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Leaders speak out against Brampton mandir vandalism

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Brampton – National, provincial, and community leaders have spoken out against intolerance and hate following yet another act of vandalism that saw graffiti spray-painted on a Hindu temple in Brampton.

According to police reports, the Gauri Shankar Mandir in Brampton was vandalised overnight between January 29 and January 30. The damage has since been repaired, police told *Global News* on February 1. So far no one is in custody over the incident.

This recent episode of vandalism is among other graffiti attacks against prominent Hindu temples in the Greater Toronto Area.

In July last year, hateful graffiti was also spray-painted on the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Vishnu Mandir in Richmond Hill. It was an act described by the temple's chairman, Dr Budhendra Doobay, as a violation and an assault where all dignity has been removed.

And then in another attack in September last year, vandals again spray-painted hateful graffiti, this time on the gates of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Etobicoke.

As circulated on social media, videos of



Chandra Arya

the graffiti showed the spray-painted text stating, "Hindustan Murdabad" [Death to India], and "Khalistan", a name that describes the concept of a Sikh-dominated homeland that independence activists see as being separate from India.

Similar anti-India, anti-Hindu statements were also evidenced in the graffiti sprayed at Vishnu

Mandir in Richmond Hill, and recently at the Gauri Shankar Mandir in Brampton.

Responding to the latest episode of vandalism in Brampton, Indo-Canadian MP Chandra Arya told the Canadian Parliament on February 1 that the incident at Gauri Shankar Hindu Mandir was "just one of many attacks in recent times against Hindu temples in Canada by anti-Hindu and anti-India groups".

Arya represents the riding of Nepean in the House of Commons in Ottawa.

He added, "Like Islamophobia and anti-semitism, resulting in hate crimes against our mosques and synagogues, causing pain to our Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters, Hindu-Canadians are experiencing the same pain due to rising Hinduphobia. As predicted by a study, Hinduphobia on social media is now graduating to physical attacks."

Arya called upon Canada to take serious note of this alarming trend, and to respond appropriately.

"As Canadians we practice, celebrate, and share our many different religious faiths and heritage peacefully and let us pledge to continue to do so," he declared.

And in a statement to *Indo-Caribbean World*, Vishnu Mandir's leader Dr Doobay also expressed

See Page 4: Leaders call

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



We celebrate the work being done in Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion in the trades by Carpenters Regional Council's Mulisius Joe & Chris Campbell. Story on Page 14.



T&T mourns sudden passing of vocalist Anil Bheem

Port-of-Spain – Calling on the government of Trinidad and Tobago to bestow a posthumous national award on deceased entertainer Anil Bheem, a mournful Opposition Leader and head of the UNC Kamla Persad-Bissessar said the singer sought to unite the country with his music, and comforted many with his melodious voice.

Persad-Bissessar made the call last week at Bheem's funeral. In her tribute, she said, "[Bheem] was a young man from central Trinidad with ambitions to unite this nation with his music. He brought comfort to so many people through his melodious voice."

Persad-Bissessar was among the thousands who attended Bheem's funeral, which was held at the NCIC Divali Nagar on February 9. Also in attendance were government Ministers Rohan Sinanan, Kazim Hosein, and Randall Mitchell, along with promoters Randy Glasglow and Rafi Mohammed; and performers Ravi B, Nisha B, Rooplal G, Rakesh Yankaran, and Dubraj Persad.

Persad-Bissessar said Bheem shared his talent by mentoring young artistes. She added that the outpouring of love displayed by his adoring fans following his death was testimony to his greatness.

"He was the only person who could sing the saddest songs and bring you a feeling of calmness, reassurance, and happiness. He was a cultural icon who brought people together," Persad-Bissessar

declared.

Bheem gave so much of himself, his love, and his talent, Persad-Bissessar said.

"He gave us comfort in our most difficult times and rejoiced with us during the happiest and joyous milestones through his music," she said.

Additionally, "Anil was an icon of music who brought joy and happiness to so many of us through his soulful voice and musical talent. Once you heard his voice you felt lighter on your feet and more cheerful in spirit. He had a rare quality; in that he had an ability to make you happy."

Persad-Bissessar said Bheem should be honoured in similar fashion with other musical icons like the calypsonian Leroy Calliste, the Black Stalin, who died on December 28 last year. For his achievements in calypso and as an entertainer, Calliste received the Hummingbird (Silver) from the government of Trinidad and Tobago, and an honorary doctorate from The University of the West Indies.

Bheem's funeral was attended by thousands of fans, family members, and well-wishers. On the day of his funeral, mourners began gathering at the Nagar site from as early as 8 am to listen to tributes, songs, and speeches in honour of the well-regarded performer.

Bheem led an exhausting schedule as a music producer, singer, entertainer, businessman, and

See Page 18: Bheem led



Persad-Bissessar



Anil Bheem

Photo: YouTube screen capture

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Vishnu Mandir, & One Love Family Services with the AWSC are among our many community groups working diligently at fund-raising & collecting emergency supplies for earthquake victims in Turkey & Syria. In photos above, AWSC members are hard at work preparing emergency items for shipment abroad

Community reaching out to help earthquake victims

Toronto – The loss of lives from the devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake that rocked Turkey and Syria on February 6 stood at over 35,000 dead on Monday, the world media reported.

Also, the United Nations issued the warning that the number of dead in both nations will keep rising, with the final death toll likely to double from its present total of 35,000.

The UN also indicated that the rescue phase of the operations in both countries was “coming to a close”. Moving forward, its focus will now be on caring for survivors, it said.

Last week UN Secretary-General António Guterres said “we haven’t yet seen the full extent of the damage, and of the humanitarian crisis unfolding before our eyes”. Also, estimates from the World Health Organisation suggest that up to 23 million people could be impacted by the natural disaster.

Here in Toronto mobilisation is continuing to help the earthquake victims, with churches, mandirs, mosques, and other charitable groups working to collect funds, medical and emergency supplies, warm clothing, and other items for shipment to the afflicted countries.

Last Sunday, Vishnu Mandir started a fund-raising drive with the goal to raise \$25,000 to aid the earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria.

Its leader, Dr Budhendhra Doobay, also issued an appeal to the community to donate to the temple’s humanitarian arm, the Global Care Outreach Program.

Dr Doobay also extended his appeal to other mandirs, mosques, and churches to begin similar fund-raisers, or to donate to the mandir’s Outreach program. *See flyer below.*

And in another humanitarian effort by another member of

our community, Habeeb Alli, Executive Director at One Love Family Services, has been working diligently on similar fund-raising efforts, and to collect emergency relief items.

On February 9 Alli participated in a Zoom fund-raiser with Dr Munir El-Kaseem, and the NGO the North American Muslim Foundation.

Also, his One Love Table has already sent hampers to Turkey.

Alli has been working with Azerbaijani Women’s Support Centre and one of its board members and advisors, Dr Nazila Isgandarova.

As Alli told Indo-Caribbean World last week, Dr Isgandarova and the AWSC distribute hampers to students and families in Toronto. However, “When the earthquake happened, she instead sent the boxes to Turkey on behalf of One Love Table,” he said.

AWSC has also sent medical and emergency supplies, food boxes, new hot warm clothes, gloves, hats, and blankets to the afflicted area, Dr Isgandarova said last week.

“We also collected money donations, and met with Turkish Consulate Sinen Hanim and got more information about needs. Canada is amazing! They will also send tents, and so on. People are homeless and need emergency shelters, tents as well,” she said.

AWSC has existed since 2005, and is a charity organisation.

Additionally, Dr Isgandarova said, “We continue helping the Turkish community in this emergency situation. AWSC collaborates with One Love Family Services; they provided 20 food boxes. Our members provided all medical and emergency supplies, warm clothes, and blankets.”

See flyer on Page 8.



Dr Doobay



Habeeb Alli

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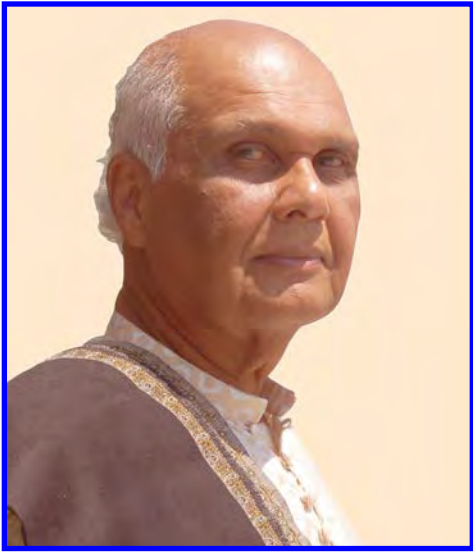
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Budhendra Doobay



Roopnauth Sharma

Leaders call for action against hate

From Page 1

alarm and sadness over the attack.

Said Dr Doobay: "I was disheartened and shocked to hear about the vandalism of the Gauri Shankar Mandir in Brampton. We all should feel safe in our place of worship. Hate is a human condition; it tears society apart."

He added, "As a nation, we've made a lot of progress, but intolerance continues to persist. These actions do not have a place in our society or country. Let us stand up with stronger voices and greater numbers to denounce these acts of hatred and intolerance, and promote respect and inclusion."

Dr Doobay also stated, "Let us counter with acts of goodness; let us pray for God to bless and help these people to be tolerant, to be accepting and respectful to others."

The Brampton vandalism was also condemned by the Hindu Federation, with its President Pandit Roopnauth Sharma expressing "great shock and disgust" over the incident.

As Sharma noted, the mandir was "desecrated with anti-India, anti-Hindu, and pro-Khalistani graffiti". He also recalled this was the third such incident in the last six months that has taken place in the GTA.

Said Sharma: "It is evident that these incidents of desecration are the actions of a very organised group, whose intentions are to create disharmony in the Indian diaspora and disrupt the peace and tranquility of Hindu places of worship. These despicable incidents of desecrations of our temples have caused the Hindu community in the GTA to feel very helpless, vulnerable, and insecure."

As a result, the Hindu Federation called on politicians at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels to "take swift and decisive action to bring back peace and stability to religious communities in the GTA."

Conservatives propose new anti-violence bill

Ottawa — Cathay Wagantall, Conservative Member of Parliament for Yorkton-Melville, earlier this month introduced her private Members' bill, the Violence Against Pregnant Women Act, in the House of Commons.

Wagantall introduced Bill C-311, which adds two new aggravating factors to the Criminal Code of Canada. The crimes of knowingly assaulting a pregnant woman and causing physical or emotional harm to a pregnant woman will be considered by judges for their severity during the sentencing process.

"Conservatives are addressing the real threat of violence against women in Canada who have been left behind after eight years of Trudeau's soft-on-crime policies," said MP Wagantall.

The organisation further stated, "This can be achieved through increased police presence around Hindu temples. If our places of worship do not have security, then it is very difficult to find peace and fulfillment. Worshippers must not be burdened with the worry that the House of God can be desecrated at any time. There must be action from political and religious leadership, as well as community police, to restore the feeling of safety and security in all places of worship."

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, also issued a strong statement condemning the vandalism.

"Everyone should be able to practice their faith in peace, free from violence and intimidation. I stand with Hindu communities in denouncing the vandalism at Gauri Shankar Mandir in Brampton. We have a collective responsibility to denounce hateful acts, which have no place in Canada," she wrote on Twitter.

The incident also saw a response from Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown.

"This hateful act of vandalism has no place in our City or Country. I have raised my concerns over this hate crime with @ChiefNish and @PeelPolice. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their place of worship," Brown wrote on Twitter.

It was revealed in an [August 2022 report by Statistics Canada](#) that the number of police-reported hate crimes increased 27 percent to 3,360 incidents in 2021. Compared with 2019, hate crimes have increased 72 percent over the last two years.

Also, more hate crimes targeting religion (+67 percent) — including Jewish, Muslim and Catholic — and sexual orientation (+64 percent), accounted for most of the national change, along with more incidents targeting race or ethnicity (+6 percent), Statistics Canada revealed.

She added, "Trudeau's crime wave has had serious impacts on women. Since Trudeau became Prime Minister, violent crime has increased by 32 percent and gang killings have gone up by 92 percent. Intimate partner violence has steadily increased each year for the past seven years and eight in ten victims of that crime are women."

The Violence Against Pregnant Women Act follows more than 80 cases in recent Canadian history of women who have been killed by men who knew they were pregnant.

"Women are at a greater risk of intimate partner violence when pregnant, but the consequences their attackers currently face do not reflect the crimes committed," said Wagantall.



Mélanie Joly



Patrick Brown

New path opens for caregivers

Scarborough, Ontario – Ottawa last week announced that the amount of work experience in Canada required for a caregiver to qualify for permanent residence is being reduced from 24 months to 12 months.

As a release noted, for decades caregivers from abroad have played an invaluable role in supporting families in Canada. As a result of recognising the immense sacrifices made by these caregivers, Canada is now offering pathways to permanent residence in return.

The announcement by Ottawa was made on behalf of Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and member of Parliament for Scarborough Centre, Salma Zahid, and member of Parliament Rechie Valdez for Mississauga-Streetsville.

"Caregivers are an important option for families in Canada and have played an instrumental role in the lives of many growing children, aging parents, and those who need additional specialised care," said Fraser.

He added, "By reducing the work experience required in Canada to one year, more caregivers and their families will become eligible to transition to permanent residence sooner, meaning that they can settle down and start the next chapter of their lives here in Canada."

The release also noted that in addition, some spaces under the existing caregiver pathways have been reserved for caregivers who already have work experience in Canada from a previous work permit. This will allow these caregivers to apply for permanent residence.

The change will be effective as of April 30, 2023, and will be retrospective for caregivers who have already applied.

As a result, caregivers and their families will benefit from a faster path to permanent residence and successful settlement in Canada.

"By reducing the amount of work experience required in Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada also intends to improve processing and applications. This update is expected to benefit around 90 percent of applications currently in processing, an advantage for both the caregivers who are just starting out and those who have been providing care in Canada already," the release stated.

It added, "As we approach the end date of the existing caregiver programs, we will continue to make any necessary changes to show our appreciation to the caregivers who help reduce some of the stress in the lives of Canadian families in need. Work is underway on the future of caregiver programming to plan for what comes next after the pilots conclude in June 2024."


"Caregivers are indispensable in assisting Canadian families, and it's an honour for us to provide them a more expedited route to permanent residence and prosperous integration into Canada," Zahid said.

She added, "The decreased work experience requirement and reserved pathways to permanent residence recognize the sacrifices that caregivers make and the value of their work to Canadian society."

Since the launch of the pilots in 2019, nearly 1,600 caregivers and their family members have become permanent residents. In 2022 alone, nearly 1,100 caregivers and their family members became permanent residents through the two pilots.




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Caribbean launches early warning initiative

Bridgetown – An early warning initiative for the various natural disasters now befalling the Caribbean saw its regional launch taking place last week in Barbados, the effort led by Caricom Secretary General, Dr Carla Barnett, the Caribbean media has reported.

The United Nations' Early Warnings for All initiative (EW4ALL) aims to ensure that every person on earth is covered by an early warning system by 2027.

At the ceremony, Barnett said the Caribbean region continues to bear the brunt of the impact of global warming. She noted that EW4ALL "is a key adaptive response to the inability, so far, to limit global emissions to a level that would keep global temperature's rise to within 1.5 degrees of preindustrial levels."

She added, "We are all acutely aware of the developmental setback that a few hours of severe weather inflicts on small States. This is, of course, in conjunction with slow-onset climate impacts like sea-level rise and accelerated drought-flood cycles. Timely, accurate and user-friendly early warning requires a wide spectrum of support."

EW4ALL is intended to drive coordinated political action towards strengthening multi-hazard early warning systems for hazards such as hurricanes, tropical storms, tsunamis, volcanoes, floods, landslides, and epidemics, among others.

It is also aimed at ensuring that every person on earth is covered by an early warning system by the year 2027.

In November last year, at the COP27 Climate Change Conference in Egypt, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, launched the Executive Action Plan for the implementation of the EW4ALL initiative. He asked the World Meteorological Organisation, and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, to co-lead its implementation.

Barnett told the ceremony that the region is at a good time to take stock, given the recent midterm reviews of Sendai and Target G particularly, and the midterm review of the Caribbean's own Comprehensive Disaster Management Framework.

"We can add to this the recent and routine reporting from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the WMO, which all provide valuable input into a regional assessment of

progress and gaps," she said.

Also, "In addition, inclusive and streamlined approaches to implementing early warning products is required at all levels so that local communities, youth, and all other vulnerable groups may contribute valuable inputs to development of systems that guard their own safety."

Barnett said that the Caribbean also needs to take a fresh look at capacity-building, moving beyond providing weather stations and a few days of training, to seeking out opportunities for education and vocational training to support equipment maintenance, statistics and data management, artificial intelligence and modelling, and broadened communication strategies.

"But above all, we must continue on a path where early warning is seen by all users, as underpinned by principles of authority, credibility, and salience," she said.

She also noted that "MET services have constantly battled stubborn disregard for warnings and fake information, which undermine credible efforts and engender public displeasure when a disaster does not occur as it was predicted".

Said Barnett: "This is detrimental to the goal. We learned during our most recent global health crisis that rampant misinformation can be so debilitating, that it can become its own crisis."

Barnett said that decades of progress in meteorological services have provided a strong platform for the pursuit of multi-hazard early warning systems in the region. She said weather-related products and services, despite its challenges, are mainstreamed in daily and seasonal decision-making and planning, adding "we have to build on that progress".

Said Barnett: "Through the EW4ALL aligning with other existing initiatives, we can reach a space where all major sources of risk information and products can reach the effective level of maturity and public integration."

In addition, "We clearly saw the tremendous benefit of multi-hazard early warning in action in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in the lead-up to the eruption of La Soufrière. Despite massive infrastructure damage, early warning and acting upon it, saved lives."



Carla Barnett



Fishermen with a catch in India

Canadian \$ for climate change support

Vancouver – The government of Canada last week announced a total of \$69.5 million in funding for climate finance to support four nature-based-solutions projects to help marginalised communities adapt to climate change, strengthen biodiversity, and reduce poverty.

The announcement came during International Development Week 2023, and was made by Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada.

As the government noted in a release, around the world healthy ocean ecosystems are a key source of food and livelihoods for coastal communities and beyond, and these are under threat. It also noted that the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss have caused coastal erosion and infertile wetlands, which jeopardise the economic, social, and environmental viability of coastal regions and communities, particularly those in developing countries where the impacts are highest.

Sajjan said the funding was for climate finance, and will support four nature-based-solutions projects. Three of these projects are part of Canada's Partnering for Climate initiative, which was announced in February 2022, to support projects implemented by civil society organisations in Canada and abroad, other organisations in Canada, and Indigenous peoples.

It will support climate change adaptation in Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world. The three projects are Regenerative Seascapes for People, Climate and Nature in Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Comoros and Madagascar; Natur'ELLES in Senegal; and Conservation and Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Ecosystems in Kenya.

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Editorial

Reach out & help

The numbers keep climbing with each passing day as more and more bodies of victims from the devastating earthquake are discovered in Turkey and Syria. On Monday the United Nations reported a total of 35,000 dead; then came yesterday, when it was reported that the total had climbed to over 41,000 dead.

There are going to be even more bodies pulled out of the rubble today; and even more tomorrow, and in the days ahead. And as the UN stated earlier this week, the present toll of tens of thousands dead is likely to double by the time rescue operations are halted.

Such is the dire state of affairs in this horror-stricken, and traumatised part of our world, where a 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked southeastern Turkey and northwestern Syria on February 6.

As the reports state, the pre-dawn earthquake was centred in the town of Pazarcik in Turkey's southeastern Kahramanmaraş province. The first wave was then followed by several powerful aftershocks.

By then, thousands of buildings had toppled on both sides of the border. Now we are beginning to understand that the death toll from this devastation will continue to rise, and could double from its present total as rescue workers continue searching for survivors buried under colossal tons of shattered bricks, twisted steel, and broken slabs of concrete.

As the numbers stood yesterday, according to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey had lost 35,418 of its people to the earthquake; across the border in Syria, the death toll stood at 5,801, the world media reported.

Even as the death toll continues to climb, earlier this week UNICEF warned that millions of children are now in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

As UNICEF noted, there are roughly 4.6 million children living in the earthquake-impacted areas in Turkey, with another 2.5 million affected children in Syria. The agency added that the number of children killed and injured is yet to be confirmed; however, it is "likely to be in the many thousands", UNICEF said.

UNICEF also revealed that there may be hundreds of thousands of families without homes, who are exposed to the winter cold, and who have little infrastructure support.

Said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell: "We must do everything in our power to ensure that everyone who survived this catastrophe receives life-saving support, including safe water, sanitation, critical nutrition and health supplies, and support for children's mental health. Not only now, but over the long term."

Yesterday, UNICEF spokesperson James Elder said that given the catastrophic, and climbing death toll, it was now obvious that "many, many children will have lost parents in these devastating earthquakes".

He also warned that it "will be a terrifying figure".

Elder also revealed that families with children were "sleeping in the streets, malls, schools, mosques, bus stations and under bridges, staying with their children in open areas for fear of going home".

He added, "Tens of thousands of families are exposed to the elements at a time of year when temperatures are biting cold, and snow and freezing rain are common." Reports were also coming in indicating rising numbers of children suffering from hypothermia and respiratory infections, he revealed.

Earlier this week Syria opened two more border crossings from Turkey for the next three months to help with the influx of humanitarian aid. Following this move, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that delivering food, health, nutrition, protection, shelter, winter supplies and other life-saving supplies to the millions of affected people was of the utmost urgency.

Already aid from our community is reaching the stricken. As we report in this edition, remarkable work is being done by our own, One Love Family Services, with the Azerbaijani Women's Support Centre.

Also, Vishnu Mandir, and others, have set out on fundraising drives, which require our community's support. Turkey and Syria are in distress; let us reach out and help.

Major mayoral election coming up for TO

Toronto has a rare opportunity to redefine the city's future for generations to come. The advent of a (likely highly-contested) by-election to select a new mayor will allow for much-needed debate on critical issues in the city.

Recent news from Toronto City Hall shocked the city, but paved the way for new opportunities.

On February 10, Toronto Mayor, John Tory, suddenly announced his intention to resign as the city's mayor, after the news was leaked that he had an affair with an employee. The departure of Tory will trigger a by-election for the top job in Canada's largest city.



Ryan Singh

Tory was first elected Mayor of Toronto in November 2014, defeating Doug Ford, the current Premier of Ontario. In less competitive races, Tory easily won re-election in 2018 and 2022. With that, he committed this as a final term in the role, leading Toronto into 2026. However, his premature departure established an abrupt and significant change at Toronto City Hall.

For the first time in nine years, Toronto will have a new head of government. And likely a new direction to addressing a series of alarming issues.

As the head of Toronto's municipal government, the mayor has significant oversight on practical issues that impact citizens every single day. Unlike the Prime Minister or Premier, the Mayor of Toronto has the most direct voters than any other elected position in the country.

From property taxes, fares to ride the TTC, funding of police and fire services, and oversight of water and waste management services, the municipal government directly impacts our day-to-day lives. This is why the upcoming mayoral by-election is a critical opportunity for Toronto.

The next mayor of Toronto will need to work with City Council to deliver future budgets for the city. This will dictate where city funds will go, and what items are priority in rebuilding Toronto. Essentially shaping the city for decades to come. Investments in strategic areas could strengthen the city to rebound, but wrong decisions might leave a hurting impact on Toronto's vibrancy.

Without question, Toronto is facing an unprecedented slew of issues. From traffic congestion on the streets, a rise in crime on public transit, and an increase of unhoused individuals in the city, the next mayor will need to present a bold vision for the city, focusing on these important issues, and likely many more.

In the coming weeks, there will be clarity on the timing of the by-election, and that will come with a likely new group of candidates seeking the role.

However, this isn't a bad thing for the city. A significant crop

of qualified candidates vying for Toronto's mayorship will ensure a diversity of views, and a variety of approaches to solving some of the biggest issues in the city. This will be a unique opportunity for citizens, ensuring that we have plenty of options from which to decide.

Tory came from conservative roots, and brought a small government approach to managing the city. The upcoming election could allow for candidate(s) to present more of the same, but it could also allow other potential candidates to present a more activist approach to managing

City Hall.

Ultimately, citizens will need to look at what the candidates will present, and decide whose vision best suits this city and its diversity.

Toronto is the nation's largest city, and within the vibrant multicultural fabric of the city, there are huge discrepancies and a growing divide. Since the conclusion of the pandemic, many in Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities are facing increased challenges, including general affordability. Rental rates continue to increase, while wages aren't keeping up.

The next mayor will need to be severely cognisant of the growing issues within all communities across the city, and will need to enact a plan to ensure that all residents are supported and benefit from the growing economy.

The future prosperity of this city is dependent on the success of its citizens. Building a truly livable city should be the leading priority for our next mayor.

As we await the announcement of the by-election and receive information on the various candidates, we must be vigilant about the Toronto we want, and the best candidate to achieve these objectives.

That is why it is important for all citizens to vote. This is the singular most important duty of a citizen. And it is even more important that the diverse communities are not left behind. The next mayor should respond to the needs of all citizens, and all candidates will need to know that all citizens are closely watching this race.

On Election Day, no matter your origins, demographic background, or financial status, all citizens have a protected right to vote, all equal with an equal say in the future of the community. The results of this upcoming by-election should not be taken for granted. This vote will determine the direction of the city for years to come.

Everyone entitled to vote should ensure they have their say. This is an important juncture in the history of the city, now is our opportunity to have a say in that future.

Time when good hibiscus fences made good neighbours

Growing up as a "harden" young boy back home was at times cause for grief for my now dearly departed grandmother. There were those days when she constantly complained about my behaviour, and her anxiety over my becoming "somebody" in this life, to any neighbour within hearing distance.

Of course, "hearing distance" back home, given that community interest was always on high alert on whatever was happening in each other's household, was typically over hibiscus fences (and at times, surreptitiously, with a pair of furtive eyes gazing through its parted twigs and leaves) that typically ran between our richly-daubed adobe, palm-thatched houses.

"Look here, Neighb," Ma used to say, invoking that affectionate diminutive, a bob-tailing of 'Neighbour' into 'Neighb', that lifted the neighbour's curiosity upwards from her squat as she peeled vegetables on the back steps.

Now for a quick digression. Back then use of the affectionate diminutive was a typical naming convention when the going was good between the two houses, which were separated by the hibiscus fence.

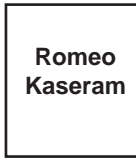
However, when things became "sour like a lime" between both neighbours, such as suspicion of a pet dog stealing a newly-laid egg, or a grazing goat offending by thoroughly feasting on a patch of thriving bhaji in a kitchen garden, it was as sure as dark clouds bringing rain that calling across the fence would change into a dry, formal, and crisp address.

So it was that the fondness in "Neighb" went out the door faster than a scrambling cat that was discovered with its raspy tongue in the butter, said feline torpedoing between two legs, and adroitly dodging whatever vessel was at hand and hurled along with an imprecation; be it the dhal pot (hopefully empty); an enamel cup that clattered against the wall to acquire another dent; or heaven forbid, the cast iron pot for cooking tall curries.

The formality in address was an immediate clue to the neighbour that a reprimand, or a complaint, was in the works.

But of course, whenever my grandmother called across the fence, it was with a tone that was either complicit, or conspiratorial, based on the content that she was about to relay.

Or, when it was about myself, then it was a call for comfort



Romeo Kaseram

preparatory to her launching out about "the little rogue" that was her pride-and-joy, star-apple-of-her-eye, one-and-only grandson.

It was such that said grandson had arrived at her doorstep with an accompanying dose of insomnia, the way breakfast in that Monty Python skit is eternally served with spam, extra spam, and "biggie" spam.

So it was that Ma would lose sleep, which given her long days of labour, and the hardships of life that she was then enduring, was as precious as a short shower of rain during a drought that drained down as trickles off the thatch, and into the thirsty rainwater barrel at the side of the house.

My shenanigans that led to Ma shaking her head, either while administering first-aid, or delivering a stern, forefinger-wagging lecture, were such that alternate days saw me leaving reams of skin behind on the bark of mango trees. Then there were the wayward wanderings along the river's bank, fishing pole over a shoulder, with eyes glued to the horizon and its blue sky; and not at my feet, where the water was rising fast in the flood plain after heavy rainfall in the distant, cloud-clotted mountains.

And there were the quotidian offences, among them plain-as-dahi truculent bad-habits as chewing too quickly on the unpalatable, slimy tip of a hibiscus twig, which served as a toothbrush in those organically hygienic, back-then days.

"You chewing too fast. Too, too fast, child! Your teeth will rotten and fall out if you don't clean them properly!"

"Humph!!" The sound was the neighbour, who listening behind the hibiscus fence, was telegraphing her agreement with Ma over how she was driving sense into my obstinate and "harden" head; of course, doing so via my reluctant mouth.

By then my grandmother was no-nonsense, since in that time of her life she had more chores to accomplish after "daylight break", than there were arms on a god to get them done.

And so, the hibiscus twig, cut for its length as a toothbrush, also saw Ma re-distributing her inherent thriftiness. It was such there was always at least half a metre of twig left after my toothbrush was fashioned, either purposed for tomorrow's teeth-cleaning; or reserved, in the wake of her great experience with my challenging bad-habits, for a more instructive purpose.

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: Frank Birbalsingh, Vidur Dindayal, Bernard Heydorn, Adit Kumar, Dwarka Laxhan, Dhanpaul Narine, Harry Persaud, Arti Panday, Mohan Ragbeer, William Doyle-Marshall. Contact Information: Indo Caribbean World Inc. 312 Brownridge Drive, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5X1 (905) 738-5005; indocaribbeanworld@gmail.com Website: www.indocaribbeanworld.com

UWI's theology studies not a reflection of T&T's diversity

Dear Editor,

It sits innocently in the Undergraduate Humanities Programmes list, alphabetically book-ended by Theatre Arts and Visual Arts. Yet The University of the West Indies Bachelor of Arts BA Theology degree is a jarring testament to the religious and ethnic discrimination that still exists in the highest institution of education in our nation, paying lip service to diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values.

Taught every year at the St Augustine (Trinidad) campus by members of the Seminary of St John Vianney and the Ugandan Martyrs since 1970, UWI's Theology degree is unapologetically Christian and Catholic in content. The syllabus comprises courses in Biblical and Pastoral Studies, History of the Christian Church in the Caribbean, Perspectives in Christology, and Principles of Christian Ethics.

But Trinidad and Tobago is an ethnically diverse society. While the largest segment of the population is Christian, a significant portion – almost 20 percent – is Hindu, 5.7 percent is Spiritual Baptist/Shouter, five percent is Muslim, and a small proportion is Rastafarian, Orishan, and other denominations.

Moreover, a growing percentage considers itself non-religious (2.2 percent) or does not choose to state its religion (11.1 percent). Ideally, the theology programme at the nation's prime tertiary institution should reflect this diversity. But this is not the case, despite it not even being the first time that this concern has been raised.

Almost 20 years ago, Parshuram Maharaj, an executive member of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, wrote a well-reasoned letter, published in the *Newsday* on October 7, 2003. He pointed out that while the meaning of theology has traditionally been restricted to a narrow understanding due to its Greek and Christian origin, in the broadest sense, it is widely accepted as meaning "the science of God or of religion; the science which teaches of the existence, character and attributes of God, his laws and government, the doctrines we are to believe, and the



Rose-Marie Belle Antoine at her January 21 induction at the University of the West Indies

duties we are to practice; divinity". He called on UWI to offer a Theology degree that reflected and represented the entire religious spectrum, as many of the leading universities of the world now do.

The University of Oxford, for example, which has a long history of preparing young men for the church, now offers Sanskrit, Pali and Qur'anic Arabic with New Testament Greek, Biblical Hebrew and Church Latin, and includes courses on Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

Harvard University provides courses in African and Afro-Atlantic Religions, Ancient Near Eastern/Israelite religions, Buddhism, Christianity, East Asian religions, Greek-Hellenistic-Roman religions, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Religion in the Modern West/Religions of the Americas, and South Asian religions.

While no one is expecting UWI to provide so many alternatives, what it offers now fails the needs of this nation's diverse population. There are private universities in Trinidad and Tobago that offer exclusively Christian theology programmes, as is their right to do so. But UWI is not a private university. It is a public institution funded by taxpayers – Christian, Hindu,

Muslim, Spiritual Baptist/Shouter, Orishan, Rastafarian, atheist, and so on – all taxpayers.

Since Maharaj's impassioned plea 20 years ago, nothing has changed. Is it any wonder, though, for according to UWI's most recent prospectus, the Theology Department comprises two bishops, two *monseigneurs*, five nuns, and 16 reverends among its 27 academic staff? Not a lot of religious diversity there. In UWI's Theology degree, Hinduism, Islam and "Afro-Caribbean Expressions" are mentioned in just one course – Comparative Religion – out of a total of 38.

But this must change, even it has to be taken to the Privy Council by my eminent attorney, Anand Ramlogan, SC.

In her induction speech on January 22, 2023, the new Principal of the St Augustine Campus of UWI, Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, spoke compellingly of the need for UWI to be more inclusive and to play a key role in healing wounds in our society. An excellent starting point for this – if such encouraging words are to be taken seriously.

The new Principal should now remove religious bias from the Theology Department and provide complementary Hindu and Islamic programmes, while a certificate or diploma programme can be introduced for smaller religious groups.

Why not allow non-Christian religious denominations to design and deliver their own programmes with university funding, support, cooperation and supervision, as the Catholic seminary has been doing since 1970? There could at least be a Centre for Hindu Studies that is similar to the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. Muslims and others could also create their own syllabi. The sooner this happens the better.

In 2019, UWI registered only 11 new admissions to, and four graduates from, the Theology Department, suggesting that a serious overhaul is needed in order to create dynamic programmes relevant to our whole society. This will be a vital step on the path to making Trinidad and Tobago a nation where "every creed and race" can truly "find an equal place".

Dr. Kumar Mahabir, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

A message from the Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada

EACH FEBRUARY WE HONOUR THE LEGACY OF BLACK CANADIANS WHO HAVE SHAPED CANADA INTO A LAND OF FREEDOM FOR ALL.



PIERRE POILIEVRE
LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

'Woke' calls to professionalise Guyana's police force not new

Dear Editor,

The criticism of the Guyana Police Force by the Opposition and opposition elements, and calls for their "professionalisation", have now become a standard feature of their political polemics. We have been calling for such professionalisation since the 1990s, including representativeness and less authoritarian behaviour, but without any support from that quarter. We welcome their new epiphany.

We explained the inherent authoritarian nature of our GPF on account of its model being the Irish Royal Constabulary, rather than the London Metropolitan Police, when it was formed in 1839.

The LMP, originally chosen as the model by local authorities in 1838, was discarded: it was too citizen-centred. The IRC, on the other hand, was militarily centralised, heavily-armed and ethnicised: it consisted mostly of Irish Protestants and English Officers, to ensure the imposition of order against the predominantly Catholic population.

Its local mirror-image GPF was to "serve and protect" the colonial rulers against the Guyanese people. The authoritarian nature of the GPF is so embedded in its culture that nothing other than a complete overhaul and institutionalisation of new values will make any difference. This is a threshold necessary reform.

On "representativeness", in 1993 a single act of racism by the LMP was not allowed to be covered up by the authorities, as had been the norm, and led to an Inquiry in 1999. It prompted a major overhaul for racial "representativeness" of the British police as an integral aspect of their professionalisation.

In that year, Race Equality Employment targets were introduced for their police forces. These were now dubbed "Services", as ours should be, to emphasise the turn away from using "force".

Their overall national target was set at seven percent and the LMP at 25 percent. The focus was to aggressively pursue recruitment, retention, and progression of minority ethnic officers and staff. Initiatives varied from force to force, but included targeted



Graduating recruits in the Guyana Police Force

advertising, mentoring, familiarisation days, open days, and seminars directed at minority groups. Today, the national percentages of minorities are 8.1 percent and 16.3 percent for the LMP, up from two percent and three percent in 1999.

In Guyana, because of intense pressure by the PPP during the 1960s' riots – when the African-dominated Police and Volunteer Forces had displayed ethnic partiality – the British had established an ethnically balanced Special Services Unit in 1964. It was disbanded in 1965 by the PNC.

But as part of the British-imposed conditions for granting Independence, an International Commission of Jurists panel was deployed to investigate ethnic representativeness in the State institutions.

It recommended a 75 percent recruitment of Indians until the GPF became representative of the population. After observing the stricture for a one year, the PNC reverted to the old pattern. While one could understand the PNC's *realpolitik* rationale, the

PPP's stance after 1992 was very circumspect.

Ashton Chase, a founder of the PPP – and a perennial insider – speculated that the party "allowed these recommendations to go abegging for fear of being stigmatised as an 'Indian' party". After riots greeted the PPP's electoral victory in 1992, the B.O. Adams Commission of Inquiry recommended that "the Police Force be more ethnically balanced and that the Government have a riot response plan to contain any future recurrence".

Whatever the reasons, the contradictions arising from de-professionalised, imbalanced forces did not disappear; violence rose to unprecedented heights – and unexpected breadth – after 1998.

In 2003, under direct Constitutional mandate, a Disciplined Forces Commission took submissions across the country on how to professionalise the Forces. They submitted their recommendations in 2004 to Parliament.

On the matter of ethnic representativeness they declared: "The Commission... is of the view that the allaying of ethnic security fears

which stems from the predominance of Afro-Guyanese presence in the GPF must be addressed... but to ensure, in so doing, that no similar insecurity fears are caused in the Afro-Guyanese community."

As ROAR had proposed in its submission, the DFC recommended, "It should be an aim (of the GPF) to achieve a Force representative of the ethnic diversity of the nation without employing a quota system."

The DFC also recommended that, as had the British in this area: "Ethnically diverse recruitment and promotion panels... be employed as openly and extensively as possible."

The DFC's Report was unanimously approved by Parliament in 2010, and since the Opposition is now concerned about the GPF's performance, perhaps they would now support the government in establishing its representativeness as part of their needed professionalism.

Ravi Dev, Guyana, via email.

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Guyana forging ahead with current plans for energy security

As Guyana forges ahead with plans to achieve energy security, there is optimism on the horizon for its people who have been plagued by blackouts and brownouts for decades; and for the rapidly expanding industrial and manufacturing sectors that need a reliable supply of power to grow.

Unlike the country's haphazard approach to achieving food security, the government is embarking on several capital intensive initiatives that will almost triple Guyana's current 226 megawatt (MW) of installed electricity capacity. These initiatives are expected to lower the cost of electricity by at least 50 percent, benefiting both businesses and consumers.

The capstone project in the government's energy security plans is the proposed 300 megawatt (MW) combined cycle gas turbine power plant at Wales on the western bank of the Demerara River. The project encompasses the establishment of a 300 MW power plant as well as a Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) plant that entails the construction of 225 kilometers of 12-inch pipeline to transport a guaranteed minimum of 50 mmcf of natural gas from offshore Guyana to the Wales Development Authority.

This project represents the single largest investment made in the country's electricity sector, and is expected to cut emissions by almost 70 percent. The construction of the pipeline will be led by Exxon, and is projected to cost approximately (US) \$1.3 billion. The current estimated cost of the entire project is approximately (US) \$2.2 billion. So far, the government has spent (G) \$24.6 billion to meet start-up costs associated with the project, and has budgeted (G) \$43.3 billion this year to facilitate the construction of the plant and associated facilities.

Last year, the government granted a no-objection permit to the US-based partnership CH4/Lindsayca to construct the 300 MW combined cycle power plant and the NGL facility at an estimated cost of (US) \$898 million.

The government has selected Engineers India Limited to supervise the Engineering, Procurement and Construction of the onshore plant facility. The country is expected to hire another firm to operate the project.

The second major project on the government's agenda is the proposed construction of the 165 MW Amaila Falls Hydroelectric Project. This project was previously shelved way back in 2013, the result of a lack of political consensus.

Incidentally, the AFHP has had an interesting history, tainted with corruption, suspect dealings, and political indifference. It initially materialised in 1998, when a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of Guyana and Florida-based Synergy Holdings, which entered into a joint venture with MW Harza Global, a global leader in wet infrastructure and water engineering, headquartered in Colorado.

Synergy leveraged an initial study carried out between 1974-1976, which explored the hydroelectric potential of the country through a grant from the United Nations.

The signing of the MOU raised a multitude of questions about Synergy and its CEO; and the transparency of the transaction. These questions tainted the project for its life.

In 2007, Synergy identified Sithe Global as a potential investor in the project and subsequently transferred its interim licence to the firm in 2009.

In early 2009, China Railway Engineering Corporation was chosen as the contractor for the construction of the power plant through a non-competitive bidding process, which included four other contractors. The choice of China Railway also raised questions of trans-

parency.

Sithe, a 99 percent subsidiary of the US-based Blackstone Group, one of the world's leading investment and advisory firms, had previously made it clear that it would only proceed with the project if it received parliamentary support from all three political parties, the PPP/Civic, the Alliance for Change, and A Party for National Unity.

Sithe, through its local corporate arm, Amaila Falls Hydroelectric Inc., abandoned the project on August 9, 2013 due to a lack of political consensus.

Incidentally, just one day earlier the Hydroelectric Power (Amendment) Bill was passed in the National Assembly – following months of opposition by the AFC and APNU – which together then held a one-seat majority in parliament.

With parliamentary approval for the project coming down to the wire, the AFC broke ranks with APNU in an unprecedented move, and voted in favour of the project, albeit with a reduced debt guarantee of (G) \$50 million instead of a (G) \$150 million proposed by the government.

The debt guarantee was to ensure that Guyana Power and Light can meet its obligations to pay for power purchased from AFHI.

APNU opposed the project, effectively triggering the pull out by Sithe.

Several well-known opponents to the project also contributed to its demise. Among these opponents were accountant, lawyer, and government critic Christopher Ram; former presidential advisor Ramon Gaskin; former auditor general Anand Goolsarran; and University of Guyana professor Clive Thomas.

While each of these individuals may have raised valid arguments, there was no consensus in their opinions, creating even further confusion about the project. In certain instances, there appeared to be a comprehensive lack of understanding about the mechanics of financing similar projects. More important, in all cases, the underlying benefit of the project was never analyzed.

In 2021, it was planned to resuscitate the project, and negotiations were held with a Chinese company, Beijing-headquartered China Railway Group Limited, to develop the project under a build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) arrangement.

Under this arrangement, the company would build and operate the project, and the GPL would purchase power from the operator under a Power Purchase Agreement. However, that arrangement fell apart after the Chinese company pulled out of the proposed arrangement.

After a year-long hiatus, the AFHP appears to be back on track. In its 2023 budget, the government announced that it will relaunch a Request for Proposals for the restart of the project. The total cost of the proposed project is still unknown.

Meantime, works are being initiated for the construction of a 1.5 MW hydropower facility at the Kumu Falls in Central Rupununi, and the rehabilitation and upgrade of the 700 kW Moco-Moco hydropower plant in Region 9, which is currently defunct.

Works on these power projects are expected to be completed in 2024, providing much-needed power to these interior communities.

In further diversification of the country's energy mix, the government commissioned a one MW solar farm in Lethem last year, and commenced work on a 1.5 MW solar farm in Bartica, and 0.75 MW in Wakenaam.

This year, the government has launched a tender for the completion of a total of 33 MW solar photovoltaic (PV) system to be connected to the GPL power system. These PV systems incorporate five MW at Onderneeming, three



Dwarka Lakhan



An artist's impression of the Amaila Falls Hydroelectric Project

MW at Charity, four MW at Trafalgar, three MW at Prospect, three MW at Hampshire, four MW at Block 37 (Millie Hideout), eight MW at Retrieve, and three MW at Dacoura.

At the household level, a total of 166.82 kW of solar PV systems at 39 locations across the regions were installed last year. This year, the government will roll out an additional 30,000 solar PV home lighting systems to the hinterland and riverain areas. GPL will become the off-taker of the planned power generation projects, including the 300 MW Gas-to-Power, 165 MW AFHP, and the 33 MW solar PV systems. This will require investment in resilient transmission and distribution infrastructure in order to deliver reliable and improved quality electricity to customers.

The power generation projects will be

integrated into the electric power systems via a combination of 230 kV and 69 kV substations and transmission and distribution lines. The new power grid will be supervised and controlled by a modern control centre, which will be constructed at Goedverwagting.

If all the power generation projects materialise according to plan, Guyanese will be well set to benefit from an abundant supply of lower-cost power as the country transitions to its next phase of development.

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

This February, celebrate the stories of Black Canadians.

Happy
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Pandit Ashwar



Pandit Gosine



Pandit Balgobind



Pandit Persad

Radha Krishna Mandir plans mega-concert

Cambridge, Ontario – A mega-concert featuring four popular pandits for the first time on stage will take place in Toronto next month, the event a fund-raiser for the ongoing construction of the Radha Krishna Mandir and Cultural Centre in Cambridge.

The concert event will feature four prominent and eminent religious leaders, Pt Neil Dev Persad, Pt Rajin Balgobind, Pt Hardat Ashwar, and Pt Narad Gosine in three hours of top class entertainment, and to the accompaniment of the diaspora's best musicians on the stage today.

Pt Persad and Pt Gosine both have roots in Trinidad and Tobago, while Pt Balgobind and Pt Ashwar are from Guyana. Together, the four pandits have a total of over 100,000 followers.

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* last week, RKMCC president, Dwarka Persaud noted that the excitement was already building for the first-time event.

And keeping with the theme of building, Persaud also noted that the RKMCC's construction was progressing, and indicated that the temple's steel structure would be going up next month.

Construction of the RKMCC started in May last year.

"The plan is that the proceeds from the

April 22 mega-concert will go to the RKMCC's building fund," he said.

Persaud also indicated that other donor initiatives are being worked on at this time.

Among these initiatives is one for donors becoming what Persaud described as foundational givers through a "buy a brick program".

More details on how donors can actually help this thrust "brick by brick" will be forthcoming, Persaud said.

Meanwhile, the April 22 mega-concert will take place in the beautiful Sringeri Banquet Hall, which is located at 80 Brydon Drive in Etobicoke. This hall



Dwarka Persaud

holds up to 750 patrons.

And in yet another first, the evening of entertainment will be available internationally online on PPV. Media coverage will also see the event made available in major population centres in Toronto, New York, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana.

Sponsorships are also available, both for tables and tickets. For sponsoring businesses, the combined reach of online advertisement is expected to target an excess of over 250,000 viewers.

Visit the [Bhakti Sangeet](http://BhaktiSangeet.com) for more information, or call Dwarka 519-240-0870; Nalini 519-578-3145; Jean 416-526-5780; or Ryan 416-560-6175.

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Jamaica's Senator Samuda addresses the WMO Regional Conference of the Regional Association IV in New Kingston last week *Jamaican govt photo*

Call to guide nations on weather events

Kingston – A call was made last week for the World Meteorological Organisation to take steps to ensure that populations across the world are educated about the link between climate change and slow, gradual weather events. Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator Matthew Samuda made the statement at the Conference of the WMO's Regional Association IV, which took place in New Kingston.

"This body has the credibility and credentials to ensure that the world also understands slow onset events, which [are] often overseen and understated... people don't necessarily appreciate what is climate change, and that climate change is present," Samuda said.

He noted that sea-level rise "is a clear and present danger" for countries such as Jamaica, where 70 percent of the population live within five kilometres of the sea.

Samuda also pointed out that climate change can affect the protection of Jamaica's cultural heritage.

"The risks to these sites are extreme. This includes our libraries, monuments, historic buildings, works of art, protected areas and, indeed, all the cultural resources. This, for countries like Jamaica, represents a shared wealth. The WMO has a tremendous role to play," he said.

Additionally, "As such, my call to you and to this body is that we do not leave out the impact of gradual weather changes in how we discuss the weather with the public."

The WMO is a specialised agency of the United Nations that is responsible for promoting international cooperation on atmospheric science, climatology, hydrology, and in geophysics.

The Regional Association IV Conference was held from February 6 to February 9 under the theme *Increasing Weather, Water and Climate Resilience in North America, Central America and the Caribbean*.

More than 60 participants from 20 member countries attended, while others participated via online platforms.



Her Excellency Marcella Liburd is sworn in as Governor General

Liburd sworn in as Governor General

Basseterre – History was made last week in Saint Kitts and Nevis when Her Excellency, Marcella Liburd was sworn in as the Federation's first female Governor General.

The event took place at Government House in Basseterre.

Liburd was administered the Oath of Office and Oath of Allegiance, which made her the Federation of St Christopher and Nevis' fifth Governor-General.

She succeeds Samuel Weymouth Tapley Seaton, who was the fourth Governor General in Saint Kitts and Nevis from 2015-2023.

Liburd served as the Federation's Governor Deputy General before being appointed as Governor-General in September 2022.

A small group of invited guests witnessed

the inauguration, including SKN Prime Minister Dr Terrance Drew. He later congratulated Liburd on her appointment on his Facebook page.

Said Drew, "Her Excellency Marcella Liburd JP has been a trailblazer throughout her career. She piloted several legislations over the years including the Domestic Violence Act and Equal Pay Act. In 2011, Liburd was nominated among prominent women for her contributions to the development of gender equality."

In 2013, Liburd became the first female to be elected as Chairperson of the Saint Kitts-Nevis Labour Party in its then 81-year history.

Also, in 2018 Liburd became the first female Deputy National Leader of the Saint Kitts and Nevis Labour Party.

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How MJ built a career & now makes a difference in our community

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

When Mulisius Joe heeded the call to the trades 13 years ago, little did she know that her decision to pursue a career in general carpentry would also see her building a corollary structure, where today she is making a difference in the lives of apprentices now entering the construction industry.

MJ's upward career climb saw her in roles as scaffolding, millwork, siding, drywall, decking, and as a concrete formwork carpenter. However, while she totally nailed these roles, it turns out that these exposures were also foundational to her becoming a pioneering and accomplished woman in a male-dominated field, and also an exemplary Black woman in our Caribbean community.

Also, MJ is today a representative with the Carpenters Regional Council. And she is among the CRC's leads administering the **Canadian government's Apprenticeship Service Program**, a federal effort that is helping small and medium-size enterprises hire work-ready first-year apprentices in the construction and manufacturing Red Seal trades.

Thirteen years ago, MJ responded to her inner call to personal action to join the construction industry. Taking concrete steps, she followed up by completing her pre-apprenticeship through the Scarborough Centre for Alternative Studies. After acquiring her certification, she joined the supportive team at **Carpenters Union Local 27**.

Her ensuing career foundation, which she laid down in general carpentry, has since seen her moving on to what she describes as an inspiring and refreshing role. It is one that is newly-cast, and which she describes as "beyond my wildest dreams".

Being one of the CRC's leads in administering the Canadian government's **Apprenticeship Service Program** now puts MJ among other players who are diligently working to reshape what has been an historically exclusive, and excluding construction industry landscape for marginalised communities.

Today, MJ is an agent of change in such communities like ours, where she and many others are opening up pathways to substantive opportunities in the trades for Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, women, newcomers to Canada, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2, and other diversity groups.

With her other colleagues, MJ is doing so via an emergent, wholesome, and embracing business practice initiated by Carpenters' Union Local 27 and other proactive trade unions, through corrective actions that are emerging out of the thrust that is Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

MJ was born in mountainous Saint Vincent, globally respected for its temperamental volcano, La Soufrière. The island is the largest in the nation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which sits in the Caribbean Sea in the southeast Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles.

Her family was "traditional" in many ways, MJ recalls.

Says MJ: "I am the sixth of eight kids – five brothers and three girls. The boys were allowed to swing the hammer, and I didn't like them getting all the attention. The girls had to attend school, and we were always pushed into the academics."

MJ notes that while her father was a mason, he too shared the "traditional" vision to educate the girls, while the boys were allowed to put hammer to nail, trowels to mortar, and to set bricks down against a straight twine line.

It was a parental vision that conflicted with MJ's early, incipient ambition that later saw her adequately and capably filling a pair of steel-tipped boots in the field.

Says MJ: "I wanted to touch the tools. I wanted to run some blocks. I wanted to do bricklaying." Only to hit a brick wall that was ongoing resistance from a well-intentioned father.

But then MJ took a secondary path that led to her entering the fast lane in her lifetime journey in the trades.

"My grandmother was a very strong and independent woman. Miss Joe was very handy with raising chickens, and she did not like sitting and waiting for someone to come around to repair her chicken coops. She was always very physical... and so she did the repairs on her own; and I helped her," MJ recalls.

She adds, "It was with my grandmother that I swung my first hammer. She was a strong and determined woman; and my inspiration."

When MJ arrived in Canada at age 15, she brought quite a few of Ms Joe's life's lessons with her, among which were a fighting and independent spirit; the self-determination to start a task and see it to the finish; and of course, a driving ambition to finesse her hand-and-eye coordination with hammer and nail.

Ten years after arrival here, MJ made the decision to seek out a substantive and well-paying job. Other family members were already working in the trades; they spoke about their jobs paying well. Such reassuring feedback saw her reviving the near-



Mulisius Joe

dormant, earlier ambition to lay down a row of blocks; to drive a nail; and perhaps to even out-hammer her favoured brothers.

"I began by getting documented," MJ says. She attended school in Scarborough for the basics in carpentry. Upon completion in 2010, MJ signed up with Local 27.

It was a move that put MJ in the fast lane; now she was driven, on her way to a career in carpentry. But staying in her lane was not without its blind-spot perils, she says.

Last August MJ spoke on the toxicity encountered while at her early work sites, telling the digital media platform *We Build A Dream* that it was a time fraught with challenges: "Most days I couldn't tell if it was sexism or racism, but you definitely feel and see the ways you're being treated differently."

She adds, "For instance, on one of my very first companies I worked for, the journeyman I was paired up with would find a reason I could not do the work assigned, even if the task was to hold the ladder while he was on it."

As MJ related, with the job coming to a close, she was told several times by the journeyman that her role was being terminated; and that she should apply to ScotiaBank, which was hiring new employees at the time.

Today, MJ's response echoes back to her early years, recalling an independent Ms Joe standing proudly in her thriving garden in Saint Vincent; and perhaps shaking a defiant fist.

Similarly, MJ's response is one of assertion, endurance, and outrage at being unfairly positioned inside the intersection of race and sexism.

As she told *Indo-Caribbean World* last week: "Who was he to tell me that?! It is my choice to be on site! Just as much as it was his choice!"

Today, MJ has acquired a centering voice, and with many others, she is being heard among the tireless voices that are calling for equity among construction workers in the GTHA. As she told the online platform *The Pointer* a year ago, the exclusion of the marginalised – Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, women, newcomers to Canada, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2, and other deserving groups – is now slowly being changed.

As MJ noted then, interventions via trade union programs are now inculcating a growing sensibility of inclusion, and are seeing a discernible shift "in how journeymen, or mentors for trade apprentices, are increasingly focused on the treatment of women and visible minorities on site, and are better prepared to foster an equitable environment".

It has not been an easy road, as MJ's work experiences reveal, with workplace tension, intersectional sexism and racism, and other toxicities. However, as she told *The Pointer*, these changes make her "hopeful the industry will develop a similar awareness around issues of discrimination and equity".

Especially following the painful racist incidents that occurred in June 2020, when nooses were displayed at GTHA construction sites. And then there was the activism from earlier that month, when MJ joined her Local 27 union colleagues in marching downtown following the death of George Floyd, and in support of the global Black Lives Matter demonstrations.

As she told *The Pointer* in commending her union, march-

ing downtown with her Local 27 colleagues "felt good". Additionally, "[As] as a woman on site, and also as a Black person, I'm always the minority. To see our union jump behind this, it [made] me feel so much prouder to be a Local 27 member."

Also on the road with MJ during the march was Chris Campbell, Director of the **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion** at the CRC. Campbell is also vice-president of the Carpenters' Union Local 27.

Just over two years ago, the CRC made a directional move in appointing Campbell to head its pioneering EDI thrust. His roles include promoting and marketing diversity in the trades; educating the membership; working with construction employees to ensure a safe workplace for all employees; and addressing complaints about discrimination and racism on jobsites.

As Campbell told *Indo-Caribbean World* last year, "The [CRC] is committed in its fight to eliminate all forms of racism and discrimination that have systemically plagued the construction industry... We advocate for safe working conditions for our members on all of our jobsites. The physical and mental health of our membership is of the utmost importance..."

MJ credits Campbell as being one of her mentors; he is a stabilising and centering influence, she declares.

She says, "I think [Campbell's] work is quite instrumental. He has been a mentor from the first day I met him at Local 27. He is someone who always gives, a positive influence, and he has effected change, not only in me, but in many others."

She adds, "It is my dream that every local union should have its own equity, diversity, and inclusion representative."

With support from Campbell at the EDI, last year the United Brotherhood of Carpenters Canadian District acquired close to **\$37 million from the Apprenticeship Service Program** to support small and medium-size employers.



Chris Campbell

The funding comes from the Canadian government, a part of its effort to help SMEs overcome barriers in hiring, and for the provision of training opportunities for first-year apprentices. It is targeting the creation of over 25,000 new apprenticeship positions in Canada.

The program provides \$5,000 for SMEs hiring any apprentice, and an additional \$5,000 if the apprentice self-identifies as coming from an equity-deserving group. A minimum of four weeks is required before the funds can be paid out.

As government data indicate, around 700,000 skilled trades workers are expected to retire in Canada by 2028. Last year the CDCO stated that Canada's construction labour force would need to add over 30,000 workers in the next five years.

This government program is a timely intervention, with the UBC Canadian District now working together with SMEs to provide this incentive to support first-year apprentices acquire hands-on work experience.

As Campbell told *Indo-Caribbean World* last year, the government funding will "assist in incentivising contractors to hire, train on the job, and keep new apprentices employed".

And as he stated, this also fits into the EDI's mandate, since it targets Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, women, newcomers to Canada, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2, and other equity deserving groups.

"It was beyond my wildest dreams," MJ says, when she was hired, along with others, to implement and administer her union's government Apprenticeship Service Program effort.

MJ speaks to pivotal moments, what she describes as turning points, in her life and career. Among them are her heeding the call to enter the trades; another is her inspiration to press forward following the downtown march with her Local 27 colleagues in support of George Floyd and BLM in June 2020.

Then there is that night before she was offered the role as a lead for the Apprenticeship Service Program, MJ recalls. At the time, she was attending a jobsite, her mission to meet-and-greet an incoming apprentice, and to introduce him to his new job.

"He was running late. But when he arrived, I quickly noted his enthusiasm and his energy, and that he was from an equity-deserving background. I felt so good to be there for that apprentice," MJ says.

That uplifting meeting with the new apprentice was resonating with her the next morning, when she was offered the role to administer the government's program. Right away she knew what she had to do; she knew she was making a difference.

MJ accepted the role without hesitation.

2023

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The Carpenters Regional Council stands in solidarity with our Black community members, Black Canadians, and all people of African descent. We are proud of the contributions they have made and continue to make to build our Union and our country. We strive to promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging for all people within our organization.



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Down-to-earth & nurturing, astronaut Camarda returns to the Ozone

By Dhanpaul Narine
 Something beautiful happened a few weeks ago. Dr Charles Camarda returned to the place of his birth. He was warmly welcomed by many that wanted to find out about that most mysterious frontier: Space.

Charles (Charlie) Camarda was born in Ozone Park, in Queens, New York. His parents had a business in Liberty Avenue for more than 50 years. Charlie attended the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy and Archbishop Molloy High School. He was always fascinated by space and the planets. He would make rockets from his basement, and disturb the peace of the neighbourhood.

Charlie's tertiary education was at the Polytechnic Institute in Brooklyn, George Washington University, and at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, from where he earned his doctorate in aerospace engineering.

Charlie joined NASA in 1974 at the Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia. He became a Research Scientist in the Thermal Structures Branch, and conducted experiments and aerothermal testing in Langley's eight-foot High Temperature Tunnel. His experiments were crucial to NASA's continuing mission in view of the Columbia disaster that took the lives of seven astronauts. In February 2003, on its return to earth, a large piece of foam fell from the shuttle's external tank and breached the spacecraft's wing that led to the disaster.

Charlie's work on safety protocols has won the admiration of many. He has received more than 21 NASA awards for technical innovations, and he holds seven patents. In 1996, Charlie was selected as an astronaut, and completed two years of training at the Johnson Space Center. This qualified him for flight assignment as a mission specialist.

The big moment came in 2005. During the period July 26 to August 9 that year, Charlie flew on STS-114 Discovery. He was on a Return to Flight mission. His space shuttle docked with the International Space Station, and the crew tested new procedures for flight safety. Charlie spent two weeks in space, and clocked 5.8 million miles. His crew of seven landed safely at Edwards Air Force Base in California.



Dr Charles Camarda, astronaut and hometown hero, in Ozone Park, Queens, New York



Astronaut Dr Charles Camarda with Iris Rodriguez-Rosa & Sam Esposito

Charlie's visit to his hometown in Queens was eagerly awaited. It was arranged by Sam Esposito, president of Ozone Park Residents Block Association. Another sponsor was the Ozone Park, Howard Beach, Woodhaven Lions Club. The plaque to Charlie was from Louie and Felice Rovegno, owners of James Romanelli-Stephen Funeral Home in Ozone Park. It was presented by Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Parks Department, and the first Latina in this post.

Sam Esposito and his team have done tremendous work to better the quality of life in the community. Charlie said that he loved growing up in Ozone Park. He looked forward to his visits in the parks, and liked to play sports.

Charlie said his experience in space was a big deal coming on the heels of the Columbia tragedy. He said, "I had a wonderful crew. Eileen Collins was my commander. She was the first woman pilot of a US Space Shuttle. We had to conduct experiments in space to test new technology in order to prevent future shuttles from having another accident. We flew for 14 days in space. It was an amazing experience. I love to share my experiences with children, and I want to encourage them to take up science in schools. I will visit three schools on this visit."

Was it easy living in space for two weeks in the absence of gravity?

Said Charlie, "It's easy living in space. Your body goes through changes in zero gravity and you have to exercise a lot because you lose a lot of bone mass. We are planning to go to the moon and Mars, so living in space will become popular in the future."

Charlie advised the young people to work hard in school and to take up science so they could one day become astronauts as well. How does one spend a typical day in space?

Charlie explains, "We do a lot of experiments. There is some time to relax and we could chat with our friends and family on planet Earth. The cool thing would be to go outside the space station and do a spacewalk. The new astronauts will have to build things on the surface of the moon and Mars, and that will be very exciting."

What about life on the other planets? Charlie says that probes are continuing on Mars, but there is no definite proof as yet. What was he thinking when he saw planet Earth from space? According to Charlie, "When you look at Earth you see its thin and tiny atmosphere. You see how perfect the conditions are on Earth for life to exist, and the only reason why life exists is that thin layer of atmosphere that blocks the radiation and UV light and gives us the magnetic field. You see that Earth is really a small planet, and we must take care of it and make it a better place. Hopefully, we will colonise other planets and extend the life of our species."

Will life on earth come to an end some day? Charlie feels that it "is very possible". A rocket was launched to collide into an asteroid that could upset the solar balance. There is always the possibility of a cataclysmic event, and one should not rule out climate change. Life on Earth is delicate and should not be taken for granted. We should do all we can to protect and prolong it.

A crew from CBS television turned up to interview Charlie, and the hometown hero from Ozone Park was able to propel his community into another stratosphere. We are proud of Dr Charles Camarda. It was a rare opportunity to learn about the final frontier. We wish Charlie and his family all the best in the future.

Celebrating the life of Ralph Gunness, the father of cricket in Brampton

Brampton – Our Caribbean community and the city of Brampton lost a cricket pioneer, a stalwart, and an eternal fan of the game on January 19 with the passing of Ralph Gunness.

He was also fondly known as The Father of Cricket in Brampton.

A gentle soul and a huge cricket fan, Gunness is credited along with other key individuals for starting the ball rolling that led to cricket being played in Brampton and Bramalea.

He first played with his cohort on Mayfield Road at a farm in the 1970s. However, during those early days, Gunness and team members needed to be innovative. While a farm was not a suitable ground for playing, they improvised by using its flattest surface, and trimming the grass low enough to serve as a cricket pitch with matting.

In 1976 the group formalised the cricket team, calling themselves the Brampton Bramalea Cricket Club. Gunness was appointed the club's president, and was one of Brampton's founding members for the game being played in the city.

The club then bought a portable school unit, and had it "police transported" to the Carrier Air Conditioning ground at Dixie and Orenda Drive. They also built a cricket pitch with input from Brampton's Councillors and the Mayor of Brampton at the time.

The Brampton Bramalea Cricket Club grew exponentially into four teams: Trinity, Royals, Blues, and Olympians. Together, the teams comprised approximately 60 players from all over the world, including Trinidad and Tobago, Australia, England, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Guyana, Jamaica, Barbados, St Kitts, St Lucia, and Canada. All four teams competed in the Toronto and District Cricket league.

Gunness was later appointed honorary president. He stayed on with the team for close to 30 years.

Cricket grew in Brampton, and the Brampton-Etobicoke District Cricket League was formed by Praim Persad. This then



saw the club becoming individual teams, which were created from the Brampton Bramalea Cricket Team.

The founding members then changed the club's name to Brampton Trinity Cricket Club, and with the help of the late Don Doan and Councillor Elaine Moore, it was then relocated to 7575 Kennedy Road.

Brampton Trinity Cricket Club later gracefully gave up their ground for the Powerade Center to be built to support the vision of a greater City. The Brampton Trinity Cricket Club is still suc-

cessfully being operated under the leadership of Sundar Saki and Ricky Ganesh.

Gunness will always be known as the The Father of Cricket in Brampton. Before his passing he was thankful to the BTCC members, past and present.

And as Gunness noted, it was his hope that he had served the membership, and the City of Brampton, well for over four decades.

With files by Russell Lutchman

Narine unreservedly chronicles early life of underprivilege & indigence

By Abel Peters

The name of Dhanpaul Narine's recently published book, *Shi**y People*, may not sit well for some, but for me, being not one to jump to conclusions without gathering more, pertinent information, the name piqued my interest; and based on what I read online, I came to some understanding about what may have led the author to choose such a name.

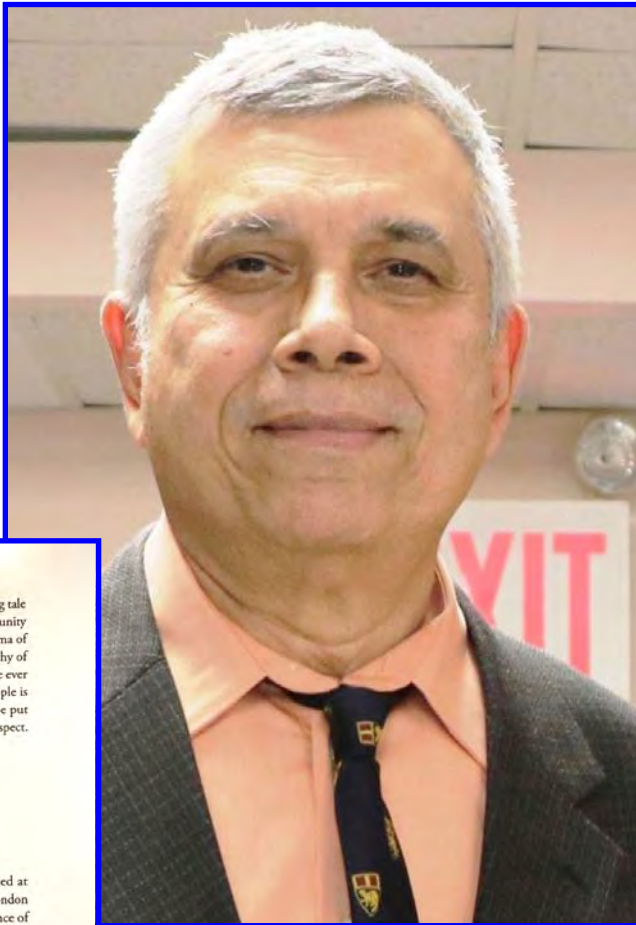
Set in the village of Vergenoegen on the east bank of the Essequibo, Guyana's largest river, a short distance from where the river meets with the Atlantic Ocean, the book depicts life in the shanty surroundings of Sookoo Yard, a collection of ramshackle and cramped living quarters, made out of discarded lumber, plastic, tins, and corrugated zinc sheets, with flooring made simply of the good old natural ground of Mother Earth.

It chronicles the life of its protagonist, Raj, from his infancy to teenage days, in the squalid surroundings of their 'complex' of primitive dwellings called logies, owned and operated by an unscrupulous landlord named Sookoo.

He is unscrupulous, because of his penchant to resort to draconian measures to punish any tenant for even simple 'infractions.'

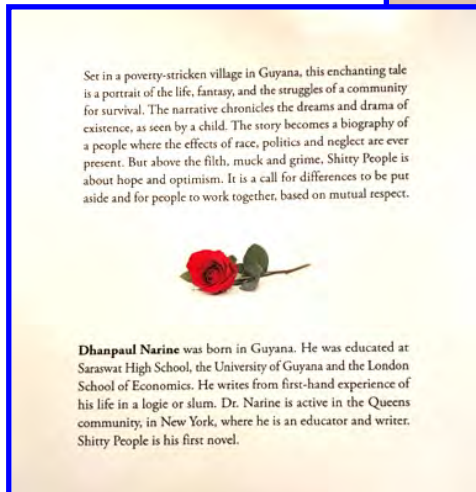
Raj, in his infancy, was entrusted by his teenage, immature, and financially strapped parents, to the care of his grandmother, whom he lovingly called Ma throughout the book, and his grandfather, Johnny, a confectionery salesman mostly away from home.

Perhaps the most striking quality of the book is its authenticity. The author boldly, with a no-holds-barred approach, portrays the miserable quality of life logie folks



Dhanpaul Narine

had to endure, with constant flooding both from rainfall and overflowing streams covering the earthen floors, and raw sewage floating around in the living and eating quarters of the units; with a stench that would linger around long after the water has receded, giving rise to the residents being referred to as "shi**y people," hence the book's title; and with a slumlord whose only priority was collecting the weekly rent, and who would resort to unorthodox, if not illegal means to penalise any tenant falling short of the full rent.



Narine's new novel chronicles his early life in a logie in Guyana

The Supernatural

The Donor

Raquel's organs, including her skin and bones. They flew the potential recipients in from around the world and prepared them for surgery at the hospital. Raquel was reduced to nothing after her organs were involuntarily removed and distributed to her beneficiaries. The hospital incinerated the discarded parts of her body, and she ceased to exist.

The medical profession deals with the science of measurable quantities. Spiritual existence occurs outside their realm of expertise. The arrogance of medical science overrides their need for compassion when peer recognition feeds bloated egos. News flashes propelled the team of specialists into the limelight and the medical profession rewarded them with accolades for creating history by saving the lives of many from one body.

When officer Marques heard of Raquel's treatment by the doctors, she was appalled. A gut feeling told her that Raquel was still alive when they butchered her. On her own time, she went to the location where Raquel was found. She witnessed animals coming back to life two weeks after appearing dead. She believed that a virus made the brain go inactive before it kickstarted itself into life. Weeks of studying the behaviours of the animals and birds in the park and her computer research gave her a sick feeling. Raquel was alive when they hacked into her without using anesthetics! She would have suffered excruciating torture at the hands of her butchers.

A website described a little-known virus that originated on the Falkland Islands, where seals brought the virus from the ocean floor on their skins and rubbed it onto the vegetation that Canadian geese ate. Their migration spread the virus around the world. Because the research was in its infancy, most medical teams were unaware of its existence. Raquel was the first human victim in North America.



Raj's dear Ma may have been illiterate, but she exuded a wealth of virtues, including patience and her constant mentoring of her grandson to always live by, and not veer away from, the truth; and her daily advice on how to respect others despite their shortcomings, some directed and sometimes causing physical harm to Raj.

Also, because of abject poverty, Raj had no textbooks in school, not to mention his constantly soiled clothing and lack of footwear; and he had to resort to sharing books with his desk companions, often 'bribing' them with sweets made by his grandpa.

Also, Ma would go to a nearby store and get old newspapers from the proprietor before the papers were thrown out. The newspapers would serve the dual purpose, when pasted on the logie walls, of covering holes punched by their inquisitive, peeping-tom neighbours, and giving Raj material, in the form of the new 'wallpaper', to improve his reading skills and bring him up to par with domestic and world affairs.

On the educational front, Raj's performance in school did not reflect his true abilities, his mind preoccupied with myriad issues, not the least of which was his dedication to help in finding food for the household, and his penchant to take risks by skipping classes to fish by the seaside to raise funds not otherwise available to the family.

Not at liberty to give away too much in a spoiler, let me say that the book, written in the first person, is largely based on the personal experiences of its author.

Dr Narine is a graduate of the University of Guyana (BA), and the London School of Economics (BSc Hons, MSc, MPhil, PhD).

His book certainly gives new meaning to the maxim, *per ardua ad astra* (through adversity to the stars).

Its absorbing prose is interspersed with memorable colloquialisms, such as *chulchul*, *chunkay*, *bunjal curry*, *bisibisi bush*, *pookney*, and *mocomoco bush*, to name a few; and this, plus the unique subject matter, grabs the reader's attention to go on and on.

I may not be quite a fast reader, but I was able to coast through the book in record time, for me at least!

I applaud Dr Narine for a fine piece of literature and highly recommend this first novel of his to all, especially my fellow Guyanese.

"Raquel September. She collapsed in Colony Park." The ambulance attendant handed a driver's license to the doctor. "We found it in her pocket." He wheeled the limp body of a young lady into the emergency ward. "We got there before the police. They should be here soon."

"She's barely alive." The emergency room doctor gazed at the girl's cold gray skin. "See what you can come up with." He handed the driver's license to a nurse, who ran a computer check on Raquel while the doctor and another nurse tried to resuscitate her.

"According to this out-of-state driver's license, Raquel is 25, but it's expired." She spoke to the female police officer, Jennifer Marques, who appeared at her workstation at that moment.

"I'll do a trace from the cruiser." Officer Marques took Raquel's driver's license and asked her partner to stay with the patient.

Raquel got her driver's permit at 16 but never renewed it. The address on the license was an abandoned apartment building demolished five years before.

The driver's license website showed that Raquel had completed a donor card for her organs. The young woman had no police records, bank accounts, or credit cards.

After calling everyone with Raquel's last name in the telephone book from the State that issued her driver's license without success, officer Marques decided to give up the search and check in with her partner in the hospital. She would have to return to the precinct to do more extensive research into the background of the unfortunate victim.

She arrived to find the medical staff working on Raquel. Their patient was hooked up to machines to keep her alive while they tried to find the cause of her coma. She asked her partner to follow her to the cruiser, where officer Marques updated her during the drive to the precinct. The captain told them that the driver's license issuing State regarded the donor's intentions as valid, even if the driver's license has expired. Raquel's organs could be harvested nationally whenever she became deceased.

A call to the police department in the city that issued Raquel's driver's license provided no new information. Raquel seemed to have dropped from the sky with no connection to anyone or any place.

A week later, Raquel's condition deteriorated. Machines told the medical staff that she had become brain-dead. They decided to let her become the source of life for terminally-ill patients who needed her vitals more than she did.

The organ database showed matches for every one of

Kamil Ali



While the prosecutor prepared a case of negligence against the doctors, the precinct received a phone call. The police discovered a bloody scene at the heart specialist's home. The heart recipient had used a meat cleaver to chop his ribs open. She rocked back and forth beside him with the heart in her hands.

The day of horrors had just begun. Another call came in about the skin specialist. Raquel's skin recipient had used a scalpel to slice his skin away. He moaned in pain while his assailant sat on the floor beside him with his skin wrapped around her.

The hospital reported the disappearance of every recipient of Raquel's organs. Before law enforcement could react, every specialist involved in the organ transfer died that day, hacked to death by the inheritors of their victim's body parts, each one suffering a brutal death by loss of the organs they pilfered from Raquel.

Each receiver of Raquel's body parts died shortly after their last acts from Raquel's failed tissues. The woman from no known place had left an indelible impression on medical malpractice that changed donor procedures.

Officer Marques' contribution to the Raquel September case earned her a promotion and merit of honour. She graciously accepted. Her story of Raquel's sad life moistened every eye during her thank-you speech. From that moment, a grateful Raquel's constant spiritual presence warmed her heart and comforted her.

With no grave to call her own, the murdered girl's soul was left to roam the Earth. The ghost of the woman whose cause officer Marques had championed after her untimely death had decided to become a guardian of the only compassionate human she had ever encountered.

Bheem led exhausting schedule as producer, singer, & radio announcer

From Page 1

radio announcer. His sudden death at age 48 stunned the nation, the music fraternity, and his close colleagues.

Among those also attending the funeral was George Singh, CEO Southex Events Management.

Singh declared that Trinidad and Tobago lost a cultural icon with Bheem's passing. He left behind an emptiness that could never be filled again, he stated.

Said Singh: "How uncertain life can be. I would never have imagined one week ago that I would be standing here speaking at... Bheem's funeral. On [the morning of February 5] the day after Anil died, I read an article that described [him] as a top Chutney Soca artiste. He was so much more than that."

He added, "While he dabbled from time to time in the Chutney Soca genre of music, his forte was his musical renditions of local Bollywood covers and Bhajans. These are the songs that resonate with us. Anil Bheem was at the height of his career. He was having the biggest year of his life. He was travelling every weekend, and was booked for months for events in Trinidad and around the world."

Bheem was in Toronto last month, when he performed at the District Lounge in Pickering, where he performed for the lounge's Dave Persaud Capricorn versus Aquarius Birthday Bash on January 21. A packed venue was on hand to listen and sway to his stellar renditions.

As the nightclub and lounge noted, "[It] saddens us to know that Anil is gone right before he could showcase his talent all over the world".

It added, "We thank everyone who came out to this event, and got to share one of his last performances in Toronto... Thank you to the whole Bheem team. We send our love and condolences to the family."

Bheem's performance at the District Lounge can be viewed here.

Delivering the eulogy last week, wife Shazina Cheryl described Bheem as the perfect son, husband, and father.

Said Shazina: "Radio, music and family were his life. The music fraternity has suffered a major loss... He was a prodigy, a true son of the soil... you have forever changed the cultural landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, and left your indelible mark on this earth."

She recalled meeting Bheem at the radio station 103.1FM,



Anil's widow Shazina Cheryl

where she was working as an announcer. Their friendship blossomed into a beautiful love story, she revealed.

She also indicated that she had accompanied Bheem last Friday on his two performances. What started off as a night of happiness later descended into horror and loss, she said.

Tracing Bheem's rise to become a national icon, she said he began his career as a singer with his family, alongside mother Prematee Bheem, and then moved on to JMC Triveni before starting his own band, BMRZ [Body, Mind and Rhythm Zone].

She also declared that Bheem loved his two daughters unconditionally, and lived for his grandchildren.

The elder of Bheem's two daughters, Neelam, said her father was a pillar of strength who gave them a magical childhood. He was the "Bheem" of light in their lives, she said.

"Everyone says my father was not an ordinary man. They say he was the man with the golden voice. But to us he was the man with the golden heart. As children, we longed for nothing, as he did all in his power to provide for us the best way he can. Our childhood was magical."

The second daughter, Pritivi, said her father was the light in her life, her best friend, and her boss. Pritivi was a lead singer in BMRZ.

Both Bheem and Pritivi performed at his final two events on the night of February 4, hours before he passed away suddenly.

Said Pritivi: "He taught me everything I know. Dad, you have broken our hearts. You have the entire world grieving for you."

Singer Saleem Beharry, and drummer Amir Ramjattan, told the funeral gathering that Bheem had changed the course of their lives, along with many others.

Performing artistes at the ceremony cried openly as they sang Bheem's songs. Among the performers were Ravi B, Neval Chatelal, Satnarine Ragoon, Nadia Madoo, Saraswati Maharaj, Rakesh Yankaran, eight-year-old Katelin Sultan, and many others, who sang from Bheem's extensive repertoire of religious and Bollywood songs.

However, it was his latest hit song, *Suhani Raat - The Indian Anthem*, that was chosen for Bheem's send-off, the artistes mournfully bidding goodbye to the nationally loved performer who touched their lives, and the lives of so many people locally and abroad.

Translated, the song tells us, "The beautiful night has slipped away, don't know when you will come. Throughout the world the seasons have changed. I don't know when you will come..."

Bheem died at his east Trinidad home in Curepe on the morning of February 5 after performing at 103.1FM's Fenomenal Fridays, and at the Avala Restaurant in Chaguana. He was cremated on the banks of the Caroni River on February 9.

2023 THEME: OUR STORY TO TELL

This February we are celebrating the accomplishments and contributions of Black communities across Canada

Happy Black History Month!

FROM

MP Ruby Sahota

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE:
 Unit 306 - 50 Sunny Meadow Blvd., Brampton, ON
 TEL: (905) - 840 - 0505 EMAIL: ruby.sahota@parl.gc.ca

Retired judge calls for patience into \$M probe

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago was last week “respectfully” urged to bear with patience until an investigation has been completed into a (TT) \$20 million malicious prosecution judgement that went in favour of nine men formerly accused of kidnapping and murder.

The call for patience was made by retired Judge Stanley John, when he addressed the nation last week following his appointment to lead the investigation. The nine men are formerly accused of the kidnapping and murder of businesswoman Vindra Naipaul-Coolman.

Naipaul-Coolman was abducted from her Chaguanas home on December 19, 2006. A (TT) \$122,000 ransom was paid by her family, but she was not released, and her body was never found.

John made the call during a televised statement. He acknowledged that citizens were “justifiably appalled and outraged” by the outcome of the case, while calling on the nation for patience until he and retired Assistant Commissioner of Police Pamela Schullera-Hinds have completed their investigation.

“While the ire of the nation has understandably been inflamed by this matter, I respectfully urge the general public to withhold judgment until the investigation is complete,” he said.

John also gave the assurance to nationals and staff at the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs that the investigation would be “fair and fearless”.

Said John: “Please note that this investigation, which I lead, is interested in one thing and one thing only, that is to say, uncovering and reporting within our terms of reference the truth about how the default judgement came to be entered and damages awarded against the State.”

He added, “In doing so, we shall act fearlessly but fairly, expeditiously but carefully, objectively and impartially, and with scrupulous regard for the requirements of due process and the rule of law.”

John promised to deliver a preliminary report to Attorney

General Reginald Armour on March 31. However, he estimated the probe would require six months before its completion.

He noted that the full probe includes a general assessment of how the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs manages its civil litigation, along with recommendations to improve the same.

It also includes written reports to the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, and Director of Public Prosecutions Roger Gaspard on possible disciplinary or criminal charges for the ministry staff, who may be found to be culpable in the probe.

The investigation was ordered by Armour after Shervon and

Devon Peters, their brother Anthony Gloster, Joel Fraser, Ronald Armstrong, brothers Keida and Jameel Garcia, Marlon Trimmingham, and Antonio Charles were each awarded (TT) \$2.1 million in damages for malicious prosecution by Master Martha Alexander on January 30.

While it was initially claimed that the men obtained a default judgement from High Court Judge Joan Charles in early 2021 after the AG’s Office

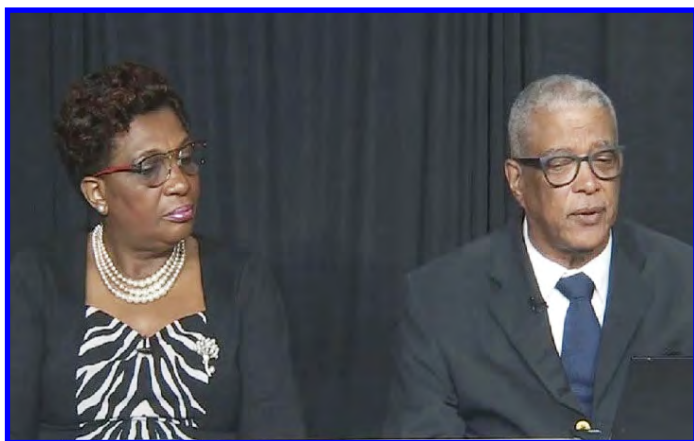
entered an appearance in the case but failed to defend it, Supreme Court Registrar and acting Marshall of the High Court Raymond Roberts later confirmed that the State did not participate until the assessment of damages before Master Alexander.

In addressing the issue, Armour stated that after the case was filed in late May 2020, it was served on the Solicitor General’s Office a month later. He stated that the voluminous file was received by an employee of the ministry, and a file was opened for the case to be assigned to a State attorney.

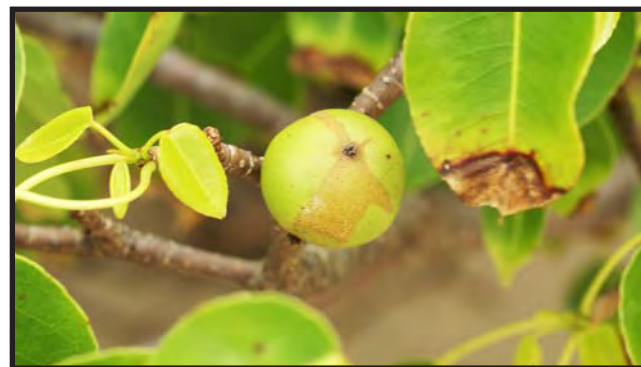
“After this, the file disappeared,” Armour said.

He added, “I would not allow myself at this time, because of due process, to utter what I think occurred, but it is sinister.”

John and Schullera-Hinds were appointed to investigate what transpired in the case, while former Caribbean Court of Justice Judge Rolston Nelson was retained to advise Armour on issues relevant to the missing file, and the provenance of Master Alexander’s decision.



Pamela Schullera-Hinds & retired Judge Stanley John



Deadly Manchineel fruit

Tobago tourist eats poison fruit

Scarborough – In what was a case of eating a forbidden fruit, the *Trinidad Express* reported earlier this month that a Canadian tourist was admitted to the Scarborough General Hospital after consuming a fruit from the poisonous Manchineel tree in western Tobago. The visitor was reported to be in a stable condition.

According to the *Express*, Rose Kishore, a legal assistant from Canada, was on vacation in Tobago with a friend Daniela Vasilko. As Kishore stated, Vasilko ate the Manchineel fruit while walking along Swallows Beach.

The fruit from this tree is highly toxic. Large warning signs in red are displayed on the trees in the Swallows area.

Said Kishore: “[She] ate it and about ten minutes later we were back in our room, but she felt super ill, she threw up before we got to the room because she felt like super, super ill.”

Vasilko was rushed to the Scarborough General Hospital in a serious, but stable condition.

Large signs in the area state, “Manchineel Tree – Do Not Touch. Fruit highly toxic and may be deadly if ingested. Leaves, bark and white sap very dangerous to skin and eyes. Avoid sheltering beneath the tree.”

Kishore said the signs were missed before the fruit was eaten. Additionally, “I’m aware that there are signs there... a couple people I spoke to on the beach earlier they also said they [saw] the signs, but it’s not just displayed in a fashionable manner where it’s so visible...”

She added, “...I don’t think... the Government or... tourism [know] how important it is for them to make that known... get rid of the trees... cut them down... kill them so they don’t grow...”

Tobago Environment Secretary Nathisha Charles-Pantin said removing the trees was unsafe due to its corrosive sap. It also has medicinal properties, and must be handled with care, she added.



**A MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU
AND YOUR GTA LIBERAL MPS:**

**From the trailblazers of the past, to the changemakers
of today, Black History Month is a time to celebrate the
diverse Black Canadian communities across Canada,
their stories, and their dreams.**

**Black history is Canadian history, and our government is dedicated
to making our country stronger, fairer, and more inclusive.**

PRESENTED BY:

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The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

Batish family: Musicians, 'move-icians', & inspiration for the Beatles

By Anu Kumar

On October 10, 1965, the series *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* premiered on BBC1 television and radio. Presented in Hindustani, Urdu, and English, its theme music was composed by the multi-faceted Pandit Shiv Dayal Batish, who had already won considerable renown as singer and music composer in the Hindi film world. The series aimed to reach the new immigrant from South Asia: it offered advice on matters like housing, insurance, migration, and education, interspersed with music from the subcontinent, especially film music.

S.D. Batish, as he was better known, was also a recent arrival to England. As his son, the musician Ashwin Batish, recounted to *Scroll*.

in an email, he had reached London earlier that year on a "near relative visa" following his older daughter Surendra's admission to a course in ophthalmology. Word of his arrival spread among fellow musicians such as Keshav Sathe, who worked in the Indian High Commission and moonlighted as a tabla player, and Batish soon became part of the BBC's outreach programmes.

A multi-instrumentalist, who was proficient at the sitar, tabla, and vichitra veena, Batish featured regularly at music festivals across Britain. At one of these, the Cardiff Music Festival, his playing impressed the British parliamentarian and activist Fenner Brockway, who went on to help Batish secure permanent residency status, Ashwin says.

Not long after, Batish's family joined him from Bombay. It was a decision, Ashwin says, that balanced his mother Shanta Devi's practicality with his father's musical dreams.

Shanta Devi, like Batish early in his career, had been an artist with the *All India Radio* at one time. To raise money for the air tickets, the family sold its land in Bombay's Santa Cruz neighbourhood – now worth a fortune, Ashwin says. Its new home was on Birchington Road, a residential area in London's West Hampstead.

A few weeks later, as Batish recalled, came Sathe's memorable call inviting him to make up the quartet of Indian musicians assembled to provide accompaniment for the *Beatles'* album *Help!* The others in the quartet were Sathe on tabla, Diwan Motihar on sitar and Qasim (known just by his first name) on flute.

A kinship must have formed during those musical sessions, for Batish's association with George Harrison did not end there.

Months later, Batish was engaged to teach Harrison's wife, Patti Boyd, the dilruba, a stringed instrument that later featured on the *Beatles'* *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album (1967).

Around 1970, the Batish family moved again, this time to Santa Cruz in California. The emigration was not altogether impulsive. Batish had been teaching a short-term course at the University of Santa Cruz, where his colleague, the mathematician Ralph Abraham, had been taking tabla lessons from him.

Abraham suggested the Batish family move to the US and the family agreed. As a family, Ashwin quipped, they were as much "move-icians" as musicians.

Hindi Film World

Born on December 21, 1914, in Patiala, Batish showed promise early. As the story goes, when he was as young as seven, he was regaling audiences and receiving praise from the likes of Hari Singh, the maharaja of Kashmir. Encouraged by the plaudits perhaps, he forayed into Bombay to forge an acting career. His attempt wasn't quite successful, though, and he returned to Patiala to study music with Pandit Chandan Ram Charan.



S.D. Batish (right) with Meena Batish & Ashwin Batish. *Batish Records' photo*



A rare photo of Hindi film industry singers together in their early years: (front row) Zohra Jan, Rajkumari, Amirbai Karnatki, Hamida Banu, Geeta Roy (later Geeta Dutt), Lata Mangeshkar, Meena Kapoor; (standing behind) Sailesh Mukherjee, Talat Mahmood, Dilip Dholakia, Mohd Rafi, Shiv Dayal Batish, G.M. Durrani, Kishore Ganguli (later Kishore Kumar), and Mukesh. *Batish Records' photo*

His guru, quite taken by Batish's sense of rhythm and memory, gave him the moniker Rasik, which Batish adopted as a pseudonym on some compositions crafted later in California.

By 1936, he was an artiste with the *All India Radio* and recorded for the label EMI as Master Ramesh – a name he acquired while singing covers of songs rendered by popular singers, especially K.L. Saigal.

As always, fortune seemed to smile on him. His singing on *AIR* drew the attention of an older cousin, Pandit Amarnath, who was an accomplished musician in the Punjabi film industry in Lahore.

Amarnath gave Batish the opportunity to sing a song – *Pagdi Sambhal Jatta* – he had composed for the film *Gawandi* (1942). The song became a hit, making Batish popular.

But, all told, the experience was bittersweet. Ashwin says his father did not relish acting in the movie: the frequent takes, the blinding light from mirrors used as reflectors unnerved him.

As Amarnath's assistant, Batish learned various aspects of music direction: rehearsing with singers, synchronising instruments, and working with an orchestra.

These learnings opened yet another opportunity for him. He was invited to Bombay by the Marathi writer and film impresario Keshav Prahlad Atre (Acharya Atre) to compose music for the film *Paayaachi Daasi*. But, in the end, credit was given to Annasaheb Mainkar.

After the Partition in 1947, the year Amarnath died, Batish moved back to Bombay, this time not to try his luck as an actor, but as a singer and composer.

Several prominent music directors of the day employed him for their movies – Anil Biswas for *Laadli*, Husnlal-Bhagatram for *Sawan Bhado*, *Hamari Manzil*, and *Surajmukhi*; Ghulam

Mohammad for *Kundan*; Roshan for *Barsat ki Raat* and *Taksal*; and Madan Mohan for *Ada* and *Railway Platform*. Some of his more notable songs were sung with Geeta Dutt in films he provided music himself, such as *Betaab* and *Bahu Beti*.

Batish, whose musical *oeuvre* has been described as an "amalgam of classical music and Punjabi folk and popular styles" composed for 16 films, including *Har Jeet*, *Tipu Sultan* and *Toofan*. For two films, he composed under the name Nirmal Kumar – a moniker that Lata Mangeshkar had given him for luck, according to Ashwin.

By this time, Batish had grown disenchanted with the Hindi film world. Ashwin recalls that his father needed a steady income to sustain his

young family, but payments were erratic and delayed. Irked by this, Batish worked for a while to set up an artistes' union to give them a platform to air their grievances and demands.

England gave a new direction to Batish's career. He founded a monthly music journal called *Musicasia*, wrote regularly for it, taught students Indian music, and performed at festivals and for Indian audiences.

In 1969, he even gave basic sitar lessons to the actor Michael York for his role in *The Guru*. Based loosely on George Harrison, the Merchant-Ivory movie depicted a musician's search for a guru in India, and starred Utpal Dutt, Saeed Jaffrey, Aparna Sen, and others.

Project Of A Lifetime

The move to the US, as with the one to England, was a family decision. Shanta Devi's initiative led to the Batish India House (at first called the Sri Krishna Café), a restaurant on Santa Cruz's Mission Street that served Indian food while music was played by members of the Batish family. "I would serve food and then jump on stage to play music," remembered Ashwin, who like his father plays several instruments, including the sitar and tabla.

The restaurant was featured often in the local paper, *The Santa Cruz Sentinel*, and ran till 1985, before music became the all-absorbing act, and S.D. Batish embarked on the "project of a lifetime".

His wish to collate, annotate, and set in writing every known detail of the Hindustani (the *Ragopedia* compendia) and Carnatic musical systems coincided with Ashwin's discovery of Gopher, an early Internet protocol that enabled files to be recorded, uploaded, and distributed easily.

It was a project envisioned after their visits to the library of the University of Berkeley yielded barely a few books on Indian music, and mostly on the Carnatic tradition.

What was an inspiration for Batish to explain every raga became a boon, not merely for music aficionados, but also for his students who were familiar only with English.

The family set up the Batish Institute of Music and Fine Arts in 1976. It was the third of its kind to come up in California after the Ali Akbar Khan College of Music and the Music Circle, which was set up by Harihar Rao, a long-time associate of Ravi Shankar.

Besides being a recording studio, the Batish Institute continues to offer classes and texts, including several hundreds of Batish's compositions (his *raga lakshan geet* set in the Hindustani classical system), and his derivative ragas based on the 72 melakartas of the Carnatic tradition.

He regularly performed with his children, Ashwin and daughter Meena, and lived long enough to see his grandchildren, Keshav and Mohini, grow into musicians.

Batish died in 2006, short of his 94th birthday. On his 85th birthday, as he regaled an audience with his music, the city of Santa Cruz honoured him with a photo exhibition on his life, labelling him a "living musical treasure".

From India with love: now Bollywood gains foothold in Russia

By Mandira Nayar

The fame of Allu Arjun's lightning fast feet has moved beyond India. *Pushpa: The Rise* (2021), the action-packed Telugu film that cemented him as a pan-India hero, has also propelled him to international stardom. The film, with its epic battle of revenge between a smuggler and a ruthless cop, seems to have struck a chord in Russia. Says Denis Klucharev, an investment banker in St Petersburg: "I loved Pushpa. I can't wait for the sequel."

The success of the film can be judged by the reception the actor got when he and the crew travelled for its premiere in Moscow. *Pushpa* is not the only film out to woo new audiences. In Moscow's most snowed-out week in December, Ranveer Singh attempted to warm Russian hearts with his *Cirkus*.

At the heart of this new craze for Indian cinema is Tahseen Nazim, a green-eyed neurologist who is also working on audio books. Nazim, with a Saudi father and an Indian mother, grew up in Britain, not typically on a staple diet of Bollywood though. The dark of the movie hall used to lull him to sleep on occasion, he admits sheepishly.

"The perils of being a doctor and being on the feet all day," he says, laughing. But he became passionate about other people watching Indian films, and as cofounder of the Indian Films Association, he is now officially a movie buff.

"*Pushpa* made 29 million roubles in a week," he says. This was almost a year after its release in India.

Unlike other overseas markets, which depend on the Indian diaspora to fill cinema halls, Nazim has chosen to focus on local residents.

He says, "We have changed the market. For me, the audience is Russian." The *Pushpa* premiere had a sea of Russian faces glued to the screen. "There were only three Indians," he says.

Russia has had a love affair with Indian films for a long time. Raj Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951) became very much the symbol of the *Hindi-Russi dosti* [India-Russia friendship] phase. *Seeta Aur Geeta* (1972) is still shown on Russian state channels. And then there is Mithun Chakraborty, always gilded in gold as *Disco Dancer* (1982).

In the 1990s, with the breakup of the Soviet Union, the cinema connection between the two countries snapped. The



Tahseen Nazim

swish world of Hollywood arrived and took over the screens. Says Nazim: "India stayed behind. Raj Kapoor used to put in a lot of effort himself. There was a lot of individual attention. The breakup of the Soviet Union happened at the same time as Indian cinema was changing and becoming more corporate."

With the big screen connection gone, the true lovers of Indian cinema turned to YouTube. Films were dubbed in Russian and watched by Russians, and the nostalgia of Raj [Kapoor] was replaced by the craze of another Raj (Shah Rukh Khan's most popular and oft-used character name).

"SRK changed the business in Russia," says Nazim. His *Pathaan* (2023) released in Russia at the same time as in India.

It has taken a while to build the audience for Indian films. *My Name Is Khan* (2010) – the new generation's *Awaara* – may have been a watershed moment, but it has been a slow buildup. Nazim began his filmi experiment in 2016. He asked a

multiplex in Moscow and St Petersburg to give two screens for Indian films for a year. *Bajirao Mastani* (2015) failed to bring in audiences; *Tubelight* (2017) flopped, but he persisted. And, it has paid off.

The shift to Indian films is part of Russia's tilt away from the west. The sanctions may have not brought life to a standstill, but they have hit entertainment. Netflix has blacked out, Spotify has blocked music, and Hollywood has cut off Russia. It is as much defiance, a little bit of ideology, and an opening to make a difference.

A recent film festival saw packed audiences. There was *Disco Dancer*, *My Name Is Khan*, *Dangal* (2016), *War* (2019) and *Pushpa*. Dubbed in Russian, the films helped introduce a whole new generation of Indian films to a whole new generation of Russians.

"There is this stereotype that Indians make only slapstick cinema," says Nazim.

Perhaps, more than the festival, what is likely to have a bigger impact for Indian films in Russia is that the Russian federal channel has bought a series of Indian films. With a much bigger reach than pay television, Russians in the holiday season got to watch *K.G.F: Chapter 1 and 2* (2018 and 2022), *RRR* (2022), *Radhe Shyam* (2022), *Baahubali* (2015) and *War*. "This is the first time that this has happened," says Nazim. Sold for between 30 million roubles and 40 million roubles, Nazim hopes this will be just a teaser for Indian films. This also reflects the new trend of the world being wooed by the larger-than-life canvas of the films from south India, propped by special effects and dramatic fight scenes.

"There are 1,000 cities in Russia, we have only shown in 110. There is still a long way to go," he says.

But the romance has certainly been rekindled. The country is also vying for Indian movie crews to shoot in Russia. The country was among the first to open up post-Covid-19. In 2014, the devaluation of the rouble began.

Says Nazim: "It became cheaper to shoot. *Tiger 3* (set to release in 2023) was the first film to be shot in Russia, where the government offered a ten per cent rebate." *Pathaan*, too, was shot partly in Russia. Also, Russia offers a whole spectrum of locales – from snow to European buildings, and even the mountainous landscape of Dagestan.

The *dosti* is only going to get deeper.



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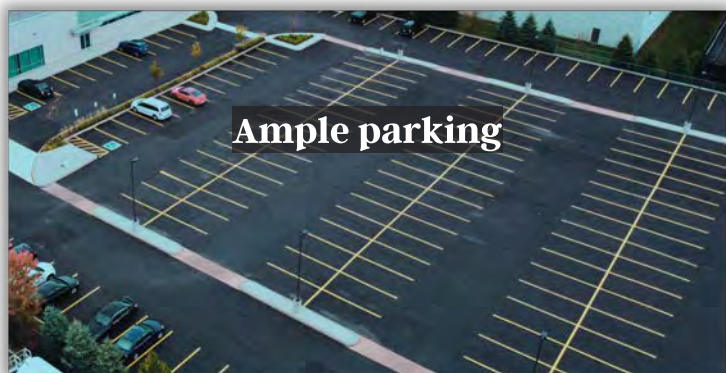


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Veerasammy Permaul

Turning point as Permaul hits 500 wickets

Georgetown – Guyana Harpy Eagles left-arm spinner Veerasammy Permaul's career came to a turning point earlier this month after notching his 500th first class wicket in Guyana. He hit the milestone at 33 years, and dedicated it to his father and late mother.

Now he wants to move on to another milestone, which is to take 600 first class wickets for Guyana.

Permaul has a total of 574 first class wickets overall that includes Tests, A teams, and first class games.

As *Guyana Times* reported out of Georgetown last week, in reminiscing about his wicket haul, Permaul said sending Brian Lara back to the pavilion was among one of his highlights while playing for Guyana.

"The second season for me, it was when I got Brian Lara caught and bowled. I think that was his last season as well," he said.

He also cited passing Mahendra Nagamootoo's first class wicket haul.

"It is just me and Nikita Miller [who] are the top wicket-takers at that time, and until now in the Caribbean. I am a few wickets away from being the leading wicket-taker in the region," he told *Guyana Times*.

Permaul also thanked his parents for their sacrifices.

"I want to give God praise and thanks for giving me this

opportunity for representing Guyana over the years. I want to dedicate this milestone to my parents, my father and late mother, for the sacrifice they have made for me over the years," he said.

Additionally, "It is a special feeling to get more than 500 first class wickets for my country. I don't think anyone else has done it [for Guyana], so it is a special feeling for me."

Permaul also indicated he would keep on bowling as long as he could.

"God has that say. All I can do is go out and do the work. Put in the training and work hard on my game. God is in control," he said.

His aim is to finish his first class career being at the top in the region, he said.

"I am looking to finish with the most wickets [in first class cricket in the Caribbean]. I would love to get at least 600 or more for Guyana, before I finish playing. But God knows best," he declared.

Permaul made his debut for Guyana in first class cricket in January 2007. To date, he has featured in 16 seasons of first class cricket for Guyana. He most fruitful season for Guyana was in 2014-2015, when he took 67 wickets in ten matches.

Permaul has played nine Tests, seven ODIs, and one T20 International for the West Indies.

Bangladesh's Ahmed confident ahead of England series

While England are superior across all formats compared to Bangladesh, pacer Taskin Ahmed still believes his team can offer a stiff challenge in the upcoming white-ball series to take place in Chattogram and Dhaka starting March 1, the cricket media platform *Cricbuzz* reported last week.

England will arrive in Bangladesh on February 24 for a white-ball series comprising three ODIs and three T20Is.

Bangladesh have won 13 out of their last 14 ODI series games

at home. The latest win saw a 2-1 conclusion against India, with the one defeat against England by a 1-2 margin in 2016. Bangladesh have also won three out of their last five T20I series at home since 2020, including series wins against Australia, New Zealand, and Zimbabwe. A two-match T20I series against Afghanistan ended 1-1.

Bangladesh's only T20I series defeat during this period came against Pakistan in 2021.

"Certainly it won't be easy against [England], and they are a bigger team [compared to Bangladesh] in every format. But we have the belief that we are a very strong side in our own backyard, and we expecting to fight with them," Ahmed said last week.

He added, "Everything cannot go by logic, and I feel whoever plays good cricket on a particular day will win. Certainly if you consider everything, then [England] are far ahead than us. But

at the same time because we are playing at home we can expect to win the series."

Ahmed said that newly-appointed head coach Chandika Hathurusingha has already started preparations by sharing his plans with the team regarding the upcoming home series against England.

Hathurusingha completed his first tenure with Bangladesh from 2014 to 2017. Now in Australia, he is expected to arrive in Bangladesh on February 20 to begin his second stint.

"We are excited that Hathurusingha is returning. He is a very good coach and an honest man, and I am sure we will do well under him. Those who were young at that time have matured now, and we are also in a good shape as far as the team is concerned," he said.

Ahmed also added, "[Hathurusingha] has spoken with everyone, and he is keeping in

touch with everyone. He is sharing his plans and explaining the roles."

Ahmed added he has started his rehabilitation programme, and is recovering from a hamstring grade one tear that prevented him from taking part in the Bangladesh Premier League since January 30.

"I have started my rehabilitation programme and completed my training in the morning. I am moving as per the plan of the board and I am hoping within a short time I will start bowling with a short run up," he said.



Taskin Ahmed

England's Rehan Ahmed gets nod for Bangladesh

England have named 18-year-old leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed in their white-ball squads for the first time ahead of the upcoming tour of Bangladesh, *The Independent* reported last week.

Ahmed became England's youngest men's Test cricketer when he lined up against Pakistan in Karachi in December, and marked the occasion with a five-wicket haul.

The Leicestershire spinner had played just three first-class matches before making his Test debut, but has slightly more experience in white-ball cricket, having played 19 T20 matches and seven List A games.

Lancashire fast bowler Saqib Mahmood was also included in the ODI squad for the first time since suffering a back stress fracture in May.

The 25-year-old is currently with the England Lions in Sri Lanka, but has not bowled so far during the red-ball series.

Also, Somerset's Tom Abell received his maiden call-up for both the ODI and T20 squads.

However, there was no place in the squad for Alex Hales.

He is now set to play franchise cricket in the Pakistan Super League after returning to the national set-up last summer.

Hales played a crucial role in England's T20 World Cup victory in Australia in November following a positive recreational drugs test on the eve of the 2019 World Cup that saw him away for three-and-a-half years.

Adil Rashid, Moeen Ali, and Jason Roy were also selected by PSL franchises, but have been included for the tour of Bangladesh.

James Vince was named as part of the ODI squad after not featuring in the most recent 50-over series in South Africa.

England will play three ODIs and three T20s in Bangladesh from March 1 to 14, which will be the first T20 matches since Jos Buttler's side became world champions in November.

ODI Squad

Jos Buttler (Lancashire, captain), **Tom Abell** (Somerset), **Rehan**



Rehan Ahmed



Saqib Mahmood

Ahmed (Leicestershire), **Moeen Ali** (Warwickshire), **Jofra Archer** (Sussex), **Sam Curran** (Surrey), **Saqib Mahmood** (Lancashire), **Dawid Malan** (Yorkshire), **Adil Rashid** (Yorkshire), **Jason Roy** (Surrey), **Phil Salt** (Lancashire), **Reece Topley** (Surrey), **James Vince** (Hampshire), **Chris Woakes** (Warwickshire), **Mark Wood** (Durham).

IT20 Squad

Jos Buttler (Lancashire, captain), **Tom Abell** (Somerset), **Rehan Ahmed** (Leicestershire), **Moeen Ali** (Warwickshire), **Jofra Archer** (Sussex), **Sam Curran** (Surrey), **Ben Duckett** (Nottinghamshire), **Will Jacks** (Surrey), **Chris Jordan** (Surrey), **Dawid Malan** (Yorkshire), **Adil Rashid** (Yorkshire), **Phil Salt** (Lancashire), **Reece Topley** (Surrey), **Chris Woakes** (Warwickshire), **Mark Wood** (Durham).

Match Schedule

1st ODI: Bangladesh vs England - March 1, Dhaka
2nd ODI: Bangladesh vs England - March 3, Dhaka
3rd ODI: Bangladesh vs England - March 6, Chattogram
1st IT20: Bangladesh vs England - March 9, Chattogram
2nd IT20: Bangladesh vs England - March 12, Dhaka
3rd IT20: Bangladesh vs England - March 14, Dhaka



Sarah Glenn

England women take aggression up a notch

England's women are on a similar aggressive path as their male counterparts as they take on the challenge at the Women's T20 World Cup that is now underway in South Africa, bowler Sarah Glenn has said.

As *The Independent* reported last week, since being appointed in May last year, head coach Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes have transformed the fortunes of the men's national team, encouraging an attacking style of play that has delivered victory in nine of the last ten Test matches.

Said Glenn: "You can see that the men's team has developed this ethos of being really aggressive as well. It was quite inspiring to watch, especially in some of the Test matches, which was really good to see how they were panning it out. Quite a few of us were thinking, 'Oh, we would love to play that kind of cricket'. It has always been in us and Lewy (Jon Lewis) is really bringing it out. Part of the process is believing we can do it, and he is making us do that."

Also, "As long as we keep pushing for that, and if England cricket can all have the same mindset, together as the men and the women's team, then I think we can create something really special."

Glenn said a similar aggressive push was being undertaken by the team's bowlers.

"We want to be aggressive always looking to take wickets. In T20 cricket when people are coming at you, you can often go

West Indies women U19 trio selected for T20 World Cup

The U19 World Cup trio of Zaida James, Trishan Holder, and Djenaba Joseph are among the 15-member squad named by the West Indies selectors for the ICC Twenty 20 World Cup tournament now underway in South Africa.

On the tour with the trio are veteran seamer, Shakera Selman, Chinelle Henry, and Chedean Nation who missed most of the recent T20 International Tri-series against India and South Africa due to injury.

Former captain Stafanie Taylor is also accompanying the group, but will only take to the field based on a fitness assessment.

"The selectors have opted for a blend of youth and experience for upcoming T20 World Cup," said Chief Selector Ann Browne-John.

"Four senior players who have been out through injury have returned: Stefanie Taylor, Shakera Selman, Chinelle Henry, and Chedean Nation. We continue the developmental pathway to grow women's cricket in the region, hence we feel the time is right to include three of the Under19 Rising Stars in the squad," Browne-John added.

The left-handed James scored two fifties in the inaugural ICC Under-19 Women's World Cup, and made her senior team debut in the final game of the Tri-series recently.

Meanwhile, Holder played three T20Is last month on England Women's five-match tour of the Caribbean after making her debut for Barbados at last year's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

The West Indies Women are the 2016 champions, and will be competing in Group 2 alongside England, India, Pakistan, and

into your shell. (Lewis) is just really encouraging us to just break that and just looking always for the aggressive option, no matter how we go about that."

Last time England faced New Zealand in the Commonwealth Games bronze medal match last August, they slumped to an eight-wicket defeat on home soil having crumbled to 110 for nine.

Glenn is confident things will be different when the two sides meet again at Western Province Cricket Club.

"We have always had the right mindset in terms of what we have wanted to achieve, which is to inspire and entertain everyone," she said.

She added, "The difference now is that we are piecing it together and are all under the same boat of how we want to play our cricket, so I think it is a really crucial time for us. We can see that clicking as a team, and it is really exciting to see it all piecing together."

Last week England comfortably beat New Zealand by five wickets in their final warm-up game. After opting to bowl first, England restricted New Zealand to 114-9 from their 20 overs, with Sophie Ecclestone claiming 3-19 and Kate Cross 2-10. England then chased the target in 13.5 overs, with opener Sophia Dunkley making an unbeaten 60 from 38 balls.

England won the 50-over World Cup six years ago, but lost in the final and semi-final at T20 World Cups to Australia last year.

Ireland. The tournament started on February 10, and ends on February 26.

Remaining T20 World Cup tournament schedule

Group 1: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh; **Group 2:** England, India, West Indies, Pakistan, Ireland

February 15 West Indies vs India, Cape Town (13:00 GMT)

February 15 Pakistan vs Ireland, Cape Town (17:00 GMT)

February 16 Sri Lanka vs Australia, Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) (13:00 GMT)

February 17 New Zealand vs Bangladesh, Cape Town (13:00 GMT)

February 17 West Indies vs Ireland, Cape Town (17:00 GMT)

February 18 England vs India, Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) (13:00 GMT)

February 18 South Africa vs Australia, Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) (17:00 GMT)

February 19 Pakistan vs West Indies, Paarl (13:00 GMT)

February 19 New Zealand vs Sri Lanka, Paarl (17:00 GMT)

February 20 Ireland vs India, Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) (13:00 GMT)

February 21 England vs Pakistan, Cape Town (13:00 GMT)

February 21 South Africa vs Bangladesh, Cape Town (17:00 GMT)

Knockout stage
February 23 *First semi-final, Cape Town (13:00 GMT)
February 24 *Second semi-final, Cape Town (13:00 GMT)
February 26 *Final, Cape Town (13:00 GMT)

*Both semi-finals and the final have reserve days.

Cricket Schedule

(ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Wednesday February 15, 2023

West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 2nd Test, Day 4, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM

Thursday February 16, 2023

England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 1, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 02:00 PM

West Indies tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 2nd Test, Day 5, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 10:00 AM

Friday February 17, 2023

England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 2, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 02:00 PM

Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 1, Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi, 09:30 AM

Saturday February 18, 2023

England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 3, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 02:00 PM

Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 2, Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi, 09:30 AM.

Sunday February 19, 2023

Afghanistan tour of United Arab Emirates, 2023
UAE vs Afghanistan, 3rd T20I, Sheikh Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi, 3:00 AM, 02:00 PM

England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 4, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 2:00 PM

Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 3, Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi, 9:30 AM

Monday February 20, 2023

England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 1st Test, Day 5, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, 2:00 PM

ICC Cricket World Cup League Two 2019-2023
Scotland vs Namibia, 5th Match, Tribhuvan University International Cricket Ground, Kirtipur, 9:00 AM

Australia tour of India, 2023

India vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 4, Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi, 9:30 AM

Tuesday February 21, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup League Two 2019-2023
Nepal vs Scotland, 6th Match, Tribhuvan University International Cricket Ground, Kirtipur, 9:00 AM

Australia tour of India, 2023

India vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 5, Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi, 9:00 PM, 9:30 AM

Thursday February 23, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup League Two 2019-2023, United Arab Emirates vs Namibia, 1st Match (Rescheduled), Dubai International Cricket Stadium, Dubai, 9:30 AM

Friday February 24, 2023

England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 2nd Test, Day 1, Basin Reserve, Wellington, 11:00 AM

Spain vs Isle of Man, 1st T20I, La Manga Club Bottom Ground, Cartagena, Murcia, 11:00 AM

Spain vs Isle of Man, 2nd T20I, La Manga Club Bottom Ground, Cartagena, Murcia, 3:15 PM

Saturday February 25, 2023

England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 2nd Test, Day 2, Basin Reserve, Wellington, 11:00 AM

Spain vs Isle of Man, 3rd T20I, La Manga Club Bottom Ground, Cartagena, Murcia, 11:00 AM

Spain vs Isle of Man, 4th T20I
La Manga Club Bottom Ground, Cartagena, Murcia, 3:15 PM

ICC Cricket World Cup League Two 2019-2023
United Arab Emirates vs Namibia, 2nd Match (Rescheduled), Dubai International Cricket Stadium, Dubai, 9:30 AM

Sunday February 26, 2023

England tour of New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs England, 2nd Test, Day 3, Basin Reserve, Wellington, 11:00 AM.



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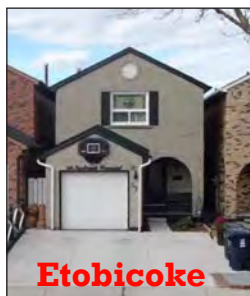
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Beautiful 4 bedrooms, 4 washrooms, 2 storey home located in the quiet neighbourhood of Angus. Minutes to Barrie. Open concept main floor w/ walkout to fenced backyard. Finished basement with rec room, full washroom & laundry area. Large driveway w/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



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

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