing earlier this year, Malinga's league economy rate of 11.71 left him the most expensive bowler in the tournament, in stark contrast to Chameera's 8.5 and Chamika Karunaratne's tournament-leading eight wickets at just 5.5 runs per over.

Captain Charith Asalanka leads a squad that blends experience with new blood, its composition reflecting a clear intent to sharpen Sri Lanka's T20I approach in the lead-up to larger tournaments.

With Zimbabwe hosting, the Harare opener marks not only the beginning of a fresh series but also the start of what Sri Lanka's selectors hope will be a new era of fearless batting and balanced team construction.



Kraigg Brathwaite

Brathwaite loses CWI central contract

- Long-serving opener and former captain Kraigg Brathwaite is poised to be omitted from Cricket West Indies' central contracts list for 2025-26, a decision seen as a watershed moment for the region's Test cricket future.

Kraigg Brathwaite's decade-long tenure as West Indies' batting anchor faces an uncertain future, with the former Test captain set to lose his central contract in a move that signals a generational shift in Caribbean cricket.

According to reports in *The Nation News*, Brathwaite, 32, will not receive an international retainer, and has instead been offered a domestic contract with his home franchise, the *Barbados Pride*, following the regional draft.

The CWI move marks a dramatic turn for the Barbadian stalwart, who has anchored the top of the West Indies' order since his debut in 2011, and recently celebrated his 100th Test cap against Australia in Grenada.

Despite becoming only the tenth West Indian to reach the milestone, Brathwaite's form has declined. His struggles culminated when he was dropped for the third Test at Sabina Park, where the West Indies suffered the humiliation of being bowled out for a record-low 27 runs in a series whitewash against Australia.

That omission ended his remarkable run of 90 consecutive Test appearances dating back to 2014.

Brathwaite's omission from the contracts list, though not yet officially confirmed by CWI, raises pressing questions about his international future. It follows his resignation as Test captain in March, just weeks after orchestrating a memorable series-levelling victory over Pakistan, the team's first Test win on Pakistani soil in 30 years.

His successor, Roston Chase, was appointed following a process that included psychometric testing. But the team has since struggled, slipping to the bottom of the ICC World Test Championship table after their 3-0 defeat to Australia, with away series against India and New Zealand on the horizon.

CWI has not yet commented publicly on Brathwaite's situation, and the player himself has remained silent. For now, his next steps remain unclear on whether to continue pressing for international selection, or to refocus entirely on domestic cricket.

However, what is certain is that the likely omission of such an experienced figure underscores a changing of the guard in Caribbean cricket - a possible indication of CWI's intention to invest in a new generation of West Indian cricketers.

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India's WC 2025 squad brings relief, intrigue

– Fast bowler Renuka Singh's return from a stress fracture and all-rounder Amanjot Kaur's comeback from a back injury headline India's 15-member Women's World Cup squad, with Shafali Verma again left out.

India will co-host the Women's World Cup with Sri Lanka from September 30, aiming to win the title for the first time after finishing runners-up in 2005 and 2017. The squad announcement brings both relief and intrigue: Renuka Singh, out since December 2024 with a stress fracture, and Amanjot Kaur, sidelined in July with a back injury, have both been recalled to strengthen India's attack.

Chief selector Neetu David underlined Renuka's importance, saying, "Renuka has been a precious player for us. She had niggles and been out of the game, but is available. Is our main player. This is a main event, great she is part of the team."

However, Amanjot has been rested for the three-match ODI series against Australia beginning September 14 in New Chandigarh. Captain Harmanpreet Kaur explained she is "working on a few small niggles" at the BCCI Centre of Excellence. Sayali Satghare, who featured against England, will take her place for the Australia series before Amanjot returns for the World Cup.

While the squad solidifies India's core, it also signals shifts. Shafali Verma, who fell out of the ODI set-up last year, remains on the sidelines despite featuring for India A recently in Brisbane.

As David noted, "She is in the system, it is not like she is not. We've got our eyes on her. Hope she plays a lot more and garners experience, it will help serve India in the 50-overs format."

SA's former captain Dane van Niekerk not on WC team

– Former captain Dane van Niekerk's hopes of an immediate international comeback have been dashed, with South Africa confirming she will not feature in their Women's World Cup squad despite her recent return from retirement.

South Africa's head coach Mandla Mashimbyi ended speculation at the training camp in Durban last week, stating that former captain Dane van Niekerk's is "definitely not part of this World Cup, she won't be going".

Van Niekerk's presence at Kingsmead Stadium had raised expectations after her reversal of retirement, but Mashimbyi clarified her pathway back remains a longer-term project.

"She is someone we are looking to towards the future," he said, adding, "There are series she might be involved in, and hopefully, when she ticks all the boxes, she can showcase all her skills again."

Van Niekerk, 32, stepped away from international cricket in 2023 following a fitness-related omission from South Africa's T20 World Cup squad. Though she has featured domestically with Western Province and admitted her game is progressing, she acknowledged the gulf between her form and the current national standards.

"I'm watching the players with their skill, there's a massive difference from two years ago. I'm probably not where everyone else is at the moment," she said.

Despite her absence, Mashimbyi insisted her presence is still valued.

"She has captained the team, played for a long time, and has been successful. The experience she carries is something would

Uncapped Eyman Fatima chosen for Pakistan's WC team

– Uncapped batter Eyman Fatima has earned a maiden World Cup call-up as Pakistan confirmed a 15-member squad led by Fatima Sana for the women's ODI World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

Led by Fatima Sana, the Pakistan World Cup squad was announced last month, the tournament team including the uncapped batter, Eyman Fatima. However, before the tournament, they will also be contesting three home ODIs against South Africa beginning September 16 in Lahore, fixtures that double as crucial preparation for the global tournament starting September 30.

For Sana, this will be a first ODI World Cup as captain after she also led Pakistan at the qualifiers earlier this year.

Eyman Fatima, 20, was not part of that campaign but comes in alongside Sadaf Shamas, replacing Gull Feroza and Najiha Alvi, who drop to the standby list with Tuba Hassan, Umm-e-

Kranti Goud, the leading wicket-taker in the ODIs against England, retains her place among the pace options alongside Renuka, Amanjot, and Arundhati Reddy.

Meanwhile, in the spin department, India will rely on Sneha Rana, whose recent comeback in the Sri Lanka tri-series impressed the selectors, alongside Shree Charani, Deepti Sharma, and Radha Yadav.

"We have Renuka and Kranti [to bowl] in the power play," Harmanpreet said, adding, "Then [we] have Shree Charani, Deepti and Radha to bowl in the slog overs, Sneha Rana in the middle overs. We didn't want to make a lot of changes and wanted continuity."

In the batting order, Pratika Rawal, who replaced Shafali last year, is expected to continue opening with Smriti Mandhana, while Harleen Deol is set to anchor No 3. Harmanpreet and Jemimah Rodrigues are slated at four and five, with wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh backed up by Yastika Bhatia, who scored two 50s in the Australia A series.

Among the standbys are Satghare, Tejal Hasnabis, Prema Rawat, Priya Mishra, Uma Chetry, and Minnu Mani. Bhatia's return offers India an additional safety net after her strong showing against Australia A.

India's campaign begins at home against Sri Lanka on September 30, with hopes high of finally ending their wait for a World Cup crown.

India's World Cup squad

Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Renuka Singh, Arundhati Reddy, Richa Ghosh, Kranti Goud, Amanjot Kaur, Radha Yadav, N Shree Charani, Yastika Bhatia, Sneha Rana.

miss if we didn't have it," he explained.

The World Cup, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, begins on September 30, with South Africa opening their campaign against England in Guwahati on October 3.

As preparation, the Proteas will play three ODIs in Pakistan, where training conditions have been tailored to mirror subcontinental pitches.

Van Niekerk's omission underscores the emphasis on fitness and readiness. She last represented South Africa in September 2021, and injuries, most notably an ankle fracture in early 2022, have stalled multiple comeback attempts.

Her exclusion from the 2023 home World Cup over a two-kilometre run time, later relaxed by CSA, left her "absolutely broken", and triggered her retirement.

Her recent social media reflections revealed contrition and resolve.

"I sincerely apologise to Cricket South Africa and the cricket family for how I handled my retirement, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to hopefully one day express my skills again on the international stage," she wrote.

Additionally, "I know the standards of the team and the women's game continue to rise, and I am ready to work hard to meet them. I return with renewed energy, focus and a deep sense of gratitude for this chance."

South Africa's provisional World Cup training group stands at 20 players, excluding captain Laura Wolvaardt and senior all-rounders Marizanne Kapp and Chloe Tryon, who are competing in The Hundred. The squad will be trimmed to 15 for the tournament.

Hani, and Waheeda Akhtar.

Eyman made her international debut earlier last month during the T20I series in Dublin against Ireland, where she batted twice for scores of 23 and 4. Her selection underlines Pakistan's bid to strengthen batting depth as they seek to move beyond the league stage of the tournament.

The 15 players and five reserves are currently in a 14-day training camp that began on August 29 under head coach Muhammad Wasim. South Africa, who arrive in Lahore on September 12, will provide Pakistan's final competitive test before the World Cup.

Pakistan open their campaign on October 2 against Bangladesh, followed by a marquee clash with India on October 5. All seven league fixtures, and a potential semi-final if they qualify, will be played in Colombo. The second semi-final is scheduled for Navi Mumbai, with the final to be staged either in Colombo or Navi Mumbai on November 2.



Kate Cross

Star-crossed Kate calls WC omission 'savage'

England last month unveiled their 15-player squad for the tournament in India and Sri Lanka, which runs from September 30 to November 2. Cross, 33, a seasoned seamer with more than 100 ODI wickets, was the most high-profile omission from head coach Charlotte Edwards' plans.

"What I'm really struggling to get my head around is it all feels like it's happened so quickly," Cross said on her podcast *No Balls*.

She added, "I've just clearly fallen out of favour with Lot [Edwards]. I haven't processed it. It's still really raw."

Cross returned from a back injury earlier this year and even opened the bowling in the first ODI against India in June. But she was left out for the rain-shortened second match at Lord's and again for the series decider in Durham, a 2-1 defeat for England. That sequence, she explained, gave her the first hint her place was under threat.

"Being in the best XI is a different conversation," she added. However, "not being on the plane – it feels savage".

The omission came despite her belief she had done enough to remain in contention, even if her back injury had sidelined her during England's heavy Ashes defeat in Australia earlier this year.

"It was one of the worst days of my career," Cross said of being told she had not been selected, adding, "It left me feeling quite sick."

While her absence was the breaking story of the announcement, England's squad did feature significant returns.

Former skipper Heather Knight is back after missing recent months with a hamstring tendon injury, while Sarah Glenn and Danni Wyatt-Hodge also rejoin after sitting out the India series earlier this summer.

Glenn, part of a four-strong spin department led by world No 1 Sophie Ecclestone, is among six players set for their first ODI World Cup.

Edwards said selection reflected both conditions and depth.

"Being selected to play for your country in a World Cup is one of the biggest honours in sport and I'm delighted for all the players named in the squad," she said.

She added, "Like all global tournaments, it will be a huge challenge, but we want to go as far as we possibly can in India, and I believe that if we play our best cricket we can compete with anyone. Conditions mean we have gone for the extra spinner and we're lucky to be able to have such depth in this department."

Edwards acknowledged the disappointment for Cross, as well as Maia Bouchier and Alice Davidson-Richards, who also miss out.

"It's fantastic to welcome Sarah Glenn back. That does mean there's no room for Kate Cross, Maia Bouchier, or Alice Davidson-Richards, which will be disappointing for them," she said.

Cross continues to play domestically with Northern Superchargers in The Hundred, and remains uncertain if she will be named as a standby in case of injury.

As she explained, "That's almost the hardest. If someone goes down, you might be playing in three weeks' time in a World Cup – then everything you feel right now is so confused and manipulated almost because you've got to spin it around."

England's core batting group, Tammy Beaumont, Sophia Dunkley, Amy Jones, Charlie Dean and Linsey Smith, remains intact, with Edwards highlighting the added "dynamism" of Wyatt-Hodge and the leadership of Knight.

"She'll be a huge asset for us," Edwards said of Knight, while noting, "India is an amazing place to play cricket, and as a group we have a huge opportunity to go and do something special."

England, four-time champions with titles in 1973, 1993, 2009 and 2017, begin their campaign against South Africa on October 3, hoping to replicate their 2017 triumph.



Renuka Singh



Dane van Niekerk

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