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# INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

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## Dabydeen earns Nobel nomination

*Born in Berbice and forged abroad in Cambridge, Dr David Dabydeen has been nominated for the 2026 Nobel Prize in Literature. His journey from Guyana to global letters marks a rare moment of diasporic recognition and literary arrival.*

By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI News Feature

There are moments when literature stops being a private act of reading and becomes a public event, when a name spoken in a distant committee room reverberates across oceans, villages, and memories. Dr David Dabydeen's nomination for the 2026 Nobel Prize in Literature is one of those moments.

It is as much a professional milestone as it is a diasporic signal.

Last month, European and Chinese scholars formally nominated the Guyanese-born author and academic for the world's most consecrated literary honour, a rare occurrence for any small nation, and rarer still for a writer whose work

has never flattered empire, never softened colonial history into aesthetic comfort, and never detached beauty from brutality.

For Guyana, the nomination was a moment of literary arrival; for those of us who reside in the Caribbean diaspora, it was a moment of symbolic vindication; for world literature, a reminder that those of us at the margins have been writing back all along, and are now arriving to take our place at the centre.



**David Dabydeen**

Dabydeen himself met the announcement with the gravitas of someone who has spent a lifetime speaking quietly into large histories.

"I am happy that I come from a small country," he told *Stabroek News*, while invoking

**See Page 16: Guyana-born**



**Mark Carney**



**Doug Ford**



**Marc Miller**

## Canada's leaders come together to mark BHM

— Canada is now marking the 30th anniversary of Black History Month with a renewed national focus on economic inclusion, cultural recognition, and anti-racism; earlier this week, leaders at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels issued coordinated statements highlighting both progress made and work still to be done.

Toronto — Canadians are now observing Black History Month 2026 under the theme *30 Years of Black History Month: Honouring Black Brilliance Across Generations – From Nation Builders to Tomorrow's Visionaries*, marking three decades since the national celebration was officially recognised across the country.

In his statement issued on February 1, Prime Minister Mark Carney said the milestone offered an opportunity to reflect on the enduring contributions of Black Canadians, and to reaffirm the federal government's responsibility to translate recognition into tangible action.

"Today marks the beginning of the 30th Black History Month in Canada, under the theme *Honouring Black Brilliance Across Generations – From Nation Builders to Tomorrow's Visionaries*," PM Carney said, declaring, "This is a time to honour the enduring culture and resilience of Black Canadians."

PM Carney underscored the central role Black Canadians have played in shaping the country's economic and social fabric, pointing to leadership in global enterprise, entrepreneurship, and community institutions. He said the federal government remains focused on removing systemic barriers that have historically limited access to opportunity.

"Black Canadians have played a vital role in building this nation," he said, noting that many have led companies driving investment into Canada, while also creating strong local businesses that anchor communities.

As part of that commitment, PM Carney highlighted

**See Page 5: Canada marks**



## TWF holds BHM symposium

Toronto — The Walnut Foundation (TWF) will host its 2026 Black History Month Symposium on February 7, with this year's program focusing on conditions that affect brain health as people age.

In announcing the event, TWF noted that Black History Month is a time to reflect on the resilience, contributions, and lived experiences of Black communities, while also confronting health inequities that continue to affect quality

of life. "At The Walnut Foundation, we continue our commitment to advancing health equity by addressing critical health issues affecting Black men and families," the organisation stated.

The foundation has extended an open invitation to community members to attend the symposium, which will focus on brain health and aging. Organisers said this year's conversations will examine how

**See Page 3: TWF**

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Simone Young, Consul General at the Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto, paid a courtesy call on Her Honour the Honourable Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, on January 27. Discussions focused on education, diaspora engagement, and youth empowerment. In left photo, (from left to right), are Sabine Soumare, Chief of Staff and Private Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor, Consul General Young, the Honourable Edith Dumont, and Deputy Consul General at the TT Consulate General, Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette; in right photo, Consul General Young and the Honourable Edith Dumont. *Facebook photos*

## VCC to stage Holi musical showcase on March 14

Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre will stage its Holi Concert on March 14 at its premises at 4345 14th Avenue, Markham, featuring a wide range of performers from across Ontario.

The musical showcase will include popular Bollywood songs and festive Holi selections, with performances by Bash Nandalall, Seema Maraj, Neetu Rambharack, Deveka Yassen, Deven Latchmana, Sudesh Naraine, and Kevin Dhar, among others. Organisers say the concert is intended both as a cultural celebration and as a platform to highlight and support local talent within the community.

In a release, the VCC noted that public response to the event "has been great so far" and encouraged community members to purchase tickets online (email: [tas@torontoaryasamaj.org](mailto:tas@torontoaryasamaj.org)) in advance to secure seating. Tickets purchased online will be reserved and made available for collection at the reception desk on arrival, the release stated.

Alongside the concert, the VCC has issued an appeal for donations in support of the mandir, which marks its 30th anniversary this year and is undergoing ongoing maintenance and repair needs. The organisation said community contributions would assist in the upkeep of what it described as an iconic building that has served the Hindu community for three decades.

Donations can be emailed at [tas@torontoaryasamaj.org](mailto:tas@torontoaryasamaj.org), or online, with tax-deductible receipts issued for contributions above \$20. Donors are asked to provide the name and address to be used for receipt issuance.

The VCC will also observe Holi on March 4, beginning at 10 a.m., with a programme that includes prayers, a spiritual message, chowtal singing, and traditional Holi songs.

For further information, community members may contact Adit Kumar at 647-866-1926, consult the display on Page 17 for additional contacts, or email [tas@torontoaryasamaj.org](mailto:tas@torontoaryasamaj.org).



Asma Musa



Jean Adeyemo



Joyce Okorafor



Olumide Adegunna

## TWF holds brain health focus for 2026 BHM event

From Page 1

memory, mood, and thinking change over time, and what individuals and families can do to protect and strengthen brain health through knowledge, prevention, and lifestyle choices.

According to TWF, the symposium is designed as a day of learning, dialogue, and community connection. Expert speakers will share research-based insights and practical, real-world guidance to help participants better understand brain health and maintain cognitive well-being throughout life.

The event will be held in person at the William Davis Centre for Families, 60 West Drive, Brampton, with a virtual attendance option via Zoom, allowing broader participation from across the community.

Among the sessions on the agenda is *Brain Power for Life: Protecting Memory, Mood and Thinking as We Age*, which will explore how the brain supports memory, mood, and decision-making, as well as early signs of cognitive change, and why early awareness matters. Featured speakers include Dr Olumide Adegunna and Dr Joyce Okorafor, who will discuss how to recognise changes before they develop into more serious concerns.

Another session, *When Brain Changes: Understanding Dementia, Stroke, Mood, and Aging*, will also feature Dr Adegunna and Dr Okorafor. During this discussion, medical specialists will break down complex brain-related conditions in clear, practical language, outlining how these conditions develop, the early warning signs to watch for, and what aging truly means for brain health.

The symposium will also include *Keeping Your Mind Strong: Evidence-Based Lifestyle Choices That Support Brain Health*, featuring Ngozi Iroanyah, Director of Health Equity

and Access at the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, alongside Asma Musa. This session will focus on everyday habits from nutrition to movement, which can protect and strengthen brain health at any age, offering participants realistic, evidence-based strategies they can begin using immediately.

Rounding out the program is *Before Health Changes: Navigating Legal, Financial, and Emotional Planning for Aging and Caregiving*. Speakers include Jean Adeyemo, Loretta Karikari, and caregiver Olui Muilli. This session will address planning ahead of health changes, covering legal tools, financial considerations, and the emotional realities of caregiving, with the aim of helping individuals and families feel more prepared and informed about the future.

TWF said the symposium reflects its broader commitment to education, prevention, and advocacy, underscoring the importance of early awareness and community-centered approaches in addressing health challenges facing Black men and their families.

TWF is committed to improving the health and well-being of Black men and their families by providing a safe, supportive, and welcoming forum where men can engage in open discussions, access reliable resources, and find encouragement along their health journeys. Its mission centres on equipping Black men and their families with the data, support, and advocacy needed to live healthy, fulfilling lives, with or without a prostate cancer diagnosis.

The foundation envisions a world in which every Black man has equitable access to proactive and preventive healthcare, including care that supports lifelong prostate and brain health. Through education, advocacy, and community-based support, TWF aims to improve health outcomes and build a healthier, more informed community.

Romeo Kaseram – LJI Community Reporter

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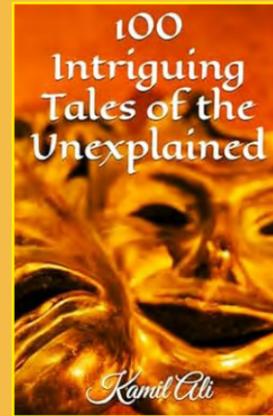
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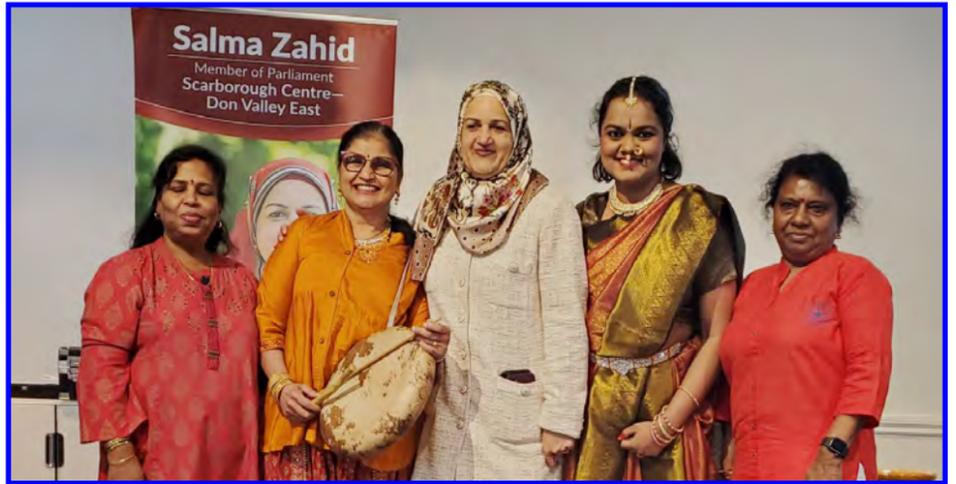
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New Year's Levee is today a welcoming community open house, an opportunity to reconnect with neighbours, for community members to meet elected representatives, and for setting a positive tone for the year ahead. In marking her celebration of the traditional event on January 24, Salma Zahid, Member of Parliament for Scarborough Centre–Don Valley East, re-created the spirit of the Levee as a space where barriers dissolve and community spirit rises. The event saw performances by the Yemel Philharmonic Society, Malal Kottai Maari Troupe Toronto, Scarborough Ontario Seniors Association, among others. Following the Levee, Zahid shared on Facebook, "What a way to welcome 2026! Thank you all for coming out to the New Year's Levee. I hope that we all carry these positive and vibrant energies into the new year!" Photos by Hinano Beekho.

## Canada marks 3rd decade of BHM

### From Page 1

the federal government's October 2025 decision to allocate \$189 million to renew the Black Entrepreneurship Program, a move aimed at ensuring sustained access to capital, mentorship, and resources for Black-owned businesses.

Since its launch, the program has supported more than 24,000 Black entrepreneurs, helping to drive innovation and economic growth across the country, the prime minister said.

Beyond economic inclusion, Carney said the government is also prioritising community well-being by supporting Black-led, community-based initiatives focused on mental health and access to care.

"Building Canada strong means ensuring everyone can contribute to and share in our country's success," Carney said, adding, "This Black History Month, we affirm our responsibility to back words with action, deliver opportunity, and build a country where racism has no place."

The theme for Black History Month 2026 was announced earlier, on January 7, in Cherry Brook by Marc Miller, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages. Federal officials said the theme was chosen to reflect both the historical depth of Black presence in Canada, and the continuing influence of Black leadership, creativity, and resilience on the nation's future.

In his own February 1 statement, Miller said Black History Month remains a national moment for reflection, learning, and celebration.

"Beginning February 1, we come together to honour Black people, whose contributions have profoundly shaped Canada's culture and history," Miller said.

He said the 2026 theme invites Canadians to consider the progress made since Black History Month was first officially recognised in 1996, while paying tribute to generations of Black Canadians who helped build the country and continue to move it forward.

"For more than four centuries, Black communities have contributed to Canada's social, cultural, scientific, academic and economic development," Miller said, pointing to eminent figures as Dr Jean Augustine, who initiated the parliamentary motion recognising Black History Month in Canada; Dr Yvette Bonny, a pioneer in hematology; and Elkin James, a wrestler and artist who co-founded a wrestling

school in Toronto.

MP Miller also outlined federal investments supporting Black communities, including funding for more than 2,300 community projects through the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative, continued expansion of the Black Entrepreneurship Program, and the establishment of the Black-led Philanthropic Endowment Fund to ensure long-term sustainability.

He said the federal government remains committed to combating racism and discrimination through Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2028 and Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate, which together encompass nearly 100 government-wide initiatives.

At the provincial level, Ontario Premier Doug Ford issued a statement in Toronto on February 1 emphasising the contributions of Ontario's Black community and the role of education in advancing equity.

"Black History Month is an opportunity to reflect on the many ways Ontario's Black community has helped strengthen our province and our country," Ford said.

He said the Black community's legacy of perseverance and resilience spans arts and culture, business, public service, sports, and community leadership, and remains integral to Ontario's social fabric. Ford also announced that beginning in September 2026, Ontario's curriculum for Grades 7, 8, and 10 will require students to learn about the history and contributions of Black Canadians who helped build Canada.

At the municipal level, Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown, on behalf of Brampton City Council, proclaimed February 2026 as Black History Month in the city, highlighting both historical recognition and local action.

"Black History Month is a time to recognise, honour, and celebrate the achievements and contributions of Black Canadians," Brown said, noting that 2026 also marks the 100th anniversary of Black History Month, first established in 1926 by Dr Carter G. Woodson, and formally recognised in Canada in 1996.

Brown said the City of Brampton is advancing its equity agenda through initiatives such as the Black Voices Consultation, launched in August 2025, which is informing a comprehensive Five-Year Action Plan aimed at eradicating anti-Black racism and delivering more equitable outcomes for Black residents.

Romeo Kaseram – LJI Community Reporter



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Editorial

David Dabydeen

The nomination of David Dabydeen for the Nobel Prize in Literature arrives as news, but it lands as something larger: a moment of collective recognition for our Caribbean diaspora itself. For communities shaped by slavery, indentureship, and migration, his ascent onto the global literary stage feels deeply personal.

Dabydeen's career has never been about literary ornament. His poetry, fiction, and criticism confront the difficult inheritances of Caribbean history, namely, African enslavement, Indian and Chinese indentureship, migration, displacement, resilience, and survival. These are not distant themes. They are the lived genealogies of the many millions of us across our diaspora.

For generations, Caribbean experience was written about by others. Colonial administrators, imperial historians, and metropolitan novelists defined us in records and narratives where we appeared only as labour, background, or spectacle. Our histories were footnotes; our voices peripheral; our lives orientated. Dabydeen's work helped to reverse that direction. He insisted that Caribbean experience is not marginal to world history, but constitutive of it.

His Nobel Peace Prize nomination, therefore, resonates beyond literary circles. It tells our diaspora communities scattered across Toronto, London, New York, and beyond, that stories forged in plantation economies, migration routes, and postcolonial struggle authentically belong in global conversations. It affirms that what our great- and our grandparents endured, what our parents navigated, and what many of us still negotiate daily, are not provincial experiences but part of the modern world's making.

This idea echoes the thinking of the Palestine-born scholar Edward Said, who drawing on what the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci told us, that we all carry an inventory of historical memories. These inherited traces shape identity long before we speak or write. In Dabydeen's work, that Caribbean inventory: slavery, indentureship, migration, loss, humour, endurance, has been transformed into literature of global consequence.

The Nobel nomination, then, does not simply honour a great writer. It acknowledges the histories he carries into his work. It validates the memories embedded in our diasporic families who crossed oceans seeking survival and opportunity, often without the luxury of imagining that their stories would one day be read as world literature.

But this moment also asks something of our diaspora itself. Recognition should not end with applause. It should lead to engagement. We must read, teach, circulate, and discuss the works that emerge from our own historical experience. Cultural legitimacy does not survive on symbolic victories alone; it depends on our community sustaining and valuing our own intellectual production.

Too often, postcolonial success has been measured by distance from origins; by how effectively one sheds provincial associations in pursuit of cosmopolitan acceptance. Dabydeen's career suggests another model: global presence anchored in return, engagement without abandonment. His continued intellectual and emotional investment in Guyana demonstrates that success abroad need not mean detachment from our homelands.

Whether the Nobel committee ultimately awards the prize in October matters as much as what it has triggered in us. A writer shaped by Caribbean histories has entered the world's highest literary conversation on his own terms. A voice incipient with its traces, formed in Berbice, speaks in arenas once closed to these narratives from the margin.

For our diaspora, this is a reminder that our experiences, long treated as peripheral, are in fact central to the modern story. Our migrations, struggles, and endurance are not marginal footnotes. They are part of the narrative that continues to shape our contemporary world.

Dabydeen's nomination is, therefore, not simply an honour bestowed upon one individual. It is an invitation to recognise the intellectual and cultural inheritance carried by us as a Caribbean people wherever we land in this world.

And it quietly affirms what many among us have always known: our Caribbean diaspora was never on the margins of history; only of its telling.

Deepening Caribbean solidarity beyond BHM in February

The Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association was born from a desire for self-identification and the need for allyship. In 2020, amid the pandemic, we were witnessing an awakening on the streets in America. The pain and the despair of the Black community gained a renewed voice.

And with the Black community's call for racial justice, many non-Black individuals had to reflect on how we would demonstrate our support. For those of us in the Indo-Caribbean community, we have an intimate relationship with Afro/Black communities.



Ryan Singh

When our ancestors crossed the Kali Pani (dark waters) and arrived in the Caribbean, they were met by newly-freed enslaved Africans. This period would be the genesis of modern Caribbean culture, a demographic rearrangement, and a lasting evolution in racial interactions between peoples of different continental origins.

Within the Indo-Caribbean community, Black (Afro-Caribbean) people are not strangers; they are our relatives, friends, neighbours, coworkers, and partners in shared spaces. The Afro-Caribbean presence has always been central to the formation and history of Indo-Caribbean identity.

Following the abolition of slavery in 1834, Caribbean colonies sought alternative sources of labour. While emancipation marked a defining moment of freedom and resistance for enslaved Africans, it also set in motion the migration of South Asian indentured workers, an event that would profoundly shape the future of the Indo-Caribbean community.

This moment in history laid the foundation for the modern Caribbean, where people of African and South Asian descent form the majority. It also created conditions for shared spaces, cultural exchange, and interdependent communities across the region.

That said, the relationship between these communities has not always been harmonious. Periods of division, mistrust, and conflict have interrupted efforts toward solidarity, and genuine unity remains a work in progress.

As a Canadian, my relationship to race is informed by a different social and historical context, and I acknowledge that I am removed from the lived realities of racial tensions in places like Guyana. From a distance, calls for unity may sound simple, but true unity can only emerge through honest engagement with history, and with one another.

It is essential to recognise the immense suffering, resilience, and resistance of enslaved Africans before the arrival of South Asian indentured labourers. The enduring impacts of slavery continue to shape social and economic realities today.

Despite generations of progress, Black communities remain disproportionately affected by racism, discrimination, and vio-

lence. These realities demand more than acknowledgement, but they require action.

Indo-Caribbean people have seen the consequences of racial division firsthand. With that understanding comes responsibility. We must actively challenge anti-Black attitudes within our own spaces, and work intentionally to confront and dismantle anti-Black racism.

Black history is not separate from Indo-Caribbean history; it is foundational to it. The Indo-Caribbean community exists because of, alongside, and within Black history, and our development is inseparable from the Afro-Caribbean experience.

Recognition should not be limited to the month of February. Our shared histories and lived connections should move us toward deeper solidarity and sustained allyship throughout the year.

Embracing our Indo-Caribbean identity means fully engaging with our shared past. While we cannot undo historical harm, we can learn from it, and commit ourselves to building a future that does not repeat the mistakes of the past.

In the Canadian context, Black History Month is an opportunity for racialised communities to reflect, learn, and take meaningful action in solidarity with Black Canadians.

Recognition goes beyond celebration; it requires an honest engagement with history, and an understanding of how the legacy of slavery, colonialism, and systemic racism continues to shape lived experiences today.

Recognition also means acknowledging shared struggles while respecting differences. While many racialised communities face discrimination, anti-Black racism has distinct roots and impacts that deserve specific attention.

Standing in solidarity includes challenging stereotypes, addressing anti-Black attitudes within our own communities, and speaking out when Black people experience injustice.

Supporting Black-led organisations, businesses, and cultural initiatives is another meaningful way to show commitment beyond symbolic gestures.

Advocacy, allyship, and accountability should extend beyond February and into everyday actions.

Ultimately, recognising Black History Month is about fostering understanding, empathy, and collective responsibility. By learning from Black history and amplifying Black voices, racialised communities, including the Indo-Caribbean community, can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable Canada.

In fact, our close association with the Afro-Caribbean community should give us further cause to ensure that we further the purpose of Black History Month, and we should be at the forefront of true allyship.

Gardens, scarecrows, and vigilance germinate after empire

It appears that understanding the past takes root underground early, that in our young lives someone plants a seed, pats down the disturbed ground and walks away; then the decades roll us along like tumbleweeds, slowing down in our later years where we discover what had germinated had been growing with meaning all this time.

Ma never knew she was planting these seeds in me; for her, gardening was about survival in ensuring that her pigeon peas, corn, and ochro germinated; in her bodi snaking its way on trellises woven from bamboos cut by the river's bank.



Romeo Kaseram

But while she was bent over her garden, she was also sowing in her struggle to survive seeds of discovery in a boy growing up in the afterlife of empire, in a place where crops were harvested and shipped abroad, leaving behind a strip of burnt-out soil for gardening in the inexorable creep of sugar canes.

Back then, gardening with Ma meant a lengthy interval between hunger and her slaving over the *chulha* cooking *bhagi* she had planted and picked. Only later did I understand with her gardening she was teaching me to fish. For in my time growing up in the homeland, gardening, like foraging among the fruit trees, were not pastimes, but fruitless attempts to satiate inheritances of hunger, a legacy passed down in lands exhausted by foreigners now enjoying our prosperity in their far off homes.

Ma's planting began with the solemnity of prayer, the seeds nestled in her clasped palms, each one put into the ground like an offering to the gods. The smoothening of the earth, her palms gently patting down the disturbed dirt, was similar to her gossamer fingertips brushing my forehead with her blessing after tucking me into bed.

But even then subsistence gardens in our colonial afterlives had to be defended, the newly-sown grains of corn vulnerable to rapacious, pecking avian appetites. No sooner had Ma lifted up her aching back than the blackbirds swooped in, sharp-eyed opportunists, similar veterans of scarcity and privation, tilting their heads with scrutiny, their calls like rusted hinges grinding on squeaking gates, their jaundiced eyes mapping out pathways to Ma's planted seeds.

Threaten Ma's garden, the gateway to supplementing her family's meal, and her hackles raised, eyes narrowed, brows knitted, and both lips grew tight as if pulled by drawstrings.

If the blackbirds' response to Ma's outrage was cussing, she out-cussed them, their conspiratorial laughter animating the limber bamboos so they bobbed in rhythmic accompaniment on their perches. What followed was a theatre of call and response across the river's laughter, the warfare similar to the verbal altercation between two village wives divided by more than the border of a hibiscus fence.

It came to pass that Ma sought out sagely, village advice against the marauding blackbirds, out of which emerged the most malevolent scarecrow ever to haunt the history of subsistence agriculture in the homeland.

Thorny brambles formed its skeletal limbs, the thorns poking out from under an epidermis of frayed brown crocus sugar bags like a porcupine armoured and ready for warfare. For its single cyclops' eye, a lone indigo-blue bottle impaled on a lengthy stick stared across the river, this optical anomaly being a Milk of Magnesia bottle, which unlike its contents that once soothed stomachs, glinted with an unsettling vigilance whenever the bamboos shuddered with its weight of subdued blackbirds.

Too late after empire had left, this scarecrow stood tilted on one leg at the centre of Ma's garden, a late-in-coming guardian against theft, appropriation, and pillage where everything valuable had already been stripped, packaged, and shipped away.

After Ma's gossamer benediction, before being lifted up into the cloudiness of sleep, my roaming imagination took me to the garden for reassurance that the scarecrow was still immobilised and anchored, that this unrelenting sentinel had not uprooted its moorings to intimidate the germinating corn, before hobbling away to sow greater chaos in our already turbulent world.

Days before, after Ma's patient wait, watering, and watching, the seeds germinated, tiny tongues of sprouts pushing out of the dirt to lick the warm sunlight. By now the blackbirds had grown cautious, the long arm that was the shadow of the scarecrow lengthening across the garden as the day aged, crossing the river into the evening where it shook its fists menacingly upward from among the knotted roots of the bamboos.

Today, the memory returns when young seedlings finally sprouted; but something else took root, with Ma's scarecrow sowing a seed in me that all would not be well in the world, not with this wakeful, watchful figure, wandering free.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication. Letters to be published will be edited where necessary. Publisher: Harry Ramkhalawan Editor: Romeo Kaseram Columnists/Writers/Photographers: Kamil Ali, Dwarka Lakhan, Dhanpal Narine, Ryan Singh, Nalini Mohabir, Ramesh Ramkalawan, Russell Lutchman, Hinano Beekho. Contact Information: Indo Caribbean World Inc. 312 Brownridge Drive, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5X1 (905) 738-5005; indocaribbeanworld@gmail.com Website: www.indocaribbeanworld.com

# TT's trade policy needs to be urgently recalibrated with experience, precision

Dear Editor,

Trinidad and Tobago is facing an undeniable foreign exchange crisis, rising unemployment, and visible contraction across retail, manufacturing and services. Yet trade policy continues to be applied in a way that worsens, rather than stabilises, the situation.

Measures such as increased gas prices to manufacturers are already feeding directly into higher consumer prices. While these are described as not being taxes, the public experiences them exactly as such through reduced purchasing power, shrinking demand, and lost jobs.

Across the economy, the warning signs are flashing. Long-established businesses are cutting back, retail spaces are hollowing out, and confidence is evaporating. This mirrors the pattern seen before major institutional collapse in the past.

At the same time, foreign exchange continues to leak through unchecked channels, luxury imports, online purchases, and

unrestricted vehicle inflows, while ordinary citizens bear the brunt of restrictions. Trade policy must include vehicle quotas, a strict negative list for luxury goods, seasonal controls on non-essential food imports, and tighter regulation of online foreign exchange spending. Anything less is policy drift disguised as management.

Nationals do not need reassurance; we need correction. People feel this crisis daily: at the supermarket, at the workplace, and in shuttered businesses. Bureaucratic hurdles only deepen frustration and signal a government out of touch with economic reality.

Trade policy is now actively contributing to hardship. If it is not urgently recalibrated with experience and precision, the damage will not be theoretical or temporary. It will be structural, and it will be remembered as a failure of leadership at a moment when the country needed clarity, discipline, and courage.

Gordon Laughlin, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Lineup outside a TT bank

## Budget 2026 meets the needs of Guyana's vulnerable

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank Guyana's Minister of Finance Dr Ashni Singh and the Government of Guyana for the 2026 budget that meets the needs of our most vulnerable citizens: young children, people with disabilities, and the elderly.

The 2026 Budget is not just about numbers and predictions. As President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali stated, "Budget 2026 is positioned with the people at the centre. The steps are meant to have the biggest effect on people and improve their quality of life."

President Ali's words show that development needs to be felt at the level of the home and community.

I was also happy to hear President Ali say Budget 2026 includes all members of the Guyanese population. Older people often feel forgotten, but Budget 2026 shows that our health, dignity, and well-being are still important as Guyana moves forward.

The latest budget's plans for those with disabilities and chil-

dren with special needs are also commendable. President Ali said that the main problem remains access, and made it clear the government is dealing with this directly.

Budget 2026 delivers tangible support for vulnerable groups through a range of targeted measures, including an increase in the Old Age Pension to G \$46,000 per month, providing pensioners with a steadier income to cope with rising living costs.

It also has annual transportation grants for pensioners and schoolchildren, and an increase in the *Because We Care* cash grant, and the expansion of public assistance, extending vital support to the most financially vulnerable households.

I am happy Budget 2026 is revealing a society that cares is one that looks out for its most vulnerable members. Budget 2026 makes us sure that the government is not only in charge of the economy, but also looking out for the health, dignity, and inclusion of all Guyanese.

Brian Azore, Guyana, via email.



Ashni Singh

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# Use the Integrity Commission Act

Dear Editor,

Recently the leader of the WIN party, Azruddin Mohamed made allegations of corruption against two ministers of the current PPP government of Guyana. The allegations, with pictures of properties purportedly owned by the two ministers, were widely publicised in Guyana's national and social media.

Both ministers responded with denials of corruption, and pointed out that they have complied with the requirements for disclosure of all assets and liabilities in compliance with the Integrity Commission Act.

I recall that around 1970, Eusi Kwayana, who was concerned about corruption in government, requested an investigation by the Office of the Ombudsman of two ministers of the then government.

At the time, the Ombudsman was legally empowered to conduct such investigations. The investigation absolved one minister, but found the other guilty. The latter was then removed from office and given an ambassadorial post abroad.

I do not know if the position of Ombudsman still exists and/or has the same responsibilities as earlier. However, I am aware of the existence of the Integrity Commission Act, Laws of Guyana, Chapter 19:12. Under this Act, certain categories of individuals, including government ministers, are required to make annual declarations of all assets and liabilities of themselves and their immediate family members.

A Code of Conduct for the noted categories of individuals is also included in the Act. Failure to comply with the full disclosure

requirements of the Act as well as violation of the Code of Conduct could result in a fine of G \$25,000, and a jail term of between six to 12 months.

Regarding the declarations made by individuals, the Commission is required to "receive, examine and retain" all documents filed. It is also required to "verify or determine the accuracy of financial affairs as stated in the declarations".



**Azruddin Mohamed**

Of relevance in this ongoing saga is Section 28 (1) of the above Act which states "any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that any person in public life is guilty of breach of any provision of the Code of Conduct may make a complaint in writing to the Commission". Subsections (a) to (d) outline the information to be included in the complaint.

I believe most Guyanese would like to know the truth of these allegations. If the two ministers are guilty of corruption, they should be held accountable.

Instead of using the media to make allegations, the leader of WIN party should take the legal route accorded by the Integrity Commission Act. However, in doing so, he should be mindful of Section 28 (3), which stipulates a penalty of G \$25,000 and two months imprisonment for any complaint that is "frivolous, mischievous or spiteful".

Is Section 28 (3) of the Act the reason for the leader of WIN and the leader of APNU making allegations in the media of ministerial corruption, but are unwilling to file complaints with the Integrity Commission?

**Harry Hergash, Toronto, via email.**



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# Guyana's Budget 2026 places nationals at the centre of development

**G**uyana's 2026 (G) \$1.558 trillion national budget does not offer any surprises. Rather, it builds on initiatives that have been in progress for several years now, and concurrently introduces a new phase of diversified growth aimed at creating more opportunities for accelerated job creation, income generation, and human capital development.

While the budget outlines a range of programs and initiatives, it falls short of providing implementation details on large scale programs. The overall aim is to enhance disposable incomes, ease cost of living pressures, and promote inclusive growth.

Presented under the theme *Putting People First*, the budget does not include any new taxes, but instead provides a range of tax relief measures. The budget is framed not as a ledger of macro targets, but as a blueprint for daily lived experiences. Every pillar is tied to tangible outcomes: better health, better schooling, safer and more affordable housing, reliable water and power, and thriving communities.

The implicit contract is that national wealth should translate into household well-being, and policy choices should be judged by their impact on ordinary people's lives.

Across its pillars, the budget places the human being at the centre of development. Massive investments in health, education, housing, water, sanitation, and community infrastructure are not framed merely as capital projects, but as instruments to raise quality of life, expand opportunity, and reduce inequality.

The emphasis on world-class hospitals, modern schools, expanded housing schemes, and reliable utilities reflects a deliberate strategy to convert national wealth into household well-being.

Equally important is the focus on incomes and cost-of-living relief. Continued tax reductions, public-sector wage growth, cash grants, pensions, and targeted social programmes demonstrate a commitment to protecting purchasing power, and ensuring that growth is broadly shared.

These measures are complemented by job creation through infrastructure, energy expansion, agriculture, and services, ensuring that dignity through work remains a core national value.

The budget also looks to the future by investing heavily in education, skills training, digitalisation, and youth development, preparing citizens to participate meaningfully in a modern, diversified economy.

At the same time, it strengthens resilience through climate adaptation, food security, and prudent management of oil revenues via the Natural Resource Fund, safeguarding today's gains for tomorrow's generations.

In substance and in spirit, Budget 2026 demonstrates that *Putting People First* is not a slogan, but a governing philosophy translated into policy, programmes, and priorities that place the welfare, dignity, and opportunity of every Guyanese at the heart of national development.

In the quest to achieve its objectives, the budget announced several key measures. Among them are: In its ongoing efforts to accelerate economic diversification, the government will designate a number of areas as Special Development Zones that will benefit from targeted fiscal incentives.

This initiative complements the government's wider push to enhance the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector, including the impending reduction in the cost of electricity, which will significantly lower production costs

and improve the viability of large-scale and export-oriented manufacturing operations.

The specific areas were not announced, but the budget stated that the locations will be identified based on a strategy to promote geographically balanced development, taking into account proximity to raw materials and connectivity to domestic markets. This approach is intended to incentivise higher levels of private investments in strategic locations.

In keeping with the country's food security agenda, the government will remove the corporate taxes on agriculture and agro-processing businesses. This will increase retained earnings and enable greater investments to boost production and productivity. This measure represents another step in the transformation of Guyana's agriculture sector,

with the objective of increasing diversification and ramping up production scale.

In support of the forestry value added sub-sector, the government will expand the list of products eligible for export allowance to include timber value added products. This will enhance the competitiveness of qualifying exporters and lower their effective costs by reducing their tax payable, thereby allowing them to price their goods more competitively in international markets.

The government will remove the Value Added Tax on locally made furniture including doors, moulding, and beds. This is intended to boost local industries on their path to sustainability and competing regionally. The VAT will also be removed on locally produced jewelry.

In positioning Guyana as a niche tourism market for destination weddings, the government will remove the 14 days residency requirement for destination weddings. This measure is expected to expand tourism-related economic activity to the benefit of the hospitality industry.

In alignment with its agenda of building safer communities, and to augment national efforts to combat crime, the removal of duty and VAT on security equipment was proposed, including security cameras and alarm systems. This is expected at the community level to enhance crime deterrents and detection, bolster situational awareness, enhance collaboration between citizens and the Guyana Police Force, and to allow for swift identification of incidents and response time.

The government recognises that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a critical role in creating employment opportunities and supporting community-based economic development. In recognition of the need to expand access to finance, Budget 2026 allocates (US) \$100 million to be injected into the Guyana Development Bank. This institution will provide SMEs, young entrepreneurs, women, and persons living with disabilities, with access up to \$3 million in micro-credit loans at zero interest, with zero collateral requirement for targeted investments in specified sectors.

Additionally, the government will embrace a co-investment model, effectively sharing the financial risks, providing support so that SMEs may be able to access up to an additional \$7 million at preferential interest rates from participating commercial banks.

The government will extend to the commercial banks similar fiscal concessions as are granted for low-income housing. This forms part of a wider initiative to strengthen the ecosystem for SME growth in Guyana.

In support of housing development, the

budget announced a further increase in the low-income mortgage ceiling from \$20 million to \$30 million, which will make housing loans at commercial bank more affordable to borrowers. Previously, the low-income mortgage ceiling at commercial banks was increased from \$8 million to \$20 million.

In addition, the low-income mortgage ceiling window of \$30 million will also be extended to approved insurance companies that offer housing loans under similar arrangements that apply to commercial banks.

The budget announced a further increase of the Because We Care (BWC) Grant to \$60,000 to benefit 206,000 children in public and private schools, placing an additional \$2 billion into households with school children. Since its restoration in 2020, the government administration has incrementally increased the BWC Grant initially from \$10,000 in 2014 to \$50,000 in 2025.

In keeping with its 2025 manifesto promise, the government announced the introduction of an annual Transportation Support Grant amounting to \$20,000 per child and totalling \$4.1 billion of additional disposable income to parents.

As a result, the BWC grant of \$60,000, the uniform voucher allowance of \$5,000, and the Annual Transportation Grant of \$20,000 will aggregate to a total transfer of \$85,000 per child, amounting to \$17.5 billion for the year.

In support of equitable access to quality education, the government will maintain the policy of paying for up to eight CSEC and CAPE subjects per child in public and private schools. This intervention will benefit almost 14,000 students, increasing disposable income of parents by over \$850 million.

The budget announced that with effect from January 1, 2026, the Old Age Pension (OAP) will be increased from \$41,000 to \$46,000 per

month. In 2020, the OAP stood at \$20,500 per month, and by the end of the government's first term, the OAP was doubled to \$41,000 per month. The government will also introduce an annual Transportation Support Grant of \$20,000 to every OAP pensioner.

The budget announced that with effect from January 1, 2026, public assistance will be further increased from \$22,000 to \$25,000 per month. The government has more than doubled public assistance, increasing it from \$9,000 in 2020 to \$22,000 at the end of 2025.

Citizens aged 18 and older will once again benefit from a National Cash Grant of \$100,000 in 2026.

The income tax threshold was increased to \$140,000 monthly, with effect from year of income 2026. This will result in the removal of 5,000 persons from the tax net whilst adding over \$2 billion in disposable income to workers. Previously, the government doubled the income tax threshold from \$65,000 in 2020 to \$130,000 in 2025.

Guyana's 2026 Budget is ambitious and socially oriented, blending short-term support with long-term development aims. It continues a trajectory of growth fueled by oil and gas revenues while trying to spread prosperity more widely through cash transfers, tax relief, infrastructure spending, and human capital investments. Its success will depend heavily on effective implementation, transparency, and diversification beyond hydrocarbons.

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



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# President Ali: Budget 2026 opens up pathways for diaspora

— Guyana's record-breaking Budget 2026 is being positioned as both a domestic development blueprint and a diaspora-facing economic invitation. President Dr Irfaan Ali says the G\$1.558 trillion fiscal plan creates concrete pathways for overseas Guyanese to invest, co-invest, or return home to participate in expanding sectors such as healthcare, childcare, infrastructure, energy, and education, as the country converts rapid economic growth into people-centered development.

**Georgetown** – Guyana's President Irfaan Ali has called on members of the global Guyanese diaspora to take advantage of investment and professional opportunities outlined in Budget 2026, describing the fiscal plan as a gateway for overseas Guyanese to participate directly in the country's transformation.

His statement was made following presentation of Guyana's largest-ever national budget, valued at G\$1.558 trillion, which was laid in the National Assembly on January 26. The 2026 allocation represents a 307 percent increase over the G\$383.1 billion budget presented in 2021, and is being advanced under the theme *Putting the People First*.

The scale of the budget is underpinned by strong macro-economic performance. In 2025, Guyana's overall economy expanded by 19.3 percent, while the non-oil economy grew by 14.3 percent, reflecting broad-based growth across multiple sectors. The government has said Budget 2026 is designed to convert this sustained expansion into tangible improvements in livelihoods, community services, and national infrastructure.

Presenting the budget, Ashni Singh, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, said the fiscal plan focuses on translating economic momentum into investments that modernise the country while directly benefiting citizens at home and abroad.

Following the budget presentation, Ali expanded on how these allocations intersect with diaspora engagement during a roundtable discussion, noting that Budget 2026 deliberately creates entry points for overseas Guyanese for both those who are seeking to return, and for those preferring to invest from abroad.

A key pillar of the budget is the expansion of childcare and elderly care services, sectors where Ali said many overseas Guyanese already possess professional training and certification.



Irfaan Ali

"You have many Guyanese over there who have worked all their life and they have the certification in elderly care. Here's the opportunity to come here now," Ali said.

He added, "The government will even co-invest with you. You have the opportunity now to have tax-free earning because we're removing the corporate tax to build out those facilities: care for the elderly, children care facility, owning local hospitals – no corporate tax."

Budget 2026 provides for the removal of corporate tax on companies offering childcare and elderly care services, alongside G\$1.5 billion in government support for co-investment in these facilities. Companies benefiting from the programme will be required to agree to capped service rates, a condition the government says ensures affordability while encouraging private-sector participation.

Ali stressed that the initiative is aimed not only at returning professionals, but also at investors seeking socially impactful ventures aligned with national priorities.

For diaspora members who are not yet ready to relocate, Ali said Budget 2026 identifies investment opportunities that can be accessed remotely through structured partnerships and consortiums.

"In Budget 2026, we are pointing to specific initiatives where you don't need to come back now. You can invest in it and earn," he said, pointing to projects such as a fertiliser plant, a

gas bottling plant, and other ventures being developed through consortium-based models. He added that the planned expansion of Guyana's local content framework would further widen opportunities for diaspora investors.

Ali repeatedly encouraged collective investment, urging overseas Guyanese to pool capital and expertise rather than acting individually.

"Take for example, we launched this project for hinterland airstrips to finance and build," he said, further noting, "You may have a group or consortium who can come and work with the local contractors to provide the financing and build the airport at the interest rate. Many persons in the diaspora will tell you they're managing funds."

He cited the proposed development of Lethem and its new airport as another example where diaspora-led consortiums could play a transformative role, drawing comparisons with diaspora-driven development models in India, Southeast Asia, and parts of Africa.

"Many of their large transformative projects are driven by a consortium of the diaspora coming together, wanting to take the risk, and making a calculated decision that this is a business," Ali said, adding, "It will have risks, but we have to invest in that risk."

Beyond investment, Ali said Guyana's expanding healthcare and education sectors also position the country as an attractive destination for diaspora members seeking to return to work, study, or access medical care.

Said Ali: "...it's the opportunities that are here, whether you're a doctor, nurse"; additionally, "Yes, the salary might not be where you are over there, [but] quality of life has a value; the propensity to save has a value. And we know that it's only going to get better."

On housing, he acknowledged limits in public-sector capacity, advising returning Guyanese to plan for private-sector solutions.

"We can't service all of the diaspora housing requirement from the Ministry of Housing," he said, noting that renting before purchasing may be necessary.

"Just like they went overseas, they have to appreciate the fact that when you return home, you have to buy from the private sector... just like you would have migrated and went through a phase of development," he said.

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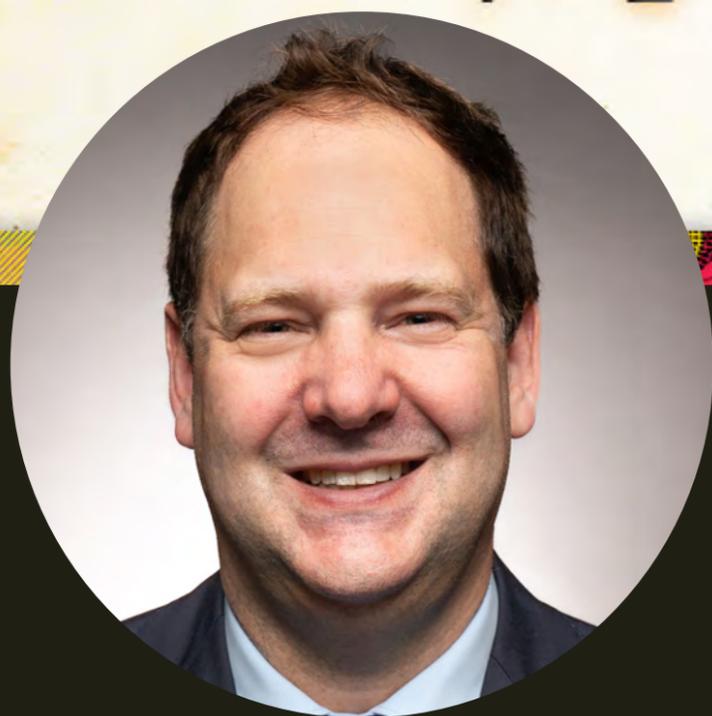
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# BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Hon.

**John Zerucelli**

Member of Parliament - Etobicoke North



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Dr Terrance Drew (left) with Kamla Persad-Bissessar in TT last week

## TT reaffirms Caricom commitment

— Despite earlier criticism of Caricom as an “unreliable partner,” Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has reaffirmed Trinidad and Tobago’s commitment to the regional bloc, stressing unity alongside the need for reform.

**Port-of-Spain** – Kamla Persad-Bissessar said in Trinidad and Tobago’s Parliament last week that her country remains one of Caricom’s largest contributors, and continues to invest in the region’s collective development, even as she maintains that the organisation requires urgent transformation.

Her comments were delivered during an official visit to Trinidad and Tobago by Caricom chair and St Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Terrance Drew, who led a regional delegation to Port of Spain.

Addressing lawmakers, Persad-Bissessar said her government shared the spirit of Drew’s New Year’s Day message upon assuming the Caricom chairmanship, which called for cohesion and collective strength among member states.

“As a government, we share the warm sentiments expressed by Prime Minister Drew in his New Year’s message to the community upon assuming chairmanship of Caricom,” she said. Quoting Drew directly, she added: “Our collective strength is greater than any single issue before us.”

At the same time, Persad-Bissessar reiterated her long-held view that reform within the bloc is unavoidable.

“While Trinidad and Tobago believes that Caricom is in urgent need of some transformation, we remain committed to Caribbean unity. I repeat, we remain committed to Caribbean unity,” she told Parliament.

She added, “My government looks forward to engaging with Prime Minister Drew and his delegation in productive discussions on issues facing the region. We will both ensure that the work of Caricom remains relevant to the people of Caricom.”

Persad-Bissessar acknowledged the upcoming Caricom Heads of Government meeting scheduled for later this month in St Kitts and Nevis, but stopped short of confirming her attendance, or announcing the composition of Trinidad and Tobago’s delegation.

Following the parliamentary exchange,

Persad-Bissessar and Drew held a private meeting at the Red House. Foreign Affairs Minister Sean Sobers and members of Drew’s delegation were also in attendance.

In a one-minute video later posted to the Prime Minister’s social media account, Persad-Bissessar described the discussions as “very encouraging”, and said she was “very impressed” with Drew’s approach to addressing concerns within Caricom.

Thanking Persad-Bissessar for the hospitality extended to him and his delegation, Drew said his priority as chair is to strengthen unity across the regional grouping.

“As you know, I’m the chair, as you would have mentioned, and I am seeking to reach out to all of our members so that we can continue to build Caricom to stronger and more stable and secured heights that would benefit all of us on the principles of respect and understanding that each of us is sovereign within the framework,” Drew said.

Persad-Bissessar first described Caricom as an unreliable partner in October, responding to questions about Trinidad and Tobago’s isolated stance in support of US operations targeting drug cartels in the region. She repeated the characterisation in December, referring to the bloc as “dysfunctional and self-destructive”.

Those remarks followed a statement issued by the Bureau of the Conference of Heads of Government of Caribbean Community, which called for engagement with the US after President Donald Trump announced further restrictions on the entry of nationals from Haiti, Dominica, and Antigua and Barbuda.

Separately, speaking with the media in Trinidad and Tobago, Drew dismissed suggestions of regional suspicion surrounding the country’s alleged role in the detention of former Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro by the US on January 3. He said Trinidad and Tobago remains an important member of Caricom, and that no accusations have been raised against it by fellow states.

Drew also confirmed that he had requested a meeting with Persad-Bissessar and expressed hope that she would attend the Caricom 50th anniversary meeting in Basseterre, St Kitts. He said discussions at the leaders’ caucus would be confidential, allowing heads of government to openly ventilate concerns facing the region.



# Ask Jay...

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## THE MORTGAGE THAT WOULDN’T SHRINK

**H**ow a variable-rate mortgage quietly extended to 50 years – and what every Ontario homeowner needs to know.  
“I used to think paying my mortgage meant I was making progress. I didn’t realise I was actually falling behind.”

He ordered a coffee he didn’t particularly want. Medium, black, more out of habit than desire. Across the small café table, Mark slid his phone towards me and sighed. On the screen was a number that didn’t make sense – not to him, and not to most people the first time they saw it.

That’s higher than when I purchased the house.

Mark wasn’t a gambler. He wasn’t reckless. He wasn’t chasing the market. He was the kind of homeowner politicians like to mention in speeches – steady job, bills paid on time, responsible. And yet, here he was, staring at a mortgage balance that had increased despite years of faithful payments.

Back in 2021, Mark did what almost everyone else did. He chose a variable-rate mortgage. Rates were extremely low, and everyone claimed that variable was “historically cheaper”. The Bank of Canada assured stability, while brokers talked about flexibility. Friends boasted about the money they were saving.

The payment suited his life perfectly, and for a while, it looked like he had cracked the system. Then, rates started rising. At first, he barely noticed. The payment remained the same. No worrying emails came through. Life went on. That’s the risk. Nothing seems wrong – until it is.

Here’s the part no one clearly explained over coffee, at the bank, or during the excitement of buying a home: when rates go up and your variable payment stays the same, sometimes it no longer covers the interest. The unpaid interest doesn’t just disappear; it gets added to your mortgage. Your loan increases, your amortisation period lengthens, and your equity quietly diminishes. Mark didn’t miss payments. He didn’t default. He simply stopped paying attention – because no one told him he needed to.

Mark uncovered the truth when he decided to sell. A new job opportunity came up. The timing wasn’t perfect, but it was good enough. He figured he would sell, keep some equity, and move forward. Then the lawyer called. His amortisation had stretched to nearly 50 years. Fifty. Years. After commissions, fees, and the current mortgage balance, there wasn’t a cheque waiting for him at closing. There was a bill.

“I thought paying my mortgage meant I was moving forward,” he told me later, stirring a coffee that had gone cold. “I didn’t know I was standing still.”

Mark’s story is becoming more common. I’ve seen it with families upgrading, downsizers planning retirement, and sellers confident they have ample equity. All of them were surprised. Some ended up trapped. If you’re on a variable mortgage, especially one taken out between 2020 and 2022, your equity might not be what you believe it is. Before listing your home, verify your current mortgage balance and review your amortisation schedule. Assumed equity is not guaranteed.

This market didn’t prove that variable mortgages are bad; it proved they require attention. Variable mortgages work if you increase payments when rates rise, monitor your numbers carefully, and can manage uncertainty. Fixed-rate mortgages succeed if you value predictability, need peace of mind, and want to avoid surprises when life changes. There’s no prize for choosing the “cheapest” mortgage, but there is real value in certainty.

If reading this makes your chest feel tight, good. That means you’ve caught it early. Take the time to review your amortisation, ask if negative amortisation has occurred, and adjust your payments if possible. Talk to your lender before renewal or sale. Hope is reassuring, but it doesn’t balance the books.

Homeownership used to seem passive. Pay the mortgage, watch the value grow, repeat. That era is gone. Mortgages now demand attention – just like careers, health, and money always do. Mark didn’t lose his home, but he lost time. And in real estate, time is the one thing you can’t get back. So if you’re having your coffee right now, do yourself a favour. Before the cup is empty, check your amortisation.

**A Lesson for Buyers:** If you’re purchasing in today’s Ontario market, Mark’s story provides a subtle warning. Variable-rate mortgages might look appealing, especially when rates are low, but they carry responsibilities many buyers overlook. Before committing, assess your comfort with uncertainty. Can you manage payments increasing? Are you ready to raise your payments to avoid negative amortisation?

Fixed-rate mortgages might cost a bit more upfront, but they offer peace of mind and predictable monthly payments – invaluable when life throws unexpected challenges. Ultimately, the lowest rate isn’t always the best option: the mortgage is that you can comfortably manage – without losing sleep.

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## Pan, dance, awards ignite wintry night

**M**ovement, memory, and mastery in pan and rhythm filled the air when Pan Arts Network staged its 28th annual *Snowflakes on Steel* concert before a sold-out audience at the Chinese Cultural Centre in Scarborough on January 24.

The signature winter showcase unfolded as a richly layered and high-energy musical journey, celebrating the enduring artistry and evolving power of steelpan music in Canada.

The audience was swept along by vibrant performances from *Panatics Steelband Network*, *Gemini Pan Groove*, *Afropan Steel Orchestra*, *Souls of Steel Orchestra*, and *Pan Fantasy*, each ensemble bringing its own tonal colour, tempo, and personality to the stage.

The evening's momentum was further ele-

vated by the kinetic and expressive choreography of the *Dance Caribe Performing Company*, seamlessly weaving movement into sound, while guest artist Olujimi La Pierre injected additional drive and dynamism into the performance arc.

Beyond the music, *Snowflakes on Steel* also served as a moment of recognition and reflection, honouring individuals whose dedication has shaped the pan movement over decades.

De Christo Bishop received the Pioneer in Pan Award, presented by Gail Christian, Consul General for Antigua and Barbuda. A Lifetime Award was bestowed on Everaldo Lewis, acknowledging his lasting contribution to the artform, while the Women in Pan Awards celebrated the leadership and impact of Sharon Gomez and Liane Charles.



*Snowflakes on Steel* saw an evening that captured celebration, community, and creativity. Photos by Russell Lutchman



# Celebrating Black History Month

This month, we celebrate the achievements of Black Canadians and their contributions to our community.

## JULIE DZEROWICZ

Member of Parliament for Davenport

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# Once sacred, rivers now weary, bearing weight of our wantonness, waste

By Dhanpaul Narine

It is argued that future wars between nations will be about the adequate supply of water. This is not science fiction, but is based on reality, given the current state of water availability worldwide. It is estimated that about four billion persons experience water scarcity for some part of the calendar month. It is further suggested that about 700 million persons could be displaced by the scarcity of water.

According to the United Nations, "Time is not on our side when it comes to dealing with the water shortage." Water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink. This famous line in the classic poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, shows that even in the midst of water people can get thirsty.

Water is an overlooked resource. We often take it for granted. We turn on the tap and expect it to flow. But water is much more than a household need. It powers nations, supports ecosystems, provides jobs, and produces food. The World Bank states that water-dependent sectors support around nearly two billion jobs.

One of the under-reported aspects of the recent conflict in Iran concerned the shortage of water. According to sources, "The Khuzestan Province has been a flash-point for protests due to acute water shortages, with demonstrators facing violent crackdowns by authorities." The shortage of water is so critical that officials have warned that Tehran, the capital, may have to be evacuated. An often-overlooked aspect of the supply of water is the relationship between river cleanliness and the preservation of water.

The pollution of rivers can result from industrial waste that are discharged by plants, as well as other pollutants. The US has over 250,000 rivers and they play a key role in supporting the health of the ecosystem.

In the developing world, the outlook for meeting Sustainable Goal 6, as outlined by the United Nations, remains doubtful. This Goal stated that sanitation and clean water for all would be provided by 2030. Scientists point out that in 2026 about two billion people rely on rivers as their primary source of drinking water. But there are threats to the health of rivers, despite the optimism in some quarters.

The fact is that rivers of the world are dying. They are poisoned by the most selfish of all the species, the handiwork of humankind itself. Each day, tons of waste matter are dumped in rivers. As the waterways groan and belch under the weight of garbage, official action takes the form of lip service. Communities suffer, and the planet gets closer to the day when the wheels will grind to a halt.

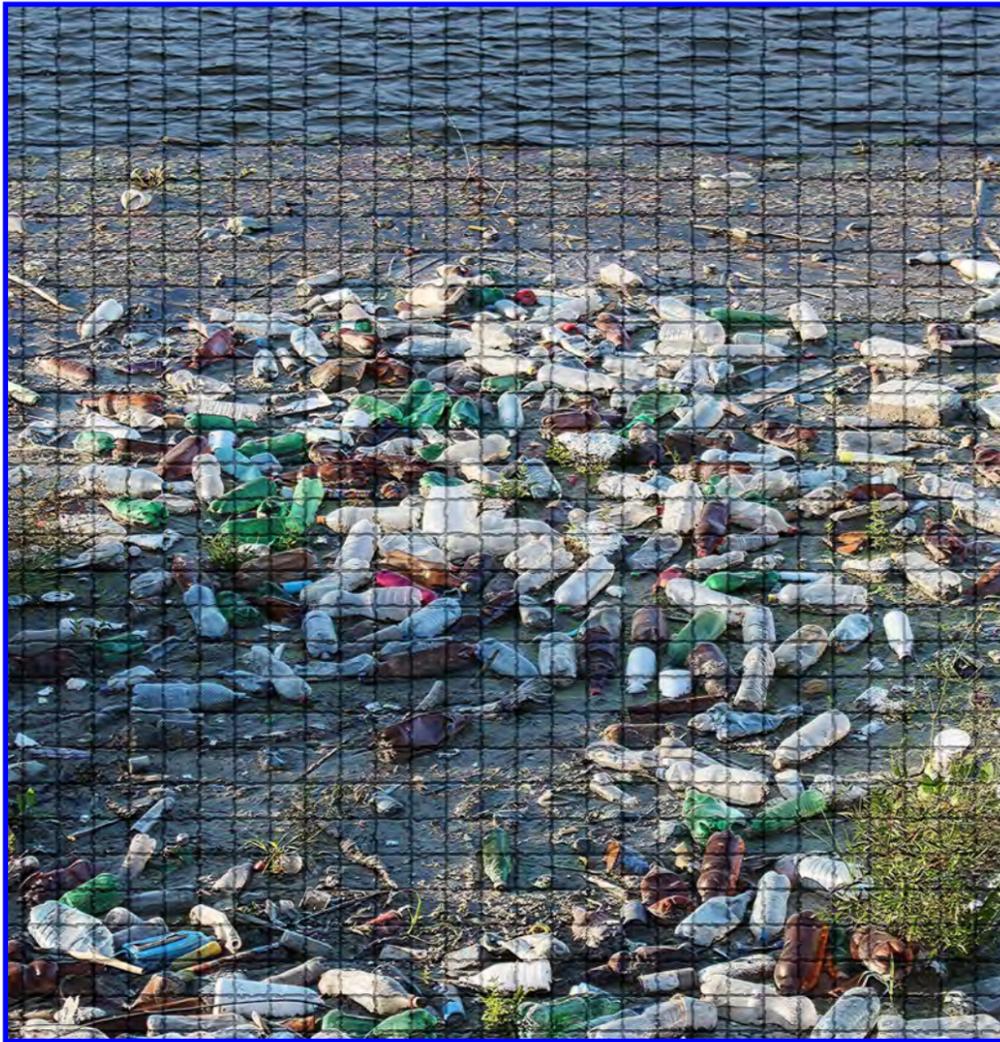
Ten years ago, the waters of *La Pasión River* in Guatemala were covered with dead and poisoned fish. It was found that the river was contaminated by Malathion, an agricultural insecticide that is said to be 100 times more poisonous than sewage. The community that is affected is Sayaxche, where palm oil plantations occupy large tracts of land.

That community has been described as an ecological disaster. The fishing industry points out that many fishermen "are embroiled in conflict and the *La Pasión River* has lost its crabs and *xixi* or blue fish".

The cause for the pollution has been placed on REPSA (*Reforestadora de Palma de Petén S.A.*) an African palm oil plant that is located upriver. Poverty has hit the area and a fisherman has summarised the feeling of the community. He said, "I only know how to fish. The poison that fell in the river nine months ago continues to harm us. We are all turning against each other and the fish is gone. But what's worse, we've lost our dignity."

The same can be said about the *Citarum* in Indonesia. This is the largest river in the country, and over 30 million residents rely on the river for agriculture, domestic, and personal use. But rapid industrialisation has meant the expansion of the textile industry. In 2020, it was estimated that over 200 textile factories were lining the banks of the *Citarum*. One report says that, "the dyes and chemicals used in the industrial process – lead, arsenic and mercury amongst them – are churned into the water, changing its colour and lending an acrid odour".

The *Citarum* is one of the most polluted rivers in the world, with dead fish and a carpet of debris and junk accounting for much of its contamination. China, too, is a major player in the pollution of its rivers. The United Nations reported that enormous stretches of its rivers cannot be used anymore, "either for



drinking, fishing, farming, or even in factories".

The first sign of civilisation in Northern China started around the *Yellow River*, but the river has become polluted in recent years. According to the River Conservation Committee, 4.3 billion tonnes of polluting effluent were tipped into the river recently.

It appears that the *Yellow River* is only one in a series of rivers that is being polluted in China. In 2013, Chinese farmers dumped 6,000 pig carcasses in the *Huangpu River*. A sample of the water found *porcine circovirus* that was caused by intestinal fluids, blood, and other pollutants from the dead pigs, and which "could alter the taste and color of tap water". By the end of 2013, the *Fuhe River* in China had problems of its own.

There were tons of poisoned fish in the river. This occurred as a result of the discharge of high levels of ammonia in the river by a local chemical plant. The samples indicated that the ammonia density was 196 milligrams per litre that was in excess of the national standard.

The *Niger Delta* is a recent newcomer to the horrors of pollution. The *Delta* is the biggest oil-producing region in Africa. Shell operates 5,000 kilometres of pipeline, and since 2007 it is said that there were at least 1,700 oil spills.

The situation in the *Niger Delta* is a classic case of the multinational claiming to follow the rules, but is in effect flouting them. In November 2015, the Nigerian Center for Human Rights and the Environment stated that, "the quality of life of people living surrounded by oil fumes, oil encrusted soil and rivers awash with crude oil is appalling, and has been for decades".

What has been the response of Shell to the criticisms? Shell says that it has addressed the oil spills, but it has not provided details. Amnesty International said in 2015 that certain areas remain "heavily polluted". It gave the example of Ogoniland, where the late Ken Saro-Wiwa led a mass movement against the military in his State. Saro-Wiwa was protesting against the pollution in the State, and was also calling for political independence.

The United Nations in a study concluded that "the Ogoni people live with pollution 365 days a year. Children born in Ogoniland soon sense oil pollution as the odour of hydrocarbons pervades the air day in, day out".

In Kerala, India, there is the statement that "a poisoned river means a dying population". Kerala is one of the most densely populated places in the world, with a population growth rate of 14 percent in 2010. The rivers of Kerala are said to be polluted from industrial and domestic waste. The industries discharge hazardous pollutants such as "phosphates, sulphides, ammonia, fluorides, heavy metals and insecticides into the downstream reaches of the river".

The industrial belt of Eloor is described as one of the world's toxic hot spots. A Greenpeace study shows that on an island in the *Periyar River*, unchecked pollution has resulted in diseases like cancer, congenital birth defects, bronchitis, asthma, and

stomach ulcers.

Brazil seems to have a non-policy towards its rivers. Many of them have been poisoned to accommodate the miners, much to the opposition of the native Indians. In November 2015, mud and iron ore residue were found in the *Rio Doce* and the water became brown.

The area is known for its humpback whales, dolphins, and turtles. Oxygen levels were reduced by 50 cubic meters; plant and animal life were devastated. This led Brazil's Environment Minister to call the spill "the worst environmental disaster in Brazil's history".

It is easy to think that the poisoned rivers occur only in poor countries. In the US, three million gallons of water were released by the Environmental Protection Agency in the *Animas River* in Colorado, turning it into a sickly orange colour. This occurred in the summer of 2015, and it was stated that the "lead level of the released water was at least 12,000 times higher than normal and also contained extremely high levels of beryllium, mercury, cadmium, iron, copper, zinc and arsenic".

This pollution has affected the life of the Navajo Nation; and what was disturbing was the fact that the slick of poison traveled to a reservoir in the *Colorado River*, and could potentially affect cities such as Las Vegas.

William Rivers Pitt concludes that "we are killing ourselves with chemicals, carelessness, and with greed. The greed dies hard even when the rivers have turned to soot and the tap water catches fire".

In Europe the situation is grim as well. *The New Scientist* reports, "Europe's rivers are awash with organic chemicals that can kill or subtly damage aquatic life".

The *Upper Tiza* was one of Europe's cleanest rivers, but a 40-kilometre flow of toxic cyanide "has wiped out the river's entire ecosystem – everything from microbes to otters". It is said that in terms of complete destruction the damage was more than Chernobyl.

Any discussion of pollution of rivers must take into account the *Ganges*. This river is worshipped by many Hindus as a goddess. It is exalted in movies and books for its powers of purification and absolution. There are pilgrims and other travelers that believe in the curative powers of *Ganga Jal*. This is the water from the river that is bottled and shipped to various places. But recently *Ganga Jal* has been replaced by "Ganda Jal".

Reports have described the *Ganges* as an environmental catastrophe. It is said that municipal waste is pumped directly in the river to become someone else's problem downstream. Organic waste that comprises food, trash, and human and animal remains, makes up 80 percent of the waste that is dumped in the *Ganges*. But there are also industrial pollutants that account for 15 percent of the deposits. This is particularly evident at Rishikesh, where raw sewage is dumped along with hydrochloric acid.

By the time the river reaches Calcutta, the water is fetid, and filled with toxins and diseases. It is estimated that there are 132 factories that include tap and dye manufacturers. Payal Sampat points out that "waterborne diseases such as viral hepatitis, dysentery, typhoid, cholera, gastro-enteritis plague communities up and down the *Ganga*".

The *Ganges* has nurtured the Indian civilisation, but the view in many circles is that while the river can take care of sins, it cannot handle the pollution. The *Ganges* is the sewer for millions. The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has earmarked the cleaning up of the *Ganges* as a priority project. The government will also do well to clean up the *Yamuna River*, which is said to be dying from industrial pollution and untreated waste. The *Yamuna* is described as the lifeline of Delhi.

It is estimated that each year mining companies dump over 200 million tons of hazardous waste into rivers worldwide. Polluting our rivers has to stop. Our rivers give life, and they need to be treated with kindness. A clean river restores beauty and balance to the ecology.

A number of solutions has been proposed to restore rivers. Governments need to implement policies to reduce industrial emissions and discharge. There is need to promote best practices in agriculture and to manage urban waste.

The role of the citizen cannot be underestimated. Clean-ups by the community and awareness exercises, together with the adoption of a green policy, will go a long way to secure clean rivers. There is need for activism with a passion that would campaign for the health of rivers.

# Guyana-born author David Dabydeen nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

## From Page 1

another Caribbean Nobel Prize lineage when he added, “We are probably one of the smallest countries to have someone nominated for a Nobel, apart from St Lucia.”

Dabydeen had in mind the late poet laureate Sir Derek Walcott. It was not an accidental recall, since both writers belong to a tradition that treats Caribbean life not as ethnographic curiosity, but as wholesome, world-historical experience rendered into language.

Yet even in that moment of global recognition, Dabydeen instinctively turned his gaze to the homeland he left behind, but which never left him.

“I’m just glad for Guyana,” he said, declaring, “I have been returning to Guyana two to three times a year since 1992, and everything I write is about Guyana, even though I left when I was a boy of 14.”

Therein is the architecture of his entire career: departure without erasure; migration without forgetting; cosmopolitanism without abandonment, but with recognition of deep roots.

...

Dabydeen was born in Berbice on December 9, 1955, into an Indo-Guyanese family with ancestral roots tracing back to Indentured labourers brought to British Guiana between 1838 and 1917 from India. His ancestry, like that of so many Caribbean families, is already a postcolonial archive: displacement layered upon displacement; survival braided with erasure and its concomitant silencing.

According to biographical records, his parents divorced while he was still a young boy. He grew up with his mother, Veronica Dabydeen, and his maternal grandparents in a household we have all experienced as a diaspora, one shaped by resilience, improvisation, and the unspoken pressures of colonial afterlife.

At age ten he won a scholarship to Queen’s College in Georgetown; at 13, he left Guyana to join his father, who had migrated to London in the UK.

It was a move that would rewire his imagination. A boy raised in New Amsterdam and schooled in Georgetown now found himself inside the metropolis of empire, not as tourist or conqueror, but as minor figure in a society still rehearsing its imperial afterlives.

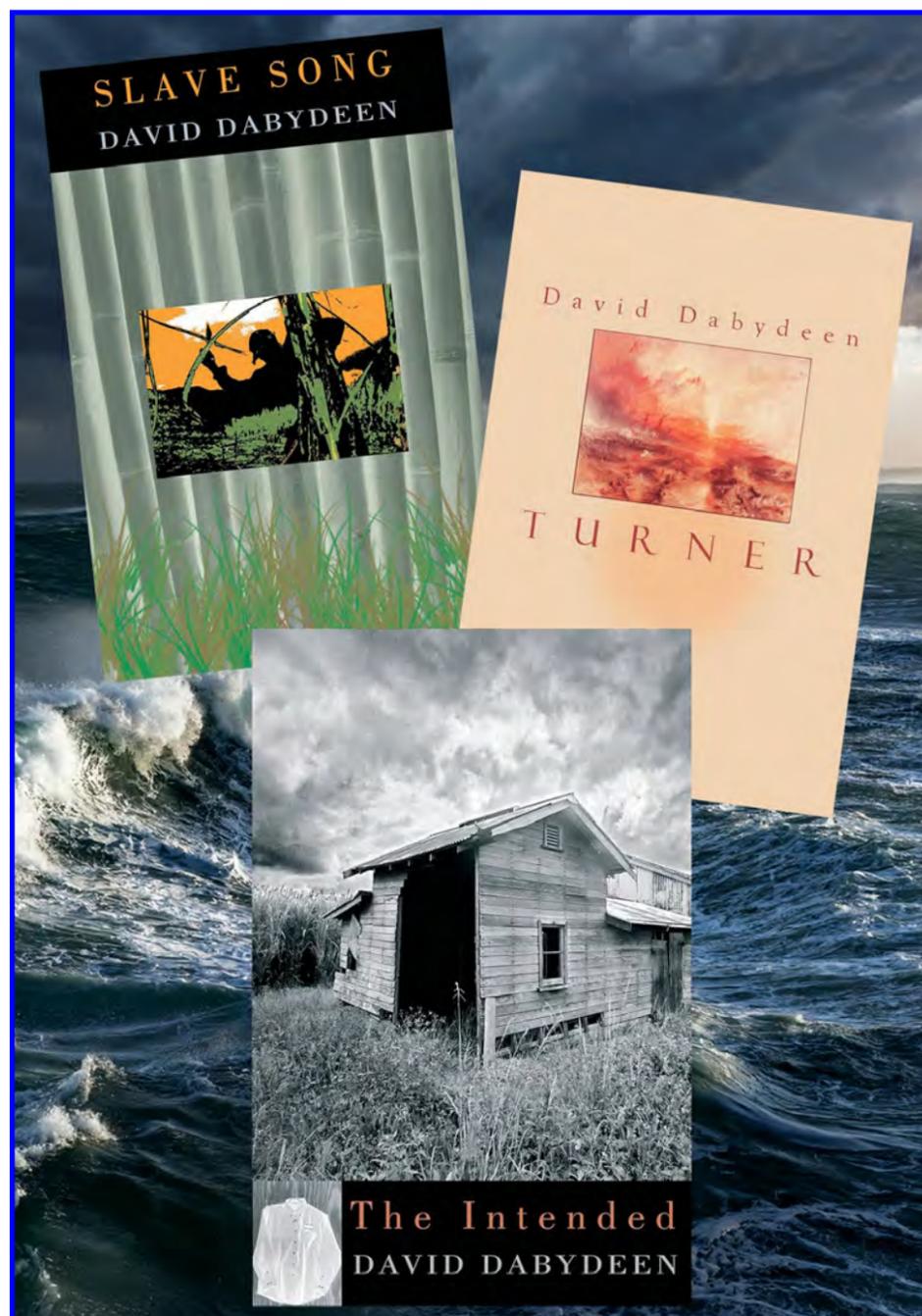
Years later, reflecting on that passage, Dabydeen would describe it with an economy that now reads like destiny distilled and condensed: it was moving “from care to Cambridge”, he stated.

At 18, he entered Selwyn College, University of Cambridge, to study English. He graduated with honours and won the English Prize for Creative Writing, the first time the Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch Prize was awarded in 1978. His academic trajectory intensified with a PhD in 18th-century literature and art at University College London in 1982; a Resident Fellowship at the Centre for British Art at Yale University; and a research fellowship at Wolfson College, Oxford.

But while Britain gave him credentials, Guyana continued inhabiting his voice. Now a Fellow at the University of Cambridge, Dabydeen has long since become an institutional figure in British academia; however, his intellectual centre of gravity never relocated. It remained rooted in Berbice’s soil, in Guyana’s village life, in the afterlives of slavery and indentureship, in the oceanic crossings that made and unmade our Caribbean peoples.

“New Amsterdam produced some of the best writers and statesmen,” he told *Stabroek News*, a quiet act of cultural reclamation that refutes the colonial habit of imagining Caribbean genius as metropolitan accident.

As of January 2026, Dabydeen entered the initial stage of the Nobel Peace Prize nomination process, which culminates in the formal announcement come October. Procedurally, the nomination places him among a confi-



dential cohort of major authors now under consideration. Significantly, it places Guyana, and our Caribbean diaspora, at the centre of a global conversation from which we are typically absent.

There is something almost glacial about the creep that led to this recognition. For decades Dabydeen has been writing, researching, teaching, editing, filming, and building cultural infrastructure minus the choreography of global celebrity. Finally, after all the layered accumulation in his eminent career, he is now in the lineup as a nominee likely to receive such a significant, global recognition come October.

European and Chinese scholars have nominated him because he is a world-class writer whose work continues to interrogate the most morally loaded subjects of modern history: slavery, indentureship, migration, racism, imperial visual culture, and postcolonial identity. What these august scholars summoned into visibility last month is evidence that this worthy body of work is finally being appreciated at the highest altitude.

...

One of the most quietly radical aspects of Dabydeen’s life is not his global mobility, but his fidelity to return. Since 1992, he has travelled back to Guyana two to three times each year, as the told *Stabroek News* last month. Not visiting as a celebrity; not as extractive intellectual; but as a writer maintaining moral residence in the place that made him.

That rhythm of return is not incidental; it resonates with the structural, underwriting his fiction, animating his poetry, while legitimising his cultural interventions. It grounds his diplomacy, and explains his obsession with archival repair. In a world where postcolonial success often mistakes detachment for cosmopolitanism, Dabydeen has practised its opposite in a globalism anchored in return.

This nomination, then, is not simply the

story of a boy from Berbice who made it to Cambridge. It is also the story of a postcolonial intellectual who refused to treat his origins as developmental scaffolding to be discarded once metropolitan legitimacy was secured.

It is the tale of a writer who did not translate Caribbean suffering into polite English metaphors, but forced English itself to learn a new grammar of historical accountability.

Here is a narrative of someone who crossed the Atlantic as a child, but refused to cross out Guyana; and here is the story of a son of Guyana who last month was handed the first key to open the first of the qualifying chambers leading to the most consecrated room of world literature.

In the narrative shifting in a tale of origin to one of accumulation, in a young boy crossing the Berbice Bridge to become the scholar that emerged in adulthood in the UK, one who quietly built institutions, repaired canons, audited empire, and turned scholarship into cultural infrastructure, the case for the Nobel Prize for Literature feels earned, one that is positioned inside an inventory of many and varying accomplishments.

...

Al Creighton writes in *Stabroek News*, “Dabydeen’s credentials are extraordinary. He is a novelist, poet, literary and art critic, editor, anthologist, documentary film maker, academic, researcher, non-fiction author, and diplomat.”

Creighton places Dabydeen simultaneously inside and outside the academy, noting that “he is among the leading academics, intellectuals and writers in the UK and a prominent Caribbean writer”.

It is a formulation that recognises Dabydeen’s double anchorage: metropolitan legitimacy without postcolonial amnesia; institutional authority without cultural abandonment.

For 35 years (1984-2019), Dabydeen

served as professor and director of the Centre for Caribbean Studies at the University of Warwick, the three decades enough not merely to influence a field, but to shape one.

As Creighton writes, “He has served as professor and director in the Centre for Caribbean Studies at the University of Warwick..., and is currently honorary fellow, Selwyn College, University of Cambridge; and director, Ameena Gafoor Institute.”

But Dabydeen’s public life has never confined itself to lecture halls and seminar rooms. As Creighton notes, “He was also Guyana’s ambassador to China (2010–2015) and Guyana’s ambassador to UNESCO (1997–2010).”

These were not ornamental postings; instead, they positioned him as a figure of cultural diplomacy, one who took Caribbean historical consciousness into the bureaucratic architecture of the global order.

His ambassadorship to UNESCO is notable. Also known as the world’s ministry of memory, UNESCO is the custodian of cultural heritage, historical preservation, and intangible inheritance. For the government of Guyana to place a postcolonial scholar steeped in archives, empire, and cultural restitution in UNESCO’s corridors makes it feel more like alignment and a course correction. It means Dabydeen was not only writing about memory; at UNESCO, he was now administering it.

Creighton also locates one of Dabydeen’s most consequential interventions in the aftermath of Carifesta X in 2008. Here he played a central role in the symposium at Carifesta X, in which Sir Derek participated. Out of those discussions emerged the idea for a new publishing infrastructure, Creighton recalls.

“Coming out of that were discussions which led to the formation of the *Caribbean Press*, funded by the Guyana government with Dabydeen as editor-in-chief, resulting in the publication of several Guyanese books – important reprints, and new works by Guyanese authors.”

Founded around 2009 as a government-funded initiative in Guyana, *Caribbean Press*, under Dabydeen’s general editorship, was conceived as a form of cultural salvage and national repair. Its primary mission was to preserve Guyana’s literary and historical inheritance.

Its flagship project, the *Guyana Classics Library*, began democratising access to rare, out-of-print texts that were scarce, unavailable, and unreachable to most Guyanese readers.

The project digitised and reprinted books that were decomposing in dusty archives, restoring a sense of national continuity, making literary heritage available to schools, libraries, and ordinary readers.

Dabydeen’s role was not just about preserving fading texts, returning and amplifying the fading voices of whispering syllabi; it was about preserving continuity.

The canon it revived included foundational novels by Edgar Mittelholzer (*Corentyne Thunder*), Wilson Harris (*Palace of the Peacock*), and Jan Carew; early poetry collections by Martin Carter and A.J. Seymour; historical and anthropological works ranging from Sir Walter Raleigh’s 1596 *The Discoverie of Guiana* to critical studies of indentureship and colonial policy by Edward Jenkins and Walter Roth.

With Dabydeen’s leadership, and others, *Caribbean Press* bridged a widening epistemic gap between colonial record and postcolonial self-recognition, in what was not an invocation of nostalgia, but the curation of futurity.

*Caribbean Press* was also a platform for contemporary voices and political documentation, publishing multi-volume collections of parliamentary speeches by past presidents, Dr Cheddi Jagan, Forbes Burnham, and Desmond Hoyte, infusing political oratory with archival permanence. And it fostered a new generation of writers through contemporary anthologies and debut works by authors such as Ashley

**See Page 17: Diaspora savours**

# Diaspora savours, celebrates David Dabydeen's Nobel Prize nomination

## From Page 16

Anthony and Churaumanie Bissundyal, in what was a salvaging of the past with the nurturing of Guyana's literary future.

Dabydeen's repairing of Guyana's canon also saw extension beyond the printed page into visual forensics. As Creighton notes, he was commissioned by the BBC to produce a series of documentaries, including *The Art of Darkness* that explored "the role of slavery as the source of funds for British art galleries, and the acquisition of important works of art".

Not only writing back to empire, Dabydeen was now auditing it. *The Art of Darkness* exposed the economic bloodstream connecting plantation slavery to metropolitan aesthetics, tracing how human bondage financed art, how suffering subsidised oil paint on canvas, and laid down marble plinths in hallowed halls. Peering beneath the colour on the canvas, British art was seen not for its beauty, but as evidence of empire's brutal extraction invested into the future and still appreciating in value.

Dabydeen's interrogations into the institutional, archival, diplomatic, and in documentary, reveal a pattern in an author who did not confine himself to producing texts merely for consumption. Instead, he built platforms for memory, created infrastructures for cultural survival, and repaired the epistemic damage left behind by empire. It was a case of not inheriting a canon, but building a new one.

And it is here, in this steady accumulation of moral and ethical labour, where his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize for Literature begins to feel less like an accolade, and more like well-deserved recognition.

Dabydeen's Nobel Peace Prize nomination does not rest only on committee service, diplomacy, or building cultural infrastructure. Creighton is exhaustive in his reflection on the imaginative force in Dabydeen's creative writing, in how his poetry and fiction returns, as the author himself always returns to Guyana, to the violence that founded our modern world, and his refusal to let it sleep as concretised sediment in settled history.

As Creighton writes, "The Nobel nomination is on the strength of Dabydeen's fiction and poetry."

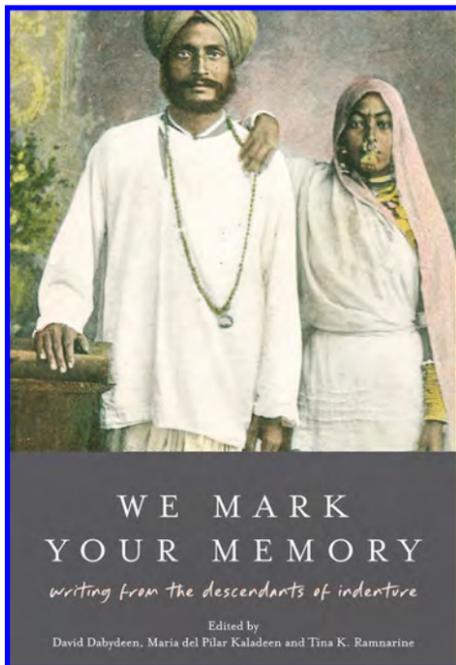
Dabydeen's poetic career begins not gently, but with a confrontation. His *Slave Song* (1984) announced itself as an act of linguistic rebellion in poems and dramatic monologues written in Guyanese Creole dramatising the Caribbean's slavery experience and its aftermath.

It did not aestheticise suffering; instead, it staged the pain, ventriloquised it, opening up new vocalisation so the enslaved spoke in a language empire had trained itself not to hear. Creole, long dismissed as 'broken' English, was retooled as a language of historical authority; in so doing, pain was not translated into metropolitan idiom – instead, Dabydeen made English answer to Creole. The collection won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize.

*Coolie Odyssey* (1989) followed as both companion and counterpoint, a response to *Slave Song* that dramatised the Indo-Guyanese peasant experience of Indentureship and the making of post-Indenture Guyanese society. Where *Slave Song* spoke in the register of chains, *Coolie Odyssey* explored the quieter violence of contracts, quotas, and promises that arrived already broken.

Creighton describes *Coolie Odyssey* as "concerned with the East Indian presence at a grassroots level and in the villages". In the text, the poems move through lived spaces in yards, cane fields, kitchens, thresholds, where Indentureship did its slow work in shaping desire, obedience, ambition, and silence.

Dabydeen's poetry climbs to the summit with *Turner: New and Selected Poems* (1994), described by Creighton as "the most accomplished of his poetry", and "his most mature and deepest verse".



Named after the 19th-century English painter J.M.W. Turner, whose painting *Slave Ship* (1840) depicts enslaved Africans being jettisoned like disposable cargo into a storm-churned sea, in the long poem *Turner* re-enters the Middle Passage not as historical tableau, but as interior consciousness. Here, the speaker is an exploited mind cast overboard. The sea is no longer metaphor; now, it is memory without rescue.

Dabydeen returns continuously to the tragic voyages of the Atlantic, to the slavers and the Zong massacre of 1781, where more than 130 enslaved Africans were thrown into the ocean so that insurance could be claimed on "lost cargo". But he does not rehearse atrocity for effect; instead, he interrogates what it means to be reborn under such circumstances, to live after history has already decided you were expendable.

It is in *Turner* that Dabydeen's lifelong preoccupations fuse most completely: art as evidence, empire as aesthetic system, migration as psychic rupture, and the sea as both grave and archive.

If poetry is where Dabydeen distils history into voice, then fiction is where he allows it to sprawl, accumulating detail, irony, contradiction, and moral pressure.

His debut novel, *The Intended* (1992), draws directly from his own early migration: a young man of West Indian origin negotiating London, education, race, aspiration, and belonging. It is the journey of mobility and vulnerability he later describes as going "from care to Cambridge".

*The Intended* won the Guyana Prize for Literature in 1992. But more importantly, it established a fictional grammar that would recur throughout his work: migration as Bildungsroman, a coming of age; displacement as education, and irony as survival.

Beyond his poetry and fiction, Dadydeen has edited and contributed to major critical and documentary works that preserve Indentureship not as abstract history, but as lived inheritance. Among the most significant is *We Mark Your Memory: Writing from the Descendants of Indenture* (2018), co-edited with Maria del Pilar Kaladeen and Tina K. Ramnarine.

Treating memory as civic duty, the title of this text is in itself an act of reclamation, with descendant voices gathered and preserved, memory transformed into archive, testimony inked into record. Indentureship in Guyana and the Caribbean are examined not only through documents, but through lived cultural aftermaths, language, ritual, family structure, and silence. It is an enterprise that extends the same ethical logic animating *Caribbean Press* in preservation as justice, and archiving as repair.

Honours and awards also reflect the breadth of his global impact. Beyond awards for verse

and fiction, he received the prestigious *Anthony N. Sabga Caribbean Award for Excellence in Arts and Letters*. From India, he received the *Raja Rao Prize* from the Government of India, awarded for "an outstanding contribution to the literature and culture of the South Asian Diaspora".

By this stage of our narrative, the Nobel Peace Prize for Literature nomination reads more like a culmination. As Creighton concludes, "Dabydeen's nomination for the Nobel Prize for Literature comes as no surprise in the light of his prodigious and prestigious oeuvre, well-recommended and with an incredible weight of achievements, cultural and literary output to plead his case."

There are moments when a life's work slips away from the individual containing it to become something larger – when recognition accrues not only to a name, but to a diaspora that recognises themselves in that name. Dabydeen's nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature is such a moment, an honour extended to a writer that ripples outward into our diaspora.

For generations, our lives as a diaspora were only spoken about; our histories were rendered by colonial clerks who misspelled our names; imperial painters who orientated our lives on canvas; plantation ledgers that alienated and monetised our muscularity; and metropolitan novels that shut us away in the attic. We appeared as background figures, labouring bodies, extras in a cast, blurred into the background *bokeh* of a photograph – present, but neither authorised, nor authoritative.

Dabydeen reversed the focus of such narratives, writing to empire from the inside of its wound; he made art answer to history, turning away silence, and rescripting erasure into archive.

In his travels back and forth, he carried with him not only his own story, but the unfinished stories of African enslavement, Indian and Chinese Indentureship, migration, loss, resilience, humour, irony, and survival. In his works, he continues to insist that our Caribbean experience is not peripheral to world history, but is corporeal, constitutive, consequential, and centred.

The feeling in our diaspora is Dabydeen's Nobel Prize nomination belongs not only to him, but to our Caribbean diaspora scattered across Toronto, London, New York, Amsterdam, Paramaribo, Port-of-Spain, Georgetown, in households where memory travels orally, where history is stitched into gesture, where the past is never entirely past.

It belongs to cane-cutters and schoolchildren, to migrants who learned to subsume the tonal layers of geographies in our speech, to readers who were once told their stories were too small, local, and parochial to matter. It belongs to anyone among us who ever felt provincial, but who always knew that to feel this way was to invalidate something within us that was nourishing and wholesome.

But when a son of Guyana, a child of our diaspora, is recognised at the level of the Nobel Peace Prize for such an inspirational oeuvre, we read it as an invitation for the world to take notice that what has long been present, but insufficiently read, has finally come to the front and centre.

Whether or not the Nobel committee ultimately crowns Dabydeen in October, something irreversible has already occurred. Yet another body of work forged in the Caribbean afterlives of empire has been acknowledged as world literature; that our voices are no longer being diluted, domesticated, or deferred, but are now speaking confidently, consciously, and at the centre.

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Anaya on the harmonium



Singing bhajans is her passion



Playing drums from age seven

## Anaya's inspirational voice bridges tradition, devotion, and tomorrow

— Young Anaya Gokool is emerging as a custodian of Hindu devotional and classical music in Trinidad and Tobago. Grounded in family, faith, and mentorship, her ongoing journey reflects a careful balance among cultural inheritance, personal growth, and musicianship.

In the quiet spaces between devotion and discipline, a new voice is steadily taking shape in Trinidad and Tobago.

Anaya Gokool, a student of Saraswati Girls' Hindu College, is emerging as one of the promising young custodians of Hindu devotional music in Trinidad and Tobago, as an expressive vocalist, an increasingly confident instrumentalist, and a young cultural bearer navigating the delicate passage between inheritance and innovation.

Her journey into music did not begin with ambition, but with listening. Rooted in spirituality and family ritual, Anaya's earliest encounters with music were shaped by *bhajans* sung not for applause, but for offering. That grounding remains central to her artistry today, as she performs devotional *bhajans* and classical East Indian songs with a poise that belies her youth.

Balancing school studies with sustained musical practice, Anaya exemplifies a quiet discipline. Her days are divided between academic responsibility and the steady honing of craft, a dual rhythm familiar to many young artists, but one she approaches with unusual focus. For her, music is not an extracurricular indulgence; it is a calling shaped by patience, repetition, reverence, and familial intervention.

Anaya is not only an expressive vocalist, but also a committed musician. She began learning the *dholak* at the age of seven, developing early rhythmic confidence, and has since turned her attention to the harmonium, an instrument she describes with unmistakable affection.

"I love it so much," she says, adding, "It has such a deep, beautiful sound. One of my main goals is to master playing the harmonium."

However, that sense of mastery is approached humbly. Anaya speaks often of learning, of being a novice attentive to correction and growth. Nowhere was that more evident than in her early engagement with language. Singing *bhajans* required more than melody; it demanded precision of pronunciation and understanding of Hindi words she did not initially know.

This challenge became formative rather than discouraging. Seeking guidance, Anaya turned to her aunt, Pandita Pamela Gokool,

whose own devotional practice became a living classroom. Watching, listening, and absorbing her aunt's chanting helped Anaya attune not only her voice, but her ear.

Pamela Gokool is among the few practising panditas in Trinidad and Tobago, serving at the Dow Village Hindu Mandir and the Temple by the Sea in central Trinidad.

"I believe without her, I wouldn't be as successful as I am," Anaya told the *Trinidad Guardian* last year, adding, "She really motivated me to continue on my music career, and the path I am on in my musical journey... Also, sitting down and listening to her chanting helped me with the correct pronunciation of the words."



Performing devotions at the mandir

The learning curve was steep. Anaya recalls spending nearly three years working through uncertainty, practising alongside recordings, and revisiting verses repeatedly until confidence began to take root.

"I realised I didn't really know how to pronounce many of the words," she noted, adding, "But in addition to listening to my aunt chanting them... I would try singing the

*bhajans*, along with watching and listening to YouTube videos to master my pronunciation."

Alongside this mentorship stood another figure – one who was gentler, quieter, and no less influential.

Anaya credits her grandmother as an enduring source of emotional and spiritual grounding. Their shared moments, she recalls, were marked by closeness and calm.

"She is very special to me, since she was the one who sat with me, listening to *bhajans*," Anaya says, further recalling, "We would sit together singing the chants to Bhagwan, and she would play her *manjira* and sing along to the music; we were like best friends."

That bond did not end with her grandmother's passing. Instead, it has taken on a symbolic presence in Anaya's life as a performer. Before stepping onto the stage, she often invokes her grandmother's memory, at times with a whispered dedication, sometimes with a glance upward.

"This is for you," she would murmur. "Before I go to perform, I would always think of my late grandmother," she says.

"She's no longer here with me, and it's like a lucky charm before I perform. I would always think about her like she is in the heavens watching me... and when I get the chills before I perform, I keep in mind that she is watching me from above, and it calms me."

That quiet ritual accompanied Anaya onto a wider platform in 2024, when she performed at *Yuva Manch*, a youth-focused performance stage embedded within *Divali Nagar*, organised by the National Council of Indian Culture. The audience's reception affirmed what her family and mentors had long seen: a young artist with presence, intention, and promise.

Encouraged by that response, Anaya now looks toward larger national stages, even as she remains anchored in purpose rather than projection. She speaks of aspiration not as self-promotion, but as responsibility, with the hope that her journey might encourage other young people to embrace Indian classical singing and instrumental practice.

In doing so, she sees herself as part of a longer arc, one that ensures continuity.

"It will ensure that this sacred art form continues to shine for generations," she says.

While her musical path is clear, Anaya remains open in her academic ambitions. She is exploring interests in business management, economics, and related fields, still weighing where her future may lead. Yet when she speaks of performance, her voice shifts unmistakably with passion and commitment.

"To me, performing makes me very happy knowing that other people are listening. Seeing them clapping along is really such a good feeling. Already, younger kids come up to me and say they want to be like me one day," she says.

Her advice is simple, and offered without embellishment: "Anybody can do it; once you put your mind to it," she tells them.

With files by Hinano Beekho

**Hon.**  
**TIM HODGSON**  
Member of Parliament  
Markham-Thornhill

CELEBRATING

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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A relative accompanies a released detainee held during the State of Emergency in Trinidad and Tobago, which ended last Friday



An energised exodus by detainees and family members from the Eastern Correctional Facility following the end of the State of Emergency last Friday

## Persad-Bissessar warns crime surge will trigger fresh State of Emergency

— Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has issued a renewed warning to criminal gangs and recently released detainees that her government will not hesitate to declare another State of Emergency if violence resurges. Meanwhile, Minister of Homeland Security Roger Alexander revealed fresh reports of gunfire in Opposition strongholds, and criticised the People’s National Movement for failing to support key anti-crime legislation.

...

**Port-of-Spain** – Speaking days after the SoE ended at midnight on January 31, Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar said the government and security services remain on high alert and fully prepared to act should criminal elements attempt to terrorise law-abiding citizens.

She said her administration would not allow a return to what she described as rampant crime and violence that characterised the previous decade.

The SoE was first declared on July 18, 2025, by proclamation of President Christine Kangaloo, acting on the advice of the United National Congress government. The declaration followed intelligence reports of a coordinated criminal network and gang threats against key officials and institutions.

Parliament later approved two three-month extensions, on July 28 and October 31, before the emergency powers expired at the end of January this year.

With the lifting of the SoE, dozens of individuals detained under Preventive Detention Orders (PDOs) were released. Persad-Bissessar warned that any renewed criminal activity would be met with decisive legal action, including the possible re-imposition of emergency measures. She said her priority remained the protection of “decent, law-abiding citizens”,

adding that criminals and those who assist them would face the full force of the law.

She said the government’s security strategy during the SoE produced measurable results, pointing to a reduction of 257 murders in 2025 compared with 2024. She attributed the decline to strengthened border security support from the US, the leadership of Commissioner of Police Allister Guevarro, and the detention of high-risk individuals under PDOs.

Persad-Bissessar sharply criticised the Opposition People’s National Movement, accusing it of undermining crime-fighting efforts, and harbouring links to criminal financiers. She cited crime statistics from 2015 to 2025, noting that Trinidad and Tobago recorded more than 124,000 crimes during that period, including approximately 5,000 murders and nearly 9,000 rapes and sexual assaults.

She said most murder victims were young Afro-Trinidadian men, and argued that many of the communities hardest hit by gang violence are Afro-dominated areas within PNM stronghold constituencies.

Meanwhile, Alexander expressed disappointment at the PNM’s failure to support the Law Reform (Zones of Special Operations) (Special Security and Community Development) Bill, 2026, which he said was designed to strengthen both enforcement and community-based interventions.

He disclosed that as the SoE was nearing its end, and following the release of detainees last Friday, authorities received several reports of gunfire in PNM “hotspot” constituencies.

Alexander said the government has a comprehensive anti-crime strategy, and held high-level meetings immediately after the SoE ended to assess threats and readiness.

“I spoke to the Commissioner of Police, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, the Chief of

Defence Staff, and they are rearing to go. We always have plans and are ready,” he said.

Addressing concerns about possible legal action from former detainees, Alexander said due process was ongoing, and emphasised that significant evidence-gathering took place during the SoE.

“One of the major things that was done during this SoE was the gathering of evidence. Some may have reached the threshold for charges to be laid; others did not yet reach the threshold. I emphasise that word, ‘Yet,’” he said.

He also criticised what he described as advocacy on behalf of criminals rather than law-abiding citizens, and said opposition to the proposed ZOSO legislation had deprived vulnerable communities of meaningful support.

According to Alexander, the Bill envi-

sioned layered interventions combining policing with social development, including measures to address school attendance, roads, street lighting, and access to services such as free Wi-Fi and improved connectivity.

Alexander also warned that if the cycle of violence continued, young Black men in Trinidad and Tobago could face devastating consequences.

He added that the government would not rule out seeking further international assistance if domestic resources proved insufficient to eradicate organised crime.

He added that, in the meantime, police and security services would continue to protect and serve the population under existing laws, while remaining prepared to escalate measures if public safety is threatened.



Released detainees leave the Eastern Correctional Facility last Friday



# CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

As we mark 30 Years of Black History Month under the theme “Honouring Black Brilliance Across Generations From Nation Builders to Tomorrow’s Visionaries,” we celebrate the resilience and rich contributions of Black communities, past, present, and future.

This month is both a time to reflect and a call to action to remember, uplift, and recommit to amplifying Black voices and stories that continue to inspire us all.



**Andrea Hazell, MPP**  
Scarborough-Guildwood



# End credits trigger fresh conversation on Bollywood's luxury vanity vans

— The Netflix re-release of *Dhurandhar* has drawn renewed attention not just to the film itself, but to an unlikely detail buried in its end credits, opening a revealing window into Bollywood's vanity van culture, its economics, and the quiet hierarchies surrounding its brightest stars.

The Netflix OTT release of *Dhurandhar* has propelled the film back into public conversation, this time not for its plot or performances, but for an unexpected detail buried in its end credits. During repeat viewings, a sharp-eyed viewer noticed three separate entries listed under vendor transportation: “Hamza Van”, “Hamza Staff Van”, and “Hamza Normal Van”.

The discovery quickly circulated on social media, reigniting long-standing industry discussions about luxury vanity vans in Bollywood, and in particular, those associated with lead actor Ranveer Singh.

What initially appeared to be a curiosity of credit formatting soon took on wider significance. In an era shaped by OTT re-watches and forensic fan engagement, the end credits, which are often ignored in theatrical runs, briefly lifted the curtain on a production reality that is typically hidden from public view.

The listings did not merely revive online chatter, but instead appeared to corroborate years of industry reporting about the scale, cost, and symbolism of vanity vans on Bollywood film sets.

That reporting has been led in part by *The Hollywood Reporter*, which has previously detailed Singh's on-set arrangements. According to a source cited by the publication, the actor requires three vanity vans during a shoot schedule: one for personal use, one converted into a gym, and a third designated for his private chef.

While rumours of such arrangements have circulated for years, the *Dhurandhar* credits offered rare, documentary-like confirmation, not through leaks or insider whispers, but through the industry's own evidential, accounting trail.

As *The Hollywood Reporter* notes, a van on a film set is never merely a vehicle. The gleaming luxury coaches parked just beyond camera rigs and catering counters function as portable fortresses, and are equal parts dressing room, lounge, refuge, and status symbol.

They are spaces where actors change, recover, negotiate, rehearse, decompress, and, at times, assert hierarchy. In their scale and design, they quietly map the power dynamics of the set.

However, the concept of the vanity van did not begin as an indulgence. Its roots lie in necessity. Veteran vanity van vendor Ketan Raval, interviewed by *The Hollywood Reporter*, recalls a time when even the biggest stars changed costumes in makeshift arrangements during outdoor shoots.

For women, the experience could be especially daunting, sometimes requiring colleagues to hold up saris as improvised screens. Long shooting days, often stretching 12 to 16 hours, under harsh sun, or in remote locations where basic sanitation was scarce made privacy and rest logistical challenges, rather than luxuries.

It was in this context that the vanity van emerged as a vehicle to a practical solution: a mobile space to change, fix makeup, and recover between takes.

Raval credits actor Poonam Dhillon with introducing vanity vans to the Hindi film industry, a milestone moment marked by the inauguration of her van by Amitabh Bachchan, then already a towering presence in Indian cinema.

As Bollywood expanded and stardom evolved into a fully industrialised product, vanity vans began to swell in size, ambition, and symbolism. What started as a functional necessity gradually transformed into an exten-



The credits showing the vanity vans of celebrity identity.

“It started as a functional thing. Now it's more about the optics of who has what in their van,” Raval told *The Hollywood Reporter*.

By the late 2000s, the vanity van had become a shorthand for status. For stars such as Shah Rukh Khan, scale itself became a statement.

Raval has noted that Khan's van is so expansive that it cannot always be driven into remote or tightly packed locations, requiring down-sized, alternative arrangements for the actor's convenience and comfort.

In this ecosystem, size is not just about comfort; it is about visibility, power, and dominance.

Design choices further personalise these spaces. Actor John Abraham opted for floor-to-ceiling windows to flood his van with natural light, while simultaneously insisting that every interior surface from the floors to its fixtures remain black.

As Raval described, the result was a stark interplay of light and darkness, where the outside world is framed by a deliberately austere interior.

Kangana Ranaut, by contrast, pursued a more organic aesthetic. Her vanity van, among the most expensive in the industry, features solid Indian rosewood, also known as *sheesham* wood, for the interiors, a costly design choice both difficult to source and challenging to maintain.

Designers Prateek Malewar and Apurva Deshmukh, cited by *The Hollywood Reporter*, noted that Ranaut was personally involved in selecting fabrics, prints, and finishes, treating the van not as a vehicle, but as a luxury home.

As vans grew more elaborate, demands sometimes edged toward the absurd, a phenomenon that industry insiders describe as performative, rather than purely practical.

Malewar recounted instances where one actor requested that switchboards be relocated to the floor so it would not appear in selfies.

Other Bollywood stars imposed strict sensory preferences. Parineeti Chopra, for example, reportedly refuses room fresheners, using only incense sticks sourced from a specific shop in Mumbai's Juhu neighbourhood, a detail so precise that an assistant's sole responsibility is to prepare the vanity van accordingly prior to her occupation.

In this environment, preparation beforehand for readiness becomes ritual.

According to production insiders cited by *The Hollywood Reporter*, actors have refused via histrionics to shoot if their vanity vans were not prepared to exact specifications. The tantrum, one insider observed, is part of the optics: oddly specific demands function as signals of stardom and elitism in an industry where visibility equates to value.

Among the most notable recent additions to the vanity van ecosystem is the gym van. As fitness regimens have become central to celebrity branding, many actors now travel with fully equipped mobile gyms, allowing them to work-out between takes.

Malewar described requests for concealed passageways linking personal vans to gym vans, enabling actors to move unseen by media while maintaining disciplined routines.

In this configuration, the body becomes a managed, and perhaps pampered asset, one that is trained, protected, and curated within controlled spaces that blur the line among



Shah Rukh Khan's behemoth vanity van and its luxurious interior (below)



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# Stars pack power in vanity vans

From Page 20

worksite comfort, luxury, and sanctuary.

Hierarchy on a film set is not only contractual; it is also spatial. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, even the placement of vans reveals rank.

Superstars may refuse to have their vans parked beside those of other stars, as proximity implies equality. Distance from the set, access to shade, and orientation relative to other vehicles become points of negotiation, at times delaying entire shoots.

Actor Sunny Deol once requested a van that could expand sideways, increasing interior width to avoid claustrophobia, along with sun-roofs for natural ventilation.

Even materials used for construction tell a story: rexine, fabric, or leather seating; linoleum, wallpaper, or painted walls. Adhesives, which are invisible but essential, can determine whether a van remains silent and odour-free after hours under the sun, or becomes a space filled with chemical fumes.

For junior actors and background performers, the absence of a vanity van is more than an inconvenience; it can be a quiet humiliation. Many still change under tarpaulin tents or behind makeshift curtains, crouched in the heat, while the big stars recline, or workout in the gym, in air-conditioned comfort.

Raval noted that while larger production houses now provide at least one common van for junior artists, these are typically basic, two-door vehicles with minimal facilities.

In this contrast, the vanity van becomes both aspiration and reminder, a symbol of arrival for some, and of distance and discomfort with their social status for others.

Meanwhile, costs remain an unspoken undertow, with industry estimates suggesting an average annual maintenance cost for a single vanity van at approximately US \$12,000-\$18,000, depending on specifications

and usage.

Beyond maintenance, the purchase price of vanity vans varies widely based on the extent of its customisation.

Industry estimates suggest that a top-tier “super van”, featuring multi-room layouts and expandable living spaces, can cost up to US \$240,000 to \$360,000.

High-end custom vans with Italian marble, luxury recliners, and gym equipment typically range from \$90,000 to \$120,000. Mid-range vans with sofas, a small pantry, television, and modest washroom cost approximately \$42,000 to \$60,000, while basic vans equipped with air conditioning and a dressing space start at around \$18,000 to \$24,000.

Such figures, and its monied aura, rarely surface in public discourse; not until moments like the *Dhurandhar* credits inadvertently unearth these undercurrents of luxury, hierarchy, and the affluent lifestyles enjoyed by Bollywood’s elite.

But what distinguishes this episode of data being unearthed in the rolling credits is not scandal, but exposure. What occurred here was the end credits, a space meant for acknowledgment rather than analysis, briefly rendered visible an economy of affluence and privilege that typically operates off screen, and which is buried in the financial overheads and even deeper in unreachable accounting books.

However, in the OTT age of streaming by *Netflix* and others, where viewers linger and re-watch, even the tiniest atomic details in production can open up entry points for much larger public conversations.

In this case, what was revealed was that in Bollywood, power does not only arrive on set in the approach of the big stars; in fact, how it drives up, parks, unlocks its doors, and strolls onto the set, a mere few metres from the camera, can now be seen scrolling in plain sight in the rolling credits.



Interiors of vanity vans for Alia Bhatt (above), and Shilpa Shetty (below)



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# New captain signals Australia's next chapter in women's cricket

— Australia have confirmed a new leadership era in women's cricket, appointing all-rounder Sophie Molineux as captain across all formats as Alyssa Healy prepares to retire following the upcoming multi-format series against India, a campaign that will also usher in several key squad changes ahead of the T20 World Cup year.

Australia have named Sophie Molineux as captain of the national women's team across all formats, succeeding the retiring Alyssa Healy.

Healy, 35, has announced she will retire from international cricket following Australia's forthcoming multi-format series against India. With Healy not selected in the T20 International squad, Molineux, 28, will take charge of the side for the first time in the opening T20I on February 15. Healy will return to the captaincy for the subsequent One-Day Internationals and the one-off Test in Perth, which will mark her final professional appearance.

"It's a real honour to be named Australian

captain and something I'm incredibly proud of, especially following on from Alyssa, who has had such a huge impact on this team and the game," Molineux said, adding, "We've got a really strong group with plenty of natural leaders, alongside a lot of exciting talent coming through."

Australia will host India in three T20Is, three ODIs and one Test between February 15 and March 9. Cricket Australia also announced that Ashleigh Gardner will become vice-captain alongside Tahlia McGrath, who has already held the role across all formats.

Molineux's elevation follows sustained leadership success at domestic level. She captains Victoria and the Melbourne Renegades, leading the Renegades to their first Women's Big Bash League title in 2024. Internationally, she has represented Australia in three Tests, 17 ODIs and 38 T20Is since debuting in 2019.

However, her career has also been shaped by significant injury setbacks. A foot stress fracture in late 2021 ruled her out of the 2022

## Pakistan in World Cup, boycott India clash

— Pakistan will participate in the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup beginning February 7, but will not take the field against arch-rivals and co-hosts India, following a government directive that has triggered sharp criticism from the International Cricket Council, and raised the prospect of financial and sporting sanctions.

Pakistan have been cleared by their government to compete in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, but have been barred from playing India, co-hosts of the tournament, in a decision that has cast a political shadow over the global showpiece.

In an official release issued earlier this week, the Pakistan government stated: "The government of Pakistan grants approval to the Pakistan cricket team to participate in the Twenty20 World Cup, however, the Pakistan team shall not take the field in the match scheduled on 15th February against India."

Pakistan T20 captain Salman Agha said the decision was beyond the players' control, following their series-ending victory against Australia on February 1.

"We are definitely going for the World Cup. That is not our decision. We can't do anything," Agha said, adding, "What our government, our (PCB) chairman say, we have do that."

The Pakistan squad arrived in Colombo earlier this week after a prolonged period of uncertainty following Bangladesh's expulsion from the tournament. The decision was confirmed after Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi met Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Lahore for the second time in a week.

The tournament runs from February 7 to March 8, and is jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka, featuring 20 teams. Pakistan's refusal to play India comes despite a previously agreed arrangement under which the two nations play at neutral venues during ICC events.

Naqvi had last week hinted at an outright boycott in protest against the International Cricket Council's rejection of Bangladesh's request to move its matches from India to Sri Lanka due to security concerns. Bangladesh's proposal was voted down after weeks of

debate, with Pakistan the only board to support the move.

The ICC subsequently replaced Bangladesh with Scotland, prompting Naqvi to accuse the governing body of double standards.

The ICC responded forcefully to Pakistan's selective participation, warning of potential consequences.

"This position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," the ICC said in a statement.

It added that selective participation "undermines the spirit and sanctity of the competitions", and was not in the interest of the global game or its fans, including millions in Pakistan.

An India-Pakistan match remains the ICC's most-watched fixture, with 206 million viewers tuning in for their Champions Trophy clash in Dubai last year. The ICC said it hoped the PCB would reconsider the "significant and long-term implications" of the decision for both Pakistan cricket and the wider global ecosystem.

Under previous ICC playing conditions, Pakistan's failure to play the match could result in a forfeit, impacting their net run-rate, but not India's. Pakistan, T20 World Cup champions in 2009 and runners-up twice, will still contest their Group A matches against the Netherlands (February 7), the US (February 10), and Namibia (February 18).

Former Pakistan wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal backed the government's stance. "Enough is enough, we had to take this decision," Akmal said, accusing India of repeatedly mixing politics with sport.

Meanwhile, Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, said the episode highlighted the dangers of politicising cricket.

"We have now completely stopped differentiating between sports and politics," Abdullah said, noting that India-Pakistan matches are routinely framed as conflict, rather than competition, creating conditions for repeated controversy.



Sophie Molineux

50-over World Cup and the Commonwealth Games, both of which Australia went on to win. She later ruptured her anterior cruciate ligament, sidelining her for 12 months, forcing her to miss Australia's victorious 2023 T20 World Cup campaign.

Molineux returned for the 2024 T20 World Cup, where Australia were eliminated in the semi-finals by South Africa.

Following the India series, Molineux will assume full captaincy duties on Australia's multi-format tour of the Caribbean, which includes a Test match, before leading preparations for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, scheduled to begin on June 12.

National selector Shawn Flegler said Molineux was the right choice, despite ongoing workload management.

"We will continue to manage Sophie's workload, prioritising key tournaments and major

international series following injury challenges in recent seasons," Flegler said.

He added that McGrath's experience and Gardner's elevation strengthened the leadership group, noting both are capable of acting as stand-in captain if required.

Several squad changes were also confirmed. Leg-spinner Alana King was omitted from the T20I squad following a difficult domestic season, while Nicola Carey returns to the white-ball squads, firming for her first international appearance since 2022.

Veteran fast bowler Megan Schutt was left out of both the ODI and Test squads, with 19-year-old left-arm seamer Lucy Hamilton named in her maiden Test squad.

Hamilton and King have also been selected for the Governor-General's XI to face India in a warm-up T20 in Sydney on February 13, two days before the series begins.



Salman Agha



Mohsin Naqvi



Nawaz Sharif

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