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# INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

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## Our Community Is Thriving!



Young Star Bhai OT participants are rapturous after working out with mentors and visiting Toronto Raptors' staff coaches

## Star Bhai rapture as Raptors visit

— With the success of its latest Star Bhai OT, the ICCA has set a dynamic tone for the year ahead, fostering community engagement and empowering young athletes as it builds bridges among sports, mentorship, and heritage.

...

**Toronto** – The Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association's Star Bhai initiative launched into 2025 with high energy and inspiration, hosting its second basketball OT workshop in collaboration with the Toronto Raptors.

The interactive session, held on January 26, brought together 26 boys and young men from our Indo-Caribbean community for an immersive basketball experience designed to foster skills, teamwork,

and mentorship.

Led by three Toronto Raptors staff coaches, the Community Impact Clinic provided hands-on training in ball handling, dribbling, and shooting techniques. More than just a basketball session, the workshop emphasised perseverance and personal growth, with coaches delivering powerful messages of encouragement to participants ranging in age from eight to 18 years old.

The event was made possible through a partnership between the Toronto Raptors and the ICCA, with a focus on providing young athletes with meaningful engagement and mentorship opportunities.

To the delight of participants, the session concluded with a surprise  
**See Page 3: Skills development**

## Ontario elections on as US impacts economy

— As Ontarians prepare to vote on February 27, the province is navigating a precarious economic landscape with the fate of US-Canada trade relations still uncertain. With only weeks to go, Ontario's political leaders are making their case to voters, each arguing that their vision will best protect Ontario's economic future. It means Ontarians must weigh competing visions of leadership in the face of one of the most defining economic and political challenges from the US in recent times.

...

**Toronto** – The nation was swept into a political and economic maelstrom on February 1 when the US indicated it would impose a 25 percent tariff on Canadian exports and a ten percent tariff on energy effective February 4.

Meanwhile, days earlier on January 28, Ontario's Premier Doug Ford called a snap election for February 27.

Ford framed the early call as a necessary step to ensure Ontario had a strong government in place capable of defending the province's economic interests, notably from US tariff aggression. Elections in Ontario are technically due by June 2026.

Announcing the snap election, Ford told a gathering in Windsor, Ontario: "The people of our province, like people across Canada, are facing unprecedented times. I am asking the people of Ontario for their trust. I'm asking... for a strong, stable, four-year mandate to do whatever it takes to protect Ontario."

On the evening of February 1, Prime Minister Justin

Trudeau addressed the nation in response to the announcement from White House of tariffs earlier that day. The US tariffs were due to kick in on February 4.

In his address, Trudeau emphasised the deep economic integration between Canada and the US, highlighting that millions of American jobs depend on trade with Canada. He also expressed disappointment with the decision, stating that it would harm workers and businesses on both sides of the border.

However, he assured Canadians that the government would take strong action to protect national interests and stand up for Canadian workers and industries.

As he stated, the government would "not back down in standing up for Canadians", adding, "We don't want to be here; we didn't ask for this."

In response to the US imposition, Trudeau announced that Canada would implement retaliatory measures with 25 percent tariffs on a range of US goods, including orange juice, peanut butter, wine, spirits, beer, coffee, appliances, apparel, footwear, motorcycles, cosmetics, and pulp and paper.

He emphasised these tariffs were a necessary response to the US actions, and urged Canadians to support domestic products.

On Monday, following discussions between Trudeau and US President Donald Trump, both leaders agreed to delay the imposition of their respective tariffs. The agreement provided

**See Page 3: Ontario's leaders**



Justin Trudeau



Doug Ford

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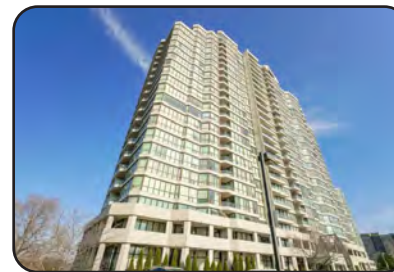
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**Star Bhai OT participants with coaches from the Toronto Raptors following their basketball session**  
**Skill development, cultural connections at Star Bhai event**

**From Page 1**

announcement – each attendee was invited to a Toronto Raptors game at Scotiabank Arena on February 21 for Caribbean Heritage Night.

In addition to the special invitation, all participants received Toronto Raptors swag, including backpacks, books, and winter hats and gloves. Three standout participants were recognised with awards for sportsmanship, leadership, and Most Valuable Player, each receiving a basketball signed by Raptors players. The awards were determined through peer voting, reinforcing the workshop’s emphasis on teamwork and camaraderie.

Adding to the excitement, two young participants and Ryan Singh, Chair of the ICCA, were interviewed for a special video segment that will be featured at the Raptors game on February 21.

The day concluded with a catered lunch provided by Shereen’s Bakery, featuring a menu rich with Caribbean flavours, including Guyanese stew chicken, cook-up rice, bake, pumpkin, fried plantain, pinetart, and salara. It was an event that provided not only an opportunity for skill development, but also for cross-cultural connection and celebration.

**For more information about the ICCA, and its Star Bhai program, visit its website here.**



Marit Stiles



Mike Schreiner



Bonnie Crombie

**Ontario’s political leaders say need to ‘tariff-proof’ economy**

**From Page 1**

a 30-day reprieve, allowing both nations time to negotiate a more permanent resolution to the trade dispute.

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of the political and economic storm, Ontario’s political parties were already well into the election campaign, with Ford centering his bid on economic resilience, while emphasising his government’s track record in tax cuts and job creation.

His messaging also indicated that Ontario needs strong leadership to counter the existential US economic threat.

The US push into Canada was also prioritised among the other parties, with Ontario NDP Leader Marit Stiles vowing earlier this week to strengthen Ontario’s economy in the face of tariffs.

Speaking alongside NDP’s Oshawa candidate Jennifer French, Stiles said her party will defend jobs, fight back, and build a resilient, more tariff-proof Ontario.

“People are worried about what the future holds, if they’ll lose their job or struggle to put food on the table. As Premier, I will defend every single job in the province. I will fight back as part of a strong Team Canada, and I’ll get to work building a more tariff-proof Ontario that can withstand any crisis for generations to come,” she said.



Donald Trump

Also this week, Bonnie Crombie, leader of Ontario’s Liberals, reiterated her commitment to stand with Canada in response to the US threat of tariffs.

“I am fully behind a coordinated response by the provinces and federal government to fight back against Trump. We are united 100 percent with every bit of true patriot love in our bodies, behind Team Canada,” she told the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

She added, “Ontario needs a Premier who will stand up to Trump. Who will fight for our jobs, our industry, our small business owners and our workers.”

Also responding to the US threat was Ontario Greens leader Mike Schreiner, who stated, “In the face of these tariffs, we need a Team Ontario approach that puts people before partisan politics to protect Ontario jobs, workers, and companies. With his irresponsible snap election call, [Premier Doug Ford] has abandoned people and put his own job before Ontarians’ jobs.”

He added, “As we work to protect and support the businesses and jobs most at-risk from tariffs, we need to respond forcefully to defend Ontario, invest in local supply chains, and aggressively diversify trade partners.”



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# Princess Margaret's Carry The Fire lights the way amid predicted cancer surge

— The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation offers hope amid a predicted surge in cancer cases with its Carry The Fire Initiative, a ground-breaking brand campaign that will address an expected 77 percent rise in new cancer cases over the next 25 years, including an alarming rise among millennials.

**Toronto** – Since opening its doors in 1958, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, University Health Network has established itself as a global leader in cancer diagnostics, research, and treatment.

Its world-first discoveries range from the discovery of stem cells, the basis of bone marrow transplants, to the cloning of the T-cell receptor, which allowed cancer researchers to pioneer the field of immunotherapy, as well as the world's first lumpectomy combined with radiation, eliminating radical mastectomies for millions of people with breast cancer.

Despite many advancements, the number of cancer cases is rising worldwide, with a concerning increase among younger generations. By 2050, it is projected that new cancer cases will surge globally by 77 percent, with millennials facing the most significant increase, underscoring the critical importance of the work of Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

To unite all Canadians in a collective effort to transform cancer outcomes, The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation has launched a new brand campaign called *Carry The Fire*, which conveys a message of hope for a world free from the fear of cancer.

*Carry The Fire* resonates with cancer patients and their loved ones who rely on world-leading diagnostics, innovative research, novel treatments, and exceptional care. This inspiring new brand will be implemented across all public engagement and fund-raising initiatives, including lotteries and events, acting as a beacon of hope for cancer patients here in Canada and around the globe.

It will also be a key springboard for a historic fund-raising campaign The Princess Margaret will launch publicly in 2026.

"Imagine a world free from the fear of cancer. We can. It's

why we *Carry The Fire*," said Dr Miyo Yamashita, President and CEO of The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation.

Yamashita added, "A cancer diagnosis has historically been met with fear of the worst possible outcome. *Carry The Fire* serves as a symbol for changing how we think and talk about cancer, and we believe it will ignite new hope for current and future generations."

With its research, education, and care ranked among the best in the world, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre has a global impact on cancer patients everywhere. *Carry The Fire* and fund-raising efforts will amplify these efforts in many ways, including:

**Early Detection: Preventing cancer before it happens.**

Researchers are improving patient survival and quality of life by increasing early-stage cancer diagnoses and enhancing prevention programs. This includes a revolutionary liquid biopsy blood test that detects cancer at its earliest stages. Early detection significantly increases the likelihood of successful treatment, with cure rates improving by five- to tenfold for some cancers.

**Innovative Treatments: Better, more tailored therapies.**

Princess Margaret Cancer Centre is pioneering new targeted treatments like theranostics and advanced immunotherapies, next-generation surgical robotics, and more precise, targeted cancer medicines. These treatments have the potential to eventually replace traditional chemotherapy and ease the physical challenges often associated with cancer care.

**Comprehensive Support: Addressing the full range of needs of cancer patients.**

Cancer patients and their loved ones encounter a wide range of emotions, including fear, anxiety, and loneliness, as well as long-term side effects from many treatments. Committed to alleviating the emotional challenges often associated with cancer, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre leads several cancer mental health initiatives and world-leading research in cancer supportive care, including a specialised program dedicated to

young people facing cancer and Canada's only clinic for caregivers of cancer patients.

"Our world-leading experts are at the forefront of new discoveries and breakthroughs in cancer prevention, early detection, diagnostics, and treatment, improving outcomes for patients here in Canada and around the globe," said Dr Kevin Smith, President and CEO of University Health Network (UHN).

Cancer is on the rise; however, survival rates are higher than ever before:

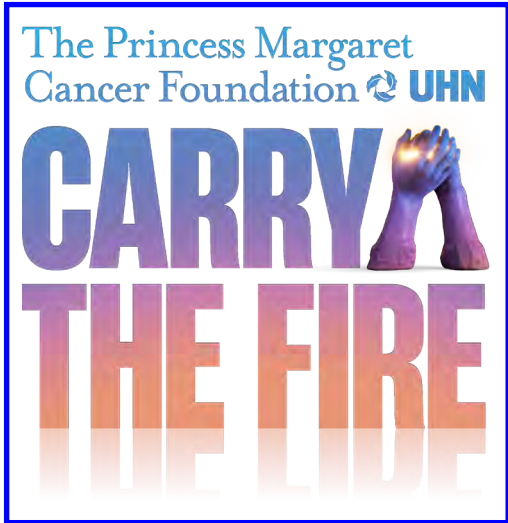
- In Canada, the five-year average survival rate for all cancers combined has increased from 50 percent in the early 1980s to approximately 63 percent today. This marks a significant improvement since the 1940s when survival rates were around 25 percent.
- While most cancers predominantly affect older individuals, cases among those under 50 have increased by nearly 80 percent since the early 1990s.
- More than one million people under 50 die from cancer each year, and experts predict that this number will rise by 21 percent by 2030.

"Seeing an increase in younger patients at the cancer centre is a global reality that we must address urgently", according to Dr Keith Stewart, Director, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and Vice President, Cancer, UHN.

Stewart added, "Our physicians, researchers, and staff work tirelessly on the most challenging and rarest forms of cancer in the country, developing personalised treatment plans along with the necessary medical and emotional support for every patient, while also improving standards of cancer care everywhere through our world-leading research."

The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation is Canada's largest cancer charity. It is dedicated to raising funds for Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, one of the world's leading cancer research and treatment centres, known for its breakthrough discoveries that transform patient outcomes. Together, its work benefits cancer patients everywhere in its mission to create a world free from the fear of cancer.

Through philanthropy, fund-raising events, and a world-leading lottery program, PMCF is changing how the world understands, prevents, diagnoses, and treats cancer, benefitting patients at The Princess Margaret, throughout Canada, and around the world.



FEBRUARY 2025

# BLACK HISTORY month

Let's celebrate the contributions and achievements of Black Canadians all year-round!

**Did you know:** Mary Ann Shadd Cary founded a racially diverse school in Canada and became the first Black female newspaper editor in North America.



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**Editorial**

**Remittance uncertainty**

**C**aribbean migrants in the US, like counterparts from Latin America and Africa, embody resilience and sacrifice. We leave behind homes and loved ones, and take on grueling, challenging jobs to send money back to communities that depend on them. These are remittances, and they pay for education, healthcare, housing, and even basic sustenance back in the homelands.

For nations like Haiti, where remittances represent more than 20 percent of GDP, or Jamaica, where the figure stands at 16 percent, these funds are not merely financial inputs – they are lifelines between the diaspora and our families back in the homelands.

The renewed immigration trajectory by the new US administration threatens to sever these connections. With policies like the reinstated “Remain in Mexico” program, expanded expedited deportations, and the termination of legal pathways for migrants from regions like our Caribbean, the spectre of mass deportations looms large.

Our Caribbean homelands cannot afford to passively weather this storm. As Distinguished Professor at the University of Alberta, and political scientist, Dr Andy Knight aptly observes in the *Trinidad Express*, our region must adopt a unified and strategic approach to safeguard its economic and social stability.

Caricom has historically served as a platform for regional cooperation, but in this moment of heightened uncertainty, its role must be expanded. Our homelands like Trinidad and Tobago, which face moderate remittance dependency, can leverage Caricom alliances to provide collective bargaining power on the global stage.

As the US tightens its borders, our Caribbean homelands must strengthen its relationships with other nations facing similar pressures. Alliances with countries like Canada and Mexico, which have their own stakes in the US’ immigration policies, can foster partnerships that safeguard migrant rights and ensure the continuity of remittance flows.

Collaborative frameworks could also facilitate the development of regional migration policies that protect the interests of both migrants and their home countries.

Advances in digital payment technologies, such as mobile wallets and blockchain-based remittance systems, offer a way to reduce transaction costs and ensure that more money reaches the families who need it most. By investing in these technologies, Caribbean governments can empower their diaspora communities to send money home with greater efficiency and lower fees.

Too much of a reliance on remittances exposes the Caribbean to vulnerabilities beyond migration policies, including global economic shocks and exchange rate volatility. Diversifying local economies through investment in renewable energy, tourism innovation, and technology-driven industries can create sustainable jobs at home, reducing dependence on remittance inflows. Initiatives that support entrepreneurship and small business development will be crucial in fostering economic resilience.

Our stories as a Caribbean diaspora must be elevated to counter the dehumanising rhetoric often associated with immigration debates. Advocacy for fair immigration policies in host countries, led by Caribbean governments and diaspora organisations, can amplify the region’s voice on the international stage. This is not merely a moral imperative; it is a pragmatic one, as the well-being of diaspora communities directly affects the region’s stability.

While this existential unfolding in the US calls for bold action, it is also a reminder of the enduring strength of our Caribbean spirit. From the sugar plantations of colonial history to our thriving diasporic networks of today, our region has always found ways to rise above adversity. The resilience of our people, in tandem with strategic planning and innovation, offer a way forward.

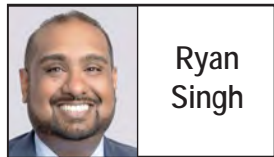
The bonds between the Caribbean and our diaspora are unbreakable, even as new challenges emerge. By strengthening our connections and building a more self-reliant economic foundation, our Caribbean region can transform these emerging moments of precarity into an opportunity for renewal. In doing so, the Caribbean affirms not just our survival, but our inherent ability to thrive.

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

**Important to get out and vote in coming election**

**D**espite all the recent talk of an early federal election, surprise, voters in Ontario will go to the polls on February 27 to vote for a new provincial government. After months (almost a year) of speculation, Premier Doug Ford called a snap election almost one and a half years before the set date for a general election in Ontario.

This is a controversial decision by the Premier; however, he has not shied away from bold and controversial decisions before, and he is hoping that this decision will pay off for his government in the long term.



Ryan Singh

Before delving into the rationale of Ford’s decision, it is important to level on how Ford was able to call an early election. Constitutionally speaking, any premier (or prime minister) can call an election at any time during their mandate despite a fixed election date.

In 2005, the Liberal government under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty passed the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005. This made a fixed election date law in the province. The required elections are held on the first Thursday in October every four years, starting in 2007.

The caveat was that the act did not prevent the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from dissolving the legislature “when the Lieutenant Governor sees fit”. In other words, when the sitting Premier requests that the Lieutenant Governor do so.

The Elections Act was amended in December 2016 by the Kathleen Wynne government. The update scheduled all subsequent provincial elections for “the first Thursday in June in the fourth calendar year following polling day in the most recent general election”.

Moving the provincial election to the spring was intentional to avoid any election campaign periods overlapping with municipal elections in Ontario, which are held every four years on the fourth Monday of October.

However, a provincial election in June 2026 would have no calendar conflict, so why did Doug Ford press ahead with an early election? The answer is simple – political advantage.

Ford has touted that the election was necessary to ensure he had a mandate to support Ontario’s economy against tariffs from the Donald Trump administration in the US. But Ford had a significant majority in the Legislature already. He leveraged his advantage of an incumbent government to call an early election while the opposition parties were still not prepared.

The Ontario NDP and Ontario Liberals, both with rookie

leaders, were facing the obstacle of time as they prepared their bids to replace the Ford Progressive Conservatives. An early election cut that time short significantly. It was less time to recruit candidates, less time to raise funds, and less time to campaign ahead of the election.

Another consideration that likely weighed into Ford’s decision was the reversal of federal and Ontario governments. Typically, the governments are rarely of the same political stripe, a natural phenomenon by voters that balances out the political dynamics.

When Jean Chretien’s Liberals won a majority government in 1993, Ontario elected Mike Harris’ PCs in 1995. After Dalton McGuinty became premier in 2003, Stephen Harper led the Conservative Party to victory at the federal level in 2006. Justin Trudeau won a federal majority government in 2015, and Doug Ford led his PCs to a majority in Ontario.

With the Conservatives, under the leadership of Pierre Poilievre polling extremely well, Ford likely did not want to risk the chances that Ontarians would counterbalance by replacing his government after the federal election.

Further, as the Poilievre Conservatives continue to poll high, and appear to be poised to become the next government, this means a lot of resources within the Conservative world will be redirected. From staff to strategists, volunteers, stakeholders, and donors as well. As the federal Conservatives continue to be a shiny new option for Conservative-Canadians to latch on to, it will become increasingly difficult for Ford PC’s to retain the talent and resources they need.

Regardless of Ford’s decision, and whether we agree or not that there should be an election, the fact is that we are in the middle of an election and need to ensure we do not waste the opportunity.

Voting is the right of every citizen, and we should ensure that we cherish this right. In Canada, we can boast about our fair voting process, even if the voting day is earlier than anticipated.

Having a voice to select who represents us is important and we should not waste that opportunity.

This election will very much be a referendum on the Ford government in Ontario, and voters have the power to send a message on the performance of the government, but also of the future they want in the province.

Even if the election is a year and a half earlier than anticipated, it is important to get out and vote.

**Steel-tipped boots, concrete replace march of crabs**

**I**remember the mound of sand shifting, with a tentative rippling at its edges, as if an enormous living creature hidden beneath it was preparing to surface and flee as our invading footsteps approached.

I was a young boy back home, and our family was walking to the beach. I recall insisting that I not wear my tiny flip-flops. Right away I paid the price for obstinacy, the soles of my feet burning on the pebbled path that was being heated by the blazing sun.

Still, I hobbled ahead with the unstoppable enthusiasm and naïveté of youth, my feet quickening pace each time I heard the surf hammering in the distance. Then there was that additional clip, having tasted the salt in the air that arrived with the soft wind penetrating the sugar canes that now had crept to the edge of the land to meet the sea.

I was desperate to keep up with the lengthy strides of our neighbour, a lanky fisherman, who was leading the way, playing a game where the tips of my toes touched the edge of the shadow cast by his wide straw hat.

We caught glimpses of the beach through the mangroves, which woven and interlocked, still clung to the memory of the ways things had been before the sugar canes came.

It was here, where for the short duration of my boyhood, there still existed a world older than the one I knew. But now everything around was being overtaken, and had become even more segmented into endless fields of sugar canes that fed the insatiable appetite of the nearby sugar factory.

I remember the old people talking about the beach between each lungful of acrid tobacco smoke, their memories reaching back to the time when monkeys made raucous noises overhead, calling to each other that invaders were encroaching into their territory in the approach to the sand and the blue water beyond.

Now, there were no shrieking protests of territoriality; the monkeys were gone, the trees that were their homes replaced by sugar canes.

In the silence of this erasure, in the absence of a chattering of protest could sometimes be heard a rustling as the wind, heavy with its memory of the sea and the land, wandered through the leaves and thrash of the sugar canes searching for the monkeys and the trees.

But even the creep of the sugar canes was temporary. Soon the sugar canes were supplanted, giving way to another extractive invader. I recall in my early youth when the brick houses arrived

to tower above our adobe huts; then came roads and machines, and with it a human din of hundreds of voices that replaced the lamentation of the wind winding through the sugar canes.

But that day the mangroves made me laugh. Quietly, *sotto voce*, my parents had whispered to each other, saying the knots of the thick and tangled roots of the mangroves were like the knees and flopping feet of our thin and lengthy fisherman neighbour striding ahead.

The mangroves were soon to disappear, like the annoyed calls from the monkeys. Bulldozed and land-filled, the salt marsh where they stood,

with knees knocking and holding hands in their final hour, was later replaced by a sparse, open landscape; then came warehouse brick buildings, and factories with blasts from air horns calling to workers in the morning, at noon, and to leave in the evening.

But on that one day I was a young boy and excited by the excursion to the beach. I did not understand the weight of this shifting world; that the rippling at the edge of the sand was a disturbance, a disruption that would lead to yet another tectonic shift in the world where I was growing up.

My feet dancing on hot pebbles, we passed the village dump where donkey carts were being unloaded, even as the poor creatures shook their heads with annoyance at the hordes of large, iridescent flies happily exploring the pink depths inside their lengthy ears. For a dizzying moment, the scent of rot mixed with the refreshing smell of the ocean.

But then, the sea-taste of salt began thickening the air, and sand began appearing in curious drifts among the roots of the mangroves. And then it happened – a drift of sand began shifting, moving, and picking up pace.

I was terrified until the illusion began peeling away layers of sand to reveal thousands of small crabs, with shells blue in spots in the sunlight, their one oversized claw clicking against the warmed pebbles, the sound like colliding billiard balls.

It was a sight of chaos and perfection, heaving over one another in an endless stream that mimicked the rippling of a wave receding from the shore, their eyes levering like windshield wipers, their scurrying an encoded response that our approaching footsteps meant the inexorable coming of change.

Now concrete has replaced the sand. Where crabs scuttled and monkeys howled, whistles of factories hoot, calling to the fisherman neighbour’s grandchildren. They respond wearing steel-tipped boots, uncaring whether the tide comes in or not.



Romeo Kaseram

## Budget 2025 committed to agriculture

Dear Editor,

The government of Guyana has allocated (G) \$104.6 billion to the agriculture sector in the 2025 National Budget, reaffirming its commitment to expanding this crucial industry. This allocation, a six percent increase from 2024, highlights the government's determination to ensure food security and diversify the country's economy.

A substantial \$13.3 billion is dedicated to revitalising the sugar industry, aiming to restore its significance as a key economic driver. The rice industry will receive \$430.9 million to increase storage capacity and introduce modern equipment for crop management.

I am most pleased about this as it underscores the government's continued commitment in further advancing these sectors.

To encourage diversification, a goal heavily campaigned on by President Dr Irfaan Ali and Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha, \$2.9 billion has been set aside for the cultivation of crops like corn, soya, spices, and high-value produce such as broccoli and cauliflower.

Today, we have seen great strides in this sector. The growing coconut industry will also benefit from \$116 million, supporting its expansion, much needed for its sustainability.

The agro-processing sector, which adds value to local produce, is earmarked for \$800 million. This is set to fund the expansion of

the Guyana Shop initiative, with 12 new locations planned across the country to promote locally made products under the "Made in Guyana" brand.

The livestock sector will see investments of \$1.7 billion, with projects including the construction of a feed pelletiser storage facility and slaughtering facilities for pigs and ducks. Meanwhile, the fisheries and aquaculture sector will benefit from \$1.3 billion, aimed at increasing shrimp ponds and improving monitoring of fishing activities.

These investments are a timely reminder of a government that wants development for its people, the opposition with its crop of leaders can in no way achieve such a goal.

We must also take note of the \$73.2 billion being allocated to upgrade the country's drainage and irrigation systems, ensuring the resilience of agricultural lands against climate-related challenges. Already, the upgrades made over the last three years have made positive impacts for farmers.

These investments demonstrate a clear strategy to strengthen Guyana's agriculture sector. By boosting production, diversifying crops, and modernising infrastructure, the government is fostering economic resilience and creating new opportunities for growth.

The 2025 budget represents a significant step toward reducing reliance on oil revenues while positioning Guyana as a regional leader in sustainable agriculture.

Fawaz Harry, Guyana, via email.



Zulfikar Mustapha

## 'Machinations at work in beloved TT'

Dear Editor,

What is not done with a good heart ends up with an evil intent. Machinations are at work in our beloved country.

Ever since Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley imposed a State of Emergency on December 30, 2024, and then on January 4 announced his decision to step down, Trinidad and Tobago seems to be at sea.

How can we have the wool pulled over our eyes by the proposed resignation of the Prime Minister, and citizens remain clueless?

Rowley has given no clear date for his exit. He even said "the political landscape is a changing, ephemeral thing, and sometimes you may make a decision and find that you have to change it".

It was hard to believe that the SoE was really to deal with gangs, although that was the government's explanation.

The arrest and later release of Police Commissioner Erla Harewood-Christopher on allegations of issuing licences for two sniper rifles to the Strategic Services Agency likely masks something much more sinister.

Rowley fought tooth and nail to get Harewood-Christopher appointed as Police Commissioner.

But recently, Rowley made several accusations against the Police Service, including that some stations were closed at night because officers were afraid of gangsters.

Harewood-Christopher fired back and said that it was not true, and Rowley reiterated his statement.

Her arrest came less than a day after the Privy Council blasted Finance Minister Colm Imbert on his handling of the Auditor General affair.

Is this a case of "wag the dog"? The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines it as "superfluous military action to deflect from a domestic scandal".

Did the Police Commissioner uncover something so nefarious that it required her immediate arrest under a State of Emergency? The firearms user's licence she approved for these two guns seemed to be outside of her authorisation; or so the story goes.

And how can 3,000 body cameras, costing close to (TT) \$25 million, be stuck in China because the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has not made any payments to the local supplier?

How is it that these cameras can cost taxpayers almost (US) \$220,000 per month, and counting, in storage fees, and no one bats an eyelid?

The Police Commissioner was not arrested for this. However, she was arrested, and released, for alleged misbehaviour in public office.

In November 2015, a sitting government minister's two young children were photographed with very high-powered guns in their hands. Does anyone remember? No one was ever arrested.

How can we have a SoE and the Mr and Mrs Bigs are still walking around smiling?

This action takes all the attention away from the Finance Minister. He is the one whose behaviour we should be scrutinising.

Rowley said that the appointment of former Police Commissioner Gary Griffith was the worst decision he ever made. Was it because he could not bend Griffith to his will?

Was this why he went to President's House to insist that he did not want Griffith's name to go to Parliament for a second time?

Are we now 'Eating the bread that the devil kneaded'?

Nationals of Trinidad and Tobago must be judicious and wise in digesting information coming from any source.

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



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# Borders, belts tighten as US moves threaten Caribbean remittances

— A mother in Omoa, Honduras waits anxiously for the remittance to arrive that pays her children's school fees. A grandmother in New Amsterdam, Guyana, is anxious that the funds her daughter sends from abroad may not arrive this month to pay the rent. Here are fragile lifelines of survival staked to remittances sent to our Caribbean homelands by our diaspora whose inflows from abroad sustain many families. With sweeping deportation policies and tighter migration restrictions under the new US administration, these lifelines are now under threat. With thousands being deported, and US border policies growing harsher, millions of lives hang in the balance. In our latest exploration for our Caribbean diaspora, we examine the ripples of uncertainty, hope, and resilience in a world where these vital connections now face unprecedented disruption.

**A Series on the Caribbean Diaspora**  
By Romeo Kaseram

A Local Journalism Initiative

The crack of a gavel, the final slam of an iron detention centre door, the roar of engines as a military cargo plane takes off are soon to be iconic sounds echoing across a nation that has long defined itself as a land of opportunity. For many migrants in the US, these sounds now herald a door to opportunity that is slamming shut.

With the January 20 inauguration of President Donald Trump and the swift enactment of his aggressive immigration policies, the fate of millions of migrants in the US now hangs in precarity. And with this, the fragile lifeline of remittances they send home to sustain families and economies, our homelands in the Caribbean being among them.

Trump's administration wasted no time from Day One in reviving and intensifying measures that target undocumented immigrants. In the sweep of Executive Orders, the scope of expedited deportations has expanded to every corner of the US.

Deportation flights now deploy military aircraft to return detainees to their home countries, with last week seeing over 5,000 individuals removed from border facilities in San Diego and El Paso, Texas, as the BBC reported.

Meanwhile, the dismantling of the CBP One app, a scheduling tool introduced to streamline asylum claims under the administration of former President Joe Biden, has left 30,000 migrants stranded in Mexico with cancelled appointments, with another 270,000 waiting in limbo on the Mexican side of the border.

Among the most controversial moves is the reinstatement of the "Remain in Mexico" policy, which forces non-Mexican asylum seekers to endure months, sometimes years, in dangerous border towns while their cases languish in a backlogged immigration court system. For those lucky enough to escape deportation, many now face new hurdles under policies limiting legal pathways to work or asylum.

It means that migrants, who were once able to send regular remittances home, are instead left in detention, or are being driven into hiding, cutting off the lifelines they worked so hard to maintain.

For millions of families around the world, the stakes are now nothing less than survival. Remittances, which are often sent by individuals working long hours in kitchens, construction sites, and care homes, represent more than money. They are the difference between children going to school or working in the fields, between a family receiving medical care, or having to endure untreated illness. The profound depth of humanity driving these financial flows cannot be overstated.

Dr Andy Knight, Distinguished Professor at the University of Alberta, and co-founder of the Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean (Trinidad), underscores the dire implications for Caribbean families.

Writing in the *Trinidad Express* on January 21, Knight states: "Trump 2.0 is poised to

impose stricter immigration laws, with sweeping deportations of undocumented immigrants and tighter restrictions on legal pathways. For Caribbean nationals, including those from Trinidad and Tobago, this could translate into greater difficulties travelling to or residing in the US."

He added, "One of the most critical ripple effects of these policies would be the potential loss of remittances. Remittances from the US represent a vital source of income for many Caribbean families."

According to the online site, *The Global Economy*, in 2023 Trinidad and Tobago received \$177.19 million in remittances, a decline from \$204.37 million in 2022.

As Knight notes, "The drying up of these funds could exacerbate poverty and economic hardship for families reliant on these inflows."

His warning illuminates the global stakes of this issue. As the BBC highlights, the policies being implemented by Trump's administration are among the most sweeping in US immigration history, with direct repercussions for millions of migrants and the economies that depend on their financial support.

To fully understand the gravity of these changes, we must explore the broader context: the historical and global significance of remittances.

These financial flows, which are sent across borders by migrants to support families and communities, are not just about money. They represent a powerful force in reducing poverty and improving lives.

But now, the very migrants who sustain these lifelines find themselves at risk, an existential threat to the very source that vitalises the economic stability that remittances provide.

Remittances are small, steady streams of money sent across borders. These may seem like unremarkable economic transactions on the surface. But behind every transfer is a story of sacrifice and resilience, of someone toiling far from home to provide for those they love and whom they left behind.

These financial flows, amounting to \$656 billion globally in 2023 according to the World Bank, are the silent scaffolding that supports millions of lives in developing nations; they help build schools, buy medicine, pay rent, keep lights on, and put food on tables.

The profound impact of remittances on reducing poverty is undeniable. In Uganda, remittances reduced poverty by nearly 11 percentage points. Meanwhile, Bangladesh saw a six percent reduction, and Ghana achieved a five percent reduction, according to the IMF.

Even during times of political upheaval, such as Nepal's decade-long conflict, remittances accounted for between 20 percent and 50 percent of the 11 percent decline in poverty between 1995 and 2004.

These figures illustrate that remittances are not just economic inputs; they are lifelines that allow families to survive, dream, and rebuild amidst adversity.

At the household level, remittances provide an immediate safety net. In poorer families, they finance basic needs: food, education, housing, and healthcare.

In wealthier households, remittances often seed small businesses or entrepreneurial ventures, generating local economic activity. On a national scale, they fund imports, service external debts, and, in some cases, even serve as collateral for overseas financing.

However, the importance of remittances

goes beyond numbers and percentages. Each transaction represents the aching absence of a parent, sibling, or child who has left their homeland behind to seek opportunities abroad.

Here in the GTA, many of us from the Caribbean would recall a crackling phone line during an "overseas call" at a telephone centre to a relative abroad; or the notification from a money transfer company bringing relief to a mother awaiting funds to pay her child's school fees from a husband working abroad.

The true power of remittances lies not only in the transferring of funds, but also in the connections they maintain, in the futures they secure across the crackling of great distances.

Today, more than 184 million people across the globe live as migrants. They are driven by economic opportunities, conflict, or climate-induced displacement, according to the *World Development Report 2023*.

Many leave behind countries where jobs are scarce and economies fragile, crossing oceans and borders to work in fields, kitchens, and factories. Nearly half of these migrants live in high-income nations, while a third reside in developing countries.

Together, they send home funds that often far surpass foreign aid and other forms of financial assistance that their home countries receive.

In fact, in over 60 countries, remittances account for at least three percent of GDP, playing an outsized role in economic stability. For small or fragile states, many of which are in the Caribbean, Africa, and South Asia, remittances are not just an economic boost; they are a lifeline.

The story of remittances is also one of resilience. During the Covid-19 pandemic, while

economies contracted and borders closed, global remittance flows defied expectations. Families abroad tightened their belts to send even more money home, ensuring that loved ones in hard-hit regions could weather the viral turbulence.

This globally traumatic period underscored the dual sacrifices of migrants: enduring hardship in host countries while maintaining the lifelines for their families back home.

However, remittance flows are now facing a new kind of disruption, such as the restrictive immigration policies recently implemented in the US. With deportations ramping up and pathways for legal migration shrinking, the stability of these flows is under threat.

For many families across the globe, the stakes could not be higher. When remittances dry up, children are pulled out of school, medical treatments are delayed, and the slow grind of poverty tightens its forward roll.

At its core, the global story of remittances is one of connection and perseverance. As the Covid-19 pandemic amply illustrates, it is migrant workers in distant lands who sacrifice their own comfort for the well-being of those left behind in the homelands. It is a mother who turns every dollar transferred by a husband overseas into a future for their children.

And in this time of uncertainty, liminality, and deportations, it is the quiet hope that, despite the challenges, these fragile bonds will hold, even across the vast distances in world that grows more and more uncertain with each passing day.

In our Caribbean homelands, such as in Omoa, Honduras, the rhythms of daily life are shaped by both struggle and resilience. For Martha, a 22-year-old mother of three, each day is a balancing act. With limited job opportunities in her northern Honduran town, her family relies heavily on the remittances sent by her husband, Jery, who has acquired his residency in the US.

Through Jery's hard work, the remittances he sends back to Omoa provide for his family's

**See Next Page: Global family bonds**



Dr Andy Knight

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(Executive Director, Alladin Foundation)

**SPEAKERS**

Allama Hafiz Ghulam Yasin Rizvi  
(Hafiz Foundation, NJ, USA)

Dr. Muhammad Usman Abdulla Naqshbandi  
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# Global family bonds fray as US policies shake remittance lifelines

## From Previous Page

most essential needs, with Martha purchasing food, clothing, paying healthcare bills, and securing an education for the next generation. Martha's eldest daughter now attends university, a goal that once seemed unattainable.

Speaking to the online publication, *IOM UN Migration Storyteller*, about her husband's contributions to the household from abroad, Martha states, "For many Honduran families, like mine, remittances are an economic support for the household. [My husband's] support has been unconditional, and without it, we would not be accomplishing our goals."

Jery's and Martha's story is shared by thousands in Honduras, where remittances are among the main sources of household income. In 2023 alone, this nation received \$8.8 billion in remittances, equivalent to 26 percent of its GDP, according to *IOM UN Migration Storyteller*.

These funds are indispensable, with over 25 percent of households depending on them for food, health, and education.

For Adelmo, a Honduran father who spoke to *IOM UN Migration Storyteller*, the journey to support his family began more than two decades ago. Living in California, Virginia, and Florida, he worked in construction, and then as a truck driver.

The long hours and extensive travel were grueling, but it allowed for part of Adelmo's pay packet to be sent to Honduras to support his wife, young children, and extended family.

His remittances made a tangible difference, he states: "Eventually, I was able to pay off my mortgage and purchased land where I hope to build a new home for my children."

Adelmo's story underscores the dual sacrifices migrants make: the separation and enduring absence from loved ones mean sending support that sustains entire households.

...

The narratives of Martha, Jery, and Adelmo resonate deeply for our diaspora here in the GTA, which similarly hails from the Caribbean. Across the region, remittances are not just monetary transfers, they are lifelines that sustain families, stabilise economies, and help to prepare the next generation for a better quality of life.

In our homelands, a number of small and vulnerable economies are particularly reliant on remittances. Limited industrial bases, dependence on imports, with tourism susceptible to natural disasters triggered by climate change, amplify the significance of these financial flows.

In a few of our homelands in the Caribbean, remittances far outpace other forms of foreign assistance, highlighting the essential role of our diaspora's contributions in maintaining economic resilience.

In the Caribbean, Haiti remains the region's largest recipient of remittances. In 2023, it received \$4.25 billion, accounting for more than 20 percent of its GDP, according to the online site, *The Global Economy*. These funds are indispensable in a nation grappling with political instability and recurring natural disasters. For Haitian families, remittances pay for food, education, and housing, often serving as their primary means of survival.

Meanwhile, Jamaica is a diaspora powerhouse. This nation's diaspora has made it the Caribbean's second-largest recipient of remittances, totaling \$3.71 billion in 2023, according to *The Global Economy*. These flows have grown steadily, providing critical support for education, healthcare, and small businesses.

For many Jamaican households, remittances from its diaspora, such as here in the GTA, mitigate the challenges posed by inflation and limited job opportunities back in the homeland.

For Guyana, its contributions in remittances continue to rise, as *The Global Economy* notes. Guyana received \$548.84 million in remittances in 2023, reflecting steady growth

as its diaspora continues to support families. Despite its burgeoning oil industry that is now reshaping the economic landscape, remittances are still crucial for funding education, healthcare, and meeting household needs.

In Trinidad and Tobago, remittances remain modest but are quite vital. As *The Global Economy* notes, in 2023 Trinidad and Tobago received \$177.19 million in remittances, a decline from \$204.37 million in 2022. While the country's diversified economy lessens its reliance on remittances compared to other nations in the region, these funds still provide essential support to many households.

Stability marks the remittances that are sent to the smaller nations Grenada and Barbados, which also rely on remittances, but on a more modest scale. Grenada received \$49.32 million in 2023, while Barbados received \$85.18 million, *The Global Economy* notes. In both countries, remittances play a key role in funding education and rebuilding after natural disasters, providing a safety net for vulnerable families.

Across the Caribbean, remittances are more than just economic transactions. Instead, they stand out as a testament to the enduring ties between our diaspora and the homelands. However, this reliance on remittances leaves the region exposed to external shocks. As the US intensifies deportations and restricts migration pathways, the stability of these lifelines is now at risk, as Knight notes in his article written for the *Trinidad Express* earlier this month.

Notably, for Caribbean nations like Haiti and Jamaica, any significant decline in remittances could deepen economic vulnerabilities, pushing already struggling families closer to the brink.

...

As members of the Caribbean diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area line up at counters in money transfer companies to send funds to their loved ones back to our homelands, there is an unspoken acknowledgment of the silent sacrifices that sustain these lifelines.

Each remittance represents not just a financial transaction but a thread of connection woven across oceans, a reaffirmation of bonds that neither distance nor time can sever. Yet today, those bonds are being tested by unprecedented challenges.

The turbulence introduced by heightened deportations and restrictive immigration policies under President Trump's administration signals a period of profound uncertainty.

For the many migrants in the US who are both documented and undocumented, the fear of separation and deportation looms large, threatening not only their lives, but the survival of families who depend on their support back in their homelands.

As the machinery of deportation accelerates its grind, remittance flows, which have long been a cornerstone of economic stability for the Caribbean, face potential disruption.

But while this period of liminality casts a shadow over the present, it also carries a reminder of the resilience that defines both migrants and the communities they sustain. The story of remittances has always been one of perseverance, of families and individuals adapting to challenges and finding ways to thrive against the odds.

Advances in technology offer a beacon of hope in the face of these upheavals. Digital payment systems, mobile wallets, and blockchain-based platforms are revolutionising how

remittances are sent and received.

These innovations are making transfers faster, more affordable, and more secure, ensuring that even as traditional systems face strain, families can continue to rely on these vital funds.

For nations in the Caribbean, investing in such technologies could reduce the costs associated with remittances, putting more money into the hands of families who need it most.

The Caribbean diaspora, particularly in hubs like Toronto, represents an untapped wellspring of potential. Beyond financial transfers, our diaspora community can play a pivotal role in national development by contributing skills, investments, and advocacy.

Governments can deepen their engagement with these communities through targeted policies, such as diaspora bonds, incentives for investments in infrastructure, and programs that encourage knowledge transfer. By embracing these opportunities, our Caribbean homelands can harness the power of our diaspora to build more robust, self-sufficient economies.

This period of uncertainty also calls for a renewed focus on local economic development back in the homelands. By supporting small businesses, creating training programs, and fostering entrepreneurship, our Caribbean nations can reduce reliance on remittances and create sustainable income opportunities at home.

The resilience of our region lies not only in its ability to weather external shocks but in its

capacity to cultivate local solutions to global challenges.

Despite the turbulence, the story of remittances remains a testament to the strength of the human spirit. It is in the father working in extreme cold at an industrial site in Fort McMurray in northern Alberta; in the nurse doing a double shift at a hospital in Scarborough, Ontario; and in the truck driver navigating a major snow storm in the eastern provinces – all are united in a shared purpose, which is to provide for their families, and so give them a better future.

These are the stories that define our diaspora daily, and our unyielding commitment and the unbreakable ties that bind us to our Caribbean roots.

As the Caribbean grapples with the uncertainty ahead, there is solace in knowing that resilience is not a new concept. From weathering hurricanes and rebuilding, to overcoming colonial legacies and enabling new generations, our region has always found a way to rise.

In the same vein, the spirit of our diaspora is marked by innovation, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to industriousness, hard work, and thrift, which will continue to be sources of our immense strength.

For those of us living in Toronto who are sending funds to families back home, this moment calls for reflection and action. It is a time to recognise the fragility of the systems we rely on, but also to celebrate the strength of the ties that bind us. Even as policies shift and the world grows more uncertain, one truth remains steadfast: the bonds between the Caribbean diaspora and our homelands are unbreakable.

The future, though uncertain, holds room for optimism. Together, as a diaspora and as a region, we can face the challenges ahead with resilience, hope, and an unshakable belief in our collective strength.



Aldemo supports his family in Honduras with remittances. *IOM UN Migration Storyteller* photo

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# Infrastructure push should be in tandem with economic growth

— As Guyana embarks on its most ambitious fiscal year to date, the government's commitment to large-scale infrastructure development signals a strategic approach to long-term economic sustainability, with the private sector positioned as a key partner in the nation's growth trajectory.

**Georgetown** – With a substantial (G) \$209.3 billion earmarked for roads and bridges development in the 2025 Budget, Chairman of the Private Sector Commission, Komal Singh, has underscored the importance of targeted infrastructure investment in sustaining Guyana's economic momentum.

In his initial reaction to the record-breaking \$1.382 trillion fiscal package, Singh highlighted that the government's continued focus on infrastructure would enable the private sector to invest heavily in the nation's economic development.

Emphasising the symbiotic relationship between infrastructure and economic expansion, Singh pointed out that this strategic investment is essential for preventing stagnation across key industries.

He also noted that both the private and public sectors stand to benefit from these large-scale projects, which are designed to yield long-term returns.

"Inside of the infrastructure, there's lots of talk around why we are putting so much money into infrastructure development. But let me say it from a private sector position and from an investor standpoint. If a country is to grow, then we must make sure that the infrastructure is in place. If those infrastructures are not in place, then we'll

have stagnation in the manufacturing sector, in the mining sector, in transportation, moving our people around the country," he told the media in Guyana last month.

Additionally, "[It] is very heartening to see that while the economy is growing and the country is growing, governments have continued over the last couple of years – and we see it in 2025 budget again – to continue to pay keen attention on strategic infrastructure development," Singh stated.

Singh specifically pointed to key infrastructure projects, including \$20.2 billion for the completion of the new Demerara River Bridge and \$5 billion each for the commencement of work on the new Corentyne River Bridge, the Palmyra to Moleson Creek Highway, and a new four-lane fixed bridge across the Berbice River.

Another critical initiative is the construction of the Lethem Highway, a pivotal transportation corridor that will strengthen trade connectivity between Guyana and Northern Brazil.

However, Singh cautioned that without a complementary deep-water port, the full economic potential of the highway could be undermined.

"If we build a road and we don't have a deep-water port, we're back to square one. We're going to be having still shallow drivers to come in here, collecting small amounts of cargo. So, we will definitely need to make sure that the deep-water port is developed as quickly as possible," he stated.

Additionally, "[By] the time the road is completed, we have a deep-water port to support the traffic that will be coming from Brazil to meet the North American market," Singh further explained.

Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali's administration has identified the deep-water port as a priority, aligning with its broader infrastructure agenda for the next term in office.

Singh noted that private sector investments

in Guyana have exceeded (US) \$2.5 billion over the past four years, with much of the country's economic growth fueled by the burgeoning oil and gas sector.

However, he stressed that private enterprises remain committed to expanding other key industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, and logistics.

Looking ahead, he expressed optimism that the 2025 budget's infrastructure focus will continue to lay a strong foundation for Guyana's sustained economic development.

"Private sector has been very committed to the growth and development, and private sector is very happy to see that the government also is creating an enabling environment for the private sector to grow, to create sustainable employment, to create sustainable growth in the various sector also, not just for ourselves, but for the region. Most of our investment that we're looking at right now is targeting not just Guyana, but the region," Singh added.

Meanwhile, Guyana's Attorney General Mohabir Anil Nandlall highlighted that while the 2025 national budget remains people-centred, at the same time it also balances bold infrastructure investments with social development initiatives.

Nandlall described the budget as unprecedented in scale, noting that this is the first time in Guyana's history that a financial injection of this magnitude will be allocated across multiple sectors.

He emphasised that Guyanese across all industries will benefit from the government's expenditure, with major investments in infrastructural, socioeconomic, and service-oriented sectors.

"Hundreds of thousands of workers will benefit. Whether you're selling water or you're selling homes, whether you are in the service industry, the agricultural industry, or the technological industry... Whichever industry you are engaged in, this money will be spent in that area and those who are participating at whatever level in the activity will benefit from it," he declared.

Beyond infrastructure, the 2025 budget includes an aggregated \$90 billion in relief measures to mitigate the cost of living and increase disposable income for thousands of Guyanese.

Key social initiatives include an increase in old-age pension to \$41,000, a rise in public assistance from \$19,000 to \$22,000, a \$10,000 universal health voucher, and a one-off \$100,000 cash grant for babies born to Guyanese mothers.

Additionally, \$9 billion has been set aside for targeted interventions aimed at easing the global rise in living costs.

Nandlall also pointed to significant fiscal measures, including a reduction in freight charges, the continuation of zero percent excise tax on petroleum products, and the abolition of tolls on the Berbice River Bridge.

He indicated that these policies will be replicated for the Wismar Bridge and the new Demerara River Crossing upon completion.

"You will hear the argument, 'We have oil, and therefore, you have money'. And the answer to that is, 'Yes'. We have an additional revenue stream, which we didn't have before. But what are we doing with the money?" Nandlall questioned.

He continued, "The largest chunk of that revenue is being spent to improve Guyana's infrastructure, in terms of providing the requisite social services, health, education, water, housing, and doing every other thing to which the budget makes reference."

Nandlall underscored that the government



**Komal Singh**

## BUDGET 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

ROADS AND BRIDGES

# \$209.3 BILLION

to further develop the roads and bridges infrastructure

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January 17, 2025

has been steadfast in fulfilling its electoral promises, working to earn the trust of the Guyanese people through tangible policy actions.

"Every single one of the manifesto promises has already been fulfilled," he asserted, adding that this generation of Guyanese is uniquely positioned to witness the kind of transformational development their forefathers had only

envisioned.

"This is something we must not take for granted. The new revenue stream that we have gotten is Guyana's blessing. And every Guyanese is entitled to benefit from this. It is the people's resources and that is why the budget does not in any form or fashion discriminate. It embraces every Guyanese from birth to death," he declared.

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# Imdadul Mosque marks Isra Wal Miraaj

By Sayem Khan

Special to Indo-Caribbean World

**Toronto** – Members of the Imdadul Islamic Jamaat gathered on Sunday, January 26 to observe *Isra Wal Miraaj*, a significant Islamic event commemorating the heavenly ascension of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

The evening unfolded with the melodious recitation of the *Holy Quran* by Ustadh Siddiq Rustam. A young sister who is also a *Hafidha* (one who has memorised the *Holy Quran*) Aisha Shiraj also performed a beautiful recitation from the *Holy Quran*. Aisha was visiting the Imdadul mosque for the first time, and she captivated the audience with her eloquent recitation.

To inform the congregation about the profound teachings of this important occasion, Imdadul Centre welcomed an accomplished Imam Shaykh Shariq Khan, a long-serving Imam of the Bradford Islamic Centre who has been serving the Greater Golden Horseshoe region, and the GTA community for a number of years.

The noble practice of dissemination of knowledge through the esteemed company of learned contemporary scholars has always been Imdadul's hallmark. Imam Shariq's scholarly presentation and his engaging delivery style were confirmation of his eminence and erudition.

Another highlight of the program was the passionate speech that was delivered by Honorary Consul Mani Singh from the Consulate General of Guyana here in Toronto. Among other things, Singh spoke to global peace and unity, while highlighting Guyana's core values Guyana as a pluralistic state, and reiterating that the homeland was constituted with many races, religions, and cultural backgrounds.

Performance of Islamic *nasheeds* always adds a different flavour to any event, and members of Imdadul Jamaat always enjoy beautiful

performances by veteran members and committed supporters like Brother Agar, Sister Nazir Baksh, and Brother Abdollah Noora.

Monaf Solaiman, an accomplished data engineer, also extended the invitation to attend the upcoming book launch in honour of the Late Shah Ahmad Noorani, an iconic scholar, activist, and economist.

The Imdadul mosque is proud to host the book launch program, which will be attended by senior scholars, local, and foreign guests. It takes place on February 23 following *Zohar salat* at 1:00 p.m.

With Ramadan a few weeks away, it was also a perfect opportunity for members to engage in spiritual reflection, and to start their preparation in anticipation of the arrival of the blessed and holy month.

Participants at the event also engaged in collective recitation of *Salatus Salam* and prayers for the entire Muslim *ummah*, which was led by Ustadh Siddiq.

Attendees were also treated to a sumptuous dinner and desserts! In addition, the mosque remained open later the next day, January 27, the night of the Islamic month of *Rajab* for members to perform their rituals by reciting the *Holy Quran* or praying extra *rakats* of *salat*.

Imdadul has a series of events planned throughout the New Year. February is already going to be an engaging one with multiple events in the works. In addition to the weekly Seniors' and Monthly 'Feed the Needy' programs, there will be a special program on the night of *Lailtaul Barat* (the 15th Night of *Shaban*), which will be held on February 13.

The *Ramadan Souk*, is a popular event showcasing the entrepreneurial spirit of Muslim small business owners, will take place on February 21. Also among the highlights for February will be the book launch on February 23. Visit Imdadul's website for the upcoming programs!



Imdadul's Osman Khan and Sayem Khan are second and third from left; at centre are Honorary Consul Mani Singh, with guests, scholars, and other dignitaries



A section of the gathering that attended the Isra Wal Miraaj at Imdadul

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## Govts urged to prepare for US deportees

Two senior Caricom diplomats are urging regional governments and citizens to prepare for an expected surge in deportations from the US, as the new administration led by President Donald Trump moves to expel thousands of undocumented immigrants, including individuals from the Caribbean.

Sir Ronald Sanders, Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the US, and David Commissiong, Barbados' Ambassador to Caricom, have issued the message, advising regional authorities to closely monitor unfolding developments and ensure that law enforcement agencies are ready to manage the potential challenges posed by an influx of deportees.

"Absorbing large numbers of deportees suddenly can have a disrupting effect on the social services of

Caricom governments, particularly in relation to healthcare and education. The additional strain could exacerbate unemployment, and potentially, contribute to a rise in crime rates," Sanders wrote in his syndicated column.

He added, "These are all factors that will have to be monitored closely, and appropriate representation made to the US government if the problems become unmanageable."

Commissiong echoed similar concerns, cautioning that regional governments cannot afford to remain passive as deportation operations intensify.

"Caricom countries have to be concerned because the US has been a prime migration destination for our people, and there are many Caricom citizens or people of Caricom ancestry in the US. So, I think that beyond just concern, I think our countries would be well-advised to be proactive and to put some

contingency plans in place."

He added, "If, as seems likely, significant numbers of our people will be deported back home, we have to be prepared for that. So, we need to give some thoughts on how we respond and how we would be able to help."

While no significant increase in deportations has been recorded in the region thus far, both diplomats stress that Caricom govern-

ments must remain vigilant and ready to address any fallout from a large-scale return of nationals.

Meanwhile, the Jamaican government indicated last week that it is "rigorously" assessing the risks associated with the deportation of criminals back to Jamaica from the US.

Speaking with the media, Foreign Affairs Minister Kamina Johnson Smith noted that persons subject to deportation fall into

different categories, with some individuals convicted of very serious criminal offences that include violence, while others may have breached immigration laws but have otherwise been law-abiding residents engaged in productive employment.

"From a citizen security perspective, as a government, we are particularly concerned about the potential impact of the anticipated increased return of individuals with serious criminal backgrounds," she said.

Additionally, "The National Security Council is therefore rigorously assessing associated risks, and is actively engaged in formulating strategies to mitigate potential threats to public safety. Ensuring the security of all Jamaicans remains our highest priority."

It has been reported there are 5,120 Jamaicans with questionable backgrounds who are being targeted for removal from the US.



Sir Ronald Sanders

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## BRACE YOURSELF: IMPACTS OF TARIFFS ON CANADA'S REAL ESTATE

In the light of US President Donald Trump's moves to impose tariffs on Canadian imports, the Canadian economy, including the real estate market, may encounter difficulties. Tariffs are taxes levied on imported goods that increase prices for consumers and businesses. Governments commonly utilise tariffs to safeguard local industries or address trade disputes.

Here are how these tariffs and potential retaliation could affect the broader economy and the housing market. Trump's tariff proposal isn't merely talk. If enacted, Canada is poised to retaliate with its own tariffs on US goods, focusing on the automotive, agriculture, manufacturing, and energy sectors. According to CTV News, Canada prepared a retaliation plan, which was unveiled shortly after February 1.

Tariffs increase the price of imported goods, and if Canada retaliates, the cost of US goods will rise, contributing to inflation. With the US providing about 50 percent of Canada's imports, tariffs could significantly raise living costs for Canadians, leading to higher consumer prices and potentially runaway inflation. The Bank of Canada (BoC) may need to raise interest rates to tackle inflation, which contradicts its recent efforts to support economic recovery through rate cuts.

Increasing interest rates could significantly impact Canadians if the BoC raises its policy rate to curb inflation. Such a rise could strain household budgets, increase mortgage delinquencies, and lower housing demand. Businesses would also encounter higher borrowing costs, slowing economic growth and worsening financial stress for indebted households. Approximately 40 percent of homeowners are estimated to renew their mortgages this year. These homeowners secured their mortgages during the pandemic at low rates. If interest rates rise, many homeowners will face financial hardship and may default on their mortgage payments. Canada's major banks could experience increased loan losses to an extent not seen previously.

The real estate market, already cooling with home sales down 19 percent year over year, may experience further declines. High interest rates will make it more challenging for buyers to qualify for mortgages, and the new capital gains tax will also decrease the number of investors purchasing residential properties. If interest rates rise, many will unload their portfolios, resulting in a surge of homes for sale, and prices could drop even further.

Building new homes would become expensive since Canada relies on US imports. Construction would halt, and consumers would avoid buying expensive items such as automobiles, which can trigger massive layoffs. The high cost of living, compounded with high unemployment, is a recipe for recession. With Canada's ballooning debt, the Canadian dollar will have a free fall, resulting in an even higher cost of living.

We must take this threat seriously. If the US imposes a tariff on Canada, we may be unable to weather a financial meltdown. We live in uncertain times and must protect ourselves if the US enacts such a tariff. Homeowners with variable-rate mortgages should think about locking in fixed-rate mortgages. If your mortgage is due for renewal later this year, you can speak to your lender about early renewal options that blend current interest rates with previous rates.

Buyers should request their lenders to lock in interest rates at today's rates. Lenders typically hold the rates for up to three months. With this guarantee, home prices are expected to drop if a tariff is imposed, allowing you to secure a bargain while knowing you have locked in a low rate.

If a tariff is imposed, it will likely be short-lived, as the Canadian government will yield to US demands and prevent a collapse of our economy. If you are considering selling your home, don't worry: the situation will improve. In this market, it is wise to sell your home before purchasing.

Investors should refrain from making purchases, as prices may decrease when the tariff is implemented, creating the perfect opportunity to acquire prime real estate. If you are investing in second mortgages, remember that if home prices fall, there is enough equity in the property for you.

While it is still unclear if the US will impose tariffs or how Canada will react, one thing is sure: we're on shaky ground. The best approach to navigate potential economic turbulence is to spend less, save more, and stay informed.

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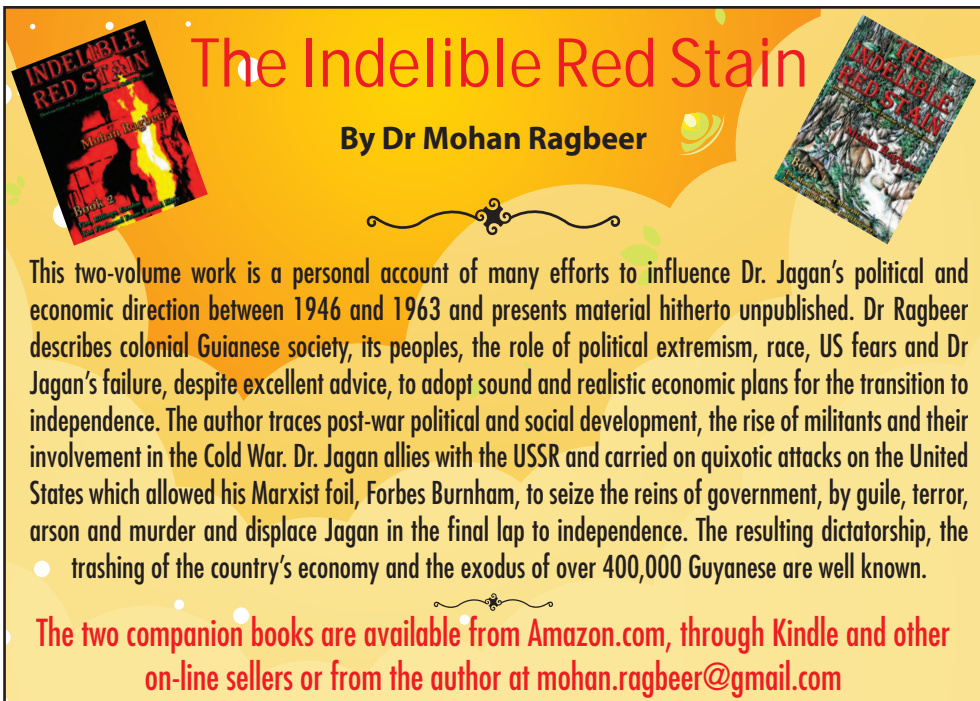


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## The Indelible Red Stain

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This two-volume work is a personal account of many efforts to influence Dr. Jagan's political and economic direction between 1946 and 1963 and presents material hitherto unpublished. Dr Ragbeer describes colonial Guianese society, its peoples, the role of political extremism, race, US fears and Dr Jagan's failure, despite excellent advice, to adopt sound and realistic economic plans for the transition to independence. The author traces post-war political and social development, the rise of militants and their involvement in the Cold War. Dr. Jagan allies with the USSR and carried on quixotic attacks on the United States which allowed his Marxist foil, Forbes Burnham, to seize the reins of government, by guile, terror, arson and murder and displace Jagan in the final lap to independence. The resulting dictatorship, the trashing of the country's economy and the exodus of over 400,000 Guyanese are well known.

The two companion books are available from Amazon.com, through Kindle and other on-line sellers or from the author at [mohan.ragbeer@gmail.com](mailto:mohan.ragbeer@gmail.com)



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# BHM reflections on MLK's dream: progress made, challenges remain

By Dhanpaul Narine

February is Black History Month. This article examines the extent to which the dream of Dr Martin Luther King Jr is still alive. We may have come in different ways but we are in the same boat now. We can fight each other and sink, or work together and safely reach the shore.

In 1963 an attempt was made to redeem the soul of America, to open a dialogue on its destiny. How cogent was it and 50 years later is the dream still in good shape? When MLK stood at the Monument in Washington and delivered his famous speech many felt that it was a landmark and a turning point in the civil rights movement in the US.

As MLK outlined his vision for America, he put aside part of his prepared text and reaffirmed the values for which this nation stood. His call for mutual tolerance and respect was passionate. He spoke about the need for equality and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the pillars on which our doctrine was built.

They sounded good on paper, but in practice these values were sadly lacking. MLK's imprint on the national ethos and character is best summed up in his speech on August 28, 1963.

He said, "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character."

Two decades earlier another peacemaker said, "All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family." He was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who became an inspiration for MLK.

In the years since the 'Dream Speech' there have been fundamental changes in the US. What are these changes and if MLK were to visit again? What would the children say to him? In short, how is the 'content of character' played out in the cities, in the suburbs and the boardrooms of America?

The pictures from segregation are harrowing. It was in 1954 that the Supreme Court upheld the case in Brown vs the Board of Education. This meant that the classrooms were opened up to children of all races. Thurgood Marshall took on the case and he later went on to become the first Black judge in the US Supreme Court.

But even though the classrooms were desegregated there was discrimination in other places. In 1955 Rosa Parks was arrested after she refused to give her seat to a white passenger in the bus. This took place in Montgomery, Alabama.

A year later the Federal government was forced to send in the troops to escort Black students to a school in Little Rock, Arkansas. In North Carolina there was sit-in at Woolworth's, which was led by black students to protest discrimination. The dreaded Ku Klux Klan also made their hooded presence felt by attacking blacks.

These and other incidents catapulted Martin Luther King into the public eye, and his calls for non-violence struck a chord on the national conscience. While non-violence formed the central philosophy of MLK's mission, he was keenly aware of the plight of Blacks, and he addressed it publicly.

MLK wanted a redistribution of wealth in the US. He felt that the system had given Blacks a 'bad check'. But as he said, Blacks have refused to accept the fact that "there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation".

MLK went on to make an economic case for the mobility of Blacks when he said that they lived "in a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity". MLK's position is that there can be no achieving of social equality unless there is economic equality. The point is that while we link arms and sing boisterously "We shall overcome", little progress will be made in real terms if the playing field is not level.

If people live in societies that are fractured by inequality, then all the rhetoric in the world will fail to redress the situation. There is no doubt that King was fighting an entrenched establishment in the same manner that Gandhi did in South Africa and India. But the remedy as both peacemakers saw it was to fight hatred with love and violence with peace.

If MLK were to revisit America he would be pleased with many changes that are for the better. The schools are fully integrated, many children have made good use of education and have moved on to good jobs, and are even running corporations. College enrolment records show that both Blacks and whites earn about the same for comparable qualifications.

Blacks hold dearly the right to vote, and for the most part they take that right seriously. Some of them have become Governors and Mayors, and the Jim Crow laws are a thing of the past.

MLK would be happy to see a Black President in Barack Obama, something that he could only dream about in 1963, when he was holding "these truths to be self-evident". The election of a Black President engendered pride among Blacks and a desire by many children to do well in school.

One positive aspect of the Obama campaign is that he was able to cross the racial divide, and to pick up white votes even more than John Kerry did in 2004. America has come a long way when voters chose a Black candidate Deval Patrick to be the Governor of Massachusetts. Deval was re-elected as Governor for a second term in 2010. In terms of race relations there is no more segregation in parks, in sports, the armed forces, or in other public places.

But there is a more fundamental analysis to segregation. America has realised that discrimination should be outlawed both in word and deed. Today, there are several ways of reporting discrimination, and those who are found doing so can be taken to the courts. A guilty verdict can lead to hefty fines and a loss of consumer support in the business sector.

At the international level MLK would be pleased to know that apartheid in South Africa was outlawed, and that his movement inspired the Bristol Omnibus Company in England to integrate its riders, as was the case in Montgomery, Alabama.

While these are positive achievements, there is cause for worry and MLK would have been the first to make his views known about it. Don Lemon the CNN anchor said that the number one problem affecting the Blacks is out-of-wedlock-births, which he added was destroying the Black community.

As Lemon stated, "Just because you can have a baby, it doesn't mean you should, especially without planning for one or getting married first. More than 72 per cent of children in the African-American community are born out of wedlock. That means

absent fathers. And the studies show that the lack of a role model is an express train to prison, and the cycle continues."

In 1963 only 25 percent of Black children were born out of wedlock and this was seen as a crisis at the time.

One can argue whether the 2013 figure is really 72 percent or slightly lower but this is irrelevant. The structure of Black families is disintegrating and it is causing a crisis. The fact is that each family will do well to have responsible parents, and this means being involved in the welfare of the children.

MLK had argued that more needed to be done to address the economic inequities that existed between whites and Blacks. He would be disappointed to learn that back in 2009 the median net worth among whites was 20 times more than that of Blacks.

Then there is education. There is more that can be done to improve literacy and to get Black students to pass the standardised tests. In a good many cases funding is lacking in Black school districts when compared to affluent white neighbourhoods. Poverty, drugs, black-on-black crimes, drop-outs from school, and a justice system that treats Blacks unfairly at times have combined to undermine the structure of Black families.

The American Civil Liberties Union states that "Blacks are more often likely than whites to be arrested for the same crime, and in some places their arrest is over eight times more likely".

MLK would be horrified to see sagging pants, the use of the N-word that seems to be ingrained in the vocabulary, and low self-esteem among young adults.

There is the view that the destiny of Blacks lies in their own hands. According to one publication, "Americans who finish high school, work full-time and wait until they are 21 and married before they have children have only a two percent chance of being poor." If Blacks meet these three conditions, then MLK's dream will be realised.



Martin Luther King Jr



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# Exploring the pardon, legacy, and future of the vision of Marcus Garvey

Our community's celebration of Black History Month is also a time for reflection, recognition, and rediscovery. For our Caribbean diaspora in the GTA, February serves as a vital opportunity to seek out literature, historical accounts, and primary sources that connect us to our past. Among the towering figures whose legacy still shapes our world today is Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican-born leader whose call for Black self-reliance, economic independence, and African unity resounded across the globe.

Garvey's name evokes images of greatness and injustice, of a man whose vision outpaced his time, only to be persecuted, imprisoned, and ultimately deported for challenging the *status quo*. His movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), was the largest Black-led global movement of its era. His initiative, the *Black Star Line*, was a bold attempt to create an economic system independent of colonial rule. His words, captured in speeches and books, inspired movements for liberation from Harlem to Accra, from Kingston to Johannesburg.

Yet, for almost a century, he remained a convicted man in the US, despite overwhelming historical evidence that his conviction was politically motivated. It all changed in January, when outgoing US President Joe Biden issued a posthumous pardon.

But a pardon does not erase the past. What does it mean for the name of a man history has already vindicated? And what can we, as members of the Caribbean diaspora here in Canada, learn from this moment?

Perhaps one of the answers lies in the literature, archives, and firsthand accounts that preserve Garvey's message, one that remains as powerful today as it was a century ago.

Born in 1887 in St Ann's Bay, Jamaica, Garvey grew up in a world shaped by colonialism and racial inequality. Opportunities for Black people were limited, and power remained concentrated in the hands of European rulers.

But Garvey's ambitions could not be contained. In his youth, he traveled to Central America, London, and throughout the Caribbean, witnessing firsthand the shared struggles of Black people worldwide – the economic deprivation, the lack of politi-

cal representation, the deep scars of slavery and colonial rule.

Determined to unite people of African descent under a common cause, Garvey founded UNIA in 1914. His mission was clear, despite a part of it evoking some contention, which he stated in his 1921 *Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World*, namely, "to establish a universal confraternity among the race, to promote the spirit of race pride and love, to reclaim the fallen of the race, and to assist in civilising the backward tribes of Africa".

By the 1920s, UNIA had millions of followers across the US, the Caribbean, Africa, and beyond. Garvey's speeches were electrifying, his message of Black pride, self-reliance, and unity deeply resonating with those seeking a way out of the racial subjugation of that era.

His newspaper, the *Negro World*, became a must-read publication, despite efforts by colonial governments to ban it in the Caribbean and parts of Africa.

His ambitions extended beyond rhetoric. He launched the *Black Star Line*, a shipping company designed to facilitate economic trade among Black communities worldwide.

Though *Black Star Line* failed, it symbolised something far greater – a vision of a world where Black people could be economically independent of white-controlled systems.

Garvey's growing influence alarmed powerful figures, particularly within the US government. Among those who closely monitored him was a J. Edgar Hoover, then a rising official in the Bureau of Investigation (which later became the FBI).

Hoover saw Garvey as a threat, and actively sought ways to dismantle his movement. In 1923, Garvey was arrested and charged with mail fraud in connection with fund-raising efforts for the *Black Star Line*.

The trial was controversial, with many believing the charges were fabricated or exaggerated to discredit Garvey. He was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison. His supporters protested, arguing that his imprisonment was not about fraud, but about silencing a powerful Black leader. His sentence commuted, in 1927 he was deported to Jamaica.

Garvey continued his activism in Jamaica, and later moved to

London, where he spent his final years writing and advocating for African liberation. He passed away in 1940.

On January 19, nearly a century after the conviction, then-President Biden granted Garvey posthumous clemency.

Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness described it as a "proud and historic day", noting that the pardon was "a significant first step toward full exoneration".

Caricom Chair and Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley also noted the pardon, saying, "This long-awaited exoneration is testament to the unwavering advocacy of Caricom leaders, both individually and collectively, along with countless members of the diaspora, for the rectification of the unjust conviction of an ardent advocate for the rights and liberties of individuals of African descent."

She added, "[Garvey's] life and work continue to inspire and influence both within and beyond the Caribbean."

But while a pardon formally clears Garvey's legal record, it raises deeper questions. Does a pardon truly compensate for the harm done? How much was lost when Garvey's movement was dismantled? More importantly, how do we ensure that his legacy is remembered beyond symbolic gestures?

Garvey's teachings did not fade with his deportation. His belief in Black economic independence can be seen in today's growing support for Black-owned businesses. His vision of Pan-African solidarity continues to shape modern efforts to strengthen ties among Africa, the Caribbean, and our diaspora.

His emphasis on self-determination and racial pride echoes in movements demanding that Black history be widely taught in schools.

Garvey's influence can also be traced through some of the most significant leaders of the 20th century. Malcolm X's father was a devoted Garveyite, and his early exposure to Garvey's teachings shaped his later activism. In Africa, Kwame Nkrumah credited Garvey as a key influence in Ghana's fight for Independence.

For those seeking to learn more about Garvey, the following books and resources provide essential insights: *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, which is a collection of his most famous speeches and essays. Also, *Negro With A Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*, by Colin Grant, which is a comprehensive biography; and *Race First: The Ideological and Organisational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA*, by Tony Martin, is an in-depth analysis of Garveyism.



Marcus Garvey

HONOURING

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# Top cop's arrest, release spark national security controversy

**Port-of-Spain** – A high-profile investigation into the acquisition of two sniper rifles for the Strategic Services Agency (SSA) has thrown Trinidad and Tobago's security apparatus into uncharted and turbulent seas, with then Commissioner of Police Erla Harewood-Christopher at the centre of the storm. Arrested on January 30 and subsequently suspended while in detention, she was later released without charge, fueling sharp criticism, legal scrutiny, and allegations of political manoeuvring.

The arrest and detention, which took place as part of an ongoing probe into the procurement of military-grade firearms, saw the Police Service Commission (PSC) issuing an official suspension notice to Harewood-Christopher on January 31. The letter, signed by PSC chairman Dr Wendell Wallace, outlined that the Commissioner had been cautioned, formally identified as a suspect in a misbehavior in public office investigation, and placed under arrest.

Shortly afterwards, the PSC sent the matter to President Christine Kangaloo, recommending the appointment of Deputy Commissioner of Police Junior Benjamin as acting Commissioner and Curt Simon as acting Deputy Commissioner. As per protocol, Kangaloo, upon receiving the PSC's request, referred the matter to Parliament, which is scheduled to debate both appointments today.

The controversy deepened while Harewood-Christopher remained in police custody at the St Clair Police Station. The PSC, maintaining that its decision was based on the gravity of the ongoing investigation, directed Harewood-Christopher to cease performing her duties pending further developments.

However, in a dramatic turn, Harewood-Christopher was released without charge on the evening of February 1, raising serious questions about the strength of the case against her.

According to a statement from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), the investigation remains active, with former SSA director Roger Best also under scrutiny.

On the evening of her release, Harewood-Christopher's legal

team, led by Senior Counsel Pamela Elder, condemned the handling of the matter. Elder labeled the detention and arrest as "outrageous" and signaled that the legal battle was far from over.

"The Commissioner of Police was questioned not as a person the officers wanted information from, but she was cautioned," Elder emphasised, adding, "We all know – or we should know – that a caution is administered to a person against whom the officer has reasonable grounds to suspect the person has committed an offence."

Elder further argued that had the investigating officer been left to make the decision, charges might have been laid. She pointed out that during questioning, the Commissioner was told, "I have evidence you did this", which, in legal terms, should have led directly to a charge rather than prolonged interrogation.

Elder, who was present throughout the questioning alongside junior attorney Russell Warner, stated that by the end of the session, it was clear to all involved that there was no evidence against Harewood-Christopher.

Her arrest and subsequent release divided opinion among security experts

that saw condemnation of the move as being politically motivated, while another stressed the importance of institutional oversight.

Retired Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force Major and security consultant Dirk Barnes described the entire episode as a "witch-hunt". With experience in procurement procedures, Barnes expressed skepticism about the legal basis of the detention and pointed to inconsistencies in the media narrative.

"This is just merely a witch-hunt," Barnes stated, arguing that the Firearms Act was either being misinterpreted, or that there was a broader effort to target Harewood-Christopher. Following her release, he reiterated his stance, stating bluntly, "I told you it was a witch-hunt."

Barnes also highlighted the role of the DPP Roger Gaspard in determining the lack of evidence.

"If there was no offence, or no evidence that could lead

to a conviction, they would have had to release her," Barnes explained. However, he cautioned that the possibility of re-arrest remained if new evidence emerged.

A key issue, according to Barnes, was the decision to arrest the Commissioner without sufficient proof of criminal wrongdoing. He emphasised that authorising the procurement of high-powered rifles for the SSA did not constitute an offence unless bribery, financial corruption, or a politically motivated conspiracy was involved.

He further warned that the incident had placed the nation in an uneasy state and urged the public to demand transparency.

Meanwhile, regional security expert Garvin Heerah took a broader approach, focusing on the implications for national security. Heerah underscored the necessity of strict oversight in arms procurement, warning that the controversy had exposed vulnerabilities in the system.

"The procurement of weapons for the TTPS and national security agencies must be subject to strict due diligence, involving checks and balances and adherence to legal protocols," Heerah stated.

He stressed that transparency and accountability were critical in maintaining public trust, noting that signature authorities and approval processes must be closely examined to prevent procedural failures.

Beyond the immediate legal ramifications, Heerah acknowledged the far-reaching impact of the arrest, which had sent shockwaves throughout the region. He linked the unfolding developments to broader political transitions, intensifying security concerns, and the ongoing State of Emergency, warning that these factors combined could significantly affect governance, public confidence, and Trinidad and Tobago's international reputation.

Prior to Harewood-Christopher's release, Heerah had called for the swift installation of an acting Commissioner of Police to ensure operational stability. He emphasised that strong and strategic leadership was necessary to guide the TTPS through the crisis.

"Leadership under these conditions must be strong, resolute, and capable of steering the TTPS through this period of uncertainty with confidence and strategic foresight," Heerah remarked.



**Erla Harewood-Christopher**

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## **A MESSAGE FROM YOUR LIBERAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT:**

This month, we reflect on Black Legacy and Leadership: the profound impact of Black Canadians that have shaped our nation's history and inspire future generations.

From trailblazers to contemporary leaders, the contributions of Black Canadians are integral to our shared story. Our Government is committed to recognizing and uplifting their achievements, resilience, and spirit.

Together, we strive to build a Canada that celebrates diversity, champions inclusivity, and empowers every individual to achieve their dreams.

## **UN MESSAGE DE VOS DÉPUTÉS LIBÉRAUX :**

En ce mois, nous réfléchissons à l'héritage et au leadership des personnes noires : l'impact profond des Canadiens venant des communautés noires qui ont façonné l'histoire de notre nation et qui inspirent les générations futures.

Des précurseurs aux leaders contemporains, les contributions des Canadiens venant des communautés noires font partie intégrante de notre histoire commune. Notre gouvernement s'est engagé à reconnaître et à mettre en valeur leurs réalisations, leur résilience et leur esprit.

Ensemble, nous nous efforçons de bâtir un Canada qui célèbre la diversité, prône l'inclusion et donne à chacun les moyens de réaliser ses rêves.

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# Bollywood horror-comedy *Stree 2* not as streetwise as predecessor *Stree*?

**Stree 2 (Hindi)**

**Director:** Amar Kaushik

**Cast:** Rajkummar Rao, Shraddha Kapoor, Abhishek Banerjee, Aparshakti Khurana, Pankaj Tripathi

**Runtime:** 149 minutes

— It appears *Stree* just refuses to fade into the shadows. The first movie bewitched audiences with its blend of eerie folklore and razor-sharp humour; spooky yet hilarious, lighthearted yet socially aware, the horror comedy worked. However, since *Stree 2* emerged from the mist with a promise of more supernatural mischief, it seems the haunted charm may have become a bit too transparent. Two film critics, Abhishek Srivastava and Shilajit Mitra weigh in on this spectral sequel, offering sharply contrasting takes on whether it delivers the chills and the chuckles; or did commercial ambition not give the movie a ghost of a chance?



Bollywood has long dabbled in horror comedies, but *Stree* (2018) was a game-changer. It blended folklore with contemporary satire, laughter with dread, and most impressively, delivered a ghost story that doubled as a feminist fable. Now *Stree 2* has emerged from the misty by-lanes of Chanderi, hoping to recapture that magic.

But does it succeed? Two film critics, Abhishek Srivastava, writing in *The Times of India*, and Shilajit Mitra in *The Hindu*, offer contrasting takes on the sequel, painting a picture of a film both entertaining and troubled by its own ambitions.

In *Stree 2*, Vicky (Rajkummar Rao), the charming yet nervous tailor-turned-ghost-buster, finds himself facing a new supernatural menace. Where the first film saw men being abducted by a vengeful female spirit, the sequel flips the narrative – this time, a headless entity named Sarkata is preying on women.

Vicky reunites with his old gang: Bittu (Aparshakti Khurana), Jana (Abhishek Banerjee), and the ever-wise Rudra (Pankaj Tripathi) to solve the mystery. And this time the stakes are personal: Bittu's girlfriend, Chitti, is among the missing, and an ominous letter sent to Rudra hints that the key to the horror lies within the missing pages of the mystical document, the *Chanderi Puraan*.

From the outset, Srivastava commends *Stree 2* for “retaining all the charm of the first film”, citing its small-town quirks, endearing characters, and witty script as strengths. He believes the film delivers “a fast-paced, tight screenplay

that keeps viewers hooked”.

Mitra, on the other hand, is less enthused. While he acknowledges the humour and “texture and whimsy” of the first half, he ultimately finds the film too formulaic, remarking that it “coasts along on the charms of the original” but lacks its tailor-made freshness.

Sarkata, the film's headless antagonist, is more than just a spectral menace. Mitra sees in it a deeper metaphor: a “chauvinistic headless monster analogous with a modern-day ‘influencer’, corrupting the minds of young men”. The entity specifically targets women who defy tradition – those who smoke, drink, or marry outside their caste.

It is an intriguing setup, but as Mitra points out, the film does not fully capitalise on this commentary.

“The critique of patriarchy that gave *Stree* its bite is kept to a minimum here,” he observes.

Srivastava, while not dwelling on the film's sociopolitical undercurrents, praises the antagonist's visual execution, particularly the moment when Sarkata's head rolls up “like an innocuous ball of wool before attacking its victims with its tentacle-like hair”.

One of the film's standout comedic moments, both critics agree, is a chase sequence where Jana, in a moment of absurdity, tricks Sarkata into drinking alcohol, resulting in the bizarre sight of a briefly grinning headless ghost. Scenes like these remind viewers why *Stree* worked so well in the first place, which was in

its ability to blend the eerie with the hilarious.

Both critics sing Rao's praises. Srivastava describes him as “once again in top form”, while Mitra delights in his portrayal of “a little man caught in a grand narrative”.

Khurana and Banerjee are also commended for their comic timing, with Tripathi, as always, stealing the show with his “witty one-liners and impeccable *shuddh* Hindi”.

The most notable divergence in opinion comes with Shraddha Kapoor's role. Srivastava finds her character “underwhelming”, arguing that she appears sporadically and contributes little beyond intrigue.

Meanwhile, Mitra is more generous, noting that her character is “a more involved presence this go-around”, even describing her as “all the superhero presence this film needed”. But as he wryly adds, the movie's director, Amar Kaushik

“has other plans”.

Both critics agree that *Stree 2* falters in the second half. Srivastava believes that the screenplay “starts to feel sloppy, as if the makers were in a rush and running out of ideas”.

He particularly takes issue with the sudden cameos of Akshay Kumar and Varun Dhawan, stating that their presence feels like an obvious ploy to “draw in more viewers – or perhaps hint at the creation of a shared *Stree*-*Bhediya* universe”.

Mitra is even more critical, decrying Bollywood's obsession with interlinked franchises, arguing that the movie's post-credit and “post-post-credit” sequences reflect a growing trend of forcing disparate supernatural elements into a shared cinematic space.

As he quips, “Cops and spies and action heroes make sense for a team-up, as do superheroes, but werewolves and ghosts? When did they get so pally?”

Despite its flaws, *Stree 2* remains an enjoyable watch for fans of the original. Srivastava ultimately gives it a pass, calling it “plenty of entertainment” and praising Kaushik's direction for retaining “the energy and charm of the original, with a clever script that brings a fresh twist”.

Mitra, while appreciative of its humour and performances, remains skeptical of its longevity, warning that the film feels more like a commercial product than a natural continuation of the *Stree* saga.

For Bollywood fans in our Caribbean diaspora, the decision comes down to expectations. If you are looking for another dose of horror-comedy with a familiar cast and witty banter, *Stree 2* delivers.

However, if you were hoping for a film that pushes its narrative and thematic ideas further you may find yourself, like Mitra, wondering whether *Stree 2* is the victim of its own franchise ambitions.

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Ibrahim Ali Khan and Khushi Kapoor in *Nadaaniyan*

### *Ibrahim Ali Khan debuts in Nadaaniyan*

**N**etflix India has announced the debut film of Ibrahim Ali Khan, *Nadaaniyan*, in which he stars alongside Khushi Kapoor. Directed by Shauna Gautam, the film is described as a young adult romantic drama that explores the magic, madness, and innocence of first love.

The first poster of the film was unveiled by Netflix India on its official Instagram account, depicting Ibrahim and Khushi in casual attire against the backdrop of a playground. The release date has yet to be announced.

*Nadaaniyan* marks Ibrahim Ali Khan's first film, while it serves as Khushi Kapoor's third project following *The Archies* and *Loveyapa*. Late last month, Karan Johar officially introduced Ibrahim to the industry with a social media post reflecting on his association with Ibrahim's parents, Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh.


Following this introduction, on February 1, the title and first look poster of *Nadaaniyan* were officially unveiled. Netflix India's release

of the poster provided audiences with their first glimpse of the lead pair, capturing the essence of the film's young and carefree spirit.


The film tells the story of Piya, a bold and spirited girl from South Delhi, and Arjun, a determined middle-class boy from Noida. As their contrasting worlds collide, they embark on a journey filled with mischief, heart, and the complexities of young love. The makers have described the film as a vibrant and heartfelt portrayal of first love's charm and chaos.


*Nadaaniyan* is Guatam's directorial debut, who previously worked as an assistant director on *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani*. Her experience in filmmaking is expected to bring depth to the storytelling in this coming-of-age romantic drama.


While an official release date has yet to be announced, the film has already generated significant buzz with the unveiling of its first poster. The anticipation surrounding *Nadaaniyan* continues to build as audiences await further updates on this much-awaited debut.



# CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



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**Black History Month is a time to honour the invaluable contributions of Black Canadians.**


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## Happy Black History Month!

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# Young Sharma unleashes batting storm at Wankhede

Abhishek Sharma did not just play an innings at Wankhede Stadium; he unleashed a storm. England's bowlers charged in and the young left-hander sent them packing, hammering a record-breaking 54-ball 135 in a show of sheer dominance with the bat.

With every six that soared into the stands, the roar of the crowd grew louder, and by the time the dust settled, India had piled up 247 for 9. The innings left England stumped. Rattled and routed, England folded for under 100, handing India a thumping 150-run victory to seal the series. It was more than just a win; it was a statement.

In a format built for fireworks, Abhishek turned Wankhede into his personal launch pad, smashing England's pacers at a strike rate of 250. Jofra Archer, Mark Wood, Brydon Carse, and Jamie Overton, all cruising in at over 145 kph, were left futilely gazing through covers, long-on, and deep midwicket, where he dispatched the ball with effortless power.

Former India opener and now team coach, Gautam Gambhir, known for his steely demeanor, could not contain his amazement.

"I haven't seen a better T20 hundred against bowlers who are bowling at 140-150 kph consistently," he admitted.

England's captain, Jos Buttler, echoed the sentiment, conceding that sometimes, all one can do is tip the cap with respect.

"That's as clean a ball striking as I've seen. I thought he played fantastically well. We always sit down and think what more could we have done or how we could have stopped him, but some days you have to give a lot of credit to the opposition," he said.

As Abhishek walked back, having fallen just short of what could have been an even bigger milestone, England's fielders gathered to congratulate him. Respect had been earned, and a new name had been etched into T20 folklore.

For those who watched Abhishek grow up in Amritsar, his tremendous innings was a prophecy fulfilled. As a child, he had a habit of sending cricket balls into orbit, much to the frustration of coaches and players at Gandhi Stadium. Expensive balls,

Kookaburras, SGs, and Duke, flew over the boundary and disappeared with such regularity that complaints were made about their ongoing loss.

However, father Raj Kumar Sharma, a coach of repute, had a simple response: "Never mind. We would get more new balls from Chandigarh."

And so, Abhishek the boy never held back; today, the young man still does not hold back.

"Hitting big shots has been his style since he was 14-15. He carried that to the age-group competitions," Sharma Sr reflected.

At Wankhede, that instinct was in full flow. Abhishek's bat produced 13 sixes, each more dismissive than the last. When asked to pick a favourite six, he shrugged, "I can't remember them."

Abhishek's explosive rise has been years in the making. His last three IPL seasons, 426, 226, and 484 runs, announced him as a batter destined for bigger stages. Yet, even as he dominated in franchise cricket, his mentor Yuvraj Singh believed he was not quite ready for



Abhishek Sharma

India's top flight.

"He wasn't quite ready for the Indian team yet," Yuvraj told the online website, *Cricbuzz*, last year. Ten months later, Abhishek changed that narrative.

"You will win games for India," Yuvraj told him, a line that Abhishek now carries as mantra.

"He was the one who believed in me, and when someone like Yuvraj Singh is telling you that you're gonna play for the country and you're gonna win games, you try to think all these things - 'Okay, I will play for India, and I will do my best.' I think those words played a major role in my cricketing career," Abhishek shared.

The mentorship was more than just talk; it was also action. Over four years, Yuvraj ensured Abhishek faced the best conditions, calling him for intense off-season training in Chandigarh, Mohali, Gurgaon, New Delhi, and Mumbai.

Sharma Sr credits these sessions for sharpening his son's game against top-tier bowling, which was evident at Wankhede.



## Cricket to Conquer Cancer: Building a bridge to hope

Toronto - Cricket has always been more than just a game for our community - it is a bridge that connects people, cultures, and nations. Across oceans and generations, it unites us with its rhythm, its drama, and its spirit of togetherness. Come May 31, cricket in Canada will become a bridge to something even greater: hope.

*Cricket to Conquer Cancer* is calling on cricket lovers across the country to come together and build a pathway to a brighter future. This inaugural event, benefitting The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, is more than just Canada's largest street cricket fund-raiser. It is a way for us all to cross over into a new realm of possibility, where the power of community fuels ground-breaking cancer research.

On May 31, the streets will come alive with the sounds of laughter, cheers, and the unmistakable knock of a bat striking a ball. Over 100 teams will step onto the pitch, each one a vital pillar in our shared mission to raise \$1 million for world-class cancer research.

However, we are not building bridge in a single day. It begins the moment your team signs up. Every dollar raised becomes a stepping stone, taking us closer to a future where cancer is no longer a barrier to life and love.

The tournament's T5 format guarantees action-packed matches, with just five overs per side keeping the energy high and the excitement flowing. Teams of six to eight players will compete not just for runs, but for a chance to leave an indelible mark. Those who excel in fund-raising can recruit celebrity talent, including international and national cricket stars, turning an already unforgettable day into a moment of legend.

Yet this bridge is not just about cricket; it is also about connection. It is about linking arms across communities, pooling our resources, and channeling our shared love of the game into a force for good.

Every drive with the bat, each run scored, and every dollar donated take us one step closer to better treatment, breakthroughs, and a cure for cancer. At the heart of it all is The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, ranked among the top five cancer research centres in the world, where life-saving innovations are born and hope thrives.

For our Caribbean community, this event is a powerful opportunity to celebrate our love of cricket while standing together for a cause that touches every one of us.

It is a chance to showcase our unity, passion, and commitment to building something extraordinary: a bridge between sport and science, joy and healing, today and tomorrow.

And we can do so one run and one dollar at a time. Step into the crease and join our team. Visit [Cricket to Conquer Cancer](https://www.crickettoconquer.com) to register your team, and be part of this transformative journey. Together, we will stand up and bat to conquer cancer, and in so doing, create hope for generations to come.





# CELEBRATING

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH



**Hon. Judy Sgro**  
Member of Parliament Humber River - Black Creek

This year, we honor the theme "Black Legacy and Leadership: Celebrating Canadian History and Inspiring Future Generations."

Let's take this time to reflect on the incredible contributions of Black Canadians throughout history and recognize the leaders who have paved the way for future generations. Together, we celebrate their enduring legacy and the inspiration they provide for a brighter, more inclusive future.



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JudySgroMp /Hon.JudySgro Hon.JudySgro

# Knight may call for light as captain

Heather Knight says she will need to make “an emotional decision” about her future as captain in the next few weeks after England suffered a 16-0 Ashes whitewash – the worst result of her nine-year tenure.

The England and Wales Cricket Board confirmed they will be conducting a post-series review, which is certain to involve a discussion with Knight about her role after Australia completed their series domination.

“Things are pretty raw and the coming weeks are a time for everyone to reflect on what we could have done better and how we’re going to improve as a side,” Knight said.

She added, “[Retaining the captaincy] is an emotional decision that’s not going to be made now – it’s one for the coming weeks. It’s been a frustrating tour. We unfortunately haven’t played our best cricket here, and we’ve got a lot of soul-searching to do.”

England’s defeat in Melbourne was a seventh consecutive loss after defeats in the three ODIs and three T20s. Knight accepted some responsibility for the defeat, but expressed her desire to continue to represent England, saying she would use the “hunger” of the loss as motivation to improve.

“Australia is always a tough place to come and tour as a cricketer. But ultimately we haven’t played well enough and you’re going to feel that on your shoulders as a leader. We’ll regroup at some point before the season. I think there will be some really honest conversations and reflections individually,” she stated.



Heather Knight

England head coach, Jon Lewis, promised a thorough review into an historic Ashes whitewash, and insisted he was the “right guy” to lead them back from being demolished in Australia.

As Lewis told the media afterwards: “We review everything all the time, we reflect and we try and grow the team and the sport. Just to do it after every away Ashes series is probably not the right way to do it.”

He added, “We will look at every single aspect of what we do internally, and I’m sure the people who work externally from this group, in particular, will look at that as well. We will have to learn and move the team forward.”

Also, “We obviously need to compete better across the bilateral series we play against Australia, but we’ve also got World Cups as well. We’ve got a 50-over World Cup coming up in India this year and we’ve got to turn around things really quickly because it’s only eight or nine months away.”

Lewis’ position is now under scrutiny following the debacle of the Australia tour. He was asked about his future after England’s performance in Melbourne.

“I strongly feel that there’s real growth left in this group of players. We’ve got some really young players that have played throughout this series. I really feel I haven’t finished the job I came here to do,” he said.

Additionally, “Obviously the results haven’t gone the way we want them, but I’m committed to the people in the dressing room and to growing women’s cricket in England. So, yeah, I feel I am the right guy to do it.”



Afghanistan women cricketers played their first game on January 30

# Afghan women get help from global fund

Afghanistan’s exiled women cricketers are set to become the first beneficiaries of a newly launched Global Refugee Cricket Fund, an initiative spearheaded by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) to support displaced athletes.

The MCC, which oversees the laws of cricket, announced the initiative late last month, marking a significant step in assisting female cricketers who fled Afghanistan after the Taliban’s return to power in 2021.

The fund, which aims to raise an initial £1 million, will provide resources to exiled Afghan players, most of whom have resettled in Australia. More than 20 former national team members, among the 25 players originally contracted by the Afghanistan Cricket Board in 2020, have found refuge in Australia, where they played their first match in exile on January 30.

“Cricket has the power to inspire, unite, and empower, and through this initiative, we aim to bring hope and opportunity to those who need it most,” MCC secretary Rob Lynch said in a statement.

The initiative seeks to offer safe training

facilities, educational opportunities, and pathways for competitive play – resources that have been denied to Afghan women cricketers since the Taliban effectively outlawed female participation in sports.

Despite repeated pleas from the players, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has neither sanctioned nor funded their efforts, leaving them without official recognition in the global cricketing community.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has stepped up in support of the fund, contributing an initial £100,000. ECB deputy Chief Executive Clare Connor emphasised the cricketing community’s responsibility in aiding Afghan women cricketers, urging others to follow suit.

“The cricket community must take action to support the brave Afghan women and to give hope that cricket can be a sport for any woman or girl,” Connor said.

She added, “We hope the launch of the fund will inspire other cricketing organisations to support this cause and to unlock cricket’s power to unite communities around the globe.”

# BLACK HISTORY

## Month

Honouring the Black Canadian legacy.



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