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Naatu Naatu scores an Oscar nomination

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Following its success at the Golden Globes early last month, India's blockbuster movie *RRR* has now scored an Academy Award nomination in the original song category for its highly-energised *Naatu Naatu*.

RRR (Rise, Roar, Revolt), is a Telugu-language drama set in that time during India's struggle for Independence from Britain. It is an historical fantasy that presents an alternate narrative of real-life Indian revolutionaries Alluri Sitarama Raju (played by Ram Charan) and Komaram Bheem (played by N.T. Rama Rao Jr.).

The three-hour movie explores the burgeoning friendship, its overlapping and at times challenging cross currents of tribulation, and teamwork in the emergent nationalistic resistance to the colonising British hegemony.

And of course, it is also the quintessential Bollywood movie: rich with pugilistic action sequences, fireworks and other incendiary explosions, epic battles, complex dance numbers (the highly-energetic *Naatu Naatu* choreography), and remarkably, episodes of wrestling between man and tiger (with an opening disclaimer indicating that all animal sequences are computer-

See Page 21: Global crossover hit



Guyana's High Commissioner to Canada, His Excellency Keith George, met with members of the diaspora on January 19 at the Guyana Consulate General in Toronto. In photo, he is addressing attendees at the meet-&-greet, among them community worker Joe Jaglal, who is standing second from right.

See story on Page 3

Camaraderie & synchronicity are evident in *Naatu Naatu* from the movie *RRR*. YouTube screen capture



Kieran Moore

Activity declines but stay vigilant

Toronto – Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr Kieran Moore last week issued a reminder to Ontarians to maintain vigilance while extending thanks for the “ongoing resilience and commitment” to following public health advice.

Moore's reminder came with the news that Ontario has now started to see a decline in Covid-19 activity, Respiratory Syncytial Virus, and with infections from the flu.

In a government release on January 26, Moore noted that RSV trends were beginning to stabilise and decline. Also, that after the annual 12-week flu season, the number of cases had peaked at

See Page 4: Stay up-to-date

Ottawa moves to combat Islamophobia

Ottawa – A special representative on combating Islamophobia was last week appointed by the federal government to a role that will see human rights activist Amira Elghawaby advising Ottawa on how to better fight discrimination against the Muslim community in Canada.

Elghawaby is Canada's first Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia, a release stated from the Office of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

As the statement noted, “Islamophobia, discrimination, and hate, in any form, are unacceptable and have no place in this country. The Government of Canada stands with and supports Muslim communities across Canada, and reaffirms its commitment to take action to denounce and tackle Islamophobia, hate-fuelled violence, and systemic discrimination whenever and wherever it occurs.”

Elghawaby will serve as a champion, advisor, expert, and representative to support and enhance the federal government's efforts in the fight against Islamophobia, systemic racism, racial discrimination, and religious intolerance, the release stated.

Additionally, “She will promote awareness of the diverse and intersectional identities of Muslims in Canada, and provide advice to the government in the development of inclusive policies, legislative proposals, programs, and regulations that reflect their realities. In so doing, she

will also help advance respect for equity, inclusion, and diversity and shine a light on the important contributions of Muslims to our country's national fabric.”

Speaking to Elghawaby's appointment, Trudeau declared that diversity “truly is one of Canada's greatest strengths”; however, he also noted that Islamophobia remains “all too familiar” for Muslims.

“We need to change that. No one in our country should experience hatred because of their faith. The appointment of Ms Elghawaby as Canada's first Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia is an important step in our fight against Islamophobia and hatred in all its forms,” he declared.

Additionally, “I look forward to working with her as we continue building a country where everyone feels safe and respected.”

Elghawaby later told the *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, and the national media, that her appointment was a “deep honour”.

She added, “Muslims are sometimes caught between being perceived as a threat, or as representing a problem to solve. It is our hope that we can use this moment to spur a national conversation about the value of Canadian diversity, including the richness of Canada's Muslim communities.”

According to *CBC News*, which quoted a spokesperson from the office from Diversity and Inclusion Minister

See Page 4: Tragic Quebec mosque



Amira Elghawaby

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Robert Persaud (third from left) with High Commissioner Keith George (third from right) with Radha Rajaram & Winston Kassim from the Canada Guyana Chamber of Commerce at left, Consulate staffer Grace Joseph (second from right), & lawyer, university professor, & community stalwart, Dhaman Kissoon

Guyana diaspora urged to be 'catalyst of change'

Toronto – The diaspora has been urged to be a “catalyst of change” in advancing the use of technology in agriculture to ensure sustainability in Guyana, and to further help in the all-round development of the country, Guyana’s new High Commissioner to Canada Keith George said on January 19.

George was speaking at the Guyana Consulate in Toronto, where he attended a meet-and-greet event with members of Guyana’s diaspora. Canada has the second largest number of Guyanese living abroad.

Also visiting Toronto with George was Guyana’s Foreign Secretary, Robert Persaud.

During his address, George told the audience to adopt strategies that can assist and benefit Guyana’s development.

“What I ask is for you to be a catalyst of change by empowering would-be agents of technological change in Guyana’s economy,” George told the gathering.

He also urged the diaspora to consider it to be a win-win situation, where they can not only introduce systems and products to the homeland, but at the same time benefit by positioning themselves as suppliers.

He singled out agriculture as one of the areas where the diaspora can benefit from this “win-win situation”. George also noted that Canada has made several strides in smart agriculture.

“If you direct your efforts at introducing technologies to some farmers in Guyana, I assure you that the benefits will multiply,” he said.

Additionally, it would also encourage Guyanese youths to see agriculture as a career, which would build resilience into the sector.

Speaking to the other areas of Guyana’s development, notably its burgeoning oil and gas industry, George declared that this focus does not deter from the country’s commitment to reducing climate change.

Said George: “We are firm believers in taking action to protect the world’s environment in combating climate change. Guyana has committed to a low carbon development strategy that ensures that our standing forest remains, and that we earn from keeping it that way.”

Persaud spoke to George’s Toronto visit when he addressed the audience.

“[George] brings considerable experience in diplomacy, having served as our Ambassador to Suriname, but also, he has a crucial position within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly as head of our frontiers divisions, which deals with the issues of borders with our neighbours,” Persaud said.

He also called for continuous engagement with the diaspora in Canada, “particularly second and third-generation Guyanese”, who can tap into opportunities, and play a critical role in the development of Guyana.

Said Persaud: “There is a clear mandate given to the High Commissioner to work very closely with groups.”

He also urged the diaspora to support the Consulate and the new High Commissioner.

“I want you to look at constructive roles that you can play in supporting what is taking place in our country, and also to support our staff here, to support our officers here, in getting their work done so they can support you, and be adequately prepared to represent our country,” Persaud said.

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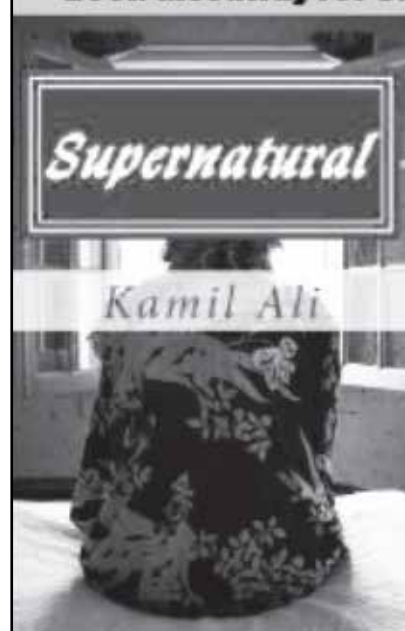
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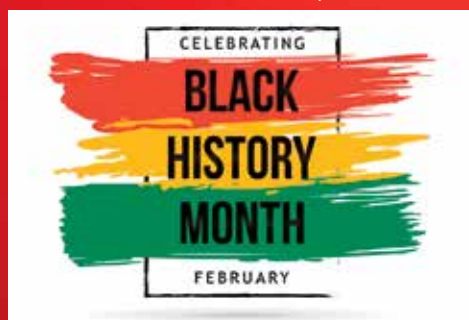
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This month we celebrate the rich culture and heritage of the African diaspora!



Tragic Quebec mosque massacre recalled

From Page 1

Ahmed Hussen, Elghawaby will occupy the office for a four-year term, with a budget of \$5.6 million, a sum that would cover the first five years of the office's operations.

Hussen also spoke to Elghawaby's appointment, saying, "In Canada, diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice. Our government has listened to the lived experiences of Muslim communities from across the country and is taking action in the fight against Islamophobia."

He added, "As Canada's first Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia [Elghawaby] will use her vast knowledge and experience as a human rights advocate to help guide and reinforce Canada's efforts in addressing anti-Muslim hatred, systemic racism, racial discrimination, and religious intolerance. This appointment is a significant step toward building a safer and more inclusive Canada for all."

Elghawaby's appointment came days before the sixth anniversary of the tragic January 29, 2017 shooting in Quebec, when a gunman entered the Islamic Cultural Centre, shot and killed six people, left 19 wounded, and 17 children fatherless.

In a statement issued on the January 29 National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action against Islamophobia, Trudeau said, "Today, we remember the six people who lost their lives and the 19 others who were seriously injured during the attack at the *Centre culturel islamique de Québec* in Sainte-Foy. We also salute the courage and selflessness of the first responders and community members who put their lives in danger and did everything they could to save worshippers that day."

Trudeau also recalled the lives lost, saying, "We remember Ibrahima Barry, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Abdelkrim Hassane, Azzedine Soufiane, and Aboubaker Thabti, who were fathers, husbands, friends, colleagues, Quebecers, and Muslims. In the days following this hateful act of terror, Canadians and communities around the world

came together to say their names, honour their memories, support one another, and stand against Islamophobia in all its forms."

In a similar statement on January 29, Hussen also called the names of the deceased, adding, "They were fathers, sons, husbands, friends, and colleagues. As Canadians honour their memory, we also send our thoughts to their families and to the many others whose lives were forever changed by this senseless, violent act of Islamophobia. We join Muslim Canadians in sharing their deep grief, while acknowledging that the trauma that this attack inflicted is still felt to this day. Our government remains unwavering in our work to combat Islamophobia and hatred, and we will continue to take action."

Elghawaby is a journalist, an expert on issues of equity and inclusion, and a human rights advocate. As a frequent media commentator, she has delivered keynote presentations and workshops to a wide variety of audiences.

She currently works as Director of Strategic Communications and Campaigns at the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, and is a contributing columnist to the *Toronto Star*.

She has also held communications roles in Canada's labour movement, and at the National Council of Canadian Muslims, where she helped promote the civil liberties of Canadian Muslims, as well as worked on issues of human rights.

Elghawaby started her career at CBC, where she worked and freelanced as a reporter and associate producer for over 14 years.

She has extensive experience supporting initiatives to counter hate and promote inclusion, is a past founding board member of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, and a past board member at the Silk Road Institute.

Also, she has served two terms as Commissioner on the Public Policy Forum's Canadian Commission on Democratic Expression, and currently sits on the National Security Transparency Advisory Group, an independent, arms-length committee that advises the Deputy Minister of Public Safety

Romeo Kaseram LJI Reporter



Justin Trudeau



Ahmed Hussen

Stay up-to-date with vaccinations, says Moore

From Page 1

the end of November.

As Moore stated, these case rates were now on the decline, and were taking some pressure off communities, hospitals, and intensive care units.

"On the [Covid-19] front, key indicators are showing signs of improvement after a rise over the holiday period due to the BQ.1 variant and its sub-lineages," he also noted.

He also thanked Ontarians "for following public health advice regarding the layers of protection throughout the holiday period and beyond, which has helped to manage the spread of these respiratory viruses".

However, he added, "We must remain vigilant as many jurisdictions across the province continue to see a rise in the number of cases of the more transmissible XBB.1.5 variant of COVID-19. XBB.1.5 has not been associated with a change in severity of illness, but due to its increased transmissibility, more individuals may get infected as it becomes the main variant in Ontario."

Moore further recommended that Ontarians remain up-to-date with vaccinations since "it remains our best defence against Covid-19 and

its variants, especially for those at increased risk of severe infection, and for anyone who has not received a booster, or been infected in the past six months".

He also highlighted the availability of Paxlovid, an outpatient oral anti-viral treatment that is used to reduce severe outcomes from Covid-19.

As Moore stated, "Prescriptions [for Paxlovid] are available for free to eligible individuals through pharmacies across the province, any physician or nurse practitioner in Ontario, as well as clinical assessment centres."

In addition, "[The] province's guidance on Polymerase Chain Reaction testing has been updated to align with the current recommendations for who should receive Paxlovid, which further improves access to this effective treatment option. I encourage Ontarians with a positive test and symptoms consistent with Covid-19 to speak to their health care provider to determine if this treatment is appropriate for them."

Free PCR tests are offered at any provincial testing location and rapid antigen tests can continue to be picked up at no charge in over 3,000 retail locations in the province, he said.



Hazel McCallion - February 14, 1921 - January 29, 2023
City of Mississauga photo

Ontario mourns passing of Hazel McCallion

Mississauga – Former mayor of Mississauga Hazel McCallion passed away peacefully on the morning of January 29, the City of Mississauga has announced. She was 101 years old.

McCallion served the City of Mississauga as mayor for 36 years, from November 1978 to November 2014.

After leaving the Mayor's office, she took on roles with University of Toronto Mississauga, Sheridan College, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, Ontario Women's Hockey Association, the Ontario Government, and Revera Incorporated, among others.


"...I stand alongside our residents, staff and my Council colleagues as we grieve the passing of Mississauga's matriarch Hazel McCallion, the longest serving mayor of

our beautiful city," said Mayor Bonnie Crombie.

She added, "Hazel was not only my mentor and political role model, but the reason why so many Canadian women were inspired to enter politics. She has left an indelible mark on our City, and her legacy will continue to be felt for generations to come. We should all strive to follow her example."


Condolences were also expressed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

"My dear friend Hazel was an extraordinary woman who wore many hats: a businessperson, an athlete, a politician, and one of Canada's – and the world's – longest-serving mayors. Nicknamed 'Hurricane Hazel' for her bold political style, she was unstoppable," Trudeau said.



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New tool launched for environmental education

Quito – A new tool aimed at reinforcing environmental education was launched last week by The Environmental Education Network, an intergovernmental platform for environmental education in Latin America.

The Environmental Education Resources Guide was launched as part of Ecuador's Environmental Education Week, organised by its Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition, and the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme.

The objective of the guide is to support primary school teachers and environmental educators with reference materials on the integration of environmental themes and concepts in formal and non-formal educational systems.

The guide includes ten environmental thematic chapters: climate change, environmental education, water, air, soil, energy, sustainable consumption, biodiversity, waste management, and ecosystem restoration.

"It is our responsibility to take the first step to strengthen and adapt the processes of environmental education to our local reality. This will undoubtedly contribute to the active involvement of present and future generations in the protection and conservation of the environment," said Óscar Rojas, Vice-minister for Water at the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition of Ecuador.

Addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss requires informing citizens and the young generation of the issues and available choices.

To do so, investment in environmental education programmes, training and adaptable resources for teachers and trainers are key, as they support the frontline of change in schools and communities.

"Despite increased global awareness of the climate, nature and pollution crisis and its impacts on society, this is not leading to transformational action and changes in behaviour. This operational guide will improve the mindsets and skillsets so that nature and its linkages to sustainable development goals are increasingly mainstreamed into formal and non-formal education systems," said Tomas Declercq, a UNEP Sustainable Consumption and Production and Consumer Information Officer, and Coordinator of the Environmental Training

Network.

Throughout 2023, UNEP and country members of the Network will conduct subregional workshops with teachers and civil society facilitators to support the integration of environmental education into formal and non-formal education systems.

The Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean is an intergovernmental platform of 18 countries dedicated to strengthening the environmental education process, cooperation, training, and south-south cooperation.

UNEP was mandated in 1982 by the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean to hold the secretariat of the network, which is composed by national focal points from the Ministries of Environment (traditionally the directors of Environmental Education units).

The Network supports its mission and work plan through its Fiduciary Trust Fund. The Trust Fund, established by the Forum of Minister's approval in 1989, works through voluntary contributions of countries.

To date, 17 countries have contributed, with Ecuador and Uruguay currently as chair and co-chair countries of the network.

The International Day of Education was marked on January 24. The theme of this year's IDE was focused on the reminder that "to invest in people, we need to prioritise education".

Education is a fundamental human right, it provides opportunities to improve societies, economies, and unleashes people's potential. Investment is critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals 4.7 to ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, and sustainable lifestyles.

The Environmental Education Resources Guide was launched on the same week of the International Day of Education to support an interdisciplinary learning approach, which can facilitate a better relationship between people and nature.

UNEP is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.



Óscar Rojas

Ottawa support for Caribbean

Ottawa – The government of Canada recently concluded a productive trip to Barbados and Jamaica to help strengthen Canadian engagement with the Caribbean by demonstrating support for local and regional priorities, including climate change, disaster preparedness and response, gender equality, justice sector reform, Covid-19 response, and food security.

Making the trip abroad was Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada. It took place from January 9-14. Canada remains committed to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and accelerating progress across the Sustainable Development Goals through the Decade of Action.



Harjit Sajjan

During his visit, Sajjan announced a total of \$127.75 million for three Canadian-funded projects that will help increase climate resilience, improve gender equality and justice services, and increase access to Covid-19 vaccines in the Caribbean.

On January 10, during a round table on disaster preparedness and response, he announced a \$750,000 allocation for the Climate Resilience Execution Agency of Dominica, bringing Canada's funding to the project to over \$3.7 million. Then on January 12, he announced a \$12-million allocation for the Social Justice project for Jamaica.

On January 13 he announced a \$45-million allocation to the Pan-American Health Organisation, and a \$70-million allocation to UNICEF.

Sajjan also reiterated Canada's support to address the vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States, and to improve access to finance.

"We need to continue partnering with local organisations and governments in the Caribbean to support disaster relief and recovery, help provide safe and reliable family planning services, address barriers to gender equality and social justice, and strengthen the delivery and distribution systems for vaccines. That is why we are committing to working with the Caribbean to promote peaceful, equitable, just, and inclusive societies," Sajjan said.

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Editorial

‘Enough in the tank’

To the astonishment of most of the world, New Zealand’s leader Jacinta Ardern last month announced she was resigning from her well-respected and eminent role as this nation’s prime minister.

While most of us felt the shockwaves from her sudden announcement, as besets all leaders, there were Ardern’s political opponents who oppose her policies, and so were quite thrilled by her unexpected declaration; and sad to say, there were also the misogynists, some of them vile, destructive, and *ad hominem* critics, not of Ardern’s party, policies, and her politics, but of her person and gender, wrongly seeing these as inhibitors to her capability.

Ardern’s announcement was quite remarkable, and made even more astonishing in that her decision to exit from power was voluntary; that she was doing so with her back not against the wall, as occurred with the ignominious exits of the UK’s Theresa May in May 2019, Boris Johnson in July 2022, and then Liz Truss in October 2022.

The suddenness of it all made Ardern’s exit all the more astonishing, and in a way, was quite an honourable path for her to take. She has been in power since October 2017, when she was sworn in as New Zealand’s Prime Minister at 37 years of age.

As we all know, once in office, many political leaders tend to historically, and perhaps too typically, grow adamant and resistant in relinquishing their hold on power.

Consider the menace that Robert Mugabe became in Zimbabwe during his 37 years of rule, morphing from a liberator into a clinging, extractive, and violent tyrant.

Also, closer to our Caribbean homelands, our community’s Guyanese diaspora is only too familiar with the decades of elections’ rigging depredations that were undertaken by the late dictator, Forbes Burnham, and later re-engineered and iterated by his political progeny.

Also, there is the recent electoral trauma in what was thankfully a failed *coup d’état* by the APNU+AFC to steal the 2020 General and Regional Elections in Guyana, what was a desperate miscalculation at rigging in order to subvert this nation’s democracy, and so cling to power.

As it now stands, as of last month, Ardern is the only holder of an enviable, and perhaps not soon to be beaten world record: she is the one global leader who has demitted office with gas left in the tank.

As she said, “I’m leaving, because with such a privileged role comes responsibility. The responsibility to know when you are the right person to lead and also when you are not. I know what this job takes. And I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It’s that simple.”

Meanwhile, a comparative can be made, once again with our homelands, this time with the political landscape in Trinidad and Tobago. Ardern’s statement regarding knowing when “you are the right person to lead and also when you are not” has recently been part of the debate over the leadership of the Opposition UNC, which is led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

The run-up to the party’s general council saw a pocket of emerging resistance to Persad-Bissessar’s role at the helm, with an attempt to move a motion of no confidence in her leadership. A bid was also rejected to have a resolution read, approved, and debated for changes to the UNC’s format for its internal elections.

However, the large turnout by the membership at the party’s weekend general council indicated what was described as majority support for Persad-Bissessar’s leadership.

This majority approval put gas in Persad-Bissessar’s tank, to extend Ardern’s metaphor of depletion into a positive place, where the needle now shifts into the territory of empowerment, energy, and renewal. As Persad-Bissessar told the crowd, “I feel good. I feel like [the] Hulk. I am strong and ready to take on all comers!”

Ardern’s humanitarianism, her firm action on gun laws, and Covid-19 policies set world precedents; now she has set another with her exit as New Zealand’s Prime Minister.

As she has shown, good leadership is knowing when the tank is running low; and of course, it is also about knowing when to become empowered with additional musculature.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
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‘Go back to your own country’? Not really!

Modern political leaders in Canada sought out a bold vision for the nation. Since the late 1970s, they have expressed a desire for Canada to become a *diverse country*: a common home to many people from around the world. An initial concrete demonstration of this was the introduction of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. Passed by the Federal government in 1988, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* was the first of its kind in the world. After years of debate and deliberation leading up to that point, the Act established a model on how Canada should take the lead to encourage, foster, and expand its diverse population. At the core, the mandate of the Act was to affirm Canada’s then-emerging evolution as a multicultural nation. This included a declaration that multiculturalism was a positive force in modern Canadian society.



Ryan Singh

Almost 35 years since the Act was enacted, the experiment of multiculturalism continues; however, this concept is still not widely accepted by many. Racialised persons in Canada, many of them either new Canadians or children of immigrants, continue to experience an onslaught of racism and hatred.

Specifically, many persons of colour in Canada have experienced nasty and racist remarks directed at themselves or someone they know. A common one being, “Go back to your own country”. Unfortunately, it is a phrase that is almost always expressed openly, and without thought to many people from racialised communities.

This hateful sentiment is a stark contrast to the principles of multiculturalism. The notion of returning to your country immediately indicates that you don’t belong here, in this country. The basis of this type of comment could be the colour of one’s skin; the clothing they wear; their religion; the food they eat; or the language(s) that they speak.

The spirit of such a heinous comment can be simplified further to indicate that our ethnic differences, visible or otherwise, taint the “purity” of the Canadian composition. Meaning, just by being here, racialised persons are ruining some folks’ vision for preserving the fabric of our nation, and therefore, those racialised communities do not belong here altogether. Unfortunately, this type of xenophobia is seemingly on the rise or, at the very least, there is an increase in the vocalisation of this sentiment overall.

The first time this bigoted remark was hurled at me, I was appalled. Yes, I am a racialised person, the son of naturalised

Sticking to the philosophy of cultivating your garden

It is now part of the family’s lore that my dearly departed grandmother was reputed for having a “green thumb”. As many of us should know, the idiomatic “green thumb” may have emerged over time from the chlorophyll stains that were acquired on the fingers through the handling of plants.

My grandmother was more than the quintessential gardener. Indeed, given the family’s romanticised hindsight today, I was on hand, and able to note first-hand that for Ma, gardening was a way to ease the burdens of this challenging life; that it was fixed as a guiding and philosophical light, a landmark, so to speak, tall, solid, and foundational as a lighthouse standing by the turbulent, oceanic black waters that constantly toss up hardships in this life.

It was among her many daily roles, this commitment to till the earth, and which was as essential as taking vitamins. And it was from this nurturing that she grew many sustaining foods for the soot-blackened pots on her cherished *chulha*, which she *chunkayed*, muttered curses at reluctant firewood, and then ladled into bowls eagerly held in our anticipating hands.

And so for my grandmother and her commitment to the family, gardening was framed in a space that was inviolable, unassailable, and of course, inevitable.

Thus she would say to me, my young feet barely getting out of the way as an exposed scorpion scuttled across my path, its sting and tail animated like a periscope.

“Look out there, child! Watch where your foot mashing! And stop getting in my way while I ‘making garden.”

Ma’s gilpin, also known as her ‘poignard’, would then expertly lift the scorpion up-and-away, the cutlass’ broader base of its blade also scooping up a handful of earth.

That action saw the scorpion mightily tossed into the middle distance, made airborne on an arc that seemed certain to deposit it into the heart of the setting sun.

It seemed this “making garden” was one of Ma’s few passions. Later, I would understand that its totalising was deeply embedded into her daily routine, that “making garden” was a concatenation of tasks, and a collective of corollary activities all rolled up into progressive actions that made her into who she was.

There was the weekly honing of the edge of the poignard using a whetstone and its dedicated enamel cup of water; then there was a preparatory wedging of the blade of the hoe by tap, tap, tapping the base of its handle on the hard ground, produc-

ing as a corollary an undecipherable Morse code of her impatience to get going to ‘make garden’.

There was that rusted, much-dented galvanised bucket, a veteran of many past crops of peas, pumpkins, and *baigan*. Now it had acquired tiny holes in its base so it left behind thin trails of water after it was dipped into the sleepy river, noticeable enough for any vengeful family member of the missing-in-action scorpion to follow and launch a counterattack on our dusty and exposed toes.

And for those triumphant moments of monumental harvests, it was picked and deposited in this self-same bucket with the holes, which I always laughingly commented on, saying it looked like the night stars were out when held bottom-up to the sky.

It was this bucket that I used to proudly take home the haul of the fruits of my grandmother’s hard labour: three-foot-length *bodi* coiled like dozens of garden snakes; cassava thick and knotted as sausages, with clumps of hard, red earth still clinging with the tenacity of crazy glue.

Add to the bucket’s contents treats that were especially cultivated for her dear grandson; despite his annoying interruptions, and disruptions, among which included occasional, frantic episodes of chase-and-rescue from harassed, pursuing wasps.

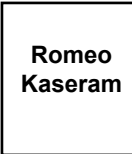
For his repast, there were ground nuts to be rooted up, and later roasted among the embers in the *chulha*, Ma lifting them out like an expert juggler. And sesame seeds, which after sun-drying, were caramelised in sugar as a crisp, candied payload.

But back to my grandmother’s putative “green thumb”. I do not recall Ma having green stains on her fingers. But then again, the phrase is part idiom, with the spoon dipped into metaphor, and a sprinkle of poetry tossed in for extra colour.

In fact, my grandmother was at pains to set a good example. And so, any show of stains: residues of dirt, or from food, or worst, the tell-tale, sugary remnant from a secret trip to the condensed milk tin, each spot as easy to read as large print on a book by Ma’s vigilant eyes, were always forcefully discouraged, and rapidly intercepted with soap and water.

Ma would say, “Child! Why this little boy so harden and own-way! Look, go right now and wash your hands! Make haste! Quick march! Don’t put hand in your mouth! You ever see me with my hands with dirt on them?”

Well! Only when she was “making garden”.



Romeo Kaseram

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Well! Only when she was “making garden”.

Budget 2023 puts Guyana on path to self-reliance, sustainability

Dear Editor,

The largest budget in the history of Guyana of (G) \$781.9 billion, which was presented last month by Dr Ashni Singh, is a document of transformative proportions, meaning that when fully implemented it will help underwrite the movement of Guyana from a structurally dependent economy, to one that is both self-reliant and sustainable.

But economic change is neither easy, nor does it work independently of other social structures and institutions in society. This much has been well-established in the academic literature on development.

Budget 2023 is structured around two temporal rhythms. The first and more easily understandable rhythm is to be found in the new measures, which are intended to deal with problems in the short-term, or even consumption needs that must be addressed immediately. On this score, Budget 2023 offers a list of substantive "interventions".

Chief among them is the tax threshold, which moves up from \$75,000 to \$85,000; also, there are the 'Because We Care' grants, which increase from \$25,000 to \$35,000; the school uniform grant stays in place, bringing total disbursements to students to \$40,000; and the zero excise tax on fuel also stays in place, amounting to a significant subsidy for gasoline.

Also, the extension of freight relief to the tune of \$6 billion is intact; \$10 billion is slated for the part-time Jobs Program; Old Age Pension goes from \$28,000 to \$33,000, benefitting 73,000 persons; Public Assistance moves to \$16,000; and there is an additional \$5 billion in measures aimed at countering cost-of-living pressures.

While the budgetary measures are for immediate human security needs, allocations in health, education, housing and water, human services, and agriculture get around 48 percent of the \$781.9 billion. This means that more than half of the budget is aimed at direct human development to be realised within the



Guyana's govt presented an historical (G) \$781.9B budget on January 16

next 12 months, or before the next budgetary allocations are put into action.

Put differently, the budget has significant expenditures that are an admixture of the investment and consumption functions. The long-term capital outlays of the budget fit within the classic PPP approach to development, which, as Singh noted, are built on the principles of continuity, consistency, and credibility.

Even a cursory historical reflection would remind readers of long-term investments by PPP administrations that turned out to be monumentally important for the quality of life of the Guyanese people.

Think of the establishment of the University of Guyana by Dr Cheddi Jagan in 1963, or the building of the Hope Canal or Berbice Bridge under President Bharrat Jagdeo.

The PNC under Forbes Burnham also made long-term investments that still have value. The Demerara Harbour Bridge and the Soesdyke-Linden Highway were excellent long-term projects that continue to yield benefits daily. The attacks on

long-term capital investments are not only uncalled for, but lack basic economic rationality.

Budget 2023 makes good on key infrastructural projects. Chief among these is the Natural Gas Liquids, Gas-to-Shore plant to be constructed at Wales on the West Bank Demerara. The investment of a little of \$40 billion in this project will provide immeasurable benefits to consumers when completed.

Electricity cost is expected to be cut by half, and cooking gas is likely to drop by around 75 percent. As a transition energy source, there are also important environmental benefits to be derived. Thousands of high-paying jobs will be created. The same benefits will accrue when the oil refinery in Berbice is finally completed.

Over \$136 billion will be spent on roads. The Opposition is fond of saying that people cannot eat roads. While this is nominally

correct, it is foolish in terms of economic development where human-centred development is the priority.

A proper road, river, and air transportation network is critical to farm to market cost reduction, food security, reduction of travelling cost to work and school, access to tourist/leisure facilities, access to health care, and the reduction of lost labour hours due to traffic delays. Better roads will also contribute to a reduction in traffic accidents and fatalities.

The strength of Budget 2023 is that it is human-centred, and well-grounded in the political economy of environmental sustainability.

Finally, I was in Parliament for the entire budget speech, and would like to commend Singh for keeping up his suave demeanour, despite a stubborn cold. Praise must also be extended to the opposition parties whose members, persistent banter notwithstanding, demonstrated good discipline, and an even better spirit of democratic engagement.

Dr Randolph Persaud, Guyana, via email.

Diplomacy & negotiations needed to end this war

Dear Editor,

There is a saying that if you wish for peace you have to prepare for war. It would seem that this is exactly the thinking of NATO-backed Ukraine and Russia, both of whom are ramping up their military hardware and manpower, in an attempt to gain battlefield advantage.

The recent decision by NATO to supply Ukraine with more sophisticated military hardware is fraught with danger, and could potentially result in a nuclear war, the consequences of which are too chilling to contemplate.

Soon this war will complete a full year. In what was projected by Russia as 'a special military operation', the war has now degenerated to a situation of horrifying proportions, especially in the Ukraine, where millions of people were forced to flee the comfort of their home and live as refugees in neighbouring Poland and several other European countries.

Tens of thousands of lives were lost on both sides, not to mention the billions of dollars in damage to property and infrastructure.

There is only one way to end the war, and that is by way of diplomacy and negotiation. Any other means will only result in

a further escalation of the war and continuing human misery. What has become clear so far is that the war cannot be won on the battlefield and with the supply of heavy military hardware to the Ukraine by NATO, the chance of an early resolution seems increasingly remote.

I believe there is a role for China and for other BRIC countries, such as Brazil and India, in bringing about a peaceful resolution, and the sooner the better.

The UN and its Security Council have so far proved to be incapable of ending the war, which calls into question its efficacy and relevance from the standpoint of conflict resolution among member states. The composition of the Security Council, and the veto powers enjoyed by some of the bigger powers need to be reviewed.

As a first step to ending the war, both sides in the conflict should end all hostilities. Russia should begin a phased withdrawal from all occupied territories in the Ukraine since the commencement of the war a year ago. This could possibly form the basis for any serious and meaningful engagement among the parties involved in the war.

Hydar Ally, Guyana, via email.



A Ukrainian soldier assists a fleeing family

Happy days in Rosignol that were filled with wonderful surprises

Dear Editor,

I grew up in Rosignol which was at the time a small village in rural Guyana, and I had the immense privilege of procuring a somewhat distant relationship with your correspondent Vidur Dindayal, and his entire family, who also happened to reside there for many, many years.

Vidur himself recently invited me to his home in England and presented me with a signed copy of his recent book *A Life of Blessings*. We have known each other for quite a few years here in the UK, and often met up at the mandir in Brixton, London, during many religious ceremonies or occasions, along with Harry Ramkhelawan [no relation to ICW's publisher], who also headed the mandir as its President some time ago.

Vidur's wife, Sabitha, was also a regular visitor and member of the same mandir, and she sadly passed away a little while ago, but she left a very alluring and lasting legacy to all of us who were lucky enough to meet her.

She was a very softly spoken person who was always eager to help her neighbours and friends, and, indeed, the entire community she resided in. Some people are indeed God's gift to us all, and Sabitha was indeed one of those wonderful persons.

When Vidur requested me to sing a few songs during her

commemoration event some time ago, I was exceptionally happy to carry out his request. As it turned out, I had to sing a few extra songs because the other singers probably arrived too late, or couldn't make it. Nevertheless, the entire occasion went well, and Vidur was pleased with myself and everyone who attended Sabitha's commemoration.

Coming back to some of our happy days in Guyana, I remember them very, very fondly indeed, and I was really pleased to spot myself and some of my brothers and friends in the photographs which adorned Vidur's book *A Life of Blessings*.

Vidur's family owned the cinema, as well as a very large and prominent shop in Rosignol. The whole of the Dindayal family was very well-respected by all of Rosignol and the surrounding villages, and as I reiterated before, it was indeed a privilege to actually know him, his brother Raman, and his parents. When I began Teaching at Rosignol Government School, I also taught Raman's two daughters there.

My entire family knew the Dindayals very well, and it is fair to say that the whole of Rosignol Village knew myself and my family, as our business in the lumber trade involved everyone who owned a house, or wanted to build one.

However, the Dindayals were a rather private family, but their

niche in the life of the village was well respected by everyone, as I mentioned before.

Vidur is a well-travelled person, and it was a pleasure to read his book to have a little insight into his life and upbringing, and so on. There were joys and sorrows that we can all empathise with, and it was indeed an honour to spend a few hours with him in his home as we reminisced about the good old days in Guyana, as well as in London.

I distinctly remember a happy occasion in the mandir when we were all singing our hearts out during a celebration, and someone asked him how he got to know me. He honestly replied that he never ever knew me in Guyana, but I would never fail to embrace him fondly whenever we met in London, and that I always told everyone how well I knew his entire family in Guyana!

Life is so full of wonderful surprises. It was the truth, and I do believe that the Dindayals are still a very respected and revered family in the memories of loads of Guyanese families. He is still doing lots of good work wherever he goes, and I hope that God grants him good health and a long life to accomplish much more as time goes by.

Zainul Lahabib (aka Johnny L. Zainul), UK, via email.

Challenges keep on coming in starting up a farm in T&T

Dear Editor,

Like most people, I have seen the rising prices of food in Trinidad and Tobago and around the world.

Since I am in business, I decided to capitalise on this trend. After lots of research, talks with potential buyers and consultations with foreign producers, I decided to start an orchard.

Our aim was simple – produce 20 tonnes of one fruit of high quality, extract the pulp for sale, and sell the by-products to the beauty industry. Sounds simple enough, right?

Wrong. Anywhere else, this would have been a simple plan.

I went to the Centeno farm to place an order for 2,000 trees with a lead time of 18 months. To me, this sounded realistic; after all, this is the sole function of the farms – to produce high-quality, grafted plants for the agricultural sector.



Well, wrong again. Centeno farm's management is claiming that they cannot do an order

Growing own food reduces its cost

Dear Editor,

My long deceased uncle used to say, "There will come a time when you will have money, but will not be able to buy food."

Those words are beginning to come true today in Trinidad and Tobago and the world.

The deleterious effects of Covid-19 and the war between the Ukraine and Russia have created continuing inflationary pressures on the global food supply chain.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the rising costs of food are being exacerbated by substantial increases in gasoline prices, and the forthcoming increases in electricity and water rates.

Last month the president of the Supermarkets Association spoke to how massive increases in electricity rates will impact suppliers and gro-

cery prices.

One example is that groceries and suppliers have appliances that run 24 hours a day for the entire year to keep foods refrigerated. These appliances use a substantial amount of electricity, and the proposed increases for commercial clients of 51 to 63 percent will be passed on to the consumer.

The good news is that citizens can invest in small pots and plant items to reduce their food costs.

If we learn to buy fruits and vegetables in season, and do without otherwise, the sticker price of over (TT) \$350 for one pumpkin at a supermarket will not cause panic attacks.

Linus F. Didier, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

of that size; mind you, even though they have three locations, and over 100 staff.

They did take my information and promised to reach out to me, but that was over 14 months ago, and nothing to date.

I then reached out to a Trini YouTuber making tutorial videos on grafting fruit trees, and guess what, he did it. Eighteen months later, I am now the proud owner of 2,000 grafted fruit trees. He and a team of one. Two persons in total did what a fully staffed farm, funded by the government, could not do.

Anyway, now the trees are getting ready for the ground, and the tractor just arrived after a lead time of nine months due to farming equipment shortages around the world because of the situation between the Ukraine and Russia, and shipping nightmares.

Six months before planting, things finally looked up, but as Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley predicted, there are rough times ahead.

I went to the [Agricultural Development Bank] to finance the land, 15 acres of fertile,

beautiful, flat land.

ADB said that things are looking good, but – and always there is a 'but' – I need a certificate of environmental clearance from the [Environmental Management Authority] as bushes have regrown on the land since it was last cultivated (by the previous owner).

Small thing, don't worry yourself. Eh, heh? Well, I had to engage a consultant to liaise with Land and Surveys, topographical drawings, public consultations with neighbours, chemicals used, source of water used on the farm, drainage, storm water, and so on.

All in all, the people doing their work, I can't vex. At least it is over. Nope. EMA responded indicating that they want me to submit a proposal before I can touch the bush for tests, to be done for three months in the rainy season and three months in the dry season to count monkeys and ocelots during the hours of 6 am to 9 am, and 6 pm and 9 pm.

Now, tell me what to do? I buy tractor and truck, did relevant courses, studied, paid consultants, made a down-payment on the land, paid valuations, did legal searches, maintained a roadway, ordered my fruit trees.

Now I have to stop the project to count monkey and ocelot for almost a year on land that is approved/zoned by Town and Country for farming; land that has been farmed before for decades.

I have to plant in June 2023 or I'm doomed. We wonder why no one wants to invest in Trinidad and Tobago. We wonder why food prices are high. We wonder what is wrong.

I'll keep two trees to plant at home, but I have 1,998 trees to sell.

To the staff at the EMA, please enjoy the food prices.

Dev Singh, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



T&T's PM Dr Keith Rowley speaks during the meeting of the Electoral College

Give Kangaloo a chance to prove herself

Dear Editor,

The selection of the seventh President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is now history with the election of Christine Kangaloo by the Electoral College.

I think it is only fair that the population of Trinidad and Tobago give the second female in succession who has been chosen for the highest office of the land a chance to prove herself worthy of the post.

There has been a lot of furore about her close association with a particular political party. However, the question arises, 'Is there anyone who can be singled out in this small-island State of ours without some kind of political affiliation?'

As long as one is in the 'know' of what is happening, or keeping up with developments in Trinidad and Tobago, she or he will have some kind of preference for one side of politics or the other.

The only distinction is that some people are openly associated with a party by way of actions, while others are more subtle in their associations.

It is the former for Kangaloo, since she has

played many roles in the politics – as an opposition and government senator, and a minister with the same political party.

Hence, it is easy to say that the president-elect is associated with that particular party.

It is unfortunate that with the composition of the party in power, with 38 MPs and Senators versus 25 Opposition MPs and Senators, it is a foregone conclusion the ruling party's choice would have been in the ascendancy.

There are nine Independent Senators, and as we have seen in the past, the tendency is for them to vote for the ruling party's choice. So the choice of Kangaloo boils down to being more of a selection than an election.

This is why the call for constitutional reform, which has been repeated many times by ex-Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, is more relevant now than ever before.

In any event, as has been said before, it is hoped that the new President will be able to shed the 'political coat' and uphold the highest office of the land with fairness, fearlessness, dignity, and compassion.

W.K.S. Hosein, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

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Budget 2023 continues agenda to accelerate economic growth

Part 2 of 2

Guyana's 2023 budget contained no surprises. Instead, it represented a continuation of the government's agenda to accelerate economic development and improve the standard of living of the people.

According to the Minister of Finance Dr Ashni Singh, the budget captures "the essence of simultaneous attention being paid to both the immediate issues and irritants of the day as well as the longer-term investments needed to secure the well being of all of the Guyanese People well into the future."

The budget was presented against the backdrop of strong revenues from oil. Last year, oil returned a profit of (US) \$1.1 billion, which was deposited into the National Resource Fund. A sum of (US) \$607.6 million was withdrawn from the fund in 2022, leaving a balance of (US) \$1,271.8 at the end of the year. Oil production is forecasted to reach 560,000 barrels per day in 2023.

In the agriculture sector, the government plans to establish a regional food hub incorporating critical elements of the production and supply chain, such as cold storage, manufacturing and processing capabilities, in order to promote improved access to markets – both export and domestic.

It also plans to establish the capability to harness greater use of science, technology, and research and development to promote innovation and product development; and promote hinterland agriculture for food security and self-sufficiency, as well as to meet the needs of markets beyond the local community.

The budget allocated (G) \$4 billion to Guysuco, for the commencement of the construction of the Albion Packaging Plant; expansion of the capacity of the Blairmont Packaging Plant; acquisition of a drying machine to improve the quality of packaged sugar; and a stick packaging machine to offer a new smaller packet of sugar to meet the needs of premium markets.

In the rice industry, the government plans to invest over \$300 million to promote production and productivity in the sector including on research and development to improve yields and identify and implement alternatives to insecticides to control the paddy bug problem; construct two new drying floors in Regions 3 and 5; introduce new bio-fortified rice varieties; and secure new markets for rice.

The budget committed over \$1.2 billion to infrastructural development in the Tacama area to facilitate the cultivation of corn and soya beans in the intermediate savannahs. The government also anticipates completing access roads to the area this year as well as complete construction of a drying and storage facility for corn and soya bean.

The budget noted that agro-processing was a critical area in the government's push for enhanced food security. In addition to agribusiness incubators established in Parika, Fort Wellington, St Ignatius and Watooka, the government will also advance the procurement of equipment for the agro-processing and packaging facilities at Sophia, Parika, and Mabaruma

and is in the process of establishing new processing facilities at White Water Creek and Charity.

The government will also invest in new agro-processing facilities at Crabwood Creek and Orealla; construct a new cold storage facility at Bartica; and procure two new refrigerated trucks to support transport of inputs and agro-products. Agro-processors will also benefit from the establishment of another Guyana Shop and a marketing information centre in Bartica.

In the energy sector, the budget announced that Guyana Power and Light will be examining options for boosting its short-term generation needs through the acquisition of an additional 50 megawatts (MW) of firm generating capacity.

Construction of the proposed Natural Gas plant is also expected to begin this year. The government has signed a contract for the construction of the integrated natural gas liquids plant, and the 300 MW combined cycle gas turbine power plant at Wales. In 2022, \$24.6 billion was spent to meet start up costs associated with this project, and in 2023, \$43.3 billion is budgeted to facilitate the construction of the plant and associated facilities.

In the area of hydropower, the government will re-launch a Request for Proposals for the restart of the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project.

In addition, works are being initiated for the construction of a 1.5 MW hydropower facility at Kumu, and the rehabilitation and upgrade of the 700 kW Moco-Moco hydropower plant in Region 9.

The budget allocated \$136.1 billion for the construction of a range of roads, bridges and access roads across the country. Among some of the major projects are preliminary studies for the construction of the Corentyne River Bridge; construction of the Linden-Mabura Hill Road; upgrading and widening the Corentyne Highway from Palmyra to Crabwood Creek; and upgrade of the East Coast Railway embankment road into a four-lane highway from Sheriff Street to Orange Nassau and continuing to the Mahaica River bridge.

Also, continuation of the upgrade of the East Coast Highway from Belfield to Orange Nassau; construction of a second bridge across the Hope Canal; upgrade of the East Bank Highway from Prospect to Timehri; construction of the East Coast-East Bank Road linking from Ogle to Eccles; rehabilitation of the Linden-Soesdyke Highway; and construction of the New Demerara River Bridge.

In terms of current expenditure, the top five allocations include the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

A sum of \$84.9 billion has been budgeted to the Health Care sector for 2023. Among construction projects identified are the paediatric and maternal hospital and six regional hospitals; the construction, retrofit and upgrade of the new Amsterdam and Georgetown hospitals, regional hospitals, and health centres.



Dwarka Lakhan



Dr Ashni Singh

The Minister also announced the upgrading of three hinterland health centres into district hospitals.

The Education Sector was allocated \$94.4 billion in 2023 to provide education to all; divided across six programmes including one each for Nursery, Primary, Secondary, and Post-secondary education.

The Minister announced a housing policy that extends beyond house lots to include the construction of houses for professionals, moderate income, and low-income earners. Programmes identified include a Home Construction Assistance Programme, a Cement and Steel Subsidy Programme, and the Lethem Housing Support Initiative.

In terms of Capital Expenditure, the top five allocations include the Ministry of Public Works with \$149.5 billion; the Ministry of Housing and Water with \$69,149 billion; and the Office of the Prime Minister with \$55.8 billion. Among the major projects which fall under the OPM are the Gas to Power Project: \$43.3 billion and the National Data Management Authority: \$6.6 billion.

The Ministry of Health was allocated \$22.9 billion in capital expenditure, while the Ministry of Local Government and Development was allocated \$16.9 billion.

Dwarka Lakhan, BA, MBA, FCSI, FICB is a Member of the Canadian Association of Journalists, and an accomplished financial writer. His recently published 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.

Table 1: Current Expenditure			
Ministries/Departments	Budget 2023		
	G\$ million	% of Total	Inc /Dec (%) over 2022
Ministry of Health	44,157	13.2	15.1
Ministry of Finance	48,467	14.4	-14.1
Ministry of Human Services And Soc. Security	39,628	11.8	34.9
Ministry of House Affairs	27,306	8.1	12.9
Ministry of Education	30,812	9.2	21.8
Guyana Defence Force	17,106	5.1	10.4
Ministry of Agriculture	18,142	5.4	-12.9
Office of the Prime Minister	14,713	4.4	-3.8
Ministry of Public Works	8,677	2.6	0.9
Office of the President	5,776	1.7	19.5
Others	80,754	24.1	12.0
Total	335,538	100.0	

Table 2: Capital Expenditure			
Ministries/Departments	Budget 2023		
	G\$ million	% of Total	Inc /Dec (%) over 2022
Ministry of Public Works	149,527	38.7	39.4
Office of Prime Minister	55,753	14.4	86.9
Ministry of Health	22,916	5.9	25.2
Ministry of Agriculture	15,142	3.9	-4.9
Ministry of Housing and Water	69,149	17.8	107.5
Ministry of Finance	7,680	2.0	33.2
Ministry of Local Govt. and Regional Dev.	16,913	4.4	72.3
Ministry of Education	15,096	3.9	183.8
Ministry of House Affairs	7,007	1.8	9.5
Ministry of Human Services And Soc. Security	784	0.2	-11.9
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs	2,910	0.8	-42.2
Guyana Defence Force	3,122	0.8	5.3
Others	21,803	5.6	26.2

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Portrait of the artist as a talented young Berbician woman

Georgetown – Young Azeena Tahsir discovered her talent for painting after a package of henna serendipitously landed in her hands.

As she told Guyana's *Kaieteur News*, an acquaintance purchased henna but no longer needed it. It turns out Tahsir was on hand, and fortuitously intercepted its unheralded consignment to the next day's garbage pickup.

It was a defining moment for the young girl from John's Settlement, Port Mourant, Corentyne in Berbice; and perhaps also a moment of divine intervention.

"I took it and started to draw on my hand. I thought it looked really nice, and when the henna was all done, I searched all over to buy [some more]," she said.

It appears that acquiring more henna turned out to be an awakening of her yet to be discovered creativity. Seeking out coloured pencils, she then began drawing more and more on paper.

An attentive sister-in-law, noting her industry, emerging skill, and its pleasing results, advised her that paint was available in New Amsterdam.

Said Tahsir: "I was actually surprised that I could do this. I couldn't believe that I could draw and paint like this," she said.

Her growing skills soon flourished into a hobby, its development burgeoning with instructive YouTube videos, her enthusiasm energised by an autodidact's drive and commitment.

"I did not have the Internet at the time," she said. A trip to any location that provided online access saw her attention glued to even more YouTube videos.

"I would watch videos and go back home and start drawing. Everything I learnt is from YouTube," she said.

Tahsir's exploration of the artform eventually evolved into

pleasing renderings of still life and landscapes. Posting her efforts to social media began attracting positive attention and constructive criticism. She was also advised to try her hand with different media, notably on canvas.

Up to that time, Tahsir was yet to encounter the medium. In fact, she admits she did not have a clue that canvas even existed.

"... I went ...to New Amsterdam [and] saw this thing marked 'artist canvas'. I bought one," she said.

Tahsir took the canvas home with trepidation, admitting she did not paint on it until after a few months due to anxiety that she would ruin its pristine surface.

However, the day finally arrived when she put brush to canvas. That was back in 2018, and as she firmly said, there will be no stopping her now.

Tahsir revealed that her homeland is her inspiration, notably its beautiful landscapes and architecture. And Kaieteur Falls will always remain outstanding among her memories, and to her artist's eye, for its breathtaking beauty and magnificence, she said.

Following a visit to the Falls in 2021, Tahsir produced a series of paintings to commemorate the trip, and to push the envelope on her emerging creativity.

"Guyana is my inspiration," she said, adding, "Ever since I visited the Kaieteur Falls... I couldn't believe this was Guyana. I really wanted to paint Guyana. I love Guyana."

Looking ahead, Tahsir said she plans to focus on growing and refining her talent, with a view to building her confidence, even as she markets her art.

She also indicated that she occasionally receives requests for paintings, and so has earned income from her growing craft.

When Tahsir is not before the canvas, she is helping at the family farm growing cash crops in Black Bush Polder.

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Azeena's Kaieteur Falls' visit in 2021



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A celebratory Usain Bolt following yet another successful international competitive sprint during his stellar & lucrative career; last month it was reported that he may have been among victims of a multi-billion dollar SSL investment fraud

Bolt runs into woes with missing \$

Kingston – Jamaica's Finance Minister Dr Nigel Clarke last week acknowledged that his office received a report from the Financial Services Commission on the fraud-hit Stocks and Securities Limited in April 2020, the *Jamaica Gleaner* has reported.

However, Clarke said the report was never brought to his attention.

The report covered an examination of the private investment firm in June 2019, two years after the FSC threatened to suspend SSL's licence after branding the company a "problem institution" that operated a "culture of non-compliance and mismanagement of client funds".

Those conclusions were never made public until the media did so late last month.

SSL is reeling from an alleged (Jam) \$3 billion fraud that was uncovered last month. The fallout

has since led to mounting questions about what Jamaican government authorities knew before the alleged theft, and what actions were taken.

Also last month, Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness indicated that no effort will be spared in uncovering the full extent of the fraud. Among its clients concerned about the whereabouts of investments is eight time Olympic champion, sprinter Usain Bolt.

According to international reports, it is being alleged that Bolt may have been fleeced out of millions of dollars, in local and foreign currencies, which were entrusted to the firm for investment.

Bolt has indicated through his lawyer that he had a balance of (US) \$12.7 million at SSL as of October 31, 2022. However, that figure has since declined to (US) \$12,000 on January 11.

Barbados passes 'fly by night' legislation

Bridgetown – The parliament in Barbados will this week amend the Minor Offences Act in a move to address the growing issue of noisy kites flying over neighbourhoods at night.

Said Attorney General Dale Marshall: "We are going to be laying in parliament... a piece of legislation, which for the first time will attempt to bring some abatement to that dreadful nuisance that affects so many Barbadians."

Marshall explained with these amendments, kite flyers can have their kites in the skies as long as they want if it does not have a "bull", a component that is added as a noisemaker.

However, kites that have "bulls" must not be flown past 7:00 p.m. or the owners will be subject to pay a fixed penalty of (B) \$500, he said.

"So the essence of this is that at 7:00 pm... that kite has to come down, and it cannot be flown again until six the next morning. So that

As the Jamaican media have reported, Bolt's attorneys have asked the SSL to return the investments "in record time, or face a huge lawsuit".

Holness said he remains concerned and sympathetic with the hard-working Jamaicans who are now uncertain about the whereabouts of their invested funds.

He also stated that while every investor's distress must be equally acknowledged, "there is a dimension of a heightened public sense of betrayal, which I share, that a National Icon who has brought so much pride to all of us, is also a victim of the alleged fraud".

Said Holness, "The public can rest assured that the government will be proactive in ensuring that there is accountability and probity in the exercise of public functions, and that our policy and administrative response is effective in continually strengthening the financial sector and protecting the investing public."

Last month the government announced that the US' Federal Bureau of Investigation will assist local authorities with the investigation.

Said Clarke: "No stone will be left unturned. The investigative authorities have full operational independence, and will pursue the facts wherever they may lead. They will unearth exactly how funds were allegedly stolen, who benefited from such theft, and who organised and collaborated in this."

He added that the probe will also seek to identify whether assets have been acquired locally or overseas with the proceeds of the alleged fraud, and that if and when such assets are identified, "all legal steps will be taken to restrain these assets with the intention of full forfeiture".

means between 7:00 p.m. ...and 6:00 a.m., any persons flying a kite with a bull or any other kind of noisemaking apparatus will find themselves afoul of the law," Marshall declared.

He added: "[Persons guilty] will be subjected on summary conviction to a fine of (B) \$5,000 or possibly to imprisonment. But you would know that this administration has taken the view that we really need to get out of this whole thing about locking up people all the time. And therefore, this involves a ticketing element."

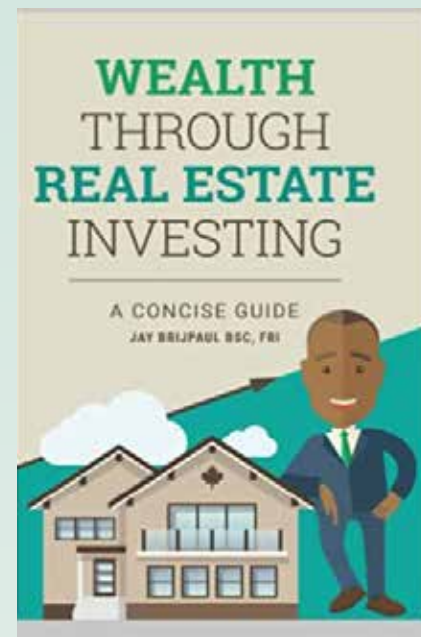
He added, "If found contravening the law, you will get a fixed penalty of (B) \$500. So you pay the penalty, no issue. If on the other hand, you insist on proceeding to court, then of course, you may find yourself subject to the full penalties of the law, as determined by the magistrate who hears the matter."



Andrew Holness

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Black History Month a time to explore, celebrate

February is Black History Month, a time for our Caribbean community to explore and celebrate the heritage, traditions, and culture of Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Canadians.

The history of BHM goes back to February 1926 in the US with its origins as "Negro History Week", which was pioneered by Dr Carter G. Woodson, an African American scholar.

Woodson's objective was a global one, where he sought to raise awareness and understanding through the school curriculum about the African experience.

Later, BHM began to be formally celebrated in US in the 1960s. By then, its organisers were focused on community activities aimed at projecting a more balanced, accurate picture of Black history.

Here in Toronto, by the 1950s, community groups such as Canadian Negro Women's Association were already celebrating the contributions of Black history to Canada.

Later, in 1979, Toronto became the first municipality in Canada that proclaimed BHM. This was accomplished through the hard work of many individuals and groups, among them the Ontario Black History Society.

Then in 1995, Toronto Area MP Jean Augustine introduced a motion that was unanimously passed by the House of Commons recognising BHM throughout Canada.

Today, BHM's success has seen it growing to acknowledge the past and present contributions that Afro-Canadians are making throughout Canada by excelling in economic development, public service, politics and human rights, education, medicine, art, and culture.

There are a number of events and celebrations taking place in the GTHA this month to mark BHM.

A fund-raising event to help support girls and young women in the community will take place to celebrate BHM with Jean Augustine, the first African-Canadian woman to be elected to Canada's House of Commons.

The event will include a film screening, dance performance, food, and a Q&A session with Augustine.

It takes place on February 11 from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Cineplex Cinemas Queensway & VIP, 1025 The Queensway.

[More information is available here.](#)

Kuumba, Toronto's largest Black Futures Month celebration, returns this February with a month-long focus on discussions and performances.

It will showcase dance, music, workshops, and literary events by contemporary artists and thought leaders from the Afro-diaspora in Canada.

Presented by TD Bank Group, Kuumba is now in its 28th year of supporting Black artists and Black culture.

Kuumba is part of the commitment by Harbourfront Centre to support Black artists through its all-year-long virtual and intended in-person programming, with a special focus during BHM.

It takes place from February 1-February 28. [Visit its website here.](#)

This month the online event, Everbloom, will make its first in-person debut in Toronto to celebrate the achievements and contributions of Black Canadians and their communities.

It is being hosted by the a non-profit music organisation Waveland Canada as a micro music festival, and will feature live music and drag performances by Black Canadian artists.

A vendors' market will also feature local Black-owned small businesses.

The event takes place on February 25 from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at The Great Hall, 1087 Queen Street West.

[Tickets are available online.](#)

Now in its seventh year, Black History Month: The Black Diamond Ball, has become the signature event that has brought together the Black community and supporters to celebrate the accomplishments, and to honour the many individuals who are excelling in their fields.

The Black Diamond Ball Workshop Connect Series will be taking place for the first time in person on February 2, February 9, and February 23.

Also, on February 25, the Black Diamond Ball will be in-person, and takes place at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto, and



Jean Augustine

would be recorded live for a nationally televised future broadcast.

Also, make sure to visit the Black Diamond Ball Virtual Marketplace, where small businesses will also be on-site at workshops, and during the Black Diamond Ball main event on February 25.

[Click here for more information.](#)



George Floyd



Michael Brown



Rodney King



Oscar Grant

Ever-present camera eye will continue to capture police brutality

By Dhanpaul Narine

What if there were no videos? How would we be able to witness the graphic scenes of brutality committed against Blacks? Americans were horrified to see the police beat the life out of Tyre Nichols in Memphis. In another gruesome scene in 2020, a police officer, Derek Chauvin, squeezed the last breath out of George Floyd. Police brutality against Blacks is nothing new, but it is the video that must be thanked for providing the incontrovertible evidence.

Many analysts argue that if there were no videos there would have been the usual cover-up and exoneration of police officers after “extensive investigations”. As America was trying to cope with the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, it was confronted with the tragedy of Freddie Gray in Baltimore. The video showed an able-bodied man arrested by the police, but what is not seen, or known, is the manner in which Gray died. Jerry Rodriguez is Baltimore's Deputy Police Commissioner. He said at a news conference, “[When] Mr Gray was put in that van, he could talk, he was upset, and when he was taken out of that van, he could not talk and he could not breathe.”

These incidents make it clear that Blacks and whites live in different worlds. This is evident in two areas of life: the role of the police, and the manner in which the justice system operates. The statistics show that only one in ten Blacks feel that they receive equal treatment in the justice system. When asked about how the police would treat Blacks and whites, two out of ten Blacks expressed confidence that they would receive equal treatment.

These findings are as a result of a survey conducted by the *Washington Post* and *ABC News* in 2014. While there is distrust among Blacks, it is interesting to find out that whites have a different perspective toward the police and the justice system.

In the same survey, around 50 percent of whites reported that the races are treated equally in America. When this is broken down into party affiliations other findings become noticeable. For example, two in three white Republicans said that minorities and whites are treated equally, but only three in ten Democrats feel the same way. Similarly, “[While] more than eight in ten Republicans say they are confident that police treat Blacks and whites equally, half as many white Democrats share that opinion.”

It is hardly surprising then, that with such differing views Blacks feel that they are getting a raw deal. They point to the prison population and argue that it is the harsh arrest policies that are responsible for the increase in the numbers. Blacks comprise 12 percent of the population in the US but represent 40 percent of the nation's prison population. One explanation for the widening, and in some cases staggering disparity, is the sheer volume of arrests that are taking place.

According to *USA Today*, “[Blacks] are more likely to be arrested in almost every city for almost every type of crime. Nationwide, Black people are arrested at higher rates for crimes as serious as murder and assault, and as minor as loitering.”

These statistics may lead to a sense of bewilderment in the Black community, and among those concerned with questions of equity and fair play. But there is no question that had it not been for recording devices the public would not have known about the excesses of the police. Who would have known about the police beating of Rodney King in 1991 if someone had not held a camera and recorded the episode?

The Rodney King incident was so outrageous that even



Frame grab from the deadly video released by Memphis police



Tyre Nichols

President George Bush called for an enquiry. Over the years, police treatment of Blacks, and other minorities, has raised great concern in the community.

In 2014, a California Patrol Officer ‘took down’ a Black woman and beat her senseless. In 2012, a defenseless Kelly Thomas was beaten by two police officers in Southern California. He repeatedly told the officers that he couldn't breathe, but they ignored him. Kelly fell into a coma and died five days after the beatings. The officers were exonerated.

In 2009, an unarmed man, Oscar Grant, was shot dead by a transit police officer Johannes Mehserle in Oakland, California. The policeman was charged with involuntary manslaughter and served two years in prison. His defense argued that Mehserle shot Grant by mistake.

In recent times, more videotapes have surfaced to show the level of police brutality, and they paint an ugly picture of the incidents.

In January 2014, Christopher Lollie was sitting in a public area in St Paul's, Minnesota waiting to pick up his kids. He was asked to leave the area by private security guards. Lollie pointed out that it was a public area and he had a right to sit there. What began as a normal conversation escalated into a major incident. The police arrived and tased Lollie. The video went viral some months later and led to a public enquiry into the arrest of Lollie.

The charges were later dropped and Lollie sued for racial profiling.

Sunil Dutta is a police officer in Los Angeles with a doctorate degree. He wrote in August 2014 that “in the overwhelming majority of cases it is not the cops, but the people they stop, who can prevent detentions from turning into tragedies”.

Dutta said that in working the streets he has withstood curses, tantrums and menacing behaviour, and in most cases, he was able to resolve them without the use of force. How did he do this? According to Dutta, he used creative solutions and wielded every trick in his arsenal to keep the peace.

But while he has shown restraint, Dutta has a chilling warning to the public. He said, that “[If] you don't want to get shot, tased, pepper-sprayed, struck with a baton or thrown to the ground, just do what I

tell you. Don't argue with me; don't call me names; don't tell me that I can't stop you; don't say I am a racist pig; don't threaten that you'll sue me and take away my badge; and don't even think of walking aggressively towards me.”

What then is one to do in the face of unprovoked police brutality? Dutta advises that the person should save his or her anger for later, and to channel it appropriately. He suggests that one can, “feel free to sue the police”. He added, “Just don't challenge a cop during a stop.”

But Dutta needs a refresher course. Walter Scott and Freddy Gray were actually running away from the police when they met with their demise, and Eric Garner could not be considered aggressive.

Some police officers make the point that one cannot fully understand the job of the police. The average cop is trained to take control of a situation, and usually has a lot of things to think about. A traffic stop can be a life-or-death situation, as was seen in the case of Tyre Nichols. While this is a valid point, the police should be sensitive to the needs of the community as well. The average person has a lot to think about too, and it is here that sensitivity training for both groups can be really helpful.

In recent times, Americans have been exposed to the deaths of John Crawford, Mike Brown, Sean Bell, Amadou Diallo, Ramarley Graham, Kendrec McDade, Eric Garner, George Floyd, and Tyre Nichols. In a good many cases, the videos showed excessive force.

It showed Eric Garner saying no less than 11 times that he could not breathe as he was placed in a chokehold. The police officer that shot Walter Scott was charged with murder. Derek Chauvin will face the full brunt of the law for the George Floyd murder, as would the five officers involved in the Tyre Nichols death. The officers were Black, as was Nichols, but what does it matter?

In the last few years New York City has paid out (US) \$428 million to settle 12,000 civil rights cases. This is an astronomical sum, and it shows the need for a change in police tactics. New York City announced guidelines during the administration of former mayor Bill de Blasio. It asked police officers not to imitate the speech of others, to avoid stereotyping, to avoid judging people if they are not breaking the law, to avoid racial profiling, to stay away from making racial, or ethnic jokes, and to be reminded that most people are law-abiding.

The current Mayor, Eric Adams, was a cop that understands police culture and the need to balance enforcement with diversity. If he could walk this tight rope, then New York City will be the better for it. But one thing is certain: those smart cameras will be out in a flash to record police behaviour.

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Rashad Hosein (right) with Marina Salandy-Brown, President of the Board of Bocas Lit Fest

Hosein wins literary award

Young Trinidad and Tobago writer Rashad Hosein was last month adjudged winner of the 2022 NGC Bocas Youth Writer Award. The award comes with a (TT) \$5,000 cash prize, which was sponsored by the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited.

The announcement was made on January 7 at the ceremony honouring the young finalists, and was hosted at The Writer's Centre by the NGC Bocas Lit Fest.

Hosein is 24 years old. His short fictional work *Saga* was selected as the winner from a shortlist of four finalists.

Launched in 2021, the NGC Bocas Youth Writer Award recognises and celebrates young authors who are of Trinidad and Tobago birth or citizenship, and are 25 years old and younger.

The 2022 judging panel was chaired by author Lisa Allen-Agostini, and included performing artist Gerelle Forbes, media expert and influencer Danielle 'DJ Dani' Parkinson, spoken word artist Derron Sandy, and author Kevin Jared Hosein.

Said Allen-Agostini: "[We] found [Hosein's] writing on par with the work of writers of much greater age. His accomplished *résumé* is a testament to both his talent and his tenacity... I guarantee this is not the last time you will hear his name calling in a forum like this."

And said Nicholas Laughlin, the literary NGO's festival and programme director: "From the beginning, one of the Bocas Lit Fest's core objectives has been to search out, support, and promote new writing talent. It's the most exciting and rewarding part of our work."

He added, "Prizes like this one are immensely valuable, not just for the motivation of the reward, but because they bring a range of writers to wider attention. The 2022 NGC Bocas Youth Writer Award finalists and nominees include several already accomplished budding authors who will help shape Trinidad and Tobago's literary landscape in years to come."

Take a journey with Shah Roath's Latchmini

In the first novel in The Demerara Series, *The Return of Latchmini*, author Dr Seeta Shah Roath explores a journey that started in British India in the 1880s. It is a re-tracing that is done by Bhanmattee, who sought to establish the truth in the oral history and make lasting connections from the past to the present.

It is 1894, and Latchmini is about to set out on a journey. The tide is high and the return ship to India from Suriname, *Sri Ram's Land*, is preparing to depart for Calcutta.

Latchmini is about to make the leap to leave behind her husband and son, and return to India for the birth of her fourth child. She is taking with her a two-year-old daughter Radhia, and eight-year-old son, Mohabir.

Would the tides of misfortune sweep her into the depths of despair? Or will she ride its crest to triumph over the evils of capitalism and servitude, wiles of female jealousy, male supremacy, and emerging class struggles of the post-emancipation British empire?

The Return of Latchmini is also a journey of discovery that Shah Roath takes as a researcher and an academic, where she discovers commonalities between her maternal oral history within the archival records that her mother Bhanmattee located in Guyana, Suriname, the UK, the Netherlands, and India during her ten-plus world tours, along with years of determined fieldwork.

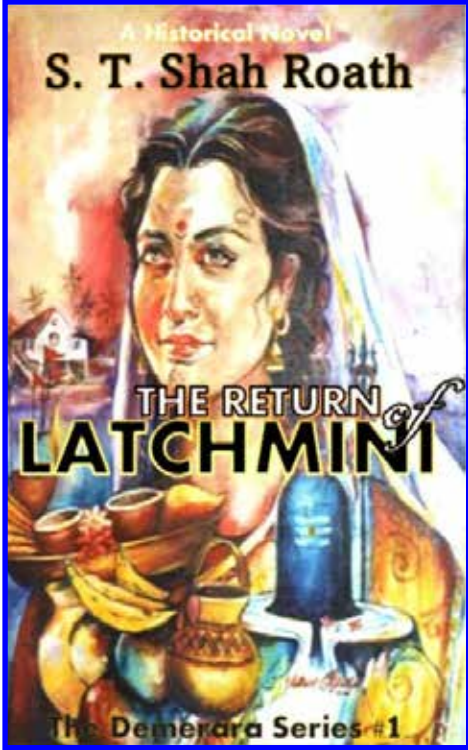
And it is also in the writing of this text where Shah Roath has also triangulated the data uncovered in scholarly works by many Indo-Guyanese researchers and writers over the last seven-plus decades.

According to *Google Books*, Shah Roath uses historical scenarios to situate creative non-fiction narratives that bring to life the frequently forgotten. She also uses multimedia formats to create for stage, film, and television.

As an international journalist, a community communications practitioner, and an educator, Shah Roath has spent time among jungle villages, cities, and towns across the globe observing, photographing, writing, and simply enjoying the simple pleasures of people at the grassroots of Indigenous, rural, and urban societies.

And as *Google Books* also notes, her early hero was the cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead, whose work inspired her early endeavours as a participant observer. This inspiration was grounded with being brought up by two strong women, whose indomitable spirits broke constraining societal barriers to negotiate life challenges – her grandmother and mother, Jack and Bhanmattee, daughter and granddaughter of Latchmini.

Shah Roath is also the author of *Wanderlust: A Collection of Short Stories - Guyana to Montana, 1983-2021*; *Under the Calabash Tree*; and *Performance Poetry: Guyana, Now and Then*.



She has also written extensively for television, film, and radio programs, as well as articles for major publications in the US.

As her biography on Texila American University's website notes, Shah Roath is an educator, author, development communications practitioner, international journalist and a cultural performing arts director.

Additionally, she has a Doctorate in Education, Educational Leadership, and Curriculum and Instruction, with specialisation in educational-technology and quantitative research.

Shah Roath also has a Masters' Degree in Education, specialising in Distance Learning/E-Learning and Adult Learning; and a Bachelors' Degree in Communication, specialising in Television, Radio, Print, and Development Support Communication.

She is the Founder and Executive Director of the Guyana Learning Channel Trust, an educational television broadcasting system network, and is also the Technical Systems Broadcasting Systems Consultant and board member of the University of Guyana Broadcasting Trust.

At the tertiary level, Shah Roath teaches research methodology, film production and theatre arts at the Institute of Theatre Arts in Guyana.

At the secondary school level, she teaches Grades 8-12 in Chemistry, Mathematics, Biology, and Life Sciences.

And as the online site *Marquis Who's Who* noted in 2022, Shah Roath has worked part time as a writer for the International Projects of the *Washington Times*, and has written reports from Panama, Jamaica, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, Egypt, Sweden, and other countries around the world.

Marquis Who's Who also notes that Shah Roath holds many professional certifications. Among these is certification in Learning Assessments, Early Childhood Education, and Online Instructional Design and Delivery from the International Institute for Educational Planning; in Creative Writing, Developmental Psychology, and Caribbean Studies from The University of Guyana Extra Mural Studies; and certification in Development Support Communication from the United Nations Development Program.

She has also received many accolades throughout her career, among them being a group Medal of Service National Award for contributions to the cultural mosaic of Guyana for the Multicultural Performing Arts Programming of Nrityageet, Nadira and Indranie Shah Dance Troupe.

Shah Roath has also received the President's Award of Excellence in Public Relations from the Guyana Manufacturing & Services Association.

The Return of Latchmini is available at [Barnes and Noble](#) and [Kobo](#).

Romeo Kaseram LJI Reporter

Return to Portugal means listening to the ocean's haunting call

As I set foot on Portuguese soil again, I feel in some way like a return of the native. It has been four years since I visited Portugal. What I have forgotten reaches out to me. The few last remaining ancient buildings that have stood the test of time have been replaced by imposing modern structures.

The citizens, Portuguese men, sturdy and short in stature; the women fresh and pretty, I see in them the faces of my ancestry on my mother's side from long ago. They had emigrated from Madeira to British Guiana in the latter half of the 19th century, never to return.

In a previous visit to Madeira, I had followed a man around as he was the split image of one of my uncles. I was trying to take a close-up picture of him and he caught me in the act!

He looked like the uncle who swam the Demerara River in Guyana both ways in the 1920s, reportedly one of the first to do so.

There are the Portuguese with the darker complexion that the British colonisers called "The Moors", and others of different complexions. They greeted my wife and I with hospitality and generosity. Not knowing the language, my



Bernard Heydorn

sign language came in very handy. My verbal language had improved 100 percent from three words to six words over the years!

My first dinner was Portuguese 'bacalhau', cod – saltfish, familiar to Caribbean people. Then I wanted 'bolo de mel', Madeira honey cake, that my parents raved over at Christmas, when I was a child growing up in British Guiana.

The cost of food here seems to be significantly less than in Canada. The growing season is longer, but the wages significantly lower. Those who have a plot of land use it to good measure.

Many folks share goods and produce in a neighbourly way as they have done in time immemorial. They are sociable as a group and have welcomed tourists.

The Roman Catholic religion exists as it has throughout the ages, although it is much reduced in influence. It has been replaced by the religion of football, North American soccer. The stadiums are large and packed. The cost of admission stretches the budget of natives, but they keep coming. Their passion is contagious.

I return to Portugal and embrace the new dances like 'kizomba'. I cannot shake my hips like I used to, but I still get fun trying! The old boy may be past his due date, but the

music is infectious and puts my wife and I back on the dance floor, where we feel together and at home. The dance also opens doors to socialisation and friendship, using a universal language.

The fruits start to blossom and grow already. I enjoy the freshness, the variety, and the plenitude. The climate is warm and semi-tropical in the Algarve, down south. Most of all I enjoy the ocean, the mighty Atlantic beating its heart out on the shores of Portugal, foaming at the mouth after its long journey. I walk on the sands, letting the ocean greet me in the way it knows best. The horizon is many shades of blue, shimmering in the sunlight.

At night the moon is bright, the wind gusty at times, welcomed many years ago by the sailors setting sail to the Americas. I remember the words, "when sails are set, someone, somewhere, always wept".

The Portuguese, a seafaring nation, have a way through popular folk music like 'fada' to express their nostalgia for the sea. It is sad and haunting, a longing for returning. It speaks to me saying, "When are you coming back to stay? Why did you leave me many years ago to sail down Demerara way? Time is running out. The door is closing. Remember me as I remember you." If the creeks don't rise and the sun still shines I'll be talking to you.



Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar (right) held a meeting last week with US Ambassador Candace Bond at the Trinidad & Tobago Parliament. Also in attendance with Persad-Bissessar were MPs Rodney Charles, shadow minister for foreign affairs; Davendranath Tancoo, shadow for finance; & Chief Whip David Lee, shadow for energy. According to a release from the Office of the Opposition, Persad-Bissessar & Bond discussed several national issues, including energy security, education, poverty alleviation, national security, & renewable energy. The release also indicated that Persad-Bissessar & Ambassador Bond reaffirmed a commitment to work together in the best interest of Trinidad & Tobago.



Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine speaks at her inauguration

Time to reclaim UWI’s identity, magic

Port-of-Spain – The plan moving forward is to now reclaim The University of the West Indies’ identity and magic, and proclaim it to the world, said Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, the institution’s new principal.

Antoine is also Pro Vice Chancellor of the Board for Graduate Studies and Research at the UWI. She made the commitment during her inaugural address on January 21, which took place at the St Augustine campus.

Her induction ceremony was held at the Daaga Auditorium, and was attended by Chief Justice Ivor Archie, Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar, National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds, Education Minister Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, former PM of Jamaica P.J. Patterson, and several members of The UWI administration and staff, including Chancellor Robert Bermudez, and Vice Chancellor Sir Hilary Beckles.

Antoine said she wanted to ensure that the university was improving the lives of its students, staff, the Caribbean community as a whole.

“I intend to place this at the centre of what we do at The UWI St Augustine (campus). For me, the meaning of civil liberty, like equality, resides in economic and social rights; enshrined in education, health, work, (access to) water and the environment. When the big building and grandiose scheme are gone, what will be remembered is the collective humanistic intellectual force that resides in The UWI. This is no esoteric stance,” she said.

Antoine is well-known throughout the Caribbean as a social activist, professor, and author.

She also indicated that she intended to harness and empower the vast talent that aligned with the university.

“My task in people empowerment involves harnessing our vast UWI talent; reclaiming the collective UWI identity and magic, and proclaiming it to the world. While our significant UWI contributions have not diminished it has become somewhat ‘invisibilised’. Individual consultants flourish, but UWI’s collective voice and presence need to be stronger,” she said.

Additionally, “The housewife must appreciate the sanitiser she bought from the supermarket is an innovation from our labs. We are too often the quiet soldiers in quiet revolutions. My job is to ensure that we remain visible, that all stakeholders look to UWI to do the important developmental work of the region, and to nurture staff to be champions of change. This in itself can increase market value and bring tangible economic benefits.”

Antoine said one of her first tasks was to establish a senior common room, so that there can be a meeting of the minds of various fields of study in the Caribbean.

“I am guided by my belief in our exceptional nature as Caribbean people, and an imperative to make a positive contribution to society as we are as intelligent, creative, talented, and capable, as anyone anywhere and our abilities find our greatest expression in service,” Antoine said.

She added, “My philosophy has always been that a university – this campus – must be entrenched in its community to have relevance. A vibrant, impactful, and revered social actor with cutting-edge research.”

Kangaloo: ‘Give me the opportunity’

Port-of-Spain – Appealing to Trinidad and Tobago for the opportunity to perform in her new role, given what she claims has been a track record of impartiality, President-elect Christine Kangaloo last week asserted this philosophy would continue to be her guiding principle in her relationship with the government, the Opposition, and all nationals.

Kangaloo was quite confident in her assertion when she recounted her experience as minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (responsible for social service delivery), saying, “I can tell you, without anyone being able to contradict me, that I never did anything on a partisan basis.”

Also, she did not believe it would be a challenge for her to tell the Prime Minister she did not agree with him, or to reject his recommendation with respect to appointments.



President-elect Christine Kangaloo

Said Kangaloo: “If you look at what I have been doing for the last seven years, I think you can judge that there is nothing that could be a challenge to me in that regard.”

She also said she would take up residence at the President’s House following her inauguration in March.

Kangaloo also responded to concerns by Opposition over her possible partisanship.

As she stated, she resigned from the PNM after becoming president of the Senate in 2015. She also indicated since that time, she has attended no political functions, taken part in no political activities, made no party political decisions, and has not being a recipient of political instructions.

“That is how I have been conducting myself for the last seven years. It would be artificial for me to deny that I (once) was a member of a political party, and that I once held different offices at different times in my life. But (even) while I held those offices, as a minister, I performed my duties without regard to any partisan interest,” she stated.

According to Kangaloo, as a minister she did not differentiate between who was PNM, and who was not.

She also revealed that during her first ministerial appointment as minister in the Office

of the Prime Minister with responsibility for social services delivery, she received numerous heart-breaking letters from citizens who were disadvantaged.

“I can tell you, without anyone being able to contradict me, that I never did anything on a partisan basis. I didn’t look at someone and ask, ‘Which political party you belong to?’ and on that basis say, ‘I can’t assist you,’” she said.

She said there were many other distinguished nationals who were once in political parties, and who have transitioned from politics into other areas, such as the Judiciary, Independent Senate bench, and as members of Service Commissions.

“All I ask of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is to give me the opportunity to show you that I can perform my duties in the way that the Constitution expects me to. I ask people to give me a chance,” she said.

Kangaloo also spoke to her future role as President, saying being in the office means “you have to be fairly involved and understand the society in which you live”.

She added, “[That] is what I have been doing all my life. I am a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. Yes, the office has certain restrictions, but I will try my very best to be abreast of everything, and to be as involved as the propriety (of the office) allows me to be.”



Health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh chats with a UNC supporter in PoS last week

UNC knocks govt on healthcare system

Port-of-Spain – An urgent conversation must be held by the Health Ministry and The University of the West Indies’ Faculty of Sciences to synchronise the intake of medical students with employment, and it is important to find roles for these emerging doctors, either in Trinidad and Tobago, or in Caricom.

So said UNC MP Dr Lackram Bodoie during a Parliament debate last week.

Bodoie was speaking during his motion that cited complaints from citizens regarding drug shortages, and long waiting times for healthcare services at public institutions.

Said Bodoie: “The evidence strongly suggests the regular healthcare system suffered

badly because staff and supplies were simply diverted to the parallel healthcare system [during the Covid-19 pandemic], leaving patients and remaining staff to fend for themselves in an under-resourced regular health system.”

Bodoie also declared that an urgent conversation was required between the Health Ministry and UWI’s Faculty of Sciences.

He added that while there was a reluctance to limit the intake of medical students, at the same time it was important to find roles for them. He suggested if there were inadequate positions in Trinidad and Tobago, then perhaps discussions needed to be held about placing them throughout the Caricom region.



HAPPY BLACK HISTORY MONTH!



Hon. Kamal Khera

Member of Parliament - Brampton West

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The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

Asha Parekh, 'hit girl of Bollywood' an epitome of beauty & grace

Asha Parekh is a name that needs no introduction. Apart from being one of the most loved and sought-after actresses in Bollywood, Asha is the first female Chairperson of the Censor Board, director and producer of TV shows (*Kora Kagaz*, *Kangan*), film distributor, President of the Cine and Television Artists Association, and the founder of The Asha Parekh Hospital in Santacruz. The milestones are many.

Half Jain, half Muslim, Asha is Gujarati-born in the year 1942. In her youth she trained in classical dance forms and made her film debut as a child artist in the early 1950s. She used the screen name Baby Asha Parekh for her movies in a child role.

She was first spotted by ace film director Bimal Roy at the age of ten while she was performing on stage. Roy offered her the 1952 film, *Maa*, followed by *Baap Beti*.

The year 1959 was a turning point in her career. At age 16, she started trying for lead roles, but director Vijay Bhatt denied her the lead role for *Goonj Uthi Shehnai*. In fact, Asha shot for that film for two days, but was then replaced by Ameeta. The director concluded that she was not star material.

Just eight days after that rejection she was signed by filmmakers Subodh Mukherjee and Nasir Hussain for *Dil Deke Dekho* (1959) in a lead role opposite Shammi Kapoor. The film went on to become one of the biggest hits that immediately shot her into stardom.

In the early 1960s she started signing big budget projects with top filmmakers, and was frequently paired with almost all leading heroes of the era.

An epitome of beauty and grace, she became a part of several iconic movies of the 1960s and early 1970s. With a bunch of hit films to her credit she earned the nickname, 'Hit Girl' of Bollywood.



Asha Parekh

Asha appeared in many women-centric roles like in *Kati Patang*, apart from doing romantic leading roles and given equal credits as her male counterparts. Some of her major works are *Dil Dekhe Dekho* (her debut film), *Mere Sanam*, *Ziddi*, *Baharon Ke Sapne*, *Teesri Manzil*, *Pyar Ka Mausam*, *Caravan*, *Kati Patang*, *Jab Pyar Kisi Se Hota Hai*, *Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hoon*, *Main Tulsi Tere Aangan Ki*, *Chirag*, *Do Badan*, *Chaaya*, *Aaye Din Bahar Ke*, *Mere Gaon Mera Desh*, *Love in Tokyo*, *Pagla Kahin Ka*, *Shikar*, *Meri Surat Teri Ankhen*, *Aya Sawan Jhoom Ke*, *Bin Badal Barsaat*, *Hum Hindustani*, *Upkaar*, *Sajan*, *Kanyadaan*, *Mahal*, *Aan Milo Sajna*, *Samadhi*, and many more.

Asha recorded some of the most unforgettable performances such as, *Aaja aaja*, *O mere sona re* (*Teesri Kasam*), *Kaanta laga* (*Samadhi*)... which still scorch the dance floor. Her melodies *Jaiye aap kahan jaayenege* (*Mere Sanam*), *Aaja piya tohe pyaar doon* (*Baharon Ke Sapne*), *Achcha to hum chalte hain* (*Aan Milo Sajna*) ... are retro gold.

She added both glamour and fortune to a project in an industry where the hero usually called the shots. The highest paid female actor in the 1960s, she delivered hits with Joy Mukherjee (*Love in Toyko*), and Biswajeet (*Mere Sanam*), Shashi Kapoor (*Pyar Ka Mausam*), Rajesh Khanna (*Kati Patang*), and the legendary Shammi Kapoor, to earn the title of Jubilee Parekh. With *Do Badan* and *Kati Patang*, she even charmed the critics.

Over the years, Asha has never shied away from addressing her love for her director, mentor, and producer Nasir Hussain, and her decision to stay single throughout life.

The veteran beauty who appeared on the cover of the

magazine, *Harper Bazaar*, in an interview with the magazine, talked about her decision to not get married. She shared her thoughts and stated that she might not be destined for it.

In her words: "I guess I was not destined to get married. Honestly, I would have loved to get married and have children, but it wasn't meant to be. However, I have absolutely no regrets."

In her autobiography, *The Hit Girl*, she revealed her love for Nasir Hussain. Talking about her love for him, Asha said:

"Yes, Nasir Saab was the only man I ever loved. It would've been worthless to write an autobiography if I didn't write about the people who mattered in my life."

She further said that she never wanted to be a home-breaker, which is why she had never married Nasir.

In her words: "I was never a home-breaker. There was never any ill will between me and Nasir Saab's family. In fact, I was so happy to see Nusrat (Hussain's daughter) and Imran Khan (his grandson) at my book launch. I feel I've lived my life decently, and without hurting anyone."

In an interview with *The Times Of India*, Asha Parekh spoke about the vacuum in her life, and how she had realised back in 2003 that she was not suffering from depression but plain loneliness.

She said: "I was the only child of my parents and after the death of my mother, father and aunt, suddenly I was all alone. There was a total vacuum in my life. I used to sit all alone during evenings and slowly depression started seeping in. I used to cry a lot and I didn't know what was happening to me. Then it suddenly hit me that it was not depression but plain loneliness in the absence of my near and dear ones. It was in 2003 after I lost my father. At that point of time I had no clue what I should do and often felt that *ke abhi mar jana chahiye*. (who wants to die now)"

Leaving footprints behind, Asha is keen to etch new ones, enjoying the now, welcoming tomorrow. A Sai Baba devotee, she simply states, "It's not me but He who's the doer in my life."

Talent, luck put RD Burman in place to be recalled for his timeless voice & music

Indian music composer Rahul Dev Burman, was born on June 27, 1939 in Kolkatta to music director S.D. Burman and Meera Burman. He moved to Mumbai as a child with his family in 1944.

S.D. Burman sent his son to Kolkata to do his schooling, where spent his formative years. Seeing his disinterest in academics, his father enrolled him in music classes. R.D. learned to play the tabla from Brajen Biswas and the sarod from Ali Akbar Khan. It is through these classes that he got his grounding in classical music.

R.D. Burman returned to Mumbai in 1955 and started working with his father as an assistant music director. His first contribution to his father's music was a tune he had composed as a young boy. S.D. Burman used that tune in *Aye Meri Topi Palat Ke Aa* (Funtoosh, 1956) without telling his son.

R.D.'s next significant contribution was the superhit song *Sar Jo Tera Chakraye* (Pyaasa, 1957), but he was not officially credited as an assistant. S.D. Burman started officially crediting R.D. as an assistant music director in *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* (1958).

Apart from assisting in composing music, he also played the harmonica and the sarod in his father's songs. The harmonica in *Hai Apna Dil To Awaara* (Solva Saal, 1958) is his playing.

While his first film as a music director was Guru Dutt's unreleased film *Raaz* (1959), his first released movie was Mehmood's *Chhote Nawab* (1961). Over the next few years, he continued to assist his father in films like *Bandini* (1963), *Teen Deviyaan* (1965) and *Guide* (1965). It was Mehmood who tried to resurrect R.D.'s flailing solo career with *Bhoot Bangla* (1965). This time his music was noticed and the rock n' roll track *Aao Twist Karen* (inspired by Chubby Checker's *Let's Twist Again*) became a big hit.

By this time, it was evident R.D. Burman had talent but he also needed a little luck to succeed. For his movie *Teesri Manzil* (1966), producer Nasir Hussain wanted to sign S.D. Burman as the music director, but because he was ill, Hussain took lyricist Majrooh Sultanpuri's advice to bring on board the young R.D. Burman instead.

What followed was a musical score that changed Hindi film music forever. Not only did the songs of *Teesri Manzil* become monster hits, they also ushered in a new kind of music in Hindi films – one that married Indian melodies with Western and Latin instruments and rhythms.

There was no looking back for R.D. after that. He delivered several successful scores through the late 1960s including *Baharon Ke Sapne* (1967), *Padosan* (1968), *Pyar Ka Mausam* (1969) and *Kati Patang* (1970).

If R.D. Burman was successful in the late 1960s, then he completely dominated the 1970s. With *Amar Prem* (1971), he earned the industry's respect and with a string of blockbuster hits – the title song of *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* (1971), *Duniya Mein Logon Ko* (*Apna Desh*, 1972), *Jaane Jaan Dhoondhta Phir Raha* (*Jawani Diwani*, 1972) – he gained mass appeal.

The 1970s marked the beginning of his relationship with lyricist Gulzar that would last his lifetime. Starting with *Parichay* (1972), the two would create songs with evergreen appeal in movies like *Aandhi* (1975), *Kinara* (1977) and *Ghar* (1978)

He also became romantically involved with singer Asha Bhosle during this period and married her in 1980, nine years after divorcing his first wife, Rita Patel.

R.D. Burman was also a singer of merit, which was clearly overshadowed by his success as a music composer. Although he might not have had the depth and range of his father, S.D. Burman, R.D. did usher in a new trend in music in the Hindi film industry as a singer.

His journey as a playback singer began with the track *Meri Jaan Maine Kaha* from *The Train* in 1970. He sang this song with Asha Bhosle, giving a forceful yet musical effect to his voice. Eventually, the song proved to be a super hit.

R.D. Burman joined with Asha Bhosle in rendering a number of sizzling hits in jazz, flamenco, rock and roll, as well as disco genres of music during the 1970s.

Some of their memorable numbers include *Piya Tu*, *Duniya Mein*, *Dil To Mane Na*, and *Gulabi Aankhen*. The popularity of these numbers encouraged R.D. Burman to experiment with his voice. He sang one line (*Daddy Ka Mummy Ka*) in the *antara* of the song *Phoolon Ka Taro Ka* (*Hare Rama Hare Krishna*).

As Lata rendered the track *Raina Jagi Jagi* sonorously, R.D. sang the *antas* in Naga musical style with equal gusto. Of course, both were overshadowed by S.D. Burman's performance in the song.

In fact, R.D. said that he was pleased to know that his performance was eclipsed by his father's rendition as he had still a lot to learn from the musical legend.

R.D. Burman is also remembered for his renowned solo singing performances. What leads the pack is *Mehbooba*



R.D. Burman

Mehbooba in *Sholay*, followed by songs in the films *Hum Kisi Se Kum Nahin* and *Shaan*.

Perhaps, his most well-known solo is *Dhanni Dhanni Aankhon Mein*, written by Gulzar for *Kitab*. In this number, which had a conglomeration of Spanish interludes and Indian ragas in light mood, R.D. Burman exuded emotions not heard in any of his earlier numbers.

In the 1980s, R.D. Burman introduced the vocoder in his compositions, especially while singing. He introduced this to give an additional effect in the background score of *Sagar*.

By the mid 1980s, R.D. Burman was getting tired of redundant musical and singing styles in the Hindi film industry. He understood well that quality of music was no more what it used to be in the 1950s and 1960s.

Therefore, he experimented with English songs in his second western album, *Panthera*, recorded at the studio of Francis Ford Coppola in Los Angeles. Hearing his arrangement of music and bold delivery of English lyrics in his songs, Coppola told R.D. that he was a highly-gifted musician.

After R.D. Burman married Asha Bhosle, he sang most of his songs with her. Once, he confessed that none of those duets were serene and will never be remembered.

By the 1990s, R.D. Burman became increasingly frustrated as a musician. It is said that once he cried in front of Salil Chowdhury in Kolkata, stating that he was losing his musical touch. Salil, who was also a family friend of the Burmans, consoled his beloved student and encouraged him. He told him that he still had lots of untapped potential as a musician.

And then came the gem of all of R.D. Burman's songs – *Hum Na Samjhe The* from *Gardish*. This track was undoubtedly his most touching and memorable performance. Very few people know that R.D. Burman was in tears after recording the number.

R.D. Burman passed away on January 4, 1994. Throughout his career, he tried to regain his Midas touch in the field of music. R.D. Burman was also fighting a lone battle against the gross commercialisation of Hindi playback songs. He might not be remembered as a legendary singer like Rai Chand Boral, Pankaj Mullick, S.D. Burman, or Hemant Kumar, but the few numbers he sang still make us sit up and take notice. His voice and music are timeless.

Global crossover hit Naatu Naatu scores 2023 Oscar nomination

From Page 1
generated).

Last month *RRR* took back to India its first ever Golden Globe award on January 10 for best original song. *Naatu Naatu* (Dance Dance) was composed by M.M. Keeravani, with lyrics by Chandrabose.

The movie was directed by S.S. Rajamouli, who co-wrote it with V. Vijayendra Prasad. It was produced by D.V.V. Danayya of DVV Entertainment, and stars Rao Jr., Charan, Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt, Shriya Saran, Samuthirakani, Ray Stevenson, Alison Doody, and Olivia Morris.

Following the Oscar nomination, the film has since won best foreign language film, with *Naatu Naatu* taking away the award for best song at the 28th edition of the Critics' Choice Awards in Los Angeles on January 15.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also got into the frame, tweeting that he was thrilled with the Golden Globes' takeaway, declaring it a "very special accomplishment". He added, "This prestigious honour has made every Indian very proud."

As Rajamouli has told *Reuters*, "When we initially set out to make it we didn't have the critical acclaim in mind. We set out to make the movie for the audience, for them to love it, for them to experience the movie."

RRR was made on a budget of (R) 550 crore (US \$72 million), and is the most expensive Indian film to date. As of last month, it had earned over (US) \$150 million worldwide, putting it in the top three of India's highest grossing films behind *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion*, and the number one, *Dangal*.

RRR began streaming on Netflix in the months following its ascending theatre run. As *CNN* noted last week, it was among the platform's top ten most viewed non-English films for 16 weeks.

And as Rajamouli later stated, part of the movie's wider exposure was due to Netflix's global reach.

"If so many people got to know about *RRR*, it's because of the streaming platform Netflix. I'm thankful for that," he was quoted as saying by *Yahoo UK*.

The energy in the *Naatu Naatu* number is quite infectious. Along with its undercurrent narrative as a passive-resistance, softer counter punch to imperialistic British cultural arrogance, at the same time it is also catchy and an earworm for listeners



Shriya Saran in *RRR*



Charan (l-r), Rajamouli, & Rao Jr.

who later cannot get the melody out of their heads.

As *Variety* reported last week, it seems that with *Naatu Naatu* now a global crossover hit, the catchy number made Academy members "want to put on their dancing shoes", and consequently, the tune "became the first number from a fully homegrown Indian film to get nominated for a best original song when it was chosen for the best song award".

The four-and-a-half-minute hit, and its intricately woven

choreography, were filmed in front of Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky's official residence in 2021, the *British Broadcasting Corporation* has reported.

If *Naatu Naatu* wins the Oscar come March 12, then it would follow in the footsteps of other Indian songwriters, the first winning song being *Jai Ho*, from *Slumdog Millionaire*, which also picked up the best picture winner in 2019. Its composer A.R. Rahman also took away the Oscar for best score that year.

However, it must not be forgotten that *Slumdog Millionaire* was a British production, which was set in India.

As *Variety* has noted, *Naatu Naatu* contributed greatly to why American audiences began taking an interest in *RRR*. As it has noted, it first emerged as a *TikTok* phenomenon, as *Variety* notes, when a short clip of the song with its "hook step" dance performed by the movie's charismatic leads Charan and Rao Jr. came out months before the movie arrived on American screens.

Said *Variety*: "When the film finally reached American screens and audiences got to see the full four-minute number, few were disappointed..."

There were more anecdotal reports in *Variety* on the warm, accepting responses by Chinese audiences to the dancing infectiousness of *Naatu Naatu*. As it noted, a screening of *RRR* at the TCL Chinese Theatre on January 9 saw dozens of attendees taking to the floor in front of the giant Imax screen to follow along in the footsteps of *Naatu Naatu*.

Said Keervani in response to the attendees' energy: "It's true that I have composed music for the movie *RRR*, but the best music I have heard today is your laughs and applause. I wish to listen to that music on and on, again and again, and forever."

And in another *Variety* report, Rajamouli spoke to the disarming role the light-hearted song serves in easing the tension in the action-filled narrative.

Said Rajamouli: "When I envisioned... *Naatu Naatu* ...while [Rao Jr. and Charan] are great dancers, I didn't want the steps to be so complicated that people can't do it. It should be like any two people – whether it be friends, mother and daughter, father and son, two brothers or two sisters – would see it and feel like, 'Let's try this'. And they did; millions and millions of people were trying to do the steps and posting on it. It became such a big phenomenon when we released the song, and it clearly (increased) public interest in the film."



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Gabriel gets recall for Zimbabwe tour

Veteran pacer Shannon Gabriel was last month recalled for this month's tour of Zimbabwe after getting the pick for the 15-man squad. The announcement on his inclusion was made last month by Cricket West Indies, the *Caribbean Media Corporation* reported.

Gabriel is 34 years old, and has taken 161 wickets from 56 Tests. At one time he was the tip of the spear in the Caribbean's bowling attack.

However, he has not featured in a Test for 15 months due to injury and loss of form. He returns alongside former new ball partner Kemar Roach, who will lead the bowling group.

Gabriel turned out for his native Trinidad and Tobago Red Force last year, struggling in the first class campaign with a single wicket from four matches, but excelling in the Super50 Cup with 15 wickets from seven outings.

His presence will be critical for West Indies, following the ruling out of the highly regarded 21-year-old seamer Jayden Seales after undergoing knee surgery.

Also, fellow Trinidadian Anderson Phillip was similarly sidelined due to injury.

"With our fast bowlers, Seales has done extremely well for us since he started back in 2021, but with him unavailable we have decided that Gabriel would be best able to fill that role," said chief selector, Desmond Haynes.

He added, "He is an experienced bowler who has been at the international level for over ten years, and has knowledge of the conditions in Zimbabwe when we won there in 2017."



Jasprit Bumrah

Left-arm spinners Jomel Warrican and Gudakesh Motie also earned recalls to the side. Warrican also played his last Test 15 months ago, but then he led Barbados Pride's attack in last year's first class championship with 13 wickets at 25 runs apiece.

Meanwhile, Motie made his Test debut last June against Bangladesh, and has not played since.

"We looked at the conditions we anticipate playing in, and have included two left-arm spinners who didn't go to Australia in Motie and Warrican," Haynes said.

Kraig Brathwaite leads a side that includes the left-handed opener Tagenarine Chanderpaul, who shone on the recent tour of Australia with an average of 40.

Selectors also kept faith in all rounder Raymon Reifer, even though he failed to feature on the tour of Australia after picking up a groin injury. Batsman Devon Thomas has also been retained.

Right-hander Shamarh Brooks did not make the team after a dismal showing in Australia, where he scored only 52 runs from four innings.

West Indies face Zimbabwe in the opening Test starting February 4 at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo, and return to the same venue for the second Test, which bowls off on February 12.

"This is the start of the international calendar for 2023, and we will hope to start with a win," Haynes said.

He added, "We appreciate it won't be [an] easy assignment as Zimbabwe, like most other teams in world cricket, play very

Bumrah still on sidelines with back injury

Rushing Jasprit Bumrah right back into international action from his back injury may not be a good move at this time, India skipper Rohit Sharma warned last week. He added it would be better for Bumrah to recover sufficiently and then be available for the last two Tests of the four-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy in March.

As the cricket website *Cricbuzz* reported, Bumrah was withdrawn from India's ODI squad for the Sri Lanka series in a last-minute precautionary decision, a move that delayed his comeback from a long injury layoff.

He has missed the 2022 Asia Cup, as well as the T20 World Cup that followed in Australia owing to back trouble. With a home ODI World Cup coming up later this year, the Indian management has been very cautious about his fitness.

"About Bumrah, I'm not too sure at the moment, of course for the first two Test matches he is not going to be available. I'm expecting that – not expecting, but hoping he plays the next two



Shannon Gabriel

well on their home soil on pitches that will support their style of play."

West Indies have won all their five Test series against the African nation.

Squad

Kraig Brathwaite (captain), Jermaine Blackwood (vice captain), Nkrumah Bonner, Tagenarine Chanderpaul, Roston Chase, Joshua Da Silva, Shannon Gabriel, Jason Holder, Alzarri Joseph, Kyle Mayers, Gudakesh Motie, Raymon Reifer, Kemar Roach, Devon Thomas, and Jomel Warrican.

Test matches, but again we don't want to take any risk with him. The back injuries are always critical," Rohit said.

He added, "We have got lot of cricket coming up after that as well; we will see, and we will monitor. We are in constant touch with doctors and physios at [the National Cricket Academy], and we are constantly hearing from them."

Bumrah has been out of action since last September after a stress reaction occurred in his back ahead of the Asia Cup. He was undergoing rehab at the NCA in Bengaluru, where he resumed training after a six-week rest in late November, and then bowling three weeks later in mid-December.

However, on the eve of the Sri Lanka ODI series, the Board of Control for Cricket in India withdrew him from the squad "as a precautionary measure", stating that he "will need some more time to build bowling resilience".

Bumrah was subsequently not considered for selection for New Zealand's six-match white-ball tour of India.

BCB to honour Guyana's cricketing heroes now resident in the US

The Berbice Cricket Board last month announced a plan to honour several Guyana overseas-based cricketing heroes now residing in the US.

The board is hoping to organise a historic ceremony at a venue in New York on June 10 to honour heroes on the cricket field, and those who served with distinction as administrators.

According to reports out of Guyana, BCB president, Hilbert Foster, indicated that along with his elder brother Keith, the board had introduced an honour system in 2009 to recognise the contribution of heroes of Berbice cricket.

The programme was named 'Tribute to Hero' and dozens of persons were honoured over the last 14 years.

The majority of those honoured were locally based residents, since it was unable to get in contact with overseas former cricketers, and was also unable to finance their trip to Guyana.

However, at least two BCB executives would be visiting New York come June to honour dozens of former national players,



Joe Solomon

administrators, and supporters of Berbice cricket. Most of the BCB's expenses would be sponsored.

A suitable venue is being acquired for the event, while a



Alvin Kallicharran

former West Indies captain is expected to be the guest speaker.

Several Berbice former national players including Clayton Lambert and Derek Kallicharran have agreed to work along with the BCB.

Awards would be given out to 25 former national players, and five former administrators, while several sponsors would be honoured for their contribution to Berbice cricket over the last five years. The sponsors would include Dr Tulsi Dyal Singh, Brian Ramphal, Terrence Blackman, and Lochan Samkarran.

Among the players expected to be honoured are former test players Alvin Kallicharran, Joe Solomon, Leonard Baichan, Sew Shivanarine, the late Basil Butcher, Mahendra Nagamootoo, and Clayton Lambert. Others include Kamal Singh, Milton Pydana, Keith Cameron, Leslaine Lambert, Sudesh Dhaniram, Vishal Nagamootoo Romain, and Tyrone Etwaroo.

The awardees would receive a plaque, trophy, medal of excellence, and a framed certificate along with a BCB souvenir.

Report to CWI warns that West Indies cricket 'may cease to exist'

West Indies cricket may "cease to exist" unless the issue of its players prioritising global Twenty20 leagues ahead of international duties is resolved, a report commissioned by Cricket West Indies noted last month.

As *AFP* indicated, this conclusion came from a three-man panel made up of former captain and batter Brian Lara, South African coach Mickey Arthur, and a senior judge Patrick Thompson. It was commissioned after West Indies' shock early exit from last year's T20 World Cup in Australia.

It noted that West Indies have struggled with availability issues for players who feature in the Indian Premier League and other T20 competitions around the world.

Said the report: "It is essential that some middle ground is arrived at. Otherwise, West Indies cricket may cease to exist as an entity. This group does not indulge in doomsday predictions, but no entity, sporting or otherwise, has a viable future if its talent is not harnessed and effectively managed. It is not in the best interests of West Indies cricket that our best players play in

every global league and play for the WI Team on an optional basis."

It also urged a "frank and honest discussion" about the issue in order to find a solution to what it called an "impasse".

One of the issues blocking better agreement about player schedules and availability is the long-standing conflicts between players and CWI, the report said.

"In this group's view, there is significant distrust between the players and administration, and this distrust is inimical to ensuring that the best 11 players turn out for the WI Team in every match," the report said.

The report made a series of recommendations for improving the functioning of the West Indies team ahead of the 2024 T20 World Cup, which will be held in the Caribbean and the US.

But the authors did not back the idea of a separate coach for red ball and white ball teams, given the limited amount of Test cricket being played. They also suggested that key players for the T20 side should be given more exposure to Test cricket in order

to get used to the conditions and standard of opposition.

West Indies have enjoyed success in the T20 format, winning the World Cup in 2012 and 2016 – only England have also won the competition twice.

But in Australia, the Caribbean side finished bottom of their group, finishing behind Zimbabwe, Ireland, and Scotland.

The report said the team were "underprepared", and pointed the finger at the short time between the Caribbean Premier League tournament and the T20 World Cup.

The report said that unless change was made, the talent pool of Caribbean players risked being used by others.

"WI cricket does not lack for talent, but our small size in comparison with other cricketing nations means that we cannot afford to lose any talented players. [CWI] must develop and create clear pathways for the identification, development, and management of talent. Otherwise, WI cricket runs the risk of being strip-mined by other professional leagues that can afford to harvest and develop our players for their benefit," it stated.



Owners of three IPL franchises secured rights last week for the emergent Women's Premier League

Newly-minted WPL scores top franchise \$

Three Indian Premier League franchises have won the rights for teams in the forthcoming women's tournament, with the five available sides sold for just over \$772 million, the UK publication *The Independent* reported last Wednesday.

The companies behind Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, and Royal Challengers Bangalore were successful in the bidding process. However, Kolkata Knight Riders, Punjab Kings, Rajasthan Royals, and Sunrisers Hyderabad did not secure a deal.

The two remaining teams were awarded to the Adani Group, based in Ahmedabad, and Capri Global from Lucknow. The competition will be branded as the Women's Premier League.

The Independent also noted that last week's total investment is further evidence of a game-changing development for the women's game. It follows a television rights deal that saw Viacom18 pay over \$157 million early last month.

The WPL will take place in March, and is a women's version of the IPL, the world's biggest Twenty20 franchise competition.

Former England cricketer and *British Broadcasting Service* Test Match Special commentator Isa Guha later told the *BBC* that the deal was "a landmark day for the women's game".

Also, the Board of Control for Cricket in India's Secretary Jay Shah described the deal as "transformative" for women's cricket.

And former India captain Mithali Raj, in a social media post, said, "A record-breaking start for the inaugural Women's Premier League and expected nothing less! It will truly revolutionise women's cricket as we know it."

Current India player Smriti Mandhana added it was a "pioneering move" and a "brilliant step forward for Indian women's cricket".

A player auction will now be held before the tournament, and

is expected to take place at the beginning of February, the *BBC* noted.

Each team can sign up to seven overseas players, with England stars such as spinner Sophie Ecclestone and all-rounder Nat Sciver expected to be among the most expensive.

The player registration process has already started, with ex-England spinner and *BBC* Test Match Special summariser Alex Hartley confirming her application on social media.

Previously, India hosted the Women's T20 Challenge, an invitational event that started as one exhibition match in 2018 before expanding to three teams in 2019.

"We are proud and honoured to associate with the Women's Premier League, and extend our vision for sports in India while shining light on the tremendously talented women of India," said Rajesh Sharma, founder and director of Capri Global.

Director of Adani Enterprises, Pranav Adani, added: "The Indian women's cricket team has been doing exceptionally well – and a cricket league for women is a significant step in creating more opportunities for women through sports."

Stephan Shemilt, *BBC* chief cricket writer, described it as being, "The most significant development in women's cricket history".

However, as the *BBC* stated, for all the excitement with the newly-minted WPL, there was a note of trepidation for the ripples this latest move might have in the international game.

As the *BBC* noted, already players as Deandra Dottin and Lizelle Lee have stopped playing for West Indies and South Africa respectively. This is so partly based on the living they can make in franchise leagues. The question now was how many more players will take this path, notably from nations where the contracts given to female cricketers are not lucrative.

CA knocked for scheduling T20 fixture on 'day of hurt'

The decision by Cricket Australia to schedule a T20 match against Pakistan on January 26 came in for criticism from national team star and Muruwari woman Ashleigh Gardner, *The Guardian* reported late last month.

Gardner is the second Indigenous woman to play Test cricket for Australia. Commenting on CA's decision, Gardner said on this day the first fleet arrived in Australia in 1788, and it was a "day of hurt and a day of mourning" for Indigenous Australians. Playing a fixture on that date did not sit well with her, she declared.

As part of its Reconciliation Action Plan, CA consults with an Indigenous advisory committee that approved the decision to play the fixture in Hobart on January 26. The match was the second in Australia's three-match T20 series against Pakistan.

The Australian team performed a bare-foot ceremony before the match, and wore a special Indigenous-themed jersey to celebrate Australia's First people.

However, *The Guardian* stated that it was understood the decision to play the game on January 26 did not sit well with the playing group. Gardner has been a regular member of this group since 2017.



Ashleigh Gardner

She tweeted, "It is a day of hurt and a day of mourning. Unfortunately this year the Australian women's cricket team [was] scheduled to play a game on [January 26] which certainly doesn't sit well with me as an individual but also all the people I'm representing."

Gardner said she plans to use her profile as a professional cricketer to educate others as to the connotations of the day.

"For those who don't have a good understanding of what that day means it was the beginning of genocide, massacres, and dispossession," she wrote.

Additionally, she stated that taking to the field made her reflect and think about "my ancestors and peoples' lives who changed from this day".

Team captain Meg Lanning also declared the Australian women's cricket team were united in its support for Gardner.

Said Lanning: "It's something that we can't control in terms of the scheduling and playing on that day. But something we would like to do is acknowledge the sadness and grief that day brings for First Nations people."

Lanning also said Gardner was doing "pretty well" after receiving online abuse for her call, and labelled her action as brave.

Cricket Schedule

- (ALL TIMES LOCAL)**
- Wednesday February 1, 2023**
England tour of South Africa, 2023
South Africa vs England, 3rd ODI, Diamond Oval, Kimberley, 01:00 PM
New Zealand tour of India, 2023
India vs New Zealand, 3rd T20I, Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad, 07:00 PM
- Saturday February 4, 2023**
West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 1st Test, Day 1, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Sunday February 5, 2023**
West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 1st Test, Day 2, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Monday February 6, 2023**
West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 1st Test, Day 3, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Tuesday February 7, 2023**
West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 1st Test, Day 4, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Wednesday February 8, 2023**
West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 1st Test, Day 5, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Thursday February 9, 2023**
Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 1, Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium, Nagpur, 09:30 AM.
- Friday February 10, 2023**
Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 2, Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium, Nagpur, 09:30 AM
- Saturday February 11, 2023**
Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 3, Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium, Nagpur, 09:30 AM
- Sunday February 12, 2023**
Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 4, Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium, Nagpur, 09:30 AM
- West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023**
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 2nd Test, Day 1, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Monday February 13, 2023**
Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 5, Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium, Nagpur, 09:30 AM
- West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023**
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 2nd Test, Day 2, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Tuesday February 14, 2023**
West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 2nd Test, Day 3, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Wednesday February 15, 2023**
West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 2nd Test, Day 4, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Thursday February 16, 2023**
England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 1, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 02:00 PM
- West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023**
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 2nd Test, Day 5, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM
- Friday February 17, 2023**
England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 2, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 02:00 PM
- Australia tour of India, 2023**
India vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 1, Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi, 09:30 AM
- Saturday February 18, 2023**
England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 3, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 02:00 PM
- Australia tour of India, 2023**
India vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 2, Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi, 09:30 AM.
- Sunday February 19, 2023**
England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 4, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 02:00 PM.



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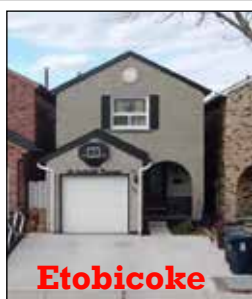
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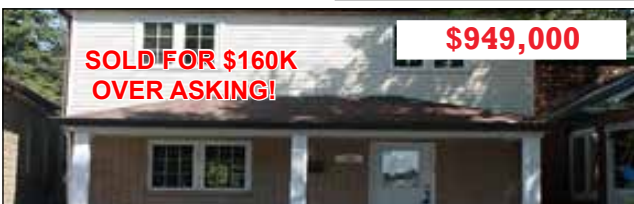
CityPointe Heights starting @ High 400s

Located at The Gore Road and Queen St E., CityPointe Heights is a new condominium community connected to three of the GTA's most beloved cities. Your favourite - and soon-to-be favourite - Brampton, Toronto, and Vaughan locations are very close to home. Discover two of the fastest growing cities in the Greater Toronto Area, and why with each passing year, they have more to offer.



Essa For Lease \$2,995

Beautiful 4 bedrooms, 4 washrooms, 2 storey home located in the quiet neighbourhood of Angus. Minutes to Barrie. Open concept main floor w/ walkout to fenced backyard. Finished basement with rec room, full washroom & laundry area. Large driveway w/ 4 parking spots. Walking distance to trails & parks. Stainless steel apps, recently upgraded w/ pot-lights & led lighting & much more. All light fixtures, fridge, stove, dishwasher, washer & dryer, central air-conditioning, hot water tank, furnace, & garage door opener.



\$949,000

A Beautiful Open Concept Renovation - 3 bedroom, 4 washrooms, Detached Home in York. Huge Backyard. Conveniently Located Within Walking Distance To amenities and schools. Extremely Close Proximity to Public Transit! A Great Place to Call Home.

Narrative Condos

STARTING FROM LOW \$300s



It all begins at 7437 Kingston Road - a unique project set against the backdrop of both nature and the city. Located on Kingston Road, adjacent to Rouge and Port Union, The Narrative offers the perfect balance of nearby green space, a diverse and welcoming community, nearby amenities, and easy access to the heart of Toronto via the 401.


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