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Our Community Is Thriving!



Trinbago Festival decked out Nathan Phillips Square with TT's red, white, and black on September 5-7. In photos, flags take over the Square; inset, top, Jenny Ramberan displays her banner; at right, Acting Consul Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette (left) proudly holds TT's national colours. Photos by Russell Lutchman. See Page 18



Lord Shiva's statue rises in Brampton

– Our diaspora's presence in the GTA shone even brighter on September 6 with the unveiling of North America's tallest Lord Shiva statue by the Bhavani Shankar Mandir in Brampton. At a height of 54 feet, this latest deity joins the constellation of divine landmarks now illuminating our GTA's skyline.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Diaspora Report

Brampton – Our diaspora recently rooted yet another towering landmark in the GTA, North America's tallest Lord Shiva statue, which was inaugurated in a jubilant and celebratory ceremony on September 6 in Brampton.

Drawing over a thousand devotees to Bhavani Shankar Mandir, the event positioned yet another radiant star in the GTA's expanding constellation of deities now resident in our diasporic landscape.

For the hundreds of devotees, officials, and friends of the diaspora who thronged Brampton's streets on September 6, the inauguration was more than a religious celebration. It was a vivid, colourful assertion of our ongoing presence, a joyous reminder that our faith and its traditions are acquiring stature, and are now shining brightly in Canadian skylines.

The procession, beginning at Castlebrooke Secondary School and winding toward Bhavani Shankar Mandir, became its own moving galaxy of colour and devotion. With flags fluttering and tassa

drums reverberating, Brampton pulsed with celebration, song, and religiosity.

The sanctification ceremony was ably guided by Bhavani Shankar Mandir's spiritual leader Pandit Hardat Ashwar in bringing thousands of hands together in prayer and gratitude, the moment steeped in sacred tradition.

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* earlier this week, Pandit Ashwar described the day as "surreal".

He explained: "I thought it was too real to be true. I felt it to be an accomplishment. I felt pride in a good way, that it was a way for our community to be united."

He noted that the unveiling was fruition of an inspirational idea conceived less than two years ago.

"The idea came to us, the vision, to bring visibility to our community. We decided to bring Lord Shivaji's murti, to create an experience that was blissful to the eyes, and to the surroundings, something to be proud about."

For too long Hindus in Canada have been "too shy" about their faith, he affirmed. And so, the project undertaken was intended to reinforce our strength, presence, and pride in our religion.

"We thought we would join with other temples to put up a murti. And with fund-raising, blessings, and encouragement we did it."

The energy from devotees at the inauguration was "overwhelming", Pandit Ashwar recalled, adding,

See Page 11: Lord Shiva



Pandit Hardat Ashwar

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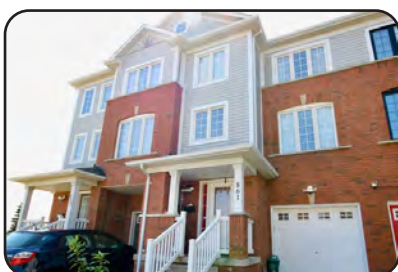
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Triveni Mandir hosts first Ganesh Visarjan Mela

A photograph of three women standing together outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a yellow sari with a floral border and a white shoulder bag. The woman in the middle is also wearing a yellow sari with a similar border and is smiling. The woman on the right is wearing a bright blue kurta with gold embroidery and a dark blue shawl. In the background, a large, ornate statue of Lord Ganesha is visible, along with other people and buildings, suggesting a festival or religious event.

Individual tickets are: adults \$125; children (under 12) \$50; corporate tables of ten guests are available with preferred seating and a family-style dinner. For ticket purchases and event information, call Rani Sethi, **416-930-8853** – email: rani@cmiccanada.com; Janty Ramkumar, **416-879-8805**; Radha Rajaram, **416-732-0604** – email: radharani.rajaram@gmail.com.



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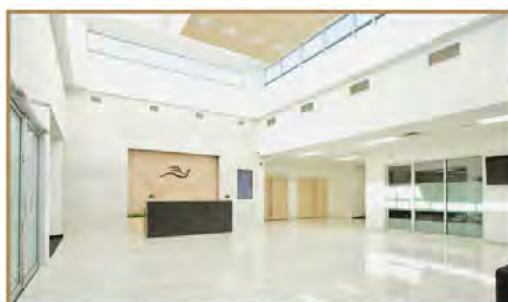
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Tobago House listens to diaspora's voices at Toronto assembly

– *Diaspora voices filled the Trinidad and Tobago Consulate General in Toronto calling for cultural preservation, economic innovation, and stronger institutional support. Speakers shared with THA leader Farley Augustine their lived experiences, aspirations, and frustrations, pressing for structured engagement from national leaders in the homeland.*

...

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Diaspora Reporter

Toronto – Members of the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora met with Farley Augustine, Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly and other government officials at the Consulate General for Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto last week.

At the September 8 meeting, among other things, attendees spoke to building stronger ties with the homeland, voiced concerns on cultural heritage, tourism, and institutional access, and highlighted the need for committed leadership to fully engage diasporic ambition.

Among the speakers was Shayna Ravelle-Thompson, who articulated a shared concern for cultural continuity.

“One of my concerns is preservation of our culture with regards to history. I understand in Trinidad and Tobago we take that for granted,” she said, drawing murmurs of approval from the audience.

Ravelle-Thompson’s delivery was grounded in both scholarship and practice.

“I spent my entire university career in Pan-Africanism, championing the importance of preservation of our culture in different ways, both in Trinidad and Tobago,” she explained. She also noted her commitment overlapped with the diaspora in her professional life in finance.

Her message was clear to the gathering – the preservation of heritage was not simply a nostalgic exercise, but a necessity for identity, belonging, and cultural continuity in the diaspora.

Conversation in the room later shifted to the economic and developmental potential of Tobago.

John Leacock, a resident of Guelph, urged leaders to think beyond Toronto’s metropolitan centres when promoting the Caribbean twin-island nation.

He described a business arc that was an ambitious pivot for Tobago anchored in agriculture, tourism, and sport.

“I want to get... about 40,000 cocoa plants planted in Tobago so that we can provide ourselves a destination for agri-tourism and sport tourism as well,” Leacock declared. It was a plan that positioned Tobago’s nutrient-rich cocoa as a signature product, capable of drawing visitors and investment.

Here was an initiative that required reliable connectivity, he declared.

“For us to do that, we need to have a direct

flight... meaning that there are multiple airlines traveling to Tobago,” he stated.

Leacock’s endearing anecdote about once boarding a WestJet flight to Tobago, where “everybody on the flight knew me”, illustrated both the tight-knit nature of the island’s community, and the untapped potential of using personal networks as marketing leverage.

His concluding remarks framed Tobago as a place where agriculture, culture, and sport intersect as a holistic approach to development, provided the infrastructure and marketing reach are put in place.

Where both speakers touched on cultural roots and economic ambition, another contributor, lawyer, developer, and Tobago landowner Anthony Benjamin, pointed to the institutional architecture that could hold such aspirations together. His message was resonant – that the diaspora needs supportive scaffolding and engagement from agencies in the homeland.

“What I would like to see is the diaspora office.... I think it’s very important that you develop it, but you consult with people before you do it,” Benjamin said.

As he noted, the absence of such an office has made even basic transactions laborious, mentioning banking challenges as an aside.

“You wouldn’t believe what a headache it is trying to get basic things done,” he lamented. For Benjamin, consultation with the diaspora community is essential if such an overarching office is to serve its purpose effectively.

His remarks touched on deeper undercurrents felt in the room, revealing the angst of many who want to contribute, but could find no official and supportive channels to do so.

In Benjamin’s words, “There are a lot of people like ourselves who would like to go home, but there’s no mechanism to achieve that.”

Among Farley’s many memorable responses that resonated with the packed gathering was his framing of the emergent discourses about Trinidad and Tobago’s situation in a regional context. Reflecting on his experiences studying in Jamaica, he offered this well-known, global model as a comparative.

“I am... sometimes jealous of my Jamaican friends,” he began, before highlighting how Jamaica’s diaspora retains strong cultural markers abroad.

“They go everywhere in the world. They hold on to their language. They hold on to their music. They promote their country. And their leaders engage them,” he said.

The results of this engagement is visible in global recognition and branding, he affirmed.

“To the extent that you walk in somewhere, you tell somebody you’re from the Caribbean, and they want to assume you’re a Jamaican. That’s because they have done a good job hanging on to their culture – wherever they are,” he declared to the gathering’s approval.

With files by Hinano Beekhoo



Chief Secretary of the THA Farley Augustine addresses the diaspora



CG Simone Young (right) with Acting CG Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette



THA's Davia Chambers speaks to the diaspora. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo



Diaspora member John Leacock speaks about tourism, agriculture, and sport.



Members of the TT diaspora at the Consulate General gathering on September 8

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Editorial

Caribbean stability

In an era where too many national elections worldwide end in discord and uncertainty, the Caribbean offers a counterpoint: ballots cast, counted, and the results accepted. Earlier this month, notably in Jamaica, and in Guyana after a failed attempt by an opposition party for new elections, the orderly transfer of political mandate reaffirmed that our homelands are anchored by democratic continuity, even as global politics churn in turbulence.

Nationals of Jamaica and Guyana, two of Caricom's most influential member states, returned their governments to office. Dr Andrew Holness' Jamaica Labour Party secured an unprecedented third consecutive term, while Dr Irfaan Ali's People's Progressive Party/Civic consolidated its second five-year hold on Guyana's political future.

Both contests, assessed by election observers from the OAS, Caricom, the Carter Center, and others, were declared to be free, fair, and peaceful. Both outcomes reflected more than electoral cycles, underscoring institutional, foundational, and democratic resilience.

A central message now coming out of our homelands is stability. Holness acknowledged low voter turnout in Jamaica but insisted the majority who did participate expressed confidence in his government's stewardship.

In Guyana, Ali's decisive win signals a populace prepared to trust his leadership in a time of rapid economic transformation. Continuity in Kingston and Georgetown means Caricom is strengthened as it navigates regional challenges, among these being food security, territorial sovereignty, and collective action against climate change.

The reaffirmation of regional stability did not go unnoticed among Caribbean leaders. Grenada's PM Dickon Mitchell's message emphasised "resilient, inclusive and sustainable" regional cooperation. Barbados' Mia Mottley framed it as "a moment of significance for both Guyana and the region". Dominica's Roosevelt Skerrit and Trinidad and Tobago's Kamla Persad-Bissessar each underscored sovereignty, democracy, and peace as shared imperatives.

Such voices speaking in unison affirm that Caricom's project of unity and integration depends on strong and stable national mandates.

Yet Jamaica's voter apathy remains troubling. Fewer than four in ten registered voters stained their forefingers, a statistic that cannot be ignored in any healthy democracy. But low turnout does not diminish the legitimacy of the outcome; instead, it challenges Jamaica's leaders to re-engage nationals and to broaden participation, a task that contributes to strong democratic growth.

Meanwhile, Guyana now faces challenges in the political aftershocks of the vote. The emergence of WIN, formed only months before the election, has upended the traditional order by displacing APNU as the official opposition.

WIN's unexpected ascent has introduced an element of uncertainty, raises questions about the durability of established parties, and the stability of parliamentary dynamics.

Meanwhile, for our Caribbean diaspora in the GTA, these outcomes resonate beyond the ballot box. Elections back home and peaceful outcomes affirm the durability of the ties we continue to nurture abroad. Our contributions to the region, whether in remittances, property ownership, or cultural takeaways, are grounded in the confidence that our homelands are guided by order. Also, we retain, metaphorically of course, an umbilical connection, one that binds us to our Caribbean's democratic heartbeat.

This connectivity found institutional voice in the Canada Guyana Chamber of Commerce's message, with its Chair Lilian Chatterjee praising Ali's record of economic growth, infrastructure development, and social progress. The CGCC also pledged to deepen trade and investment ties, noting that Ali's renewed mandate offers an opportunity to advance national unity and equitable growth.

The CGCC's message resonates directly in our diasporic community: our engagement is strengthened when democratic continuity assures us that our investments of faith, family, and finance rest on a solid, democratic foundation.

For our diaspora, this is more than reassurance. As our homelands build, so too are we growing and investing back home, forging a better, stronger Caribbean together.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
Letters to be published will be edited where necessary.
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Govt returns to Ottawa to major issues on national agenda

It is that time of year again. After a summer break, the bells will ring, and keen minds will return to their desks. From coast to coast to coast, Members of Parliament have returned to Ottawa for the fall parliamentary session.

Many spent their time in their constituencies, meeting with residents, attending events, and engaging on local issues. Despite Parliament being on break, MPs conduct a significant part of their duties in their home electoral districts.

With the return of Parliament this week, Canada's 343 elected representatives (the most in Canadian history) will convene in the nation's capital to conduct legislative work. Topical issues will drive the priorities for many MPs, including Prime Minister Mark Carney.

Still in his first year as prime minister, Carney has led a busy summer calendar, crisscrossing the country, engaging with Canadians, connecting with other world leaders, and building his government's response to evolving issues.

He inherited a government that was on the verge of being removed from power; however, earlier this year, he was successful in achieving a renewed mandate from Canadians. He promised that he was the leader Canada needed for these tremulous times, and there are huge expectations from him.

These expectations will be exemplified by the Leader of the Official Opposition, Pierre Poilievre. He lost his seat in the recent general election, but was fortunate to receive a second chance, as a Conservative caucus member resigned, and he was able to be elected in a heavily Conservative seat in Alberta.

With Poilievre back in the House of Commons, the parliamentary session will intensify, with rigorous questioning on the government's work. He has already set his objectives clearly, ready to oppose the Liberal government on several items. They have focused on electric vehicle (EV) mandate, housing costs, bail reform, and immigration.

Poilievre himself will need to demonstrate his command of the party and convince his own party that he is the Prime Minister in waiting. The Conservative Party is set to host its national convention in January, and party members will vote on whether Poilievre should remain as their leader.

On the other side, Carney has laid out his plan to boost the Canadian economy and create more jobs, two issues that continue to dominate as a leading priority for Canadians.

Carney recently announced the initial projects for the newly



Ryan Singh

launched Major Projects Office (MPO). Large-scale projects that are meant to spur economic growth in the country while establishing much-needed critical infrastructure. Beyond that, Canadians will get a further glimpse into Carney's plans when the delayed 2025 Budget is tabled this fall, likely in October.

Due to the election and irregular parliamentary calendar, the government is set to outline their fiscal agenda, which will include a road map to constraints on government spending and yet still seek to deliver vital programming for Canadians.

Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne has suggested the Budget will encourage a leaner government to ensure funding for housing and other major projects. To achieve this, Champagne directed the public service sector to cut spending by 15 percent over three years.

And Carney has given indications that the upcoming budget's deficit will be bigger than last year's, which is driven partly because of the government's need to respond to increased US tariffs. As trade tensions with the US continue, the government will also continue to manoeuvre international channels in response.

Carney is set to travel to Mexico to meet with President Claudia Sheinbaum amid pressure from the US to impose further tariffs on China. They will likely engage on this, but seek to increase bilateral trade opportunities.

Amidst all of this, MPs will debate and vote on several bills in the House of Commons. These will address pressing concerns of Canadians. Expect to hear more about Bill C-2, the Strong Borders Act. Intended to provide officials more power to suspend immigration documents, tighten the asylum claims process, and allow more intelligence collection across government entities, among other things, it has become quite controversial.

Advocates fear that the government will have too much unchecked power in the handling of immigration documents, and in instituting time limits on asylum seekers making their applications. Both the Conservatives and NDP have registered their opposition to these likely issues.

The government is also expected to introduce legislation aiming to address a rise in crime by repeat offenders.

There will be no shortage of news from the government over the next few months. And this is only based on what we expect; there is still more to come that the government will need to respond to, ensuring that the needs of Canadians are met.

Hibiscus fences breached as village dreams ride a new tide

The news rose fast and soon overflowed the banks. At first it arrived as exploratory ripples filling the cracks in our sunbaked road; it then grew into shallow rivulets, fingers probing the woven network of branches in hibiscus fences as it flowed through, until even the fences could not retain the breaking of the dam, its full-throated flood surging mightily into our front yards.

The news came upon us, crashing down like waves no monarch could hold back. One among us had risen. Out of the gravel paths hemmed by cane fields and the sugar factory's harsh grind, where chimneys exhaled the empire's sooty rot, one among us had been lifted into the rarified air to join the government in the distant capital city.

He was one of our own; living three streets away in a leaning wooden house covered with red-rusted galvanise, his sudden rise to prominence was enough to cause broom, spoon, and comb to halt in mid-air.

It was Kap-Kap. Here was a name borne out of village amusement, the nickname pinned when, as a barefoot and bare-bottomed boy, he ran behind single-passenger vehicles of the sugar factory managers, imitating the backfiring engines: "Kap! Kap! Kap!" He was Kap-Kap for so long the names on his birth certificate were now forgotten.

But now, a wash of news had replaced the spluttering vehicles on the gravelled roadway. Kap-Kap was no longer chasing scooters, but was being lifted upward by the tide of national change. He had been elected to represent not only our village, but neighbouring ones, even the further town itself, in the new government that had taken root in the distant capital city.

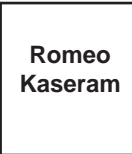
At once the hibiscus hedge, for years a no-talk zone separating quarrelsome neighbours, became porous to conversation.

"Girl, you hear the news?" a too-friendly voice floated across. "Yes, girl! What a thing to happen to the village," came a ready reply, disbelieving and giddy with astonishment.

It was as if both neighbours were the best of friends for years. In that moment, grievances over wandering chickens, and unsubstantiated, errant glances at husbands were suspended, their jealousies across jealousies momentarily put aside for luxuriant surfing on the incoming waves.

Next came the rumours, sinuous shadows silently swimming swiftly inside the current. Our village shopkeeper, a repository for the confluence of tributaries weighted with hearsay, incredulously reported Kap-Kap had been sighted in a suit-and-tie.

To further distraction as he thumbed the weights on the scale, he added that Kap-Kap's hens were now nesting in brand-



new shoeboxes; it was as if prosperity had arrived, and leaving its shoes by the gate, had settled down to hatch in his front yard.

Bewildered by the turn of events, we watched as our parents fathomed each undercurrent. Kap-Kap, whose back was now arched from planting sugar cane ratoons, and later poured his pay packets into shot glasses in the rum shop, was well-known for his oratory after two-three drinks.

His cohort of imbibers would croon, "Kap-Kap, you is a born politician!" Meant as jest, he took it as gospel; now he was decked out as a winning candidate, his tie thickly knotted, new dark suit glistening with a too-hot pressing, the chickens ruffled with territoriality by their shoe boxes.

But he was more fiction than fact. When we lined up to stain our forefingers, we were not voting for Kap-Kap. We were voting for ourselves. Each folded ballot was a bid to rise above corrugated-iron roofs flaking into red dust, above the bald dirt yards where chickens scratched futilely in sterile patches, above the relentless blare of the first warning call at 6:45 am from the sugar factory, reminding villagers to not be late, that a second punitive blast of the air-horn was 15 minutes away.

And herein was the paradox. Kap-Kap did not ascend alone; he represented our longing, an unfulfilled hunger for dignity and a greater purpose. The flood of news was not only about him; it was also about our dreams for a better, more fluid world.

Decades later, I see the residue the flood left behind. Today the factory's chimneys are broken like the trunks of trees split by lightning; hibiscus hedges still divide sparring neighbours.

Even Kap-Kap's name has faded, but the dream endures: an unalterable belief by an entire village that one man's rise could lift us all out from under the weighty shadow cast by the ripened, swaying stalks of millions of sugar canes.

I find myself resisting this memory hardening into futility; that the flood left behind more than the detritus of a diminished empire. It left us with evidence that imagination itself could stop its "kap-kap-kap" spluttering, and instead flow unimpeded into our front yards, even if only for one moment of glory.

Kap-Kap's improbable rise revealed the boundaries of our front yard did not stop at what we called "the gap"; that there was promise in worlds beyond the black snow that rained down from the fiery cane fields, covering our thatch roofs, smudging laundry, and irritating our eyes with grit beyond soothing.

Today, a memory reincarnates – news arriving from a breach in the dam, then withdrawing to leave behind the knowledge that despite the ankle-high residue of an empire's detritus, we could still rehearse for our forthcoming agency and resilience.



Satyakama Maharaj

US tariffs offers opportunity to strengthen economy

Dear Editor,

“We are exploring all options.” With those words, Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar set the tone for Trinidad and Tobago’s response to Washington’s new tariffs. From August 7, a 15 per cent duty has been placed on some key exports.

Not everything is affected – goods already shipped, items under US tariffs on steel, aluminum and copper, and a few products like medicines and semiconductors are exempt. These carve-outs do not cover Trinidad and Tobago’s main exports, but they indicate there is still room for negotiation.

For Trinidad and Tobago, this is not a distant policy ripple. Nearly 40 per cent of our exports, around US \$2.22 billion in 2024, go directly to the US, with total bilateral trade reaching about US \$5.2 billion. Tariffs on ammonia, methanol, fertilisers and steel strike at the heart of our economy.

US importers may hesitate, rivals like Russia, Mexico, and Canada could gain ground, and local producers, already facing high gas costs and underperforming plants, will feel the squeeze. This shows just how exposed our economy is to shifts in US trade policy.

The consequences are real. Trinidad and Tobago’s Manufacturers’ Association already flagged risks to export earnings, jobs, and foreign exchange stability. Political voices warn of rising inflation and pressure on the Trinidad and Tobago dollar. Every family understands what that means: higher supermarket prices, tighter budgets, and uncertainty about tomorrow.

Nevertheless, this cannot be treated as the end of the road. Yes, the pain is real, but so is the opportunity.

As Trinidad and Tobago’s Trade Minister Satyakama Maharaj stated, controversially but not incorrectly, this could be a “blessing”. His point is simple: over-dependence on the US leaves the country exposed. These tariffs are a wake-up call that if one door starts to close, others must be ready to open.

India, Africa, and South America are not abstract possibilities, they are markets with real demand. The African Import-Export Bank doubling its Caribbean allocation from US \$1.5

TT govt must take sure steps on foreign exchange

Dear Editor,

If one were to stand by any roadside in Trinidad and Tobago, it would soon be observed that the latest models of new cars: mini, small, mid-size, compact, saloon, sedan, sports and SUVs, including gas, hybrid and electric models, are driving past.

The most recent models of two-wheel, four-wheel drive, and turbo pick-ups fly past; the latest seven-seater maxi and other foreign-used vehicles crowd even more our already overcrowded highways.

Most supermarkets sell everything from basic foodstuff to household items. Quite likely imported, these range from lettuce, bottled water, and lobster tails. We import cauliflower that remains lily white weeks after it was reaped and shipped to Trinidad and Tobago, and ignore our local products that were freshly picked days ago.

Recently, I looked on as an employee in a large supermarket removed ripe bananas from the display, putting them into a big shopping cart. It was for disposal, he said.

Our farmers absorb losses while we subsidise farmers in distant lands. This can only happen because there is no foreign exchange shortage.

Twenty years ago, Trinidad and Tobago was the manufacturing hub of the Caribbean region. We were well on our way to transforming the economy away from its chronic energy dependency. The gas boom of 2000 and the oil price spike in 2010, as well as the start of China’s dominance of cheap finished goods, curtailed this ambition.

Spending increased as the economy boomed, but the cost of doing business increased, as productivity fell, while the lower currency competitiveness affected exports, creating the perfect storm, as evident in the closure of Arcelor Mittal Steel and Unilever manufacturing facilities.

Walk through any hardware store in our nation today, and one would be hard-pressed to find locally-made steel products



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

billion to US \$3 billion signals that financing is available if the country is bold enough to seize it.

Diaspora networks in India and Africa can also help establish new footholds. Within the region, Caricom remains underutilised: there is considerable potential if trade with closest neighbours is expanded.

Some describe the tariffs as economic bullying. Others view them as part of a global shake-up; after all, countries everywhere face similar or even higher rates. Regardless of the label, the response must be the same: imagination, resilience, and a united front.

Caricom must push Washington collectively, not piecemeal. If Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago face 15 per cent tariffs, while most other Caribbean countries remain at ten per cent, that imbalance requires correction.

Trinidad and Tobago has faced difficult periods before, such as oil price crashes, recessions, currency shocks, and yet emerged resilient. The country still possesses world-class energy expertise, strong industrial capacity, and a skilled workforce.

What is now required is discipline: businesses must innovate, government must maintain transparency, and citizens must prepare for adjustments while keeping focus on the broader goal.

This is not about pretending tariffs will not cause disruption – they will. Jobs may be lost, margins will shrink, and forex reserves will be tested. Yet if this moment is approached seriously, it can become the impetus for the diversification long discussed but not fully achieved. The US will remain a vital partner, but it cannot be the only one.

Tariffs are indeed painful. However, this situation also offers an opportunity to strengthen the economy, broaden markets, and demonstrate resilience. The choice is clear: panic and stumble, or prosper and move forward.

If the country rises to the occasion, years from now this moment may be remembered not as the beginning of decline, but as the point when Trinidad and Tobago chose to prosper, not panic.

Dr Hriday Sarma, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

for which Trinidad and Tobago was once a proud and dominant player. Wholesalers became emboldened to compete with manufacturers irrespective of sufficient local capacity.

When importers have access to US dollars as if it comes from a broken underground WASA pipe, then there is no foreign exchange shortage.

We can purchase smart phones, toiletries, cosmetics, shoes, clothing, and so on, cheaper than in Miami or NY. Shopping on the many online sites or watching the latest movie is done without leaving our living rooms with the flash of a credit card.

Most international flights are in high demand. Trinidad and Tobago has the widest range of international food franchises from burgers, chicken, pizza, to fine dine-in restaurants.

When we can satisfy this insatiable appetite for foreign goods and services, then there is no foreign exchange shortage.

The last government in its ten years in office fabricated a fake image for Trinidad and Tobago of a Miami-type, high standard of living, and encouraged conspicuous spending by supporting an artificially low rate of TT \$6.8 to US \$1.

Some economists may disagree on its correct value based on the metrics from TT \$7.5-\$8 per US\$1. However, what is not in dispute is that the sustained subsidy at this artificial low rate recklessly depleted Trinidad and Tobago’s foreign reserves, destroyed local production, and the competitiveness of our exports.

Authorised dealers sold US \$1.85 billion to the market between January-April 2025, while our import bill for 2024 was an eye-watering \$63 billion according to the World Bank.

Trinidad and Tobago has now reached the unsustainable state where we are spending far more than we are earning and decisive steps must be taken. For ten long years, the last government fooled the population into believing that there was no foreign exchange shortage.

Richard Ballard, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

REGIONAL FORUM



Andrew Holness

Jamaican electorate seeks accountability, continuity

Dear Editor,

Jamaica’s general election delivered a close result – 34 seats for the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and 29 for the People’s National Party (PNP) at the end of counting. The verdict was not a landslide endorsement but a calculated choice by the electorate. Voters signalled that while they value continuity, they also demand accountability.

Continuity matters. Regime changes often bring costly disruptions – policies reversed, projects abandoned, resources wasted. Stability allows for long-term plans in infrastructure, education, and economic growth to mature. For a country that cannot afford to squander scarce resources, this outcome protects progress already under way.

But Jamaicans did not vote for continuity at any cost. The narrow margin of victory tells a different story: the people want governance to improve. They want crime, education, health care, and economic equity addressed with urgency and vision.

On crime, the government deserves commendation. The reduction in major crimes is a welcome relief for communities that have long lived in fear. Yet, progress in this area must go hand in hand with police accountability. Jamaicans cannot afford a trade-off between safety and justice. Abuses of power, corruption, and extrajudicial actions erode public trust and can undo the very gains being celebrated. A modern democracy demands not just fewer crimes but transparent fair and accountable policing.

This is where the Opposition’s role becomes vital. With 29 seats, the PNP has both the opportunity and responsibility to ensure robust parliamentary oversight. On the matter of constitutional reform, after 63 years, we are yet to agree on a decisive pathway for what future governance should look like. Democracy thrives not only when governments deliver, but also when oppositions scrutinise, propose alternatives, and amplify the voices of those left behind. A strong Opposition is not a nuisance – it is the safeguard against complacency.

The past five years have certainly not been Jamaica’s finest hour of governance. Questions around transparency, service delivery, and responsiveness persist. The electorate, by narrowing the government’s majority, has given the JLP another term but not a blank cheque. This is a chance for renewal – for the government to listen more closely, govern more inclusively, and lead with integrity.

Likewise, the Opposition must rise above partisanship. The people are weary of empty quarrels. What is needed are serious policy debates, creative solutions, and a commitment to nation-building over point-scoring.

The lesson of election is clear: Jamaicans want stability, but not stagnation. They want progress, but not at the cost of justice. And they want leaders – on both sides of the aisle – to serve with accountability, vision, and respect for the people’s will.

The next five years will show whether our political leaders understand this message. For the sake of the nation, one hopes they do.

Reverend Paul Morris, Jamaica, via email.

Looking to civility among political parties, acting in Guyana's best interest

Dear Editor,

Aubrey Norton, leader of Guyana's opposition APNU, the party now with third party status following the recent elections, has announced the names of the candidates who will be its Members of Parliament. Dr Terrence Campbell has been named parliamentary leader of the group.

Azruddin Mohamed, leader of WIN, the new party that contested the elections, and now set to become the official opposition, has provided a partial list of names of his candidates, and indicated that he will assume the official position of Leader of the Opposition.

As of writing this letter, President-elect Dr Irfaan Ali had not provided the PPP/Civic's list of names, although Dr Bharrat Jagdeo and Brigadier Mark Phillips were sworn-in as Vice President and Prime Minister respectively, and therefore, will be among the PPP/Civic's Parliamentarians.

Based on the rancorous campaigns leading up to the elections, and some of the individuals listed to be in Parliament, one can expect parliamentary sessions to be raucous. The Speaker, whoever is appointed, will likely be severely challenged to be fair but firm in managing debates in the new Parliament.

Leaders of the returning governing party, the PPP/Civic, and Campbell, the announced leader of the APNU parliamentary team, have had a contentious relation over the transparency and accountability of major withdrawals from the Natural Resource Fund, prior to the latter's formal entry into party politics.

Also Dr David Hinds, a co-leader of the WPA, and member on APNU's list, is not only a highly controversial, race-based critic of the PPP/Civic, but is also known for his derogatory and demeaning references to Afro-Guyanese members of the PPP/Civic.

As for Mohamed, the leader of WIN and soon to be Leader of the Opposition, he and the PPP/Civic leaders were once close friends, but have had an acrimonious relation and parted company after he was sanctioned by US officials for smuggling gold into that country, allegedly evading taxes in Guyana, and commenced plans for entry into politics.

In addition, two of the members on his party's partial list, Gobin Harbhajan and Vishnu Panday, have had long standing battles with the PPP/Civic, the former while serving as an APNU+AFC Regional Democratic Councillor in Region 6, and the latter as an on-and-off former executive of Guysuco.

Guyanese are likely to see some interesting inter-party dynamics at play in the new Parliament. With a comfortable majority of six seats in Parliament, while prudence may suggest differently, the PPP/Civic does not legally need the support of either of the two Opposition parties to implement its stated agenda.

APNU and WIN could form an alliance in opposing the PPP/Civic with the hope that they would gain resonance with the electorate for a possible coalition/unification in 2030.

Alternatively, depending on the ambition and the expectation of each of the two leaders, and considering that WIN has attracted major support from the APNU base, they could end up battling each other with the hope of eliminating a competitor for 2030.

It is hoped that for the next electoral term civility will prevail, and members of all parties will act in the best interest of the country. Younger generations of Guyanese are seeking mature and responsible leadership from their elected representatives.

Harry Hergash, Toronto, via email.



Irfaan Ali



Bharrat Jagdeo

Govt asked to add regional supporters in new Cabinet

Dear Editor,

As the People's Progressive Party/Civic moves forward in forming the new Cabinet, I wish to respectfully call for greater inclusion of regional individuals who have been on the ground, working and actually fixing issues to the benefit of residents, not only to secure the party's resounding victory but also to ensure livelihoods are improved.

These efforts of some of the individuals at the regional level were nothing short of remarkable. I had the opportunity to work closely with some of the leadership during the recent campaign as they welcomed the youths on board, and their dedication, strategic insight, and connection with the people were clearly reflected in the results.

Region Six delivered a commanding performance, contributing almost eight Parliamentary seats to the PPP/Civic's majority. This was not by accident; it was the product of committed work by the leadership who understand the needs of the people.

At a time when the country is undergoing rapid development and facing evolving challenges, our Cabinet must reflect a balance between national leadership and those who understand the realities of our regions.

Including regional leaders ensures a more inclusive and representative government, one that listens, understands, and responds effectively to the diverse needs of our people. With Berbice about to take off, we need the people that have a direct connection with our residents there.

The inclusion of these leaders in the cabinet would not only reward hard work, but also strengthen the bridge between the central government and the grass-roots.

As the final decisions are made, I urge those responsible to consider the undeniable contributions from the regions and to ensure that these leaders are given the opportunity to serve at the highest levels.

Royan Abrams, Guyana, via email.

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General Elections Results							
Region	APNU	AFC	ALP	FGM	PPP/C	WIN	Total Valid Votes
1	469	35	–	75	9,030	5,716	15,325
2	1,835	91	–	147	17,478	7,400	26,951
3	8,992	322	138	522	48,055	12,969	70,998
4	46,956	1,765	497	2,431	87,536	41,607	180,792
5	6,480	208	58	128	18,432	5,816	31,122
6	6,223	315	132	361	41,320	12,623	60,974
7	983	415	59	–	3,577	5,098	10,132
8	276	57	–	–	2,872	2,562	5,767
9	450	192	–	–	9,938	4,817	15,397
10	5,334	210	85	662	4,260	10,458	21,009
Total	77,998	3,610	969	4,326	242,498	109,066	438,467

Regional Elections Results							
Region	APNU	AFC	ALP	FGM	PPP/C	WIN	Total Valid Votes
1	344	25	–	61	9,021	5,830	15,281
2	1,791	93	–	143	17,442	7,433	26,902
3	8,907	299	148	540	47,754	13,020	70,668
4	46,772	1,833	549	2,690	87,018	41,930	180,792
5	6,441	210	59	127	18,273	5,808	30,918
6	6,251	306	122	355	41,014	12,580	60,628
7	980	414	65	–	3,508	5,085	10,052
8	253	54	–	–	2,847	2,558	5,712
9	430	265	–	–	9,853	4,794	15,342
10	5,370	224	82	818	4,197	10,262	20,953
Total	77,539	3,723	1,025	4,734	240,927	109,300	437,248

Guyana’s 2025 general elections – A political landscape transformed

Guyana’s 2025 general and regional elections marked a dramatic reshaping of the country’s political terrain, with continuity as well as disruption emerging as decisive factors in the new political scenery.

Held on September 1, the elections saw incumbent President Irfaan Ali secure a second term, with the People’s Progressive Party/ Civic winning 36 seats for a clear majority in the 65-seat National Assembly.

But the real story lies in the seismic shifts beneath the surface. In a surprising development, We Invest in Nationhood (WIN), led by US-sanctioned businessman, Azruddin Mohamed, captured 16 seats, marking the first time in the country’s history that a new party, formed a few months before the elections, emerged as the country’s official Opposition party.

In doing so, WIN displaced A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), formerly the Peoples National Congress (PNC), which has historically either been the ruling party or the main Opposition ever since the country commenced holding elections in 1961. The disgraced APNU picked up only 12 seats, a far cry from the 31 seats it secured five years earlier in the 2020 elections.

Another new party, The Forward Guyana Movement (FGM), led by former APNU parliamentarian Amanza Walton Desir, picked up the lone remaining seat.

PPP/Civic emerged victorious with 242,497 or 55.3 percent of the total votes cast. It won in eight of the ten regions, while WIN won in Region 8, Poataro-Siparuni and Region 10, Upper Demerara Berbice, which includes Linden, a long-standing APNU stronghold.

The other two parties which contested the elections, the Alliance For Change (AFC) and the Assembly for Liberty and Prosperity (ALP) failed to pick up a seat. The AFC, which in the 2011 elections was the first fringe party to threaten the grasp of the country’s two-party stranglehold by garnering five seats, failed miserably to win a seat.

One of the major developments was the PPP/Civic’s gains in Region Four, the most populous and historically APNU-aligned region, underscoring its growing appeal across demographic lines. This is the first time PPP/ Civic has won the majority in that region, suggesting a strategic pivot in campaign messaging and outreach.

Arguably, the incumbent President Irfaan Ali and the PPP/Civic capitalised on proven delivery in infrastructure, social spending, and continuity in oil policy. The party’s campaign emphasised tangible projects: roads, schools, free university tuition, and steered clear of overpromising, reinforcing a narrative of steady stewardship.

Ali has also consistently preached social cohesion and promoted inclusiveness through his One Guyana initiative, which apparently resonated with the population, compared to

racial discord promoted by individuals associated with some other parties.

Behind the scenes, the party’s command of oil-revenue management and a world-class offshore boom allowed it to finance visible milestones and bolster rural outreach, converting prior APNU strongholds into PPP/Civic gains in Region 4.

The PPP/Civic was also aided by several key APNU members who crossed over to the party, and might have had an influence on shifting voter allegiance.

At a macro level, Guyana’s first major oil boom shifted voter priorities toward economic stability and revenue transparency. Pre-election analyses previously warned that control over the Stabroek block and gas-to-power projects would dominate the pre-election political discourse, with the PPP/Civic’s promise of “no renegotiation” apparently resonating with investors and voters wary of policy whiplash.

APNU, on the other hand, focused on renegotiation of Exxon contracts and corruption allegations, which failed to overcome the PPP’s message that continuity meant faster execution on energy projects and broader social dividends.

At the end of the day, APNU’s fall from its previous position as the dominant Opposition party to third place reflects weak leadership, internal fragmentation, and voter fatigue. Compared to 2020, when APNU held a more competitive stance, its 2025 performance reveals waning influence and the need for reinvention.

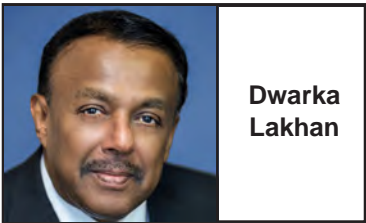
A key driver of the altered landscape was the splintering of the traditional Opposition. The A Partnership for National Unity-Alliance For Change (APNU+AFC) coalition contested separately in 2025, diluting the anti-incumbent vote and paving the way for newcomer We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) to become the main Opposition force.

WIN’s breakthrough was aided by several other factors, including the direct grassroots engagement style of its leader Mohamed, who appealed to people who wanted change, as well as his charitable activities.

He was even made more visible by US sanctions for tax evasion, which dominated the headlines, and by targeted banking and compliance warnings that generated media buzz. These supposedly negative implications turned out to be positive for WIN.

Guyana’s 2025 elections were not just a reaffirmation of leadership; they were a referendum on change. The electorate has spoken, and the message is clear: tradition alone would not win votes anymore. Racial politics that had previously dominated voting patterns have become less important.

The PPP/Civic faces the challenge of governing with a more diverse Opposition, while WIN, an inexperienced newcomer to the political scene, must prove its staying power beyond electoral success, especially in policy formula-



Dwarka Lakhan



GECOM officials affirm the 2025 General Election results

tion. APNU, on the other hand, is at a crossroads, needing to rebuild trust and relevance.

Notwithstanding, the PPP/Civic might very well build a closer relationship with APNU than with WIN.

...

Dwarka Lakhan, BA, MBA, FCSI, FICB

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

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Walnut, Brampton partner to promote prostate cancer awareness month

Brampton – The City of Brampton on September 10 proclaimed September as **Prostate Cancer Awareness Month**, reinforcing its partnership with **The Walnut Foundation** to advance men’s health education, encourage early detection, and confront the disproportionate impact of prostate cancer on Black men.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer among Canadian men, with research showing Black men are 76 percent more likely to be diagnosed and more than twice as likely to die from the disease. Yet stigma and silence continue to prevent many from seeking testing and treatment early.

“This proclamation is a call to action,” said Anthony Henry, President of TWF, adding, “By breaking down stigma and talking openly about prostate cancer, especially in Black communities, we can save lives.”

Brampton’s Mayor Patrick Brown said the city was proud to partner with TWF.

“Brampton is proud to stand with The Walnut Foundation in bringing attention to an issue that affects so many families. Together, we can ensure that men know the risks, talk to their doctors, and get tested,” he declared.

TWF’s Walk the Path campaign Honorary Chair, Gervan Fearon, President of George Brown College, underscored the importance of early detection through his own experience.

“I know first-hand how life-changing it is to catch prostate cancer early. Too many men, especially Black men, wait too long because of fear or stigma. We need to change that story, and that starts with conversations like this one today,” Fearon said.

The proclamation also marked the launch of TWF’s September campaign, which is **seeking to raise \$20,000 this month to reach a \$100,000 milestone** in support of community education and advocacy.

Henry noted the foundation’s gratitude to the City of Brampton for annually supporting its advocacy. He added that TWF has invested in scholarships and research while continuing to provide education and support for men diagnosed with prostate cancer.

TWF also announced a commitment of \$20,000 over four years to fund scholarships for Black medical students at the new TMU School of Medicine in Brampton. The initiative includes \$5,000 annually, beginning in the 2025-2026 academic year, with the aim of building a \$150,000 endowment.

“We’re proud to have recently made a down-payment on



At the TWF announcement of four TMU scholarships (left to right) were Ken Noel, Executive Director, TWF; Dr Trudy McFarlane, Associate Dean, TMU; Angela Carter, Advisor, Strategic Initiatives, Black Health & Services Hub; and Anthony Henry, President, TWF

a \$5,000 annual scholarship for Black medical students at the new TMU medical school right here in Brampton,” Henry said, adding that community representation in medicine was crucial.

“As one of the most diverse medical schools in Canada, TMU is opening doors for future doctors who reflect the communities they serve. More Black medical students from our communities means better care, stronger representation, and healthier futures,” TWF stated.

Henry urged men to take proactive steps by paying \$40 for a PSA test, or attending free clinics offered by TWF and its partners.

- Upcoming clinics include:
- **September 20 at Sheridan College in Mississauga, with Peel Public Health and the Peel Health Collective, geared to African and Caribbean communities (see sidebar);**
 - **October 14 at the IUPAT Union Hall in North York, targeting the trade union community.**
- “Let’s stop blaming the PSA test for overtreatment and under-

Community Wellness Fair

Roots Community Services and partners will host the 11th ‘Our Community Wellness Fair’ on Saturday, September 20, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Sheridan College’s Hazel McCallion Campus, 4180 Duke of York Boulevard in Mississauga. Admission and parking are free, with designated parking available at 4219 and 4171 Living Arts Drive. Visitors can obtain a pass using the code posted at the parking meters.

The fair will offer a full day of health services, education, and family-friendly activities. Attendees can benefit from free health checks including screenings for diabetes, prostate cancer, kidney disease, and more. School immunisations, resources on heart health, cancer prevention, mental health, and wellness supports for youth, families, and seniors will also be available.

A highlight of the day is a youth panel discussion titled *Student Success – Careers, Wellness, and Finding Your Way*

Beyond health, the fair promises plenty of fun with music, giveaways, interactive fitness sessions, children’s activities, a caricaturist, a legal clinic, and a food truck offering meals for purchase.

The event is made possible through the collaboration of Roots Community Services with partners including LAMP-East Mississauga, Wellfort CHC, Ontario Health, CMHA Peel Dufferin, Moyo, the Black Health Alliance, the Black Physicians Association of Ontario, REST Centres, and Peel Region.

[Visit the website for more information.](#)

stand that the test is one of the best we have to detect prostate cancer,” Henry said.

He concluded by emphasising that sustaining awareness depends on continued community support, declaring, “It is donations from folks like you in the room, with brothers, uncles, dads and husbands that allow us to continue doing this work. Let’s make prostate cancer a thing of the past.”

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Devotees, guests, and officials celebrate with Pandit Ashwar (left in photos above)



Lord Shiva statue inaugurated

From Page 1
“It exceeded our expectations. They embraced our project; they joined in the march. It was something one only sees in movies.”

Lord Shiva’s statue stands at 54 feet, and is both an engineering feat and a work of art. Sculptor Naresh Kumar Kumawat invested nearly two years in its creation, constructing it from a resilient blend of fiberglass and steel. Designed to endure our Canadian weather, Lord Shiva’s presence now projects permanence, strength, and endurance in Brampton’s skyline.

As Lord Shiva’s form stands with majesty and magnificence on Bhavani Shankar Mandir’s grounds, the serene features of his welcoming countenance are balanced with the cosmic force of his trident rising skyward.

Approaching the sacred site from almost any vantage point, Lord Shiva’s presence and gaze emerge as anchors in faith and promise, the immersive holy aura projecting the strength of a protector, inviting reverence, and deep reflection.

“This is not just a statue; it is a spiritual and cultural landmark that will stand tall for generations,” Thaamesh Singh, Bhavani Shankar Mandir’s media and community relations spokesperson, told the media earlier this month.

For Pandit Ashwar, the statue also carries profound meaning for younger people, and for the generations to come.

“Our temple has been a pillar for the young people, and we are focused on putting them on stage, on a pedestal, and preparing them before sending them out into the world. The Shivaji murti is going to enhance that experience,” he declared.

He acknowledged that some youth feel hesitant to speak of their faith in Canadian schools, but Lord Shiva’s statue now provides a new, vibrant source of pride.

“Many among our young people, when they go to school, are ashamed to talk about God. Now Lord Shivaji’s murti would give approval, its visibility a statement that we are not only ritualist, but hardworking. It is visible testimony of our faith, and would make our young people less afraid, arming them with the confidence to openly embrace their faith.”

Lord Shiva’s statue is the newest star in a constellation that has been forming across the GTA. In Mississauga, last month saw the inauguration of a 51-foot Lord Rama statue at the Hindu Heritage Centre, the tallest of its kind outside India.

In Richmond Hill, the grounds of Vishnu Mandir are holy with the 50-foot golden Hanuman, an 18-foot Lord Shiva in meditation, and the 25-foot Radha Krishna murti.

Together all these deities trace a growing celestial map of faith across the GTA, each radiant in its own right, yet connected by our shared origins. They serve more than devotional points, rising to become luminous markers of our diaspora’s identity, visible affirmations of our faith, art, and heritage.

For the South Asian and the Caribbean diaspora, the deities convey many layers of meaning. While offering visibility to places for prayer and pilgrimage, their presence is a declaration of continuity; that the sacred traditions of our ancestors remain alive, and that our cultural memory is engaged and growing with presence and fortitude, rather than in erasure.

Bhavani Shankar Mandir’s Singh acknowledged and underscored this role when he stated, “Brampton is known for being a multicultural city, and the GTA is one of the most diverse regions in the world. This statue further elevates the city as a destination for faith, culture, and heritage, and symbolises how traditions from around the globe thrive here.”



Guyana, Suriname leaders hold energy, crime, food security talks

Nieuw Nickerie, Suriname – Meeting for the first time since Jennifer Geerlings-Simons assumed office, Presidents Ali and Geerlings-Simons reaffirmed the historic bonds between their countries and pledged to accelerate cooperation across energy, food security, and crime. Their discussions also renewed support for the Corentyne River Bridge, an infrastructure project with transformative potential for the entire Amazon region.

Energy emerged as the most prominent theme of the Nieuw Nickerie talks. The leaders identified oil and gas, renewable energy, and cross-border electricity interconnection as strategic priorities.

Ali stressed that energy “is an important pillar of our growth and development for both countries”, while also emphasising the regional dimension. He explained that the two nations see themselves contributing not only to their own security but to “an energy economy for the rest of the region in Caricom”.

This vision extends beyond hydrocarbons. By mentioning renewable energy and grid interconnection, both leaders signalled alignment with broader Caricom efforts to diversify the energy mix, reduce costs, and improve resilience against climate-related shocks.

The commitments also point to potential opportunities for private investors. Both governments agreed to make the investment climate more transparent and efficient, laying groundwork for cross-border joint ventures. In sectors as capital-intensive as energy, this kind of predictability is key for attracting regional and international partners.

Infrastructure and connectivity were given equal weight, with the Corentyne River Bridge taking centre stage. Long-discussed but delayed by legal and financial issues, the project has again received political endorsement from both sides.

The bridge is not only about Guyana and Suriname. It would serve as a vital artery connecting the Guiana Shield with the wider Amazon basin, opening new trade routes for South America while giving Caricom another anchor for integration.

Both leaders recognised this wider significance, describing the bridge as essential for “trade, tourism, connectivity, and people-to-people exchanges”. The agreement to intensify work on legal and financial hurdles signals renewed determination to turn a symbolic ambition into a tangible link.

Parallel to this, the presidents committed to reviewing and upgrading the Canawaima Ferry Service, vital for border communities. Ali underlined that improving reliability is “important in the movement of goods and services and people”. Both leaders also endorsed the idea of a regional ferry system, which, if realised, could give Caricom a stronger maritime backbone to complement its air routes.

Food security has been high on Caricom’s agenda, with both Guyana and Suriname positioning themselves as agricultural powerhouses capable of reducing the region’s dependence on extra-regional imports.

To this end, the presidents announced the establishment of a joint fisheries commission by year-end, involving ministers, technical teams, and fisherfolk. This step recognises fisheries as both an economic sector and a critical food source for coastal communities.

Ali described agriculture and fisheries as “enormous opportunity” sectors. He argued that collaboration between the two nations could position them as “major food producers in our region”. By linking food production with improved ferry and bridge infrastructure, the talks underscored the interplay between logistics and food security.

The Strategic Dialogue and Cooperation Platform will continue to coordinate these efforts, with both leaders reaffirming it as the central mechanism for bilateral planning.

Security cooperation was another key pillar of the Nieuw Nickerie meeting. Both leaders expressed strong resolve to fight transnational crime, including drug trafficking and human trafficking, through a more coordinated security architecture.

Ali was unequivocal, declaring, “Madam President and I are both committed to taking a very strong position against transnational crime, and to have our security architecture collaborate and work in a close manner in combating transnational crime.”

The leaders also moved forward on the sensitive issue of borders. As was reported, both leaders agreed to convene the seventh Meeting of the Suriname-Guyana Joint Border Commission before the end of 2025, affirming that all disputes will be handled peacefully, and in accordance with international law.

It was noted that these commitments align with their joint pledge to maintain the region as a “Zone of Peace”. The emphasis on diplomacy and peaceful resolution was particularly significant in a region where territorial disputes have historically strained, and continue to impact relations.

Beyond the high-level agreements, the talks carried important signals for the private sector. Both leaders stressed the need to improve transparency, efficiency, and ease of doing business. They also encouraged joint ventures as a way to maximise opportunities in energy, agriculture, and fisheries.

By explicitly calling for private sector engagement, the two governments acknowledged that bilateral agreements alone cannot sustain growth. For investors in Guyana and Suriname, as well as for regional players, the Nieuw Nickerie meeting offered assurances of political stability and a supportive investment climate.

The Guyana-Suriname agenda also intersects with larger regional dynamics. Within Caricom, both nations are positioning themselves as central players in the twin priorities of food and energy security. Their commitments directly support the Caricom goal of cutting the region’s food import bill by 25 percent by 2025, while also advancing energy interconnection projects.

At the same time, the Corentyne River Bridge project situates the two countries within Amazonian geopolitics. By providing a stronger link between the Caribbean and South America, the bridge could shift trade flows and strengthen Guyana and Suriname’s roles as gateways between continents.

For both Caricom and South America, the Nieuw Nickerie meeting offered a reminder that bilateral cooperation between the two developing nations can generate ripple effects across a much larger regional canvas.



President Dr. Jennifer Geerlings-Simons greets Dr. Irfaan Ali last week



Ask Jay...

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TORONTO’S HOUSING MARKET IN FLUX: STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

The phone hasn’t stopped ringing recently. Some callers sound excited, others anxious, but they all want to ask the same question: “Jay, what’s going on with the market?”

The headlines are everywhere – Toronto’s housing market declined again in August, with the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board reporting a 5.2 percent drop in the average selling price compared to last year. Condos were hit the hardest, especially in the suburbs, where prices fell more than ten percent.

Last week, I met a young couple who had been renting in Liberty Village for years. They showed me a few condos they were considering, but the wife hesitated: “What if prices keep falling?” she asked.

It’s the question on every buyer’s mind. My advice to them, and to anyone considering buying right now, is this: don’t try to time the bottom. Instead, focus on finding the right home at a price you can comfortably afford.

This is one of the most buyer-friendly markets we’ve seen in years. Sellers are now negotiating more actively. I recently closed a deal where my clients secured a condo 15 percent below the asking price, with the seller covering part of the closing costs. That would not have happened two years ago.

Yes, prices may decrease further, but waiting indefinitely could result in missing out on the perfect home. Get pre-approved, stay informed about interest rate announcements, and be prepared to move when the right opportunity comes along.

On the other hand, I recently met a condo owner in Etobicoke. She wanted to list at last year’s prices. I warned her that the market had shifted. She insisted. Weeks went by. No offers.

Finally, she adjusted her price, this time to match today’s market, and within days, we had showings and an offer. For condo owners, sometimes the most brilliant move isn’t to sell at all.

The lesson is clear: with nearly ten percent more listings than last year, buyers have many options. Setting realistic prices is now crucial. Detached and semi-detached homes in the 416 are maintaining their value better, but sharp pricing and good presentation remain essential.

A long-time client pulled me aside after a showing and admitted he regrets using his house like an ATM during the boom. He had refinanced several times, thinking property values would keep rising. Now, with prices down and payments higher, he feels stuck.

I tell every homeowner the same thing: today’s market is different from the one we experienced during the pandemic. Don’t over-leverage. Protect your equity. Avoid tapping into it for lifestyle spending. If you’re not planning to move, ride out the volatility. Toronto has faced downturns before, and over the long term, property values here have always recovered.

The Bank of Canada has indicated more rate cuts, leading lenders to compete more fiercely than ever for business. If you have a renewal coming up, don’t just accept your bank’s first offer. Negotiate and explore fixed and variable options. Even shaving half a point off your rate can save thousands over the life of your mortgage.

Canada-wide, housing prices are expected to decline by about two percent this year, with Toronto likely facing a sharper drop due to its heavy reliance on condos. Federal housing minister Gregor Robertson even described the condo market as being in “free fall”. Strong words, but not without truth.

Nevertheless, downturns don’t last forever. As interest rates fall and affordability gradually improves, buyers will return. Toronto continues to attract newcomers, businesses, and investments. Long-term demand for housing stays strong.

Markets evolve, but the core principles of wise real estate investment stay the same: plan carefully, think long term, and adapt to the changing landscape.

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Health, humanity, and heart as Rambihar inspires U of T graduates

– Toronto cardiologist and Guyana Scholar Dr Vivian Rambihar has combined medicine, mathematics, and advocacy to reshape heart health and community care. Honoured with the University of Toronto’s highest alumni award, he returned to his alma mater in June this year to inspire new graduates with lessons on prevention, diversity, and complexity science.

Toronto – Dr Vivian Rambihar, a University College alumnus and practicing Toronto cardiologist since 1980, delivered the 2025 Commencement Address to Science graduates at the University of Toronto weeks after receiving the Carl Mitchell Alumni Award for Community Impact, the institution’s highest alumni honour.

The address in June came at a time of heightened recognition for Rambihar’s decades of service in medicine and community health. In May, he received the Carl Mitchell Alumni Award, presented to graduates whose contributions embody the University of Toronto’s commitment to public service and innovation. The accolade joined his induction into the Scarborough Walk of Fame in 2024 for science and medicine, and his inclusion in the *Top 25 Canadian Immigrants* list in 2012.

His professional impact stretches beyond conventional clinical practice, encompassing pioneering work in preventive health and advocacy for culturally sensitive care. He is widely recognised for shaping a vision of medicine that bridges scientific inquiry with cultural realities.

Born in Guyana, Rambihar’s early path was defined by scholarship and opportunity. As the 1969 Guyana Scholar, he was awarded a prestigious scholarship to study any subject at his university of choice anywhere in the world. He chose University College at the University of Toronto, arriving in 1970 as an 18-year-old after a year teaching mathematics at Queen’s College in Georgetown.

At University College, he pursued a multidisciplinary course of study, premedical subjects, mathematics, physics, and biomedical engineering, before enrolling at McMaster University’s medical school, where he graduated in 1975. That year marked both his medical qualification and the scientific emergence of chaos theory, a framework he would later adapt for medicine. He went on to specialise in cardiology at McMaster and the University of Toronto’s Toronto General Hospital.

In 1980, Rambihar began his cardiology practice in Scarborough, then an emerging hub of cultural diversity. Responding to alarmingly high rates of heart disease, diabetes, and unexpected sudden deaths in South Asian and Caribbean populations, he undertook pioneering research and extensive community outreach. His work drew attention to the urgent need for culturally-tailored health promotion.

Together with an interdisciplinary team at Scarborough General Hospital, he introduced preventive strategies and raised awareness about lifestyle modification. This emphasis on culturally sensitive care was considered ground-breaking in Canada at the time, anticipating broader public health initiatives that would emerge decades later.

Rambihar’s career is notable for his integration of mathematics and medicine. Inspired by James Gleick’s 1987 book, *Chaos*:



Dr Vivian Rambihar delivering the University College, University of Toronto Commencement Address June 2025.



Dr Rambihar with Acting Principal University College, Professor Sali A. Tagliamonte (left) representing the Chancellor, U of T, and Professor Leah Cowen (right), Vice President, Research and Innovation, and Strategic Initiatives, representing U of T's President.



In the platform party (front row, left to right) were Dr Vivian Rambihar, Professor Sali A. Tagliamonte, and Professor Leah Cowen. Photos by Lisa Sakulensky

Making a New Science, he began applying concepts of chaos and complexity science to health and society.

He authored *Chaos from Cos to Cosmos: Making a New Medicine*, in which he re-imagined medicine through this new lens, linking clinical practice with broader patterns of uncertainty and adaptation. His 2023 letter to *The BMJ* urged medical schools to teach chaos and complexity early in the curriculum,

extending the tools of systems thinking to future doctors and even to non-medical students.

Following the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, he launched the concept of *Global Heart*, a call to view humanity as interconnected and to extend the care of the heart to global well-being. His book *Tsunami Chaos Global Heart: Using Complexity Science to Rethink and Make a Better World*, advocated for rethinking society through complexity science, with Canadian writer Bruce Powe describing it as “visionary” and a work that “brings back the magic of reading”.

Despite decades in Canada, Rambihar has remained closely linked to his homeland. In March 2025, he returned to Guyana with daughters, cardiologist Dr Sherryn Rambihar and physiatrist and sports medicine specialist Dr Nadira Rambihar, for a national symposium on heart health. Their joint presentation drew nearly 300 attendees in person and 200 online, triggering what organisers later described as “national attention on heart health and prevention”.

By engaging multiple generations of medical professionals in one family, the symposium symbolised continuity and commitment. It also underscored Rambihar’s belief that health advocacy must cross borders, integrating diaspora expertise with homeland needs.

In his June Commencement Address, Rambihar reflected on his own days at University College, and the crossroads between careers in mathematics/physics and medicine.

He chose both, he told graduates, describing how he had brought complexity science into clinical work and social advocacy.

He urged graduates to care for themselves amid rising concerns about youth health, calling for prevention of diabetes and heart disease. He spoke to the prevention of heart disease; to seek good health by starting young; and to avoid heart issues and diabetes, which is today increasing and mostly preventable.

Among his recommendations were more physical activity, healthier eating, and reducing or avoiding alcohol, which is now a firmer advisory than appeared in previous guidelines.

Rambihar also reminded graduates that learning outside their field would prove essential later in life, invoking Steve Jobs’s line from Stanford, namely that “the dots will connect themselves later”. He introduced the concept of “wicked problems”, complex challenges that shift as solutions are attempted, and recommended that students study chaos and complexity science to better navigate uncertainty.

In closing, he linked scientific rigour with moral responsibility. Referencing pop artist Billie Eilish’s question, “What are you made for?”, Rambihar told graduates they must also show, “What they are made of”.

He urged them to “think heart”, expanding the idea beyond clinical cardiology to include caring for humanity and the planet. To further illustrate his point, he cited two Nobel laureates: V.S. Naipaul’s assertion that, “The world is what it is”; and Barack Obama’s reminder that, “The world is what you make it”, leaving his listeners with the challenge of reconciling these truths to shape a better world.

VCC annual dinner, awards to honour poet, philanthropist

– Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre will host its Annual Dinner and Awards on September 27 in Markham, honouring poet-educator Janet Naidu and retired lawyer-philanthropist Ramnarine Sahadeo for their outstanding achievements and community service, while also raising funds to support the VCC’s operations.

Markham – The Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre will honour community leaders Janet Naidu and Ramnarine Sahadeo at its Annual Dinner and Awards on September 27 at the Centre’s banquet hall in Markham.

The annual event, one of the Vedic Cultural Centre’s signature gatherings, recognises individuals for their achievements, contributions, and service to the community. Organisers note the awards help highlight role models for younger generations, while the evening also serves as a major networking opportunity for attendees. Proceeds assist in covering the VCC’s operating costs.

Naidu, an accomplished poet, writer, and educator of Guyanese heritage, has contributed significantly to community development within the Guyanese Canadian diaspora and broader Canadian society. Her poetry has appeared in academic publications and blogs featuring Indo-Caribbean women poets. Her debut collection, *Winged Heart* (1999), was short-listed for the *Guyana Prize for Literature* in 2000.

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She is founder and president of Guyanese Canadians for Unity, an organisation dedicated to fostering social engagement and heritage preservation in the Toronto-based Guyanese community. Naidu is also a past president of the Association of Concerned Guyanese.

Sahadeo, a retired lawyer, is widely known for his philanthropy and long-standing community service. He spearheaded the *Gita In Every Home* project, bringing the Hindu text to thousands of households in Canada and abroad. In the 1990s, he also launched the Adopt-a-School initiative in Guyana, through which many schools benefitted, and continues to send books to children in interior regions.

During the 1980s, Sahadeo successfully represented numerous Guyanese and Caribbean nationals seeking refugee status in Canada, and advocated for reforms to the refugee determination process. He has also promoted digitisation of Guyana’s indentureship records, and initiated the Gandhi Scholarship at McMaster University.

The semi-formal program begins with a meet and greet at 6:00 p.m., followed by dinner at 7:00 p.m. The awards presentations and entertainment will start at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are priced at \$50 per person, with \$25 eligible for a tax-deductible receipt. For more information, contact Toronto Arya Samaj President Adit Kumar at **647-866-1926**.

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Provocative, presumptuous perhaps, but a 3rd term for Guyana’s President Ali?

By Dhanpaul Narine

It may be considered provocative, even presumptuous, to discuss the 2030 elections in Guyana. The dust is still settling on the 2025 polls. But in the shifting and unpredictable nature of Guyanese politics, one cannot rule out the unthinkable as we proceed to the next election.

There is much to analyse in the recently concluded 2025 elections. One senior functionary of We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) called it “the smoothest election in living memory”.

There was a great deal of professionalism in the polling stations with voters directed to the right places, and the staff painstakingly explaining the rules. They included valid identification, the non-use of cell phones, the correct folding of ballot papers, voting in privacy, the staining of the finger, and placing of the ballots in the boxes.

These were done in the presence of the polling clerks, the presiding officers, and polling agents representing the various political parties.

In the 2020 elections, it was clear that voting was one thing and counting was another. In 2025, the counting was as smooth and above board, as was the voting. This writer observed 23 polling stations on the East Coast of Demerara (Region Four), and found that the counting and declaration were of the highest standard. What emerged from the tally sheets and Statements of Polls (SOP’s) was the fact that the WIN party was eating up the votes of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU). This trend was replicated nationwide and helps to explain why APNU did so badly.

The most stunning evidence of WIN’s victory over APNU was in Linden, a town named after Burnham, and a stronghold of the People’s National Congress (PNC).

The relegation of APNU to third place means that for the first time in Guyana’s history the position of Opposition Leader will go to businessman Azruddin Mohamed and his WIN party.

Amanza Walton-Desir, of Forward Guyana Movement, broke ranks with the PNC, went it alone, and has won a seat in Parliament. She would have been the ideal leader of APNU.

The mandate given to the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) with 55 percent of the votes and 36 seats means the Guyana government and President Irfaan Ali can carry out its transformative agenda in a hurry.

President Ali struck the right notes in his inaugural address, saying, “I am not the President of some Guyanese. I am the President of all of Guyana.”

Uppermost on the list of to-do policies is to tackle the cost of living. President Ali is aware of it, and has promised to confront it “head on”. He said that no new taxes would be imposed; taxes would be removed from hygiene products for women, and that electricity and gas prices will be reduced.

Also, there are plans to help working mothers, to fight domestic violence, to open up employment opportunities for women, and others. The cash grants are expected to con-



Dhanpaul Narine was an official observer at the 2025 Guyana Elections

tinue, and would probably be increased. It would be good if the government could give a death benefit to help families with funeral expenses as well. In this way, the safety net would take care of families from the cradle to the grave.

It would also be good if the administration could start naming places and things after notable Guyanese. President Ali could restore the National Awards with the stroke of a pen, recognise Guyanese of merit, and bring the diaspora closer to the home country.

As we move forward, there are a number of projects that are aimed for completion. The most noteworthy is the new Demerara Harbour Bridge. This imposing structure provides an ample opportunity for private sector involvement. The sight of cruise vessels up and down the Demerara, stocked with food and entertainment, and catering to locals and tourists, will provide employment, and open up the tourism business.

Housing, or the lack of it, is a visible manifestation of poverty. There is no question that many Guyanese would like to own homes, as it provides security of tenure. The government will do well to explore partnerships with low-income groups.

Participatory housing means that the poor should be able to have a say in the design, layout and construction of their housing. The government should provide the basic infrastructure such as materials and technical advice, but the poor should pool their resources and provide labour, where the emphasis should be on quality. In this way, they will have ownership in the finished product. Participatory housing has worked well in parts of Africa and Asia where the emphasis has been on community participation and social development.

President Ali has outlined an ambitious agenda for the next six weeks. It includes plans for the construction of a new Berbice River Bridge, a bridge across the Corentyne River, and a meeting with Suriname’s President has already taken place about the Corentyne Bridge, and bilateral cooperation.

There are plans also to expand the Demerara Harbour, the construction of a deep-water har-



Voters line up outside Golden Grove Primary School on polling day

bour, and the establishment of a second gas-to-energy plant in Region Six, among others.

It is part of President Ali’s vision to build prosperity in every home. He proclaimed that, “Guyana must never again be a country rich in resources, but poor in living standards”. He spoke at the International Building Expo 2025 and reaffirmed his government’s plans to construct Silica City as a flagship development for Guyana. He described it as a “global model city” that would create economic prosperity and improve living standards. This project is supposed to come on stream in 2030.

A model city would need a model park. There is a good case to knock down the Georgetown Prisons and replace it with the Jagan-Burnham Park. On Sundays, parts of the city should be closed to traffic to allow for concerts, celebrations, and general relaxation. The creation of bike lanes would lead many to ride bikes and play other sports.

The wealth should be used to make people happy. Guyana stands on the cusp of radical development. A National Development Plan (2025 to 2030) is needed to highlight the sectoral approaches to planning, and to show how implementation will be achieved.

President Ali and his government will use their majority to make sweeping changes. They need to target vulnerable communities to ensure that no one is left behind. The team

will need to employ the techniques of community participation, consultation, and local-level democracy to help realise its agenda.

The next five years will test the political acumen of the Opposition to consolidate its position in Parliament. The APNU party cannot afford to play petty politics if it is to be taken seriously. Lacking a powerful leader and figurehead in Parliament, APNU would do well to oppose constructively. This means supporting the government in projects that are aimed to develop the country, and to hold it accountable in the process.

The main opposition is the unknown quantity. The WIN party took most observers by surprise. In the space of three months, it captured 16 seats, and displaced APNU as the main Opposition party.

WIN’s political behaviour will be closely scrutinised. Its leader, Mohamed, lacks experience in government. Will he stay the course or get bored and give up the whole thing? Will WIN’s members be motivated to perform in the interest of the country, or will the spectacular showing at the polls be short-lived and wither into oblivion?

These are questions that will be answered in the ensuing months, in what Desmond Hoyte called the cut and thrust of politics.

Five years is a long time in politics. Guyana is on course to be transformed into a middle or even upper-income economy. The social and political landscape would be changed, and with it the mindset of the Opposition.

It is conceivable that by 2030, the transformation will include the support of WIN, and even some members of APNU, to agree to a change in the Constitution to allow President Ali to run for a third term. Stranger things have happened in politics, and a third-term by President Ali cannot be ruled out.



Tents at Paradise Playfield housed eight polling stations

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Former West Indies cricketer, now GTA resident, Larry 'Mr Dependable' Gomes, was caught, not behind the wicket by wicket-keeper and photographer, Russell Lutchman, but getting ready to defend the timbers at a practice match with the Canadian Cricket Masters Over-70 team. The team was practising at the Danville Cricket Ground in Mississauga on September 11 as it gets ready for its next tournament.



One Love Family Services held its Miladun Nabi, Barbecue, Back to School Drive, and Seniors Program at its Scarborough location on September 7. In photos, volunteers prepare hampers and backpacks for city-wide distribution, and enjoy the good food and camaraderie at the barbecue and seniors' event.



Winning hand as Team Spicy deals out hearts

Brampton – *Hot n Spicy* shuffled their way to the top of the deck earlier this month, claiming victory at the Keshore Annual All Fours Tournament in Brampton. With competitors from Toronto, Montreal, New York, and Trinidad and Tobago, the event was a solemn, studied affair, with no place for jokers.

Hot n Spicy's story goes back to when Shiva Nandlal, once part of the legendary *Drupati Boys All Fours* team, refused to fold after that team dissolved. With nothing more than a love for the game and nine companions, he called all hands on deck, pulling together a team for a ten-player tournament.

They walked into play with heart, not knowing if fortune would deal them a winning hand.

The early rounds were not easy for the team. Losses came, lessons followed, but the foundation was being quietly set. Then came a key partnership with Nandlal's longtime friend from Trinidad, Donny Gayadeen. Together, they laid out the rules for success: discipline above all, followed by skill, loyalty, honesty, and a pride that mattered as much in defeat as it did in victory.

Members remained loyal to the pack, even when some forays did not bring home a winner. Part of their resilience derived from a promise to two retirees, Uncle Moti and Uncle Tom, who

wanted nothing more than to play in good company. They played for them, and with them, building a foundational structure more with spades than shovels, one stronger than a house of cards.

As Gayadeen and veteran Danny Siewdass guided the group, *Hot n Spicy's* culture matured. Heart and pride remained their trump cards, but unity became their ace. New recruits were

chosen carefully, each one strengthening the hand. Amy and Kevin Hajaree joined up, bringing Ken's proven skill and calm leadership. He took the captaincy, steering them to one triumph after another.

From there, the wins stacked up like a well-played suit: 2023 Keshore Invitational Champions, the 2024 repeat, and then the 2025 three-peat. They added the 2025 Nitro Cup, and the 2025 New York World Cup, a spread of titles that confirmed their reputation as queens and kings beyond Brampton's border.

Today, *Hot n Spicy* plays with the same values that built them up: unity, loyalty, and heart. Each player knows the role, holding steady at the centre so the team never loses balance. It seems it was always in the cards for the team to hold a winning hand in the All Fours firmament.

Today, *Hot n Spicy* are proof that in cards, as in life, the winning hand is often built not only on the draw, but also on discipline, trust, the courage to hold on, and to never fold.



Hot n Spicy savour winning the 2025 Kishore Trophy. Shiva Nandlal (at back) is making the victory sign.

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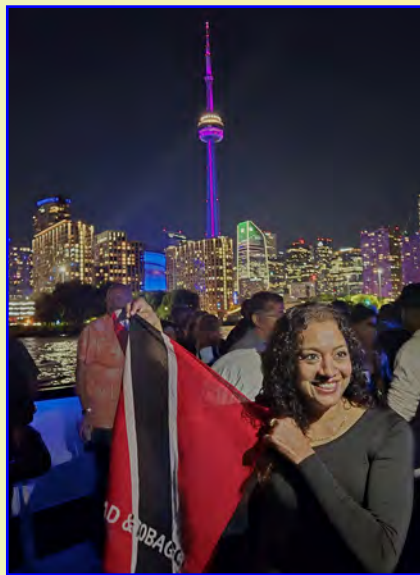
radharani.rajaram@gmail.com



Shiv Seva Sangh Mandir & Cultural Center conducted its annual Ganga Maa Puja late last month at the Scarborough Bluffs. The sacred event by Lake Ontario was held in respect and devotion to Mother Ganga, the goddess of the blessed Ganges River. Devotees offered flowers, fruit, coconuts, and other symbolic items in a ceremony blessed with warm weather that enhanced the purification, well-being, and spiritual upliftment felt that day. Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir is located at 2555 Eglinton Avenue East, Unit B, in Scarborough. The mandir can be reached at 416-261-0281. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo



Community cruising into fall...



United Youths and A2K Promotions held its third annual *Escape on De Lake* cruise on August 31, the event marking Trinidad and Tobago's celebration of Independence Day. The cruise was held on the *Enterprise 2000*. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo



Radica's Hot & Spicy Roti and Doubles and Dave's Roti & Doubles held its *Brampton versus Scarborough* annual boat cruise on September 13. The menu on board the *Enterprise 2000* included delicious curries, roti, and the best Chinese food in town. Photos by Russell Lutchman



Friends in a quiet moment at the Trinbago Festival. Photos by Russell Lutchman and Hinano Beekhoo



Toronto unites to Trinbago Festival’s rhythms, partying, and flavours

– The sights, sounds, and flavours of Trinidad and Tobago swept through downtown Toronto during the three-day Trinbago Toronto Festival from September 5 to 7, drawing tens of thousands to Nathan Phillips Square for Canada’s largest showcase of Caribbean food, music, and culture, while also supporting youth empowerment initiatives.

...
Toronto – Tens of thousands of visitors filled Nathan Phillips Square earlier this month as the *Trinbago Toronto Festival* returned for its fourth year, transforming downtown Toronto into a vibrant hub of Trinidad and Tobago music, dance, cuisine, and community spirit.

Held from September 5 to 7, the three-day celebration has grown into the largest festival of its kind in Canada, showcasing the dynamic heritage of the twin islands.

More than a cultural get-together, organisers emphasised that the festival represents a movement of community spirit, diasporic pride, and opportunities for the next generation.

Each day brought a packed programme of performances. The opening on September 5 featured DJ Maceo, Connector, Ren Violin, Crooner, Silhouettes Steel Orchestra, Pan Masters Steel

Orchestra, and Xhaiden Darius.

Also on that evening, the highly-engaged audience enjoyed appearances by Tameika Darius, Karene Asche, Black Sage, Myron B, Kersh Ramsey, Gi Beharry, Duvone Stewart, Makeda Darius, and Chris Fire Entertainment.

On September 6, top-notch performances were delivered by DJ Karyen, Socacize, Mahima Dance Academy, DJ Steph Honey, Dance Caribe, STCC Dance Academy, and DJ Shiva.

And among the highlights that day were entertaining performances by Gi Beharry, Impulse Steel Orchestra, D Enforcas, JFiyre, Kersh Ramsey, Duvone Stewart, Johnny King, DJ Doc, Benjai, and Iwer George.

On closing day, September 7, featured were DJ Maceo, Footsteps Dance School, DJ Steph Honey, Ground Shakers Tassa Group, Panman Pat, Marlon D Percussionist, Kersh Ramsey, and Black Creek Reign. Also performing were Earl La Pierre Jr, Duvone Stewart, DJ Doc, Orlando Octave, and Swappi. Special tributes honoured DJ Wonder Woman and DJ Bad Lad.

Beyond the stage, visitors sampled Trinidad and Tobago’s renowned cuisine, with reports indicating that vendors were putting up “sold-out” signs throughout the day. On offer were

Trinidad and Tobago “staples”, the ubiquitous Doubles, Bake and Shark, and *paratha* roti with a variety of curries, along with Pelau, Callaloo, Corn Soup, and traditional sweets. A Stag Beer Garden and Angostura Rum Experience also provided vibrant gathering points celebrating the iconic Caribbean brands.

The festival was not only a sensory feast but also an occasion for connection. Traditional masqueraders parading among visitors, warm weather, and effusive mingling created space for Toronto’s Trinbagonian community, the wider Canadian public, and curious passersby to share in the friendly island spirit.

“The Trinbago Toronto Festival is built on community – the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora and the friends we’ve made here in Canada. It’s proof of what happens when cultures connect, stories are shared, and we work together to keep our traditions alive for the next generation,” said Petronilla Marchan, Palo Seco Managing Director and Trinbago Festival organiser.

Now in its fourth year, the festival doubles as a fund-raiser for the Caribbean Scholarship Foundation. Proceeds support scholarships, mentorships, and empowerment programmes in business, education, and the arts, providing opportunities for youth in the Caribbean diaspora across Canada.





This year the Guyana government reaffirmed its commitment to the Guyana Prize for Literature with new Youth (15–18) and Creative Non-Fiction categories, expanding access for local writers. In photos, Guyana’s Prime Minister Brigadier Mark Phillips with young prize winners at the July awards. Facebook photos

Martin Carter Lecture warns forgotten Guyanese voices at risk of erasure

– At this year’s Martin Carter Lecture held in Georgetown, Dr Alison Donnell issued a call to action: recognition of Guyanese writers, especially women and Indigenous voices, requires constant recovery work to prevent their erasure from the nation’s literary memory.

Recognition of Caribbean writers, particularly those from Guyana, remains fragile and often fleeting, Dr Alison Donnell of the University of Bristol warned during this year’s Martin Carter Lecture at Castellani House in Georgetown.

Delivering a lecture titled *Recognising Guyanese Writers: Lost, Found and Still at Risk*, Donnell stressed that literary recognition is unstable and must be revisited repeatedly to counteract historical exclusions.

“All histories are acts of selection and the idea of an inclusive, comprehensive Guyanese literary history is as impossible and it is necessary; recognising as well as resisting or reducing the space of exclusions and of loss is a good starting point,” she said.

Her remarks coincided with the release of her new book, *Lost and Found: A-Z of Neglected Writers from the English-speaking Caribbean*, and drew on the Leverhulme Trust-funded Caribbean Literary Heritage project, which underpinned her research.

“For more than 35 years, I have been fascinated by questions of Caribbean literary inclusion and recognition – who we read,

who we don’t read and why,” Donnell noted. She observed that delivering the Martin Carter Lecture itself was a symbolic act, underscoring Carter’s secure place in national consciousness. And she referenced a quick AI-generated survey that placed Carter alongside Edgar Mittelholzer, Wilson Harris, Roy Heath, and Grace Nichols as Guyana’s most acknowledged writers.

Yet, she stressed, many important voices, notably Indo-Guyanese authors and women, remain absent from such recognition.

She cited early attempts at inclusion, such as Mahadai Das’ *They Came in Ships* (1998) and Petamber Persaud’s pamphlet on Indo-Guyanese writers, but noted these works remain rare and largely overlooked in the broader literary discourse.

Donnell highlighted six mid-20th century Guyanese writers who contributed significantly but remain under-recognised: Oscar Dathorne, Beryl Gilroy, Arnold Harrichand Itwaru, Peter Kempadoo, Eric Walrond, and Edwina Melville.

The case of Edwina Melville was particularly moving. Born Edwina Gordon in 1926, she managed to write while raising a family in the Rupununi, a region with few publishing outlets. Correspondence with BBC producer Henry Swanzy and publications in *Blackwood’s Magazine* earned her fleeting international notice in the 1960s. But turbulence came during the 1969 Rupununi Uprising,



Alison Donnell

“I know what you’re doing.” One full moon night, Rowan confronted the twins while they sat eating ice cream cones in the village square. “I don’t know how, but I know it’s you.” Delia smiled, her expression cool and almost bored. Mara hesitated, feeling the weight of Rowan’s certainty press against her mind.

“Prove it,” Delia challenged, her voice echoing with telepathic vehemence. But Rowan was undeterred. He produced a small device from his pocket – a sound recorder, primitive but effective. He dangled it in front of the twins and alternated glances at them. “People talk. They say you’re always near when trouble starts. Your classmates, your neighbours, even your teachers. The pattern is clear.”

Delia reached out to cloud Rowan’s mind, but Mara faltered, her mental focus splintering as the truth of their isolation hit her. Rowan pressed his advantage. “You’re not untouchable,” he said. “You’re just alone.”

The words struck a chord deep within Mara. A flicker of guilt – her own, not Delia’s – rippled through the shared space between them. For the first time, the unity of their minds faltered. Delia, furious at Mara’s hesitation, tried to seize control. Mara resisted, pushing back with a force born of desperation. Their mental struggle spilled outward, a silent battle that Rowan could not see but sensed in the sudden intensity of their stares.

The streetlights on the ornate posts flickered and died. In the split second before the lights came back on, Mara broke free, rescued from her sister’s vengeful influence by the boy who would fall in love with her innocence and ask her to become his wife after teaching her how to block her sister’s invasion of her innermost thoughts.

After their marriage, their move to the city further distanced the sisters from each other. Mara moved her parents with her and erased all traces of her sister from her life. Delia, without Mara, became mentally weak and miserable in a community that shunned her.

But the story began long before that moonlit confrontation. Mara and Delia were known as the twins who spoke with their eyes, their silences more eloquent than any spoken word.

The Supernatural
The Sinister Sister

Childhood had been a game of secrets—telepathic exchanges, shared dreams, silent pranks played on unsuspecting villagers. Their bond had always been unbreakable, their thoughts intertwined so closely that sometimes even their parents could not tell them apart. But as they grew older, the world began to notice the subtle differences. Mara’s gentleness contrasted with Delia’s sharpness; Mara sought connection, while Delia veered towards isolation and control.

Their abilities, once a playground for innocent mischief, grew darker with age. Delia discovered she could manipulate memories, cloud perceptions, and even incite fear in those she disliked. If her mind conjured any imagined transgression against her, she sought revenge based on the degree of the perceived infraction. Mara, horrified by her sister’s growing cruelty, struggled to contain Delia’s impulses, often intervening to soften the effects.

The village, wary but unable to prove their suspicions, watched the twins with uneasy fascination. It was only Rowan, the new boy with an observant gaze and a persistent curiosity, who dared break the silence that shielded Mara and Delia from scrutiny.

Tragedy had brought Rowan to the village after the death of his mother. He had never known his father. He moved around looking for comfort until he finally found solace in the rhythm of small-town life, and in the company of Mara, whose kindness stood out amid the social complexities of youth. Rowan sensed the strange undercurrents around the twins, but only after a series of unexplained incidents, such as lost pets and sudden illnesses.

That summer, Rowan set about collecting stories. He listened to children whispering at the edge of the playground, pieced together the memories of elders who recalled the twins’ odd behaviour, and even questioned teachers who had seen unusual flashes in Mara and Delia’s eyes. The sound recorder was a token of his resolve, a device that could capture words even if it could



Kamil Ali



not unravel the mysteries of the mind.

Rowan became even more convinced of the twins’ involvement when the annual Harvest Ball, an event that brought great joy to the villagers, ended abruptly with violent brawls between usually peace-loving neighbours, resulting in several arrests and lingering hostility.

When Rowan finally confronted the sisters, the tension between them had been smouldering for months. Mara was tired, her spirit worn down by guilt and fear. Delia, sensing Mara’s weakness, grew more reckless. The confrontation on the village square was as much a battle between Mara and Delia as it was between the twins and Rowan. The moon, full and pale, hung above them as a silent witness.

As the telepathic struggle unfurled, Mara felt the presence of Rowan anchoring her, his certainty offering her a lifeline. She remembered the gentle moments they had shared: a walk along the old railway tracks, a quiet afternoon at the library, Rowan’s soft voice as he read to her about faraway places. He became her shield against Delia’s rage, a beacon of hope when the darkness threatened to swallow her.

When Mara finally broke free, the separation was both a relief and a wound. She felt herself split in two, her identity no longer wrapped around Delia’s. The silence between their minds was jarring – like stepping into cold water after a lifetime of warmth. Yet that silence also meant possibility, a chance for Mara to discover herself beyond her sister’s shadow.

Rowan and Mara’s relationship blossomed quietly. He taught her how to build mental walls, simple techniques for blocking out unwanted thoughts. Mara learned to trust her own mind, slowly letting go of the constant vigilance that had defined her existence. Their wedding was small, attended only by close family, and a handful of friends who had seen the twins grow up. Mara’s parents, grateful for their daughter’s new peace, agreed to move with her to the city, leaving behind the memories of their turbulent past.

Govt warns devaluation could fuel inflation, hurt small businesses

– Trinidad and Tobago's Finance Minister Dave Tancoo has rejected calls to devalue the Trinidad and Tobago dollar, warning it would intensify inflation and hurt small businesses. The debate, sparked by businessman Emile Elias, has drawn sharp responses from economists, exposing deep divides on exchange rate policy and economic reform.

...

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago's Finance Minister Dave Tancoo has dismissed proposals to devalue the Trinidad and Tobago dollar, warning the move would "do more harm than good" to the national economy.

Responding to businessman Emile Elias' suggestion last month to adjust the exchange rate from TT \$6.79 to TT \$9 per US \$1, Tancoo said such a measure would worsen inflation and stifle growth.

"Regarding devaluation of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar, the fundamental question is whether such a move would truly benefit our country," the minister stated.

"It is my view that devaluation cannot work to stimulate the Trinidad and Tobago economy in its current structure," he added.

Tancoo explained that unlike countries where weaker currencies improve export competitiveness, Trinidad and Tobago's energy exports are bound by production limits and long-term contracts. He said non-energy exports are small and reliant on imported inputs that would become more expensive.

"A devaluation would primarily raise the cost of imported inputs, driving up the cost structure of non-energy exports," he warned, adding, "This means they would not become more competitive internationally. This has the potential to decimate a large number of small and medium-sized businesses at a time when we need more productive activity from them."

He also cautioned that nationals would face higher prices for imported goods, with inflation spreading across the domestic economy. Larger firms with foreign reserves might benefit, but



Dave Tancoo

small and medium enterprises would be squeezed further.

Instead, Tancoo called for a strategy of boosting productive efficiency, strengthening manufacturing, expanding services such as tourism and logistics, and reducing reliance on imports through greater local food production.

"Ultimately, devaluation would do little more than trigger inflation in the local economy," he stressed.

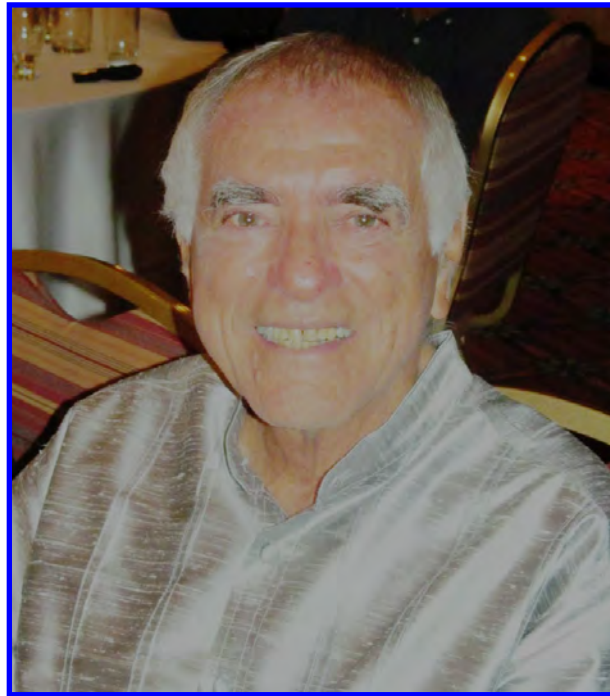
Several economists strongly opposed devaluation, with Dr Patrick Watson pointing to the experiences of Jamaica and Guyana, warning the move often fuels speculation.

"Everybody will start thinking that this thing will just get worse," he said, explaining how speculation could push the rate far beyond TT \$9, perhaps even to TT \$20, as Jamaica's spiralling dollar had done.

Watson argued that because Trinidad and Tobago's economy depends on oil and gas priced in US dollars, devaluation merely increases the local dollar value of revenue without raising foreign exchange earnings. Meanwhile, imports become costlier.

"We are a foreign exchange-losing country," he said, adding that the real issue is lack of diversification.

Dr Ralph Henry said the Trinidad and Tobago dollar had



Emile Elias

already depreciated in practice, with an unofficial rate of TT \$7.50 or more. He explained that Elias' call only formalises what already exists.

However, he warned that moving to TT \$9 would still "cause serious inflationary effects, particularly in a highly import-dependent society".

Instead, Henry advocated for a managed float, adjusting the rate gradually to avoid shocks. He tied the foreign exchange problem to declining energy production and stressed that structural reforms, particularly in agriculture, would take time.

In contrast, economist Dr Justin Ram supported depreciation, not as a reactive measure but as a "critical price signal". He argued that the overvalued dollar has encouraged consumption and imports, rather than domestic production.

"If we are to give people dignity, then it is imperative that Trinidad and Tobago once more becomes a production economy," Ram said.

The devaluation debate was sparked after Elias, executive chairman of NH International (Caribbean) Ltd, urged Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar to raise the exchange rate.

He said former Finance Minister Colm Imbert was the "architect of this crisis", and appealed to Persad-Bissessar to empower the Central Bank Governor to manage monetary policy while the Finance Minister focused on fiscal matters.

"If you act decisively, your legacy will be that of the leader who restored sanity to the exchange rate, eliminated the black market, rebuilt reserves, and restored Trinidad and Tobago's credibility," Elias said.

He argued that shifting to TT \$9 would eliminate the black market overnight, boost exports, attract investment inflows, and normalise demand for US dollars.

"Madam Prime Minister, the country is watching. Please act with courage, honesty, and foresight. Save Trinidad and Tobago; move the rate to TT \$9 to US \$1 now," he urged.

Govt sends 300 URP workers home in sweeping anti-corruption overhaul

– The Trinidad and Tobago government last week terminated more than 300 Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) workers as part of a restructuring drive aimed at eliminating corruption and "ghost" employees. Rural Development and Local Government Minister Khadijah Ameen said the move will clear waste, corruption, and create "more meaningful" job opportunities.

...

Port-of-Spain – More than 300 Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) workers were terminated last week, the move part of the Trinidad and Tobago government's ongoing restructuring exercise to root out corruption within the programme, Minister of Rural Development and Local Government Khadijah Ameen said. She added that "meaningful" employment opportunities will follow.

Ameen noted (TT) \$400 million of taxpayers' money were allocated to URP in the national budget, but argued the programme has been riddled with "ghosts" and friends of the former People's National Movement administration who were on the payroll and receiving salaries without performing any work.

She pointed out that traditionally, URP employees are terminated immediately when a new government comes into power. However, that did not happen when the UNC took over the government, she said.

Said Ameen, "For many decades, once the government changes, all the workers of the URP will be dismissed immediately. We did not do that. Since winning the election, it has been five months, and as the Prime Minister indicated, we are looking at restructuring these programmes."

She added, "So while we allowed the workers to continue as we go more advanced into the restructuring, those persons are now being terminated."

Ameen contrasted the current administration's approach with that of the PNM when it took office in 2015 under Dr Keith Rowley.

"The PNM did that the very week they won the election; we chose not to do that. So, yes, people are being terminated, but what you will have is more meaningful employment being



CEPEP workers protest following termination in July created. People having better-paying jobs, as well as the type of work that they are doing will be contributing to society in a bigger way," she said.

Ameen also expressed alarm over what she described as rampant corruption within URP, and the misuse of State funds for political patronage.

"What we have within the URP is a lot of corruption, a lot of persons of people who are politically affiliated who the PNM hired, friends and family, who were employing 'ghosts'. There was a lot of corruption within the programme, and by this restructuring would eliminate that corruption and allow us to hire more real people," she said.

Ameen placed blame on PNM members of Parliament, claiming they were aware of the corrupt practices.

"So many of the PNM MPs facilitated those 'ghost gangs', they facilitated the corruption. There was a senior URP employee at the head office whose [relative is studying abroad] and receiving a salary for an office position that she did not report to, so all this blatant corruption under the PNM has to be removed for that money to be used for meaningful employment," she said.

She reaffirmed the government's commitment to job creation.

"Our commitment is to ensure that more people receive jobs. We did not callously terminate people immediately as the government changed, even though that has been the tradition and the norm, and that was what the PNM did," Ameen reiterated.

She said further announcements on employment initiatives and the URP restructuring will be made.

In July, UNC campaign manager Feeroze Khan was appointed as the new programme manager for URP. Khan introduced strict monitoring measures and has been auditing the URP employee lists to identify and remove "ghosts" – individuals receiving salaries without showing up to work.

He has reportedly mandated daily roll calls to account for all employees and track hours worked. Following his appointment, a URP worker posted a video on Facebook condemning the approach.

In a one-minute video laced with obscenities and racial slurs, she objected strongly to the daily headcount, and what she described as this "prison system where yuh bring every day headcount, every day three strike and yuh out; what you feel: is prisoners you [expletive] dealing with or what?"

The woman also said the UNC government would serve only a five-year term as the PNM "have to come back".

In June, some 10,000 Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme workers were sent home following the termination of over 300 contractors. One of those contractors has since taken the matter to court.

Public Utilities Minister Barry Padarath also cited corruption within CEPEP, claiming that days before the April 28 general election, contracts were renewed for an additional three years without Cabinet approval.

In July, Persad-Bissessar declared that these programmes could not continue in their current form. Speaking at a national budget consultation in her constituency, she said Trinidad and Tobago had become a nation of "grass cutters", and she could not allow the programmes to continue without reform.

Persad-Bissessar said her government intended to expand vocational and skills training initiatives to provide more sustainable employment.

Bollywood’s silver screen glitterati shines as producers struggle in the shadows

– Bollywood’s shimmer is coming at a steep price. As megastars charge around \$12 million per film, entourages run up hotel bills, and chefs serve “birdfeed” at approximately \$2,200 a day, producers face shrinking margins and an industry weighed down by its own star power.

An LJI Series for the Caribbean Diaspora

It began with a teapot. Filming on location in the UK, a star’s family complained that their villa lacked the right one, putting the producers in hot water and adding to their costs. Add to that complaint a \$180 cafe bill for an entourage’s lunch, and the extravagance of Bollywood’s celebrity culture reveals itself, not as a punchline, but as a crisis draining the very films those stars headline.

Bollywood has long been powered by its stars. From Raj Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan to Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan, charisma has often mattered as much as content. In the 1970s and 1980s, a hit star could virtually guarantee box office success, but then, production budgets remained modest relative to revenues.

The landscape shifted in the multiplex and corporate-studio era of the 2000s. As international markets expanded and satellite rights became lucrative, star fees began to soar. Stars not only commanded higher paychecks but also made profit-sharing arrangements, effectively placing them at the top of the film industry’s food chain.

Today, Bollywood finds itself in an unusual bind: the very actors who once secured financial stability for films are now threatening it. With ballooning budgets, entourage costs, and inflated salaries, the sustainability of Hindi cinema is being called into question.

The year 2024 underscored Bollywood’s vulnerabilities. *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* mounted at an eye-watering \$42 million, and *Maidaan*, was budgeted at \$30 million; and both flopped, leaving producers reeling.

Star fees were a major culprit: Akshay Kumar reportedly pocketed \$15 million, while Tiger Shroff earned \$6 million.

Even successful films struggled to deliver meaningful returns. *Crew*, with a budget of \$9.6 million, managed to gross \$10.7 million, leaving almost no profit margin after publicity and distribution costs. Meanwhile, Bollywood’s overall box office receipts fell 25 percent in 2024 to \$544 million from \$725 million in 2023.

And yet, the appetite for risky spending persists. Superstar Rajinikanth’s *Coolie* was budgeted at \$42 million, with pre-release business estimated at \$48 million. The gamble demonstrates both the faith in star-driven spectacle and the peril of an industry hooked on high stakes.

The Producers Guild of India convened meetings in June 2024 to address escalating costs, but little progress has been made. Producer Ram Mirchandani emphasised the core issue:



Karan Johar

“Stars and directors must take a realistic view of remuneration” if films are to remain viable.

Yet not all Bollywood stars are complicit. Vivek Oberoi revealed that he often bears his own costs, explaining to *News18* that he travels simply, sometimes in a Toyota Innova instead of luxury cars; and that he also pays his long-time staff out of his own pocket.

“Ancillary costs about an actor’s entourage add unnecessary expenses to cinema,” he said.

John Abraham, speaking to *The Hollywood Reporter India*, was more vocal and quite blunt.

“It’s already hurting Hindi cinema. At this point in time, we shouldn’t be paying people to act in films because we don’t justify those huge budgets, the huge fees that we get paid. We can’t load a film with entourage costs as well. It’s ridiculous.”

He added a pointed reminder: “Actors should admit that we are down the deep black hole... How much more will you suck the system dry?”

Aamir Khan, appearing on Komal Nahta’s *Game Changers* last week, called current trends “dangerous for the industry” and “a shame.”

He recalled a simpler time when only essential staff were covered, stating, “When I came into the industry, the producer paid for the make-up man, hairdresser, costume person – that’s all part of the film. But why would the producer pay for my driver or my cook?”

Director Anurag Kashyap, known for low-budget realism, mocked the waste. In an interview with Janice Sequeira, he described a star’s chef charging around \$2,200 a day to prepare minuscule portions of meals he likened to “birdfeed.”

On another occasion, a driver was dispatched on a three-hour round trip to fetch a bespoke vegan burger from a five-star hotel, which left him wondering whether the food arrived cold.

“If I had been a hair and makeup artist, I’d be far richer,” Kashyap quipped, noting daily charges sometimes climb to around \$900.

Karan Johar, one of Bollywood’s most influential producers, acknowledged the problem at the trailer launch of his film *Kill*, declaring, “The entourage cost is the least of our worry.



Amir Khan

Meanwhile, stories of restraint stand out precisely because they are rare. Oberoi upgrading his hotel room at his own expense, or traveling without fuss contrasts sharply with stars who insist on multiple vanity vans for makeup, wardrobe, and even personal gyms, which are costs that producers are expected to absorb.

Behind these stories are the invisible casualties: spot boys who do the heavy-lifting on the set earn a fraction of their worth, junior artists struggle to pay rent, and technicians accept wage cuts. Their labour sustains Bollywood, yet they remain at the mercy of budgets skewed toward stardom.

The debate is not merely about cost; it is about the sustainability of Hindi cinema in a competitive, content-driven era. South Indian blockbusters like *Pushpa 2* earned around \$107 million in Hindi markets alone, despite modestly scaled star fees. OTT platforms such as *Panchayat* continue to prove that compelling storytelling, not entourages, secures audiences.

Smaller films are also pointing the way. *Article 370* at \$2.4 million, and *Munjya* at \$3.6 million, crossed \$12 million and \$16 million respectively, earning returns that mega-budget flops cannot match.

If unchecked, Bollywood risks pricing itself out, leaving audiences to turn increasingly to regional cinema or digital platforms. But the solution may lie in a cultural reset: stars must shed their bubbles, scale back demands, and return to a team-player ethos.

As Aamir Khan reminded his peers: “When a star earns in crores, can’t he pay his own staff? Every star’s priority should be not to burden the film.”

The teapot in a UK villa, a burger gone cold, and the chef serving “birdfeed” may sound like gossip, but each excess symbolises an industry that has come to the crossroads. Beneath the glare of stardom, Bollywood’s technicians, writers, and supporting actors struggle on dwindling pay, while producers bear the weight of unsustainable costs.

As the ongoing debate continues, more and more it is pointing to an implosion, where stars themselves must come to recognise that without restraint, their bright light will continue to dim on the elevated stages where they stand.

MNS objects, issues warning to Kapil Sharma over use of ‘Bombay’ in show

– The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) has warned comedian Kapil Sharma over the use of “Bombay” and “Bambai” on his Netflix show, demanding strict adherence to the official name “Mumbai.” The party insists its warning is long-standing and not politically motivated, threatening agitation if ignored.

Mumbai – The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) has issued a stern warning to comedian-actor Kapil Sharma, demanding that his Netflix program *The Great Indian Kapil Show* stop referring to Mumbai as “Bombay” or “Bambai.”

Ameya Khopkar, head of the MNS film wing, told PTI and ANI that the repeated use of the city’s old names on Sharma’s show was unacceptable.

“The name of this city is Mumbai. On Kapil’s show, for a long time, we have seen that the city is always referred to as Bombay or Bambai. We oppose this. It’s not an objection; it’s anger,” he said.

Khopkar questioned why cities like Chennai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata are addressed by their official names while Mumbai is not.

“If you can address other cities by their proper names like Chennai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata, why insult our city?” he asked.

The MNS representative reminded Sharma that Mumbai has been a central hub to his professional success.

“You have been working in Mumbai for so many years...



Kapil Sharma

Mumbai has been your karmabhoomi. The people of Mumbai like you and watch your shows. Mumbai is in our hearts; don’t insult this city, don’t insult the people of Mumbai... I am warning Kapil Sharma,” Khopkar declared.

He urged Sharma to ensure both he and his guests refrain from using “Bombay” or “Bambai” on the program.

“If this does not happen, then the MNS will launch a strong agitation,” he warned.

As evidence of its position, the party posted a video on X (formerly Twitter) highlighting an episode where actors and siblings Huma Qureshi and Saqib Saleem, while recalling their move from Delhi, referred to Mumbai as “Bombay.”

Khopkar noted that even though the city was officially renamed nearly three decades ago, old terms remain common in Bollywood, television, and films.

Responding to speculation about whether the timing of the warning was tied to upcoming local body elections, Khopkar dismissed the claim.

“We have been agitating on this issue for the past many years. Keep elections aside; the name of this city is Mumbai. You will have to say Mumbai. And those who do not call it so will have to face our anger,” he said.

Mumbai officially replaced the colonial-era name “Bombay” in 1995, drawing from the Marathi goddess Mumbadevi, revered by the city’s Koli fishing community. The change mirrored similar renamings across India, such as Madras becoming Chennai and Calcutta changing to Kolkata, each reflecting cultural and linguistic roots.

The *Great Indian Kapil Show*, featuring Archana Puran Singh, Navjot Singh Sidhu, Kiku Sharda, Sunil Grover, Krushna Abhishek, and others, recently premiered its third season on June 21.

As of last week, neither Kapil Sharma nor the show’s producers had issued a public response to the MNS warning.



Rishabh Pant is helped off the pitch

Pant eyes October return after Manchester injury

– Rishabh Pant's heroic Manchester half-century with a fractured foot is heading to become the stuff of legend; meanwhile, it appears the wicketkeeper-batter is eyeing India's October home series for a comeback.

...

India's wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant is targeting a return during the upcoming home series against West Indies in October, or failing that, in the white-ball contests against Australia later next month.

He has been sidelined since fracturing a toe on his right foot during the Manchester Test in July, where he was forced to retire hurt after being struck by England pacer Chris Woakes.

Despite the injury, Pant returned to the crease on the second day, producing one of the most defiant innings of his career. He smashed his 90th Test six to draw level with Virender Sehwag as India's joint-highest six-hitter in the format, before completing a gritty half-century.

His knock of 54 from 75 balls ended when Jofra Archer bowled him with a searing delivery that sent a stump cartwheeling, but his courage left a mark far beyond the scorecard.

Head coach Gautam Gambhir lauded Pant's bravery in the post-match press conference.

"The character and the foundation of this team will be built on something that Rishabh did for the team and for the country as well. Any amount of praise is not enough for him. Especially batting with a broken foot. Not many people have done that in

the past, and he has put his hand up," Gambhir said.

He added, "I think the generations to come forward will talk about this."

Pant's series ended with 479 runs in four matches at an average of 68.42, including two centuries and three fifties, a reminder of his pivotal role in India's batting line-up.

After the fracture, believed to be on his metatarsal bone, Pant returned to India and began rehabilitation at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru following consultations with specialists.

The setback has ruled him out of the Asia Cup 2025, starting September 9 in the UAE, where India are grouped with Oman, Pakistan, and the hosts.

Pant has continued to update supporters on social media. Recently, he posted: "Appreciate all the love and good wishes coming my way. It's been a real source of strength. I will begin rehab once my fracture heals and I am slowly settling into the process. Staying patient, following routines and giving it my 100 percent. Playing for the country has always been the proudest moment of my life. Can't wait to be back doing what I love."

Pant's latest injury follows a string of physical challenges. He missed the final Test at the Oval, which India won to level the series, and had earlier been forced out of keeping duties at Lord's due to a finger injury.

In 2022, he survived a near-fatal car accident that sidelined him for more than a year with a serious knee injury.

ICC reveal Men's T20 World Cup tournament venue, February 7-March 8 run

– The 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup will run from February 7 to March 8, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, with 20 teams set to contest the tenth edition of the tournament.

...

The 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup is scheduled for February 7 to March 8, with India and Sri Lanka confirmed as joint hosts. The tenth edition of the tournament will feature 20 teams and 55 matches played across five Indian venues and two in Sri Lanka.

India will defend the crown they secured in 2024, when they defeated South Africa in the final in Barbados to claim their second T20 World Cup title.

According to reports, the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad is the designated venue for the final, although if Pakistan qualifies for the summit clash, the match will instead be staged in Colombo.

The co-hosting arrangement stems from an agreement earlier this year between the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Due to longstanding political tensions, heightened after the Pahalgam



India celebrate after their 2024 victory in Barbados

terror attack in April, both boards agreed not to play matches in each other's countries. As part of that arrangement, Sri Lanka will stage all of Pakistan's fixtures during the tournament.

At present, 15 teams have qualified for the World Cup: India,

Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, South Africa, USA, West Indies, New Zealand, Pakistan, Ireland, Canada, Netherlands and debutant Italy, who will appear at a global ICC tournament for the first time.

The remaining five spots will be filled by qualifiers, with two teams advancing from Africa and three from the Asia and East Asia Pacific events.

The format will mirror that used in the 2024 tournament. The 20 teams will be divided into four groups of five, with the top two advancing to the Super Eight stage. From there, the eight sides will be split into two groups, with the top two from each progressing to the semi-finals before the final showdown.

The BCCI faces an intense early-season calendar. The Women's Premier League (WPL) is earmarked for January-February, running alongside India's home series against New Zealand from January 11-31. The T20 World Cup follows in February-March, and the 19th edition of the Indian Premier League is tentatively scheduled between March 15 and May 31.

ICC appoints all-women officiating panel for Women's ODI World Cup 2025

– The ICC Women's ODI World Cup will make history this year with an all-female panel of umpires and referees, the first time the tournament has been entirely overseen by women match officials.

...

For the first time in the history of the ICC Women's ODI World Cup, the entire tournament will be officiated by women. A total of 18 officials: 14 umpires and four referees, have been appointed to the 31-match event in India and Sri Lanka beginning September 30.

The landmark move continues a trend established at recent global events, including the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and the last two ICC Women's T20 World Cups, but marks a first for the sport's premier 50-over competition.

Among the 14 umpires, Claire Polosak, Jacqueline Williams, and Sue Redfern will each stand in their third Women's World Cup. Lauren Agenbag and Kim Cotton, who officiated in the 2022 final when Australia claimed their seventh title, return for their second tournament. Eloise Sheridan, another official from



G.S. Lakshmi

the 2022 edition, also features.



Jacqueline Williams

The match referees' panel brings together a diverse group of

experienced administrators: Trudy Anderson, Shandr  Fritz, Michelle Pereira, and India's G.S. Lakshmi, who has become a pioneering figure in global cricket officiating.

ICC Chairman Jay Shah hailed the development as both historic and transformative.

"This marks a defining moment in the journey of women's cricket, one that we hope will pave the way for many more trail-blazing stories across all facets of the sport. The inclusion of an all-women panel of match officials is not only a major milestone, but also a powerful reflection of the ICC's unwavering commitment to advancing gender equity across cricket," he said.

Shah also stressed that the initiative transcends symbolism. "This development goes beyond symbolic value. It is about visibility, opportunity, and the creation of meaningful role models who can inspire future generations. By highlighting excellence in officiating on the global stage, we aim to spark aspiration and reinforce that leadership and impact in cricket know no gender," he declared.

Australia's Starc announces retirement from T20Is to focus on Tests, ODIs

– Mitchell Starc has announced his retirement from T20Is, ending a 12-year career to focus on Tests and ODIs as Australia's pace spearhead enters the final stretch of his decorated career.

...

Australia's left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc has retired from T20Is, choosing to concentrate on prolonging his Test and ODI career. The 35-year-old departs the format as Australia's second-highest wicket-taker, with 79 wickets from 65 matches, trailing only his fellow national, Adam Zampa.

Starc debuted in T20Is against Pakistan in 2012, and featured in five of the six T20 World Cups held since, missing only the 2016 edition due to an injury. He was instrumental in Australia's 2021 triumph in Dubai, helping complete the team's set of ICC trophies.

In a statement released by Cricket Australia, Starc said, "Test cricket is and has always been my highest priority. I have loved every minute of every T20 game I have played for Australia, particularly the 2021 World Cup, not just because we won but the incredible group and the fun along the way."

Looking ahead, he said his decision was about maintaining longevity.

"An away Indian Test tour, the Ashes and an ODI World Cup in 2027 are my focus. This is my best way forward to remain fresh, fit, and at my best for those campaigns. It also gives the bowling group time to prepare for the T20 World Cup in the matches leading into that tournament."

Starc's T20I career ends with 79 wickets at an economy of 7.74. He was a consistent threat with the new ball and at the

death, often producing breakthroughs that swung matches. His presence in the 2021 campaign was pivotal, underlining his reputation as a bowler capable of changing games in an instant.

Chair of selectors George Bailey praised Starc's impact, stating, "Mitch should be incredibly proud of his T20 career for Australia. He was an integral member of the 2021 World Cup-winning side, and as across all his cricket, had a great skill for blowing games open with his wicket-taking ability. We will acknowledge and celebrate his T20 career at the right time, but pleasingly, he remains focused on continuing to play Test and ODI cricket for as long as possible."

Cricket Australia CEO Todd Greenberg added that Starc's career reflected "significant sacrifices" made in service of his country, acknowledging his professionalism and longevity.



ICC's Chair Jay Shah (fourth from left) with officials and players following the prize money announcement

Record-breaking prize \$\$ for ICC Women's World Cup

– Women's cricket is set for an unprecedented leap with the 2025 ICC Women's ODI World Cup unveiling record-breaking prize money, surpassing even the men's event, and signaling a powerful commitment to equality in the sport.

The 13th edition of the ICC Women's ODI World Cup will carry a prize pool of (US) \$13.88 million, almost four times higher than the \$3.5 million offered at the 2022 tournament in New Zealand.

The rise also eclipses the \$10 million purse of the 2023 Men's ODI World Cup in India, marking a watershed moment for the women's game.

For the champions, the reward is historic. The winners will secure \$4.48 million, a 239 percent increase from the \$1.32 million Australia earned in 2022. The runners-up will take home \$2.24 million, up from the \$600,000 awarded to England three years ago. Losing semi-finalists will each collect \$1.12 million,

West Indies women complete dual high-performance camps

– West Indies Women cricketers have wrapped up back-to-back high-performance camps in Antigua and India, signalling Cricket West Indies' stepped-up push to build world-class depth and resilience ahead of a packed 2026 season.

The West Indies Women's team has concluded an intensive training block at the Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua, part of Cricket West Indies' wider investment in strengthening the women's game across the region. The camp was staged in two phases: an initial group of players completed a two-week programme earlier this month, followed by a second group who finished their sessions late last month.

Under the guidance of Senior Women's Head Coach Shane Deitz, assistant coach Ryan Austin, and pathway coach Ulric Batson, the players engaged in sessions that combined technical refinement, tactical awareness, physical conditioning, and mental aptitude.

Deitz explained the approach, noting, "We had a mixture of established players, new players and fringe players come to Antigua... It's been great to be able to focus on some fundamental technical work and some strength and conditioning work. We were also able to conduct fitness testing and have already seen some improvements in a short space of time."

He also credited the work of Strength and Conditioning Coach Hector Martinez, adding, "He has been pushing the players, and they are responding very positively. The girls will head to the WCPL now, and after the end of that tournament we will have an intense few months of training which will prepare us for a very important 2026."

In parallel with the Antigua camp, 15 of the region's most

nearly quadrupling the 2022 figure, while all group-stage participants are guaranteed \$250,000.

The distribution extends further, with each group-stage win earning \$34,314. Teams finishing fifth and sixth will receive \$700,000 apiece, while those ending seventh and eighth will collect \$280,000 each.

ICC chair Jay Shah emphasised the organisation's intent, saying, "Our message is simple, women cricketers must know they will be treated on par with men if they choose this sport professionally."

He added that the uplift "underscores our ambition to deliver a world-class ICC Women's Cricket World Cup and to inspire the next generation of players and fans. Women's cricket is on a remarkable upward trajectory, and with this step we are confident the momentum will accelerate."

The tournament is being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, and begins on September 30.

promising players took part in a specialised two-week training programme at the Super Kings Academy in Chennai, India.

Running from August 13 to August 30, the camp included senior-capped players such as Ashmini Munisar, Zaida James, Djenaba Joseph, and Jahzara Claxton, alongside several current and former West Indies Under-19 stars including Naijanni Cumberbatch, Samara Ramnath, and Steffie Soogrim.

Led by head coach Merissa Aguiliera, assistant coaches Ryan Hinds and Tremayne Smartt, and team manager Yasmine St Ange, the players worked with Sriram Krishnamurthy and his coaching staff.

The program emphasised performance against spin in subcontinental conditions, technical and mental development, and cultural adaptation through practice matches and intensive training sessions.

Director of Cricket Miles Bascombe highlighted the significance of extending the India programme to women's players following its success with the men's group last December.

"This initiative will provide

targeted technical development, especially in batting against spin, while also exposing the players to the mental and physical demands of elite training in subcontinental conditions. It forms a key part of our broader vision to build a deeper, more resilient player pool and ensure gender parity in developmental opportunities," he said.

Bascombe added that alternating between male and female groups annually will strengthen CWI's holistic development model, ensuring both parity and continuity across programmes.

"We are confident that the players selected will grow from this experience and help raise the standards across our entire women's cricket pathway. It's another important step in strengthening the foundation of West Indies cricket for the future," he stated.



West Indies young women players at the Chennai Camp

Teen Meso makes SA WC squad

– South Africa have named a blend of youth and experience for the upcoming ICC Women's ODI World Cup, with 17-year-old wicketkeeper-batter Karabo Meso making the cut for her first senior global tournament.

South Africa have confirmed their 15-player squad for the ICC Women's ODI World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, the selection headlined with the inclusion of teenager Karabo Meso. At 17 years old, the wicketkeeper-batter has only two ODI caps and seven senior internationals to her name, but is already a two-time Under-19 World Cup participant who earlier this year won the SA20 Schools title with Steyn City.

She is one of two debutants in the squad, joined by offspin all-rounder Nondumiso Shangase, who was recalled in May.

Top-order batter Anneke Bosch and allrounders Nadine de Klerk and Annerie Dercksen will also feature in an ODI World Cup for the first time, though all three have previous T20 World Cup experience.

The side will once again be captained by Laura Wolvaardt, with experienced all-rounders Marizanne Kapp, Sune Luus, and Chloe Tryon, along with seamer Ayabonga Khaka, forming the backbone of the squad.

They were all instrumental in South Africa's run-up to the semi-finals at the last ODI World Cup.

There was no recall for former captain Dane van Niekerk, whose international return remains uncertain despite being part of a recent training camp. Batters Lara Goodall and Faye Tunnicliffe, seamer Ayanda Hlubi, legspinner Seshnie Naidu and all-rounders Eliz-Mari Marx and Luyanda Ntuzi also missed out. Offspinning all-rounder Miane Smit has been named as the lone travelling reserve.



Karabo Meso

Convenor of selectors Clinton du Preez explained SA's approach, saying: "The make-up of the squad is underpinned by the consistent selection process that was adhered to during the recent ICC Women's Championship cycle, while taking into account the sub-continent conditions and the different characteristics of the group required for a successful tournament of this nature."

This will be South Africa's first major tournament under head coach Mandla Mashimbyi, who succeeded Hilton Moreeng in a permanent role last year. Since taking charge, Mashimbyi's team has recorded four wins from ten ODIs, including a series victory over West Indies in June.

Although player availability has been inconsistent during his tenure, with Kapp missing the Sri Lanka tri-series, Mashimbyi is optimistic about the group's readiness.

"From the moment I joined this team, and even before my time when the squad went through the qualification phase, it was all about working towards this moment," he said.

Additionally, "We can look back at the amount of preparation we have put in and know that we have done our best. We are ready to send a squad to the World Cup that will make South Africa proud. We believe we have the squad of players that can go out there and deliver on the world stage. Now it is all about carrying that belief with us every step of the way, along with the support of the entire nation."

Chetry replaces injured Bhatia

– India have suffered a setback ahead of the ICC Women's ODI World Cup, with wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia ruled out due to a knee injury sustained during camp in Visakhapatnam.

India's preparations for the Women's ODI World Cup were jolted when wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia was ruled out of both the upcoming three-match series against Australia and the tournament itself. Bhatia injured her left knee during the preparatory camp in Visakhapatnam, forcing a last-minute reshuffle in India's squad.

Her replacement is 23-year-old Uma Chetry, one of the designated standbys. Chetry has represented India in seven T20Is, but has yet to make her ODI debut. With her elevation to the senior squad, she has been withdrawn from the India A side that was scheduled to face South Africa in a World Cup warm-up match on September 28.

Bhatia last featured in an ODI in October 2024 and had been selected as back-up for first-choice keeper Richa Ghosh. She earned her place in the World Cup squad following strong performances for India A in Australia earlier this year, where she scored 59, 66, and 42 in three 50-over matches.

Her absence is a blow to India's depth behind the stumps, though Chetry's promotion represents an opportunity for the youngster to break into the ODI format.

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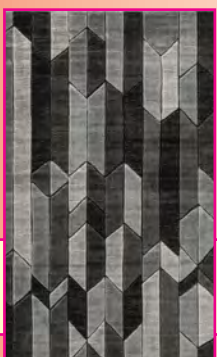


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