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Our Community Is Thriving!



At the NY book launch last month, writer Janet Naidu (centre) presents a copy of her latest work, *River Crossing*, to the daughters of the late Rajkumari Singh – Pritha Singh (left), and Chitra Singh (right)

Naidu launches *River Crossing* in NY

New York – The NY diaspora were the beneficiaries in December with a first reading by poet, writer, and community leader in Toronto, Janet Naidu, when she launched her new book of poems, *River Crossing*.

The launch was organised by Chitra Singh, singer, song writer, and daughter of the late Rajkumari Singh, an iconic figure in Guyana's cultural history.

Rajkumari is highly-regarded for her work in creating a space for young artists in the 1970s in Guyana. Naidu was among the first recipients of Rajkumari's eternal, artistic, and historical legacy.

At the launch, Naidu recalled being inspired by Rajkumari to write poetry.

"My start with poetry began with Rajkumari. She inspired me to become a poet. She was dynamic and passionate about the arts. I recall her bringing to the centre our Indian cultural identity. I looked up to her, and I listened to her," Naidu revealed.

Naidu started the program with a first read-

ing from *River Crossing*, and was followed with further readings by Chitra, and Misha Azaria, also an artiste. Among the poems read were *The Descendant Knows*, *A Rock In The River*, and *Annapurani, Pati*.

Chitra read *Kali Mai* and *Chandini's Thumbprint*. Azaria wrapped up the program with a reading of *The Butterfly*, and *Beyond All Things*.

River Crossing is a breathtaking collection of 53 poems that is located from place to place, evoking the lived experiences of the historical and the persistence of memories of migration, and survival in new lands.

Naidu's voice is powerful for its storytelling about settlement in new lands; readjustment; a home away from home; cultural connections to Guyana; and reflections of life in Canada. Her poems also distill what it means to experience difficulties in life, and ways of surviving.

Her other books of poems include *Winged Heart*; *Rainwater*; and *Sacred Silence*.

River Crossing is available on Amazon.

Disapora, TT mourn Panday's passing

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – The diaspora, the Caribbean region, and Trinidad and Tobago are mourning the passing of Basdeo Panday, who died on January 1. Fondly known as "The Silver Fox", Panday died in the US, where he had traveled in December to receive medical attention.

His death is being keenly felt abroad. Here in Toronto, Capil Bissoon told *Indo-Caribbean World* that Panday's death brought "to an end an era in Trinidad and Tobago's politics".



Basdeo Panday

Bissoon added, "[Panday] was perhaps the most gifted, favourite leader of the people, and his loss is an enormous loss for all of us."

Bissoon recalled meeting with Panday after he took the leadership of Trinidad and Tobago back in 1986.

"We discussed the formation of the party's first overseas affiliation, *Friends of UNC Canada*," Bissoon

recalled.

"That organisation was responsible for Panday coming to Toronto to meet with the diaspora on four occasions. He even visited with us in 2002, during the 18-18 [elections' crisis in Trinidad and Tobago's] Parliament," he stated.

Speaking to Panday's statecraft, Bissoon noted it was his "thoughtful, wise, and brilliant leadership" that influenced

See Page 5: Panday an icon



Trinidad and Tobago's national flag is lowered in mourning and respect at the Consulate General's office in Toronto on January 2 following the death of former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday

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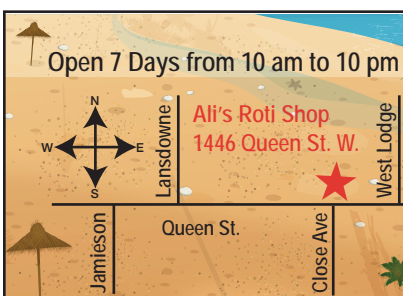
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Guyana Consulate General's Honorary Consul Mani Singh attended the African Union sixth Region Global Conference and Gala, which was held last month in Brampton. Singh addressed the gathering on behalf of members of the Caribbean Consular Corps, updated attendees on the border controversy between Guyana and Venezuela, and thanked the governments and peoples of Africa and the Caribbean for their unwavering support and solidarity with Guyana with its ongoing border controversy.

Guyana Consulate extends New Year's greetings

Guyana's Consulate General in Toronto has extended warm greetings and heartfelt wishes for a prosperous and joyous 2024 to Guyanese at home, in the diaspora, and to all the friends of Guyana.

A statement from the Consulate declared, "As we look ahead to the future, we are committed to improving the efficiency and quality of consular services offered and fostering unity and inclusivity within our community. Our dedication to serving the interests of Guyanese citizens remains unwavering, and we strive to strengthen our ties with friends of Guyana worldwide."

It added, "In the spirit of collaboration and cooperation, we encourage you all to actively participate in initiatives that contribute to the betterment of our society. Let us harness our collective talents, ideas, and energies to build a brighter, more prosperous future for our home, Guyana."

The Consulate's message ended with the wish for a "New Year filled with peace, joy, and prosperity".



Uni-TnT completed its annual food drive last month with acquisition of over 1,000 pounds of donations. Among the items collected were tins of corn, tomatoes, and tuna; and the food drive also saw acquisition of rice, oats, and many other staples. This time Uni-TnT chose the Scarborough Food Security Initiative as the recipient of its annual effort. Founded by Suman Roy, the SFSI's vision is for a hunger-free, resilient Scarborough, with its mission being to empower the community and provide innovative solutions to poverty reduction via dignified access to food. In photo above, Uni-TnT president Mahadeo Sankar (back row, left), with another Uni-TnT executive Steve Ramrattan (right, back row), and SFSI volunteers, who received the donations (bottom photo).



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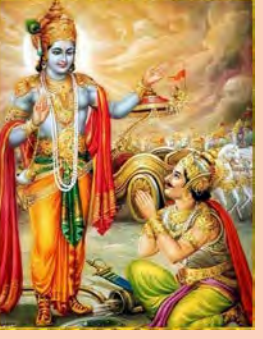
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Teacher, actor, lawyer, Prime Minister - the many lives of Basdeo Panday

Basdeo Panday was born on May 25, 1933 in St Julien Village, Princes Town, south Trinidad to Kissoondaye and Harry 'Chote' Sookchand Panday. His early education saw him attending New Grant Government School, and Presentation College in Chaguana.

Later, he worked as a primary school teacher, and then as a civil servant taking notes in the Magistrates' Courts.

Panday left Trinidad and Tobago in 1957 for the UK to further his education, where he acquired a diploma in drama from London School of Dramatic Art in 1960, and a degree in law in 1962 from Inns of Court School of Law, where he was a member of Lincoln's Inn. He was subsequently called to the bar.

The year 1965 saw him acquiring a Bachelor of Science in Economics from the University of London as an external student.

During his stay in the UK, Panday worked as a labourer at a construction site, a clerk at the London County Council, and as an electrician. He also appeared in several acting roles, including *Nine Hours to Rama* (1963), and *The Winston Affair* (1964).

He returned to Trinidad and Tobago in 1965, where he started his political career by joining the Workers and Farmers Party. He also made an unsuccessful run for Parliament. It was in 1972 when he finally succeeded, entering Parliament as Opposition senator for the Democratic Labour Party.

He joined the All Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Union a year later in 1973, moving upwards to become president general of the union.

In 1975 he formed the United Labour Front with labour leader George Weekes and Raffique Shah. A year later, in 1976, he won the Couva North constituency seat at the general elections to become Trinidad and Tobago's official Opposition Leader.

Internal power struggles in the ULF saw Panday co-founding the Trinidad and Tobago National Alliance with former presi-

dent Arthur N.R. Robinson of the Democratic Action Congress, and Lloyd Best of the Tapia House Group.

It was in 1984 when the National Alliance became the National Alliance for Reconstruction; a year later, it merged with the Organisation for National Reconstruction, and in 1986, the coalition won the general election.

Panday was named Minister of External Affairs and International Trade. However, infighting then started, with Panday accusing Robinson of autocratic rule, and the government of discrimination against Indo-Trinidadians.

In response, Robinson reshuffled the cabinet in a move that saw Panday with reduced ministerial responsibilities. Infighting continued, and culminated with the expulsion of Panday, Kelvin Ramnath, and Trevor Sudama from the party on February 8, 1988.

It led to Panday and the other expelled ministers founding the Caucus for Love, Unity and Brotherhood (also known as Club '88). On April 30, 1989, Club '88 morphed into United National Congress.

Panday then created history in the 1995 general election after a snap election was called, taking the reins of power with the UNC and NAR as a coalition.

He also made an historic move by becoming the first East Indian as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, and also appointed Kamla Persad-Bissessar as the first woman Attorney General.

Then in 2000, Panday led the UNC to victory at the polls once more, and was sworn in as Prime Minister for a second time.

However, a year later in 2001, UNC MPs Ramesh Maharaj, Trevor Sudama, and Ralph Maraj alleged government corruption. Panday

was forced to call a new election, which resulted in an unprecedented 18-18 tie between the UNC and PNM. The election outcome triggered a constitutional crisis on which party should form the government.

It led to the then-president Robinson choosing the Patrick Manning-led PNM to lead the country. But then Parliament was dissolved,

and new elections were called in 2002 after it was unable to elect a Speaker. The elections saw Panday back as Opposition Leader.

Then in 2006, Panday was convicted of failing to declare a bank account in London to the Integrity Commission after being charged in 2002. He faced further legal challenges in May 2005 when he, along with wife Oma, former UNC MP Carlos John, and businessman Ishwar Galbaransingh (chairman of Northern Construction Ltd) were arrested on corruption charges.

He was refused bail, and became the first Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister to be imprisoned. He accepted the reduced bail amount a few days later and was released. Charges in this matter against Panday were dropped in 2012.

After facing the drama of the alleged airport corruption scandal in September 2005, Panday nominated Winston Dookeran as successor party leader. There were major challenges with this dual-leadership, which led to Dookeran breaking off and forming the Congress of the People.

Then on 24 April 2006, Panday was found guilty on all three charges that were laid in 2002. He was sentenced to two years with hard labour, and fined (TT) \$20,000. He appealed the decision.

Following his 2006 conviction, Panday's position as Leader of the Opposition was revoked, with Kamla Persad-Bissessar serving as UNC leader.

However, he was reinstated as UNC leader in 2007 after the Court of Appeal overturned the conviction, citing an unfair trial and bias by former chief magistrate Sherman McNicolls.

Then on January 24, 2010, Panday was defeated at the UNC's internal elections by Persad-Bissessar.

On February 25, 2010, then-president George Maxwell Richards revoked Panday's appointment as Leader of the Opposition. He was replaced by Persad-Bissessar after the majority of Opposition MPs indicated their support for her as leader.

On June 26, 2012, Panday was acquitted of all charges as the magistrate stated that he was not given due process.

His last public appearance at an official function was in September 2023 for the ceremonial opening of the Parliament. At that function, President Christine Kangaloo called on the government and Opposition to work together to tackle crime.

However, at the time, Panday declared he was not confident both governmental bodies would cooperate. Notably, both the government and the Opposition are yet to meet.

Panday celebrated his 90th birthday in May last year. At the time, he stated he did not want to travel overseas; instead, it was his wish to remain in Trinidad and Tobago with family and friends.



Basdeo Panday

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'We shall fight this fight, hunger or no hunger' - Sahidan Ramroop

In 2013, I met with former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago (1995-2001), Basdeo Panday, to discuss Indo-Trinidadian women's involvement in politics, shaped by labour movements in the sugar industry. This is an excerpt from the larger interview, which was published in the journal Wasafiri (2022), as we remember his commitments to labour, political contributions, and sacrifices - Nalini Mohabir

NM: Why is gender important to you?

BP: [W]hen I first went into the opposition, I appointed a cane cutter, Dora Bridgemohan, to the Senate. People said to me, 'Why are you appointing this lady to the Senate? She can't even speak properly?' And I told them, I did not put her there to speak. I put her there to demonstrate to women that you too can walk in the corridors of power. That was the reason. And the one I chose was of the lowest category, a cane cutter. I chose a cane cutter because I wanted to show no matter where you are as a woman, you have a right to power...

Women were the key to success in our struggles because women are stronger than men psychologically. When we strike, the food in the house gets less and less and less. And as the food gets less and less, the cries of the children get louder and louder. The men escape, go in a wrong way, but the women have to stay in the house. And those cries get louder and louder until they buss like thunder in her head. And she has to endure.

There was a labourer whose name was Sahidan Ramroop. She was a warrior. And she was illiterate. But she was an enormous orator. She could speak in the language of the cane fields. I remember one day we had been on strike for some time and hunger was setting in. And she said: 'We shall fight this fight, hunger or no hunger. And if I have nothing to eat,' she pulled out some grass, 'We shall eat this'. The

wages of a sugar worker when we came into the industry were 63 cents an hour, five dollars and four cents per day, and they would work for six months of the year. So the average earnings of a sugar worker was about \$600-\$700 per year. For our first battle we fought for guaranteed work, that is to say, we want more work than six months of the year. And I remember my trade union colleagues, I was leader of the trade union at the time, saying, 'All of us fighting for more money. Panday fighting for more work!'

NM: I'm also curious about the political spaces that women participated in.

BP: Strangely enough, a lot of Indian women still suffered from our heritage, where women didn't belong to this kind of thing. Also, when women went out in the politics, the abuse that women would get is more hurtful than how you're going to abuse a man. When you abuse a woman of immorality, and you abuse a man of immorality, the hurt is more on the woman. In those days, when you accuse a woman of infidelity, you'll ruin her, whether it's true or not. I think that was one of the reasons why Indian women in particular were slow to enter politics.

Nonetheless, in 1976 when the ULF was formed, we had a woman's arm that would appoint someone to the national executive, the UNC also had a women's arm.

NM: They also brought other women out

to vote?

BP: They organised the women. But it was extremely difficult. Again, because husbands didn't want their wives to go out.

NM: How did you work around that?

BP: By fighting and quarrelling with the men! You have to let them go out, I told them. The men were the greatest constraint to the participation of women. So that's why only the very strong women emerged.

It's part of our past. It's part of Indian culture, although they have women gods. When we came across as indentured labourers, they brought what was existing at the time. And so they kept that, even if India moved in another direction. In Trinidad, it took a long time for Indo-women to begin to stand up. But if you go to some of the meetings now, most of the people there are women. The men always in the rum shop taking a little drink.

NM: And were the women involved in the struggle mostly grassroots sugar workers?

BP: Well, as far as I was concerned, not mostly, always. We had no schools. So we organised classes in the bottom house of different people. The women would say 'Boss we don't need to read and write to cut cane.' I said, 'I know that Indians have a great attachment to land. They'll kill you for six inches of it right? So you know why I want you to read and write?'

Suppose you have a piece of land. And you can't read the deed. Somebody could take away the land from you.' And they said, 'Alright'. Many of them learned to sign their names. Only because [of the] deed.

NM: And how did struggle make a difference in women's daily lives?

BP: In order to qualify for a day's work in the sugar industry, you had to cut two tonnes of cane. And you had to cut and bundle the cane. That's heavy work. Both women and men, both husband and wife, did that work. Because you get only \$3.99 to cut a tonne of cane, both the women and the men would go into the fields. But the men were strong enough to cut and bundle two tonnes. The women were not; so they carried the children. She cut, while the children bundled.

In 1974, I tried to stop that. My workers themselves wanted to kill me. They said, 'How the hell you expect us to live?' But in 1975 when I got the 100 percent wage increase, I said, 'No. It's a war between me and you now.'

I also threatened the company [Caroni Ltd]. I said, 'You all don't know I'm a lawyer and there's something called workman's compensation. If those children are injured, I'm coming to you.'

So when I broke that, the children were now sent to school. You see, there had been a revolving source of cheap labour. When the parents died, the children would take their place. But if they were educated, they wouldn't do that, which is exactly what happened.

NM: Considering that the younger generation does not necessarily have a sense of the hardships of estate life, what would you like them to remember?

BP: I want them to remember the courage; the dedication; the singlemindedness; the truth of that struggle. The courage to endure suffering.



Basdeo Panday and Nalini Mohabir at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, 2008

Panday a social, political icon in the Caribbean

From page 1

the first change of government in 1986.

Bissoo also spoke to Panday's depth of compassion, empathy, and support, recalling the personal tragedy his family underwent in 2002.

"On a personal note, my family and I will always treasure his visit with us here in Canada in 2002, when our son was killed in a motor vehicle accident," Bissoo said.

He added, "History will record Basdeo Panday as being one of the greatest politicians, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but the entire region."

And while the Consulate General for Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto lowered its national flag yesterday in respect and mourning, in the wider Caribbean community, friends of Trinidad and Tobago were also expressing condolences following news of Panday's passing.

At Guyana's Consulate General in Toronto, Honorary Consul Mani Singh noted that Panday's death was "a sad day for both Trinidad and Tobago and the entire Caribbean community."

Said Singh: "...Panday was a relentless advocate and fighter for social and economic justice in... Trinidad and Tobago; and he was a social and political icon in the Caribbean. He was Trinidad and Tobago's labour lawyer, a trade unionist, and a politician extraordinaire."

Additionally, "His contributions to the evolution of human rights, workers' rights, and social and political consciousness in Trinidad and Tobago, and in the wider Caribbean community, are undebatable and unquestionable."

News of Panday's death was conveyed on January 1 via his daughter, Mickela. She is a former Oropouche West MP, and the only child to follow in her father's political footsteps.

In sharing news about his death, Mikela

wrote on Facebook, "With deep sorrow, we would like to share that our loving husband and father, Basdeo Panday, passed away on 1st January 2024, surrounded by his family."

She added, "In life and death he was a fighter. He passed with his boots on, keeping everybody around him on their toes with his wit and humour. He will live on in all of us, remembered as a wonderful husband,

father, grandfather, leader, and friend. He was an inspiration to his family and everybody that knew him. We will continue to celebrate his life and treasure the time we were able to spend with him."

UNC Opposition Leader Kamla Persad Bissessar said she was saddened Panday had passed.

"He was a great leader and spent most years of his life helping the oppressed and poor. Panday will always be remembered with love and adoration by all of us whose lives he touched. I express my condolences to all his loved ones. May his soul rest in peace. He will be missed but will always be remembered and loved," she stated.

Trinidad and Tobago's President Christine Kangaloo declared she was deeply saddened.

Said Kangaloo, "Union leader, politician, statesman, husband and father, Panday was a giant of a man who led this country with passion and compassion."

She also extended her deepest condolences to Panday's family, friends, and those mourning his death.

Panday had a history of heart issues, and underwent triple bypass surgery in 1989, and an angioplasty procedure in 1995. He was married to Oma Panday. He had four daughters: Niala, Mickela, Nicola, and Vastala. Niala was born to his first wife, Norma Panday, who died in 1981.



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Editorial

Basdeo Panday

We celebrate the life of Trinidad and Tobago's former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, who passed away on January 1, 2024 in the US following medical complications.

As our own member of the diaspora in the GTA, Capil Bissoon has stated, Panday's death marks the end of an era in politics in Trinidad and Tobago.

"[Panday] was perhaps the most gifted, favourite leader of the people, and his loss is an enormous loss for all of us," Bissoon has noted.

Additionally, "History will record Basdeo Panday as being one of the greatest politicians, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but the entire region."

Following his death, other commentators are describing Panday as visionary, and a leader who championed the cause of the underprivileged, and struggled for equality, freedom, and justice for all in his lifetime.

He is also being recalled for that "Pandayesque and indomitable spirit", which is noted in his many idiomatic sayings that still resonate today. Among them are, "If you see me fighting with a lion, feel sorry for the lion"; and, "In politics you pay the price right away".

Many are also recalling Panday for his vision for national unity, equal opportunity, and social justice for Trinidad and Tobago. Also being recalled was his humanitarian leadership approach in improving the lives of sugar workers throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Meanwhile, here in Toronto, friends of Trinidad and Tobago are also noting a similar stature and eminence.

At Guyana's Consulate General in Toronto, Honorary Consul Mani Singh noted that Panday's death was "a sad day for both Trinidad and Tobago and the entire Caribbean community".

Said Singh: "...Panday was a relentless advocate and fighter for social and economic justice in... Trinidad and Tobago; and he was a social and political icon in the Caribbean. He was Trinidad and Tobago's labour lawyer, a trade unionist, and a politician extraordinaire."

Singh also noted that Panday's "contributions to the evolution of human rights, workers' rights, and social and political consciousness in Trinidad and Tobago, and in the wider Caribbean community are undebatable and unquestionable".

Recognition for a life of commitment and devotion to his homeland also came from Trinidad and Tobago, with Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley saying, "[Panday was a] man, a citizen, whose impact was felt at every step of the way as he made his mark so indelibly on the people of our nation. Having served the nation for so long and in so many different ways, with such resolve and *panache*, he can only be recognised as a true believer in this nation and its potential."

Rowley added, "Now that he is no more, we are called upon not just to mourn, but to celebrate his life and endeavour to be worthy colleagues of his legacy."

Trinidad and Tobago's Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar also expressed condolences to Panday's family, acknowledging his deep humanitarianism, while stating, "He was a great leader and spent most years of his life helping the oppressed and poor. Panday will always be remembered with love and adoration by all of us whose lives he touched."

And in expressing her condolences, Trinidad and Tobago's President Christine Kangaloo praised Panday, declaring she was deeply saddened by his death.

Said Kangaloo, "Union leader, politician, statesman, husband and father, Panday was a giant of a man who led this country with passion and compassion."

On Tuesday the national flag of Trinidad and Tobago was lowered at the Consulate General's office in Toronto in respect and mourning following Panday's passing.

At the same time, the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora, and many friends abroad, are invited to visit the Consulate General's Toronto location, where a condolence book will be opened for visitors. It will be available January 4, January 5, January 8, and January 9 from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. A State funeral will be held in Trinidad and Tobago on January 9.

Haunting 2023 ends with pressing the reset button

One festivity has ended, and we prepare for the next. Old Year's night marks that space of limbo where time hangs in suspense before the great countdown. Everyone excites over age-old beginnings and endings. Most spend the week between Christmas and New Year's with feet kicked up, reminiscing over fond memories, as we edge over one year to the base of the next – it is the great universal reset button!

Yet these last few months of 2023 have been frightening and elegiac, the very opposite of the celebratory.

Some might say we are living in a moment when the western world and all its institutions are exposed, their double-speak, ironies, and absurdities laid bare, as bombs explode over Gaza, triumph over Hamas declared with aplomb as refugee camps and hospitals are obliterated, and Palestinian people and infrastructure are reduced to body parts and rubble on our nightly news.

It is a haunting 2023 that also began with an Israeli raid on refugee camp in the West Bank. Of course, this conflict goes back much longer, as far back as 1915, when the British had promised independence to Palestine in exchange for support against the Ottomans, yet left the fate of Palestine unresolved.

It seems as if everywhere the British went, they left divides, tensions, partitions, and border disputes. In 1953, the first democratic elections were held in Guyana, and Dr Cheddi Jagan (leader of the People's Progressive Party) became premier.

Percy Hintzen (2004) describes PPP politics at this time as "a counter-discursive challenge to the idea of white supremacy. It was directed at the externalisation and exposure of white immorality and banality. Because white colonial power was so integrally tied to the organisation of the colonial capitalist economy, the movement took an anti-capitalist turn. It was a political movement highly critical of contemporary manifestations of racial power, and world economic orders".

And as we know, they paid the price for independence of mind and action. After only 133 days of the PPP being in office, the British suspended the constitution, sent warships, and jailed "militants".

Martin Carter's (2006) poetry captures this period:

*Although you come in thousands from the sea
Although you walk like locusts in the street
Although you point your gun straight at my heart
I clench my fist above my head; I sing my song of FREEDOM!
My father described to me the strangeness of seeing British*



Nalini Mohabir

soldiers, seemingly confused as to the purpose of their mission, wandering through New Amsterdam.

US involvement in Guyana, in the form of CIA interference, soon followed, eventually leading to the overthrow of Jagan (as detailed in US National security files, and the so-called migrated archives in Britain).

Turning to another, more recent, site of suppression in the Caribbean by imperial power, poet Audre Lorde was in St Croix in 1989, and wrote of her experiences when Hurricane Hugo hit.

In a series of letters, she described the US version of disaster aid, which was to send the military, guns drawn, to protect Hess Oil, not the people of St Croix.

In November Hess Oil with its massive offshore oil investments in Guyana announced it had been bought-out by Chevron. The Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis calls Guyana's offshore oil project "the crown jewel" in that deal, stating that Guyana would receive (US) \$100,000 (if that) from the sale, and called it another example of the interests of oil being put ahead of the interests of the nation.

I do believe we should applaud President Irfaan Ali for the way he has handled the recent threats from Venezuela, strongly navigating diplomatic tensions to protect Guyana's people; still I must paraphrase Grace Nichols to say, "we is a long-remembered people". We must be cautious in the face of experiments such as asking the US and Britain (in the name of allyship or commonwealth) to protect Guyana's interests, when we all know they are there to protect oil investors.

A few years ago (just before the Covid-19 pandemic), I was in old Delhi, in a typical mutton take-away, ordering *Rogan Josh*, when a truck went by with "*Bharat Mahan*" (India is Great) on the back, an echo of the Trump slogan "Make America Great Again," in the heart of north India.

We live in a world where we can see many entwined forms of bankrupt aggressions emanating from a desire to promote national triumphalisms. Accompanying these new and old forms of nationalism is the heavy juggernaut of western capitalism, looking for new areas to expand growth, and to outwit the feared racial Other, whether non-western economies, Black and Brown, or Muslim peoples.

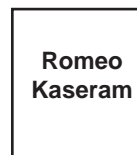
Some circumstances change; some remain the same. Nothing is simple, and nothing is easy, especially in a world that craves sound bites and easy solutions.

However, I cannot think of a better time of year to hit that reset button for the world.

Panday's political sea-change also gave us a new lexicon

Here is another visit to a legacy column in my reclamation of older narratives as I assemble my book project. It was likely written in the early 1990s, and with contemporary editing and reconstituting, is still about the charisma of the late Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Basdeo Panday.

As a boy I recall attending public meetings in the village where I was growing up to hear the emerging national leader, Basdeo Panday address the crowd. The meeting place was outside a rumshop, where sugar workers assembled to hear "Bas" deliver "The Word".



Romeo Kaseram

Necks craned for a glimpse when he arrived, his noisy vehicular entourage sounding horns like an approaching *baraat* when the bridegroom's party arrived at his bride's house.

Cheers went up when he stepped out of the vehicle and ascended the front steps of the house above the rumshop. He then took his place among the white plastic chairs set out in the verandah, also called "the gallery", from where the speakers addressed the crowd below.

Bas was well-respected and fervently adulated. His ties with the sugar workers were strong, at the point where the silver-edge of the cutlass met the base of millions of stalks of sugar cane.

When he stepped out of the car the sugar workers opened a path for him to easily work his way to the landing at the front steps. From my vantage point at knee-height, it was a marvel to watch the human surge part down the middle as he made his progress forward. Coming to think of it, if Bas held up his hand, and said, "Sea come no further", unlike King Canute, he would have stopped this swimming, human tide.

From my early awareness of his emerging charisma, to the decades later as his career in politics traced its arc, I saw him grow in eminence and prominence with support from the sugar workers; and then to fall into the wilderness of later-life marginalisation due to questionable practices in his government.

Now later in my years, I recall discussions with journalist colleagues back then. We understood that Panday had brought a sea-change; but then there were bonuses that came as ripples, particularly in the nuances he introduced into the language of local politics back home.

As a collective of wordsmiths, we marveled how he shaped the lexicon via his down-to-earth connectivity with his sup-

porters, and so engaged at the ground level those who harvested bitter sugar from that unwholesome, exploitative landscape.

For example, we marveled at the contextual nuances that were introduced in his use of the word, "*neemakharam*". Panday's enunciation of "*neemakharam*" for denunciation of his aggressors crossed over into the national charts; and it still resonates today in universal usage.

"*Neemakharam*" means ungrateful; it is deployed with attendant rancour to describe someone who shows ingratitude.

Soon it began turning up in our written text submitted to editors, and was to be found in news reports on the front pages of newspapers back home. If my recall is sound, the word was even used in a lead headline, and above the fold!

Such was its climb into universal usage. I even recall a colleague referencing an uncooperative group with a dismissive wave of the back of the hand as, "That bunch of *neemakharams!*"

The word had come into vogue in Trinidad out of Panday's casual, but caustic mouth, during one of the crises he faced in his leadership after the defection of three government ministers.

But it was not the first time I had heard him describe someone as an ingrate. In those youthful peregrinations that took me to political meetings, I once heard Panday berate a chronic heckler, who up to then, was typically tolerated for comic relief.

However, the heckler went too far one evening, and vulgarly addressed Panday, who was in the throes of a sweaty oration.

The ensuing and palpable silence was worth its measure in gold; even the fireflies quickly blinked out in the distant fields.

The moment was reflexive when Panday turned, drew the arrow back in its bow, and let loose "*neemakharam*", the dart flying swiftly to its target, even as the crowd parted in its trajectory, moving once more like the ocean only he could control.

"Leave this place! Go to your home, you *neemakharam!*" Panday shouted, the crowd closing in ranks after the dart's passage, while murmuring approval at his pointed response.

Stunned by Panday's attack, the heckler quickly left the scene of his excoriation, also now hostile with emergent ostracism.

But in politics, one pays the price immediately: yet another of Panday's idiomatic statements. Hardened later by the fires of this world, I did not lift even an eyebrow when after his fall, supporters began describing their messiah as "*neemakharam*".

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 Dindyal, 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

Guyana govt must attend to illegal influx of immigrants at its borders

Dear Editor,

The recent news from Europe and the UK indicating a concern over immigration being weaponised by foreign actors should be a red flag for the government of Guyana.

Countries are concerned over the lack of regulations pertaining to receiving illegal migrants and exercising control over their influx.

As a result of this national security risk, these nations are clamping down on illegal immigration and restricting the intake of refugees.

The Prime Minister of the UK Rishi Sunak recently said, "Our enemies will also see that we are unable to deal with this (illegal immigration), and then they will so increasingly use migration as a weapon, deliberately driving people to our shores trying to destabilise our societies".

The current conflict with Venezuela should raise an alarm over the current influx of thousands of refugees from this nation.

It means Guyana's government and the Opposition must work together in Parliament to ensure that we prevent the recent statement made by Prime Minister Sunak from becoming a reality in our own country.

Venezuela can disarm and remove troops from the border while still using the passive-aggressive strategy of weaponised migration to populate our Essequibo region, gain influence and intimate knowledge of the inner workings



Rishi Sunak

TT hit by brutal December trauma

Dear Editor,

The events of December 2023 have destroyed the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

It was a build-up for most of the year with the wanton shootings, home invasions, extortion of businessmen everywhere, and finally – if anyone was in doubt – there was the Courts Megastore shooting.

Then that was followed by the almost unbelievable assassination of three men, and the death of an innocent businesswoman as collateral damage, in late December.

How the words of PNM ex-prime minister Patrick Manning return to curse the current administration!

But it then got worse when – amidst a plethora of killings of women and children, and missing men and boys – there was the kidnapping of a San Juan businesswoman right at the end of the year. This was reminiscent of an unsolved Siparia kidnapping, and both were felt all across the nation.

The Autorama family are San Juan icons, known in business for years. They are law-abiding, normal people, and like so many others, worked in a legacy business that was started by their ancestors as micro-enterprises on the backs of donkeys and mules.

Today, they have risen up as employers, contributors to the nation's commerce; but they are kidnapped, assailed, and terrorised.

I assure you, as of now, every parlour-keeper, every tradesman, every professional, every retiree in San Juan is hoping for a lottery ticket win, and then to leave for the US for good, and many are packing as we speak.

of our government and the region – and, worst of all, may use migration to gain knowledge of our armed forces.

Russia has used this strategy over the years to gain dominance in the eastern section of Ukraine, where their culture and language became dominant, leading to an easier annexation of that region of Ukraine's territory.

What Guyana must do now is restrict migrants' access to government jobs and enlistment into the armed forces and the Guyana

Police Force until Venezuela has accepted the ruling of the ICJ, and relinquished its claim to Essequibo.

Returning those migrants without links to direct family in Guyana back to their homeland in Venezuela must remain a top priority, and be acted upon shortly.

The use of the area around the border, especially in the vicinity of Ankoko Island, for trade between our two countries would allow the refugees

and migrants to establish themselves economically and socially with Guyanese in a safer environment.

Such an opportunity, if provided, would help them develop their community in a part of the country that will also safeguard our nation against deceptive migration that can be weaponised by Venezuelan authorities seeking to conquer the Essequibo region.

We must prudently act upon this promptly.

Jamil Changlee, Guyana, via email.

Mind you, the government is not on their side. One notices carefully that in the midst of all this hardship, the only response from the State is an obsession with the wicked(est) property tax and a daily diatribe from a grinning, "They ain't riot yet" minister of finance.

Then there is the duck-and-run, "I am not responsible for the safety of the nation" minister of national security; and a prime minister who is happy to just open overpasses to suit the upscale Victoria apartments, and to belch distractions with the Opposition leader.

The Police Commissioner also had an intervention by advising of the increase in Firearm User's Licences – imagine that! So, if you want a gun, you have to pay more; but the criminal element pays nothing to the State.

Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley beats his chest that he is also the PM of Tobago – so, does he take ownership of the 14 murders in Tobago for last year, the accidents, the failed public transportation, and the terrible, terrible death of a woman who was burned alive there?

Prime Minister Rowley, where are you in all of this? Hiding behind Erla, Collis, Rohan? The Tobago MPs? What has become of your impotent leadership?

Despite the trite narrative coming from the criminologists, the columnists, the religious leaders (who are busy blessing same-sex relationships) about parenting, access to resources, geographical discrimination and stereotyping, crime has finally destroyed the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

Linda Capildeo, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Officers at a crime scene in Trinidad and Tobago

Anxiety over safety cannot be new normal

Dear Editor,

Feeling safe in Trinidad and Tobago has become a luxury that I no longer take for granted. I suspect I am not alone in this sentiment. My father, a retired police officer, would caution us, saying, "What frightens me does rotten bottle".

Today his words have a chilling resonance as the bottles decay, metaphorically representing the erosion of safety that now permeates every corner of our country.

Unlike previous years, where crime was relegated to "hot areas", it has now become an omnipresent force, forcing citizens to navigate daily life with a heightened anxiety about the unknown threats lurking around them.

The situation has escalated to the point where the metaphorical horse has not only left the stable but has galloped into an unprecedented level of violence.

The aftermath captured by CCTV cameras reveals a blatant disregard for human life, leaving citizens uneasy and questioning the essence of security. As a parent, this unsettling reality transforms me into an unofficial "helicopter mom", compelled to adopt extra security measures for my children. This reality is not the life any parent envisions for their children, yet it is a reality we must confront.

While some may wonder why we expose our children to this harsh reality, I argue that awareness is paramount. Similar to African American parents teaching their children survival tactics during encounters with law enforcement, we must educate our young minds about the crime situation and its impact on daily life that is tailored to their age.


If as a citizen you feel safe, then I am eager to know your secret, for the thunderstorm of crime has left many of us questioning how to move forward without constant worry.

This cannot be the new normal for Trinidad, and more recently, for Tobago. We cannot passively accept this as the best effort of those entrusted with our safety. While I am usually inclined to see the glass as half full, in this situation I struggle to see any water at all.

Addressing this issue should be at the forefront for Minister of National Security Fitzgerald Hinds, Police Commissioner Erla Harewood-Christopher, and the National Security Council.

It is time to break the cycle of insanity, to reclaim our safety, peaceful nights, and a nation where looking through your window does not pose a threat to your life.

S. Benoiss-Selman, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



GUYANA PROPERTY MATTERS

Property Values Rising in Guyana

By Kal Juman-Yassin

Overseas property owners are taking a renewed interest in the Guyana property market. Their real estate assets are likely worth more today and could be excellent long term investment assets, providing income and equity growth. The question is whether to invest and modernise, or whether to cash out at today's record high values.

The growing demand for land and the shortage of residential housing supply have pushed property values to record levels. Agricultural lands are being rezoned into housing with some landowners reaping significant windfalls. The economic hyper-growth is challenging the current infrastructure which is barely adequate as is. Construction is already on the way for new highways on the east coast, east bank, and west coast, which will open up many new areas for development.

Guyana's Real Estate Association has noted the sharp rise of rentals where the cost of a two bedroom apartment rental is triple the price in 2010. Rates for a modern two bedroom apartment in Georgetown can easily fetch (US) \$2,500 per month with updated detached homes in better neighbourhoods going for more than (US) \$4,000 per month.

The sharp rise in building materials costs, coupled with a shortage of skilled workers, have pushed construction costs higher. Inflation has seen aggregate costs rise from (US) \$40 to (US) \$55 per ton, and average building costs up from (US) \$60 per square foot to over (US) \$125 per square foot or more. Building in Guyana to North American standards will likely cost 10-20 percent more, since the majority of materials are imported.

Georgetown properties now range from (US) \$250,000 to (US) \$1M-plus depending on location, size of the lot, and condition of the building. Property values may be rising, and owners need to have realistic expectations. Estimating a property's potential value requires understanding several factors including the current condition of the building and the dynamics of the surrounding neighbourhood.

For investors interested in the Guyanese property market, there are many opportunities with higher yields than available in the US or Canadian market. RE/Guyana is a property services company dedicated to making it easier for overseas property owners to administer, divest, acquire, and develop their real estate assets in Guyana. [Click here to visit RE/Guyana's website.](#)

Challenging GPO visit to find ancestry details

Dear Editor,

I recently visited the General Post Office in Georgetown seeking information about the ship that brought my grandfather from India to Guyana.

A friend who took me to the GPO pointed to the door of Raymond Cummings, the Registrar. He was not in his office; instead, an employee tried to assist.

I presented my mother's birth certificate and my father's birth certificate, but the registrar's employee was unable to link either of my grandfathers to the ship on which they arrived.

An hour went by, and she gave up after trying various searches. Her explanation was the computer did not have enough information to locate the ship on which my grandfather arrived.

She recommended that I bring information such as my grandfather's birth certificate, or information about the ship on which he came.

Of course, such advice was neither a reasonable expectation, nor was it logical, since I went there to get such information from that office.

Finding this information is important for me. I am entitled to the Overseas Citizen of India Card, which I am trying to obtain with the help of the Registrar's Office in Georgetown.

I believe that obtaining the OCI card is a step in the right direction for us to maintain our culture and tradition, just like our foremothers and forefathers.

Also, I would like to make it easier for other Guyanese who are interested in visiting India to further their studies on our rich Indian heritage, and for them to experience our rich culture, which I have done.

Easier processing of the OCI card is a sure step to achieve such objectives. Like myself, there are many Guyanese who find themselves in the same "boat", and cannot locate the ship that our grandparents travelled on from India.

While it is obvious that our ancestors came from India as Indentured servants, we do not know which ship they came on. It is a missing link.

I would like to appeal to the personnel in Georgetown in charge to simplify this process, to make it easier, and more accessible. Doing so would help in obtaining the OCI card.

In our age of advanced computer development, databases and digitisation, with diligent effort by the qualified personnel in Guyana, I am confident that this objective can be accomplished.

I look forward to the day when these records are digitised and available in Guyana, as I suspect it is in other Caribbean countries.

Sri Rajaji, via email.

Need for Massy to reflect on disconnect in values with foreign currency spending

Dear Editor,

Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Rowley is correct when he stated last month, "US dollars are very hard to come by and not only must be earned but, once earned, must be highly and carefully prioritised before visiting modern-day, self-proclaimed oracles".

This entire Massy Group issue involving questionable foreign currency usage should lead us all to reflect on whether or not distributive justice and the common good are concepts that are understood in our beloved country.

I remember in 2012, as chair of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice, when I ran a workshop in Trinidad and Tobago for business leaders to reflect on Cardinal Turkson's (the then president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace) 32-page document entitled, *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*.

In this text he offers a vision of how the business community can incorporate their faith in their daily life and work.

It also focuses on the obstacles that businesses must overcome if they are to serve the common good. Businesses must seek to identify and serve genuine human needs without violat-

Looking at the warm, friendly positives about TT

Dear Editor,

Unfortunately crime is well-embedded in Trinidad and Tobago, as it is everywhere else in the world. Nowhere is perfect, so let us count our many daily blessings, and actually be grateful to be living in beautiful Trinidad and Tobago.

If you have ever lived abroad, you will never have experienced this warmth and friendliness of our own people. Even standing in a line to pay a utility bill, we talk openly on the latest topic to a complete stranger.

This is unique, and is not found anywhere else in the world. Even while overseas, the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora tend to stick together, whether living in the US, England, or in other parts of the Caribbean.



Indentured ancestors in Guyana

Call to Guyana's govt to digitise ancestral documents

Dear Editor,

I am responding to the emerging narratives in Guyana about the lack of digitised records and the challenges this is presenting to individuals seeking information about those who suffered the indignity of Indentured servitude.

The descendants of these brave individuals who sought a new life in Guyana now face a unique challenge, which is the Guyanese government's reluctance to digitise the records of Indentured servants.

This lack of proper records has significant implications for nationals who are direct descendants of these immigrants. It impacts their ability to connect with their roots, and to understand their familial histories.

Indentured servitude, a system that brought labourers to the then-British Guiana from regions like India, China, and Portugal, represents a crucial chapter in Guyana's past.

These migrants played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's cultural and social landscape. The documentation of their arrival, work contracts, and subsequent contributions forms an essential part of Guyana's historical narrative.

Unfortunately, the lack of digitisation of these records poses a formidable obstacle for descendants who seek to explore and preserve their heritage.

One key aspect of the digitisation debate lies in accessibility. Traditional paper records are often stored in archives that may be challenging to access due to factors such as physical distance, limited resources, and concerns about preservation.

Digitising these records would make them accessible to a broader audience, enabling descendants to trace their roots with greater ease. It would foster a sense of connection to their ancestral past, and provide a tangible link to the sacrifices and contributions made by their forebears.

Furthermore, digitisation can play a crucial role in the pres-

ervation of historical documents. Paper records are susceptible to deterioration over time, whether due to environmental factors, aging, or mishandling.

By converting these documents into digital formats, the risk of losing valuable information is significantly reduced. This preservation effort is not just about safeguarding the past for the sake of posterity, but also about ensuring that future generations can explore and understand their cultural heritage.

For the descendants of Indentured servants in Guyana, the digitisation of records represents an opportunity to reclaim a piece of their identity. It empowers them to explore their roots, understand the sacrifices of their ancestors, and contribute to the rich tapestry of Guyanese culture.

Beyond personal connections, it also contributes to a collective understanding of the nation's history, fostering a sense of unity and shared heritage among its citizens.

One other thing of importance is that those whose family hails from India will have a much harder time visiting the land of their ancestors, as they will continue to have to apply for visitor visas rather than holding an Overseas Indian Citizenship card. If nothing else, this should motivate the government to act toward digitisation.

The Guyanese government's reluctance to digitise the records of Indentured servants poses a significant challenge to those seeking to connect with their ancestral roots. The importance of digitisation extends beyond convenience – it is a means of preserving and celebrating the diverse contributions of Indentured servants who played a crucial role in shaping Guyana.

As we navigate the complexities of the present, embracing technology to safeguard our historical treasures ensures that our ancestor's stories remain accessible and relevant for the future.

Fred Stella, Member, National Leadership Council, Hindu American Foundation, via email.

ing the "foundational ethical principles" of business, which are human dignity and the common good.

Amidst the global economic crisis, it is noteworthy that the opening sentence in the executive summary of the handbook states: "When businesses and market economies function properly and focus on serving the common good, they contribute greatly to the material and even the spiritual well-being of society."

I love Massy's vision: "A global force for good, an investment holding company with a Caribbean heart."

At the heart of the Caribbean heart is the Caribbean person. I urge Massy's executive and its board to reflect on whether the company is serving the common good by spending millions of hard-to-come-by US dollars for its executive leadership's training programme, while SMEs, and ordinary citizens face many challenges to get a few US dollars.

Massy's values are truly laudable: honesty and integrity, responsibility, collaboration, love and care, growth and continuous improvement, respect.

Under love and care, Massy states: "We believe that everybody matters, and that everyone deserves to be treated with

kindness, respect, consideration, and compassion."

As Massy celebrates 100 years of being in business, I urge the group to please reflect on whether these latter words are at odds with its priorities in spending what Prime Minister Rowley calls "hard-to-come-by" US dollars.

The most significant obstacle for a business leader, according to Cardinal Turkson's handbook, is "leading a 'divided' life. This split between faith and daily business practice can lead to imbalances and misplaced devotion to worldly success.

It adds, "The alternative path of faith-based 'servant leadership' provides business leaders with a larger perspective and helps to balance the demands of the business world with those of ethical social principles, illumined for Christians by the Gospel."

The six practical principles for business on Page 17, and the discernment checklist for business leaders on Page 26, including the Appendix, which is "an examination of conscience for the business leader", are very useful tools.

Let us love and care for everyone, because everyone matters!

Leela Ramdeen, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Maracas beach in north Trinidad

Guyana set to continue with prosperous future in 2024

The Guyana economy will continue to prosper in 2024, buoyed by increasing oil production and strong economic growth. Meantime, the government will strive to consolidate its gains with the population in preparation for general elections in 2025.

In spite of buoyant economic conditions, the main Opposition APNU will make every effort to accuse the government of racial discrimination, and inequitable distribution of economic opportunities.

While evidence of racial discrimination will remain doubtful, the mere manufactured perception will be sufficient to raise doubt among Opposition supporters. As a result, optimism about the country's stability will continue to be clouded by the persistent attempts of the main Opposition party to incite racial tensions.

To keep the population satisfied, the government will continue to dole out a myriad of incentives to improve the livelihood of the population at large. Guyanese have come to expect handouts from the government as a result of its oil wealth. Yet some segments of the population will remain dissatisfied with the handouts that they receive.

In the oil sector, production will continue to expand rapidly, with four new fields coming on stream between 2024 and 2028, enhancing the country's growth prospects. Real GDP growth is forecasted at average of over 20 percent per annum for the next five years.

Oil production, which averaged 350,000 barrels per day last year, is expected to continue to increase with the discovery of new wells, and is forecasted at over 700,000 barrels per day in 2025 and 1,000,000 barrels per day by 2030.

The non-oil sector is expected to grow at a healthy clip of over 5.5 percent, supported by the implementation of a fast-paced public investment program focused on providing transportation, housing, and flood management infrastructure, and raising human capital. Spillovers from oil and construction will support growth in the services and supplies sectors, while agriculture, mining, and quarrying are also expected to perform well.

According to the IMF, the government will continue with its ambitious plans to address developmental needs. The international financial watchdog noted that Guyana's favourable medium-term growth prospects are accompanied by both upside and downside risks. On the upside, further oil discoveries would continue to improve growth prospects.

However, while construction growth and strong public investment may support higher than expected short-term non-oil growth, they could also lead to inflationary pressures, and the appreciation of the real exchange rate beyond the level implied by a balanced expansion of the economy, overheating, and the crowding out of credit to the private sector.

Adverse climate shocks, and volatile or lower than projected commodity prices, may also negatively impact the economy, says the IMF.

The digitisation of the economy to boost labour and total factor productivity (such as single window processing of permits, digital ID, and digital banking records) will also continue to progress during the year.

The country will remain a haven for foreign investors seeking to take advantage of a wealth of available opportunities. Many will have the resources to invest, but a sizeable portion will simply be seeking to make noise with the intent of attracting attention.

In the meantime, the government will remain nonchalant about prioritising specific areas that need to be developed, especially those that are non-oil and non-technology related.

With an increase in foreign investing, the risk of money laundering will rise in spite

of the country's efforts to prevent the crime. Weaknesses in the banking system, newer methods to undermine control efforts, a rise in activities at laundromats such as cambios and casinos, and the mere fact that the country still has a cash-based economy will support continued money laundering.

Efforts to digitise financial transactions will continue at a healthy pace, but will remain at a formative stage over the year. However, it will require a set of more comprehensive money laundering controls as digitisation is not a panacea for preventing money laundering, but rather an accelerator.

On the agriculture front, the government will continue to make concerted efforts to develop and diversify the agriculture sector, the country's most important non-oil sector. It will strive to take advantage of regional trade opportunities in food products, given that the country has a golden opportunity to finally realise its potential as the breadbasket of the Caribbean, based on the region's quest to cut its extra-regional food import bill by 2025.

Rice, which remains the most viable agricultural crop, will continue to benefit from improved drainage and irrigation, and expanded research on new high yielding varieties, and seed production. The other crops' sector, on the other hand, will continue to benefit from extended government support to the private sector to produce non-traditional yields such as corn, soya, coconuts, broccoli, cauliflower, spices, citrus, and fresh flowers.

The government will also remain committed to resuscitating the ailing sugar industry, and will remain focused on reopening and recapitalising the closed estates; rationalising cost structures; diversifying the sugar sales mix to maximise earnings; re-engaging previously displaced workers; and repositioning the industry on a sustainable path to profitability.

In spite of efforts in agriculture, the sector has failed to meet domestic food demand. This failure has partially led to record high food prices, putting a strain on the budgets of the poor and those with a fixed income. At the same, time food imports have been increasing. There are no signs that this will change in 2024.

Energy generation will remain a primary focus during the year. The Amaila Falls Hydroelectric Project will probably come back on stream. In addition, work on the Gas-to-Energy Project will continue apace, while plans to construct an oil refinery as well as a dock facility to accommodate increased shipping should also begin to take shape during the year.

The hotel industry will continue to expand to accommodate the influx of visitors to Guyana. It is expected that three internationally branded hotels, and some eight additional hotels will probably be completed by the end of the year.

Allegations of corruption will continue to surface throughout the year, while crime will remain a huge social problem.

In spite of its rising oil revenues, Guyana's external, as well as its domestic public debt, will continue to rise during the year. In fact, the country's total public debt is currently at its highest level in the last decade.

However, the country's debt as a percentage of its sharply rising GDP – resulting from higher oil revenues – will continue to fall as the country will have a greater ability to repay its debt.

In spite of substantial spending on drainage and irrigation infrastructure, the country will continue to face periodic flooding, putting households at risk. While flood control planning is improving, the task at hand will remain challenging. Evidently, poor planning, coordination, and implementation will leave much to be desired.

The Guyana-Venezuela border dispute will



Dwarka Lakhan



The government of Guyana will continue to make concerted efforts to develop and diversify the agriculture sector in 2024

remain an overhang over the year, although the two neighbours pledged to resolve the dispute in accordance with international law.

Guyana will remain steadfast in the belief that the decision of the International Court of Justice would prevail on the matter, but Venezuela does not recognise the ICJ's jurisdiction over the issue.

The two countries agreed to meet again during the first quarter in Brazil to discuss the disputed territory. However, the UK's decision to send a warship to support Guyana has alarmed Venezuela, tainting the chances of an

amicable resolution.

Nonetheless, Guyana appeared set for a prosperous future, which needs careful management. The lack of strategic planning could, however, put its future at risk.

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

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2024 brings renewed possibilities to advance Caricom's priorities

**New Year Statement by the incoming chairman of Caricom
His Excellency Mohamed Irfaan Ali President of the
Cooperative Republic of Guyana**

As the in-coming Chairman of Caricom, I extend warm New Year's greetings to all citizens across our beloved Caribbean Community. May 2024 be for all of us a year of good remembrance.

The last six months of 2023 saw Caricom under the Chairmanship of the Honourable Roosevelt Skerritt, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica. My first words must be of thanks on behalf of Caricom for his outstanding leadership during that time – qualities that will remain with us as I invite his continued participation as a member of the Bureau – and of course his active involvement as a member of Conference as Caricom implements critical initiatives to the benefit of all our people.

This New Year brings renewed possibilities to continue targeted programmes to advance Caricom's strategic priorities with the objective of pursuing the region's development goals and striving for peace and prosperity across our Caribbean Community.

Regional security is an increasingly critical matter. We live in a world where peace is challenged from one corner of the universe to the next.

However, we ended 2023 with Caricom's robust role in assuring the rule of international peace and security in our corner on the world, and ensuring that Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole remained a Zone of Peace.

We shall continue 2024 with this respect for international law. We all remain committed to peacefully and by legal means resolving border controversies. We are resolved to effectively address crime and violence in our Region, including combatting the illegal weapons trade through our "War on Guns" campaign.

We will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to return our Member State, Haiti, to peace and stability. Our Region must remain a Zone of Peace.

Ensuring our Region's food and nutrition security continues to be at the forefront of our endeavours. Despite adverse challenges, including climate change, Caricom Member States have made steady progress towards achieving our "25 percent by 2025" target to reduce the Region's food import bill.

We will build on these achievements, including advancing



Dr Irfaan Ali

our regional agenda for energy services that are available, reliable, affordable and sustainable – to support expected innovations in the agricultural sector. Crucial to this initiative is the need to improve regional transportation, and this will remain as one of our top priorities.

We will continue our advocacy for early and fair operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund, agreed at COP28, and we shall continue our insistence on fulfilment of the commitments made by major emitters to be converted to actions to reduce emissions that lead to climate change with its deleterious impact on vulnerable Small Island Developing States and Low-lying Coastal Developing States, such as Caricom Member States.

We all know that SIDS do not contribute in any meaningful way to climate change, but we carry the heaviest burden of the impact: from more and stronger tropical cyclones to increasingly scarce and saline ground water, to disappearing coastal lands, to degrading marine eco-systems, to stress on agriculture and other sectors.

This is why our call for fair access to affordable financing to address the impact of climate change must and will continue.

The year 2023 was a period of reflection as we marked the 50th Anniversary of our integration movement. We will continue to advance these ideals with the requisite undertakings, which will allow Caricom nationals to exercise their right to free movement within the Community, and to bring the regional capital market into being. We will also work on ensuring greater participation of all sectors of our Community, including the private sector, labour organisations and civil society, in building our Caricom Single Market and Economy.

We will identify new avenues for targeted partnerships, especially with our young people, to encourage innovative approaches and renewed energy for sustained economic development and convergence.

Our objective is to improve the lives of our citizens, through purposeful and sustained cooperation, by delivering high-quality health services, a more relevant system of education for young people, secure and amenable living environments, new jobs, and a financial climate that is conducive to investments.

I am heartened by the tangible evidence of what our collective action and determination have already achieved. I remain confident that the ongoing and new initiatives being implemented will help to ensure that Caricom is truly "A Community for All".

Guyana is honoured to Chair the Conference of Heads of Government for the period January 1 to June 30. I look forward to welcoming all Caricom Heads of State and Government to Georgetown in February 2024, where we will host the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference, and continue our Community's activities to mark Caricom's 50th Anniversary.

Let us approach this New Year with optimism, and a strengthened desire to pursue our shared objectives of unity and prosperity.

I wish you all a peaceful and prosperous 2024!
May God bless you all.

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Prime Minister Skerrit (centre) at the 45th Conference Heads meeting last year

Caricom looks to unity, cooperation

Caricom's integration movement can become an even more unified force with the group continuing to work together, outgoing chairman, Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, said last week.

His statements were reported in the Caribbean media, and by the *Caribbean Media Corporation*.

Skerrit made the statement on unity and cooperation during his end-of-year statement, when he spoke to the significance of the regional body in the wake of the challenges and achievements of the past year.

He also noted that "acting in concert is our surest way of making the local, regional, and international impact that is needed to deepen the Caricom integration movement".

In his message, Skerrit said the region made steady progress to advance the integration movement this year.

He pointed to celebrations across the Caricom for the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the signing of the original Treaty of Chaguaramas.

"Under the theme, '50 Years Strong: A Solid Foundation to Build On,' we paused for reflection on the many seminal achievements since 1973, and recommitted to the vision of our Founding Fathers for a prosperous, unified Community".

He also noted that during the 45th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of Caricom in Trinidad and Tobago in July last year, Caricom took the pivotal decisions to work towards the free

movement of all Caricom nationals within the Community, and to advance measures to bring the regional capital market into being, with appropriate attendant amendments made to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Concerning the 25 by 2025 food security, Skerrit said the initiative picked up pace, with several Member States recording important initiatives to reduce the food import bill, and advance food and nutrition security for our people.

"Our flagship event, the *Caribbean Week of Agriculture*, held in The Bahamas in April, allowed focused engagement with the private sector. A critical Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture will prioritise actions to combat food and nutrition insecurity, and improve the climate resilience of agriculture in the Caribbean," he declared.

And on the matter of regional security, Skerrit said this was brought into sharp focus "as we navigated escalating threats to our borders".

He added, "We continued strenuous efforts, including through the interventions of the Caricom-appointed Eminent Persons Group, and international advocacy, to find solutions to the multi-dimensional crisis in Haiti and for a return to peace and stability."

Also, as he noted, to date five consultations with stakeholders have been undertaken, with the last yielding a Framework Agreement to provide a transitional governance arrangement to take the troubled country to free and fair elections.

Gonsalves seeks to reduce court backlogs

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is hoping to join at least one other Caricom country in abolishing preliminary enquiries, the move aligning with the efforts by other regional nations to deal with a backlog of cases in the courts, along with growing crime.

A preliminary enquiry is a legal process through which a magistrate determines if the prosecution has enough evidence for a jury to consider in determining whether someone is guilty or not guilty of a charge.

Last month, Trinidad and Tobago announced the abolishment of preliminary enquiries in a move that will create sweeping changes to the functioning of the courts and the dispensation of justice.

Doing so would also reduce case backlog, ease the burden on witnesses, and significantly eliminate the wastage of time and resources in the disposal of indictable matters.



Ralph Gonsalves

As the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs in Trinidad and Tobago government noted, now moving forward, nationals can anticipate a thoroughly reformed, highly streamlined, and entirely operational pre-trial system, which was under development for several decades.

As was reported last month, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has started exploring the possibility of following the Port-of-Spain model.

As Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves stated, his administration is proposing changes as to how the courts handle certain criminal matters, and that it has a clear strategy on crime.

Gonsalves is also the Minister of National Security and Legal Affairs.

"We have done some important reforms already in relation to evidence, procedure. But we need to do some more," he stated.



Ask Jay...

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KEY THINGS TO KNOW WHEN YOUR MORTGAGE IS UP FOR RENEWAL

Picture this: a mortgage, a ticking financial time bomb that demands attention when renewal day arrives. The stakes are high, and decisions weigh heavy. Will you opt for the stability of a fixed rate, or dance with the unpredictable allure of a variable one? Is the long-term commitment the way to go, or does the flexibility of shorter terms beckon? And in this financial arena, do you stick with the familiar face of your current lender, or venture into the unknown with a new contender? The choices are yours, and the clock is ticking.

Embarking on the mortgage renewal journey? Start about four to six months before the big day. Take stock of your situation – it's like a financial health check-up! Think about using some extra cash to trim down that mortgage, or bundle up your debts with it.

Now, here's the fun part: ring up your lender. Chat about the options – they're like different flavours of ice cream. Then, snoop around elsewhere. Imagine it's a shopping spree, but for mortgages. Quick tip: grab your credit report first to avoid too many peeks into your financial diary. And guess what? There's a shortcut – meet a mortgage broker. They're like your personal navigators through the mortgage jungle.

Oh, and if you find a sweet deal, get a commitment letter. It's like a promise sealed with financial fairy dust. Feeling bold? Approach your current lender and say, "Match this or watch me go!" It's your mortgage renewal dance, so make it a show-stopper!

On the other hand, while the rate with another lender might be better, you will have to undergo the qualifying process once again. For many borrowers, that may not be a challenge. If you maintained or improved your credit score and income since your last mortgage approval, you stand a good chance at being able to qualify for a rate that may be substantially better than your current mortgage rate.

However, if you have lost your job, procured more debt or taken a hit to your credit score, you might have a hard time passing the stress test once again. The good news for borrowers who have been victims of financial hardships is that their current lender will not need to re-qualify them for their mortgage renewal. Borrowers can also look at other lenders, like credit bureaus and trust companies, who do not always implement the stress test in their approval processes.

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Journey to Ireland encounters warmth, friendly faces, and hospitality

By Dhanpaul Narine

It started in 1978. It was a chilly June morning when I walked into an Old People's Home in London. It was in a posh neighbourhood in Hampstead, the place of writers, poets, and politicians. The Home was on a hill, with 21 bedrooms and an assortment of peoples from all over London.

There was Bill who sat in a corner by himself. Jim walked around thinking that his relatives would come for him, while Marie spoke fluent French with Doris. And there was Jane, with her red handbag and high-heels, who couldn't stop talking about County Cork. Each day brought new stories about this place, its people, and the sights to see.

I left Hampstead knowing that County Cork was stuck somewhere in Ireland. I made a silent promise to visit it one day.

Ten years later, we were in New York, a city known for its immigrants, festivals, and celebrations; and yes, the famous Irish Day Parade.

We settled in Queens, the most cosmopolitan borough in all of America, and where, like London, they speak dozens of languages. And then we met Bill and Rita Shanahan. They were two most amazing persons. Rita was Guyanese. Bill was Irish, and as luck would have it, he was from County Cork!

During our conversations, Bill would tell us that his family owned several acres of land in Cork, and a famous hotel was built on the land. It is the *Oriel*, and is located about five miles from Cork's city centre. I told Bill that one day I would surprise him, and call him from the *Oriel*. He would smile and nod, but I could tell he had his doubts.

One day, he said something that was most interesting: "If you find the evidence that we used to own the land, the hotel would give you a free pint of Guinness!" That was the motivation I needed to buy a plane ticket.

I was always fascinated by Ireland, its people, culture, and landscapes. One cannot watch the movie *Ryan's Daughter* and not be riveted by the rugged beauty of Ireland. A good number of US Presidents have traced their lineage to Ireland, and perhaps the most famous of them was John F. Kennedy. And who can forget the Irish Day Parade in New York when everyone becomes Irish!

The opportunity came to visit Dublin in December 2023. It was a way not only to visit a beautiful country, but also to redeem myself in the eyes of Jane and Bill. A fellow traveler at JFK airport said I was in for an interesting week. It turned to be an Irish understatement.

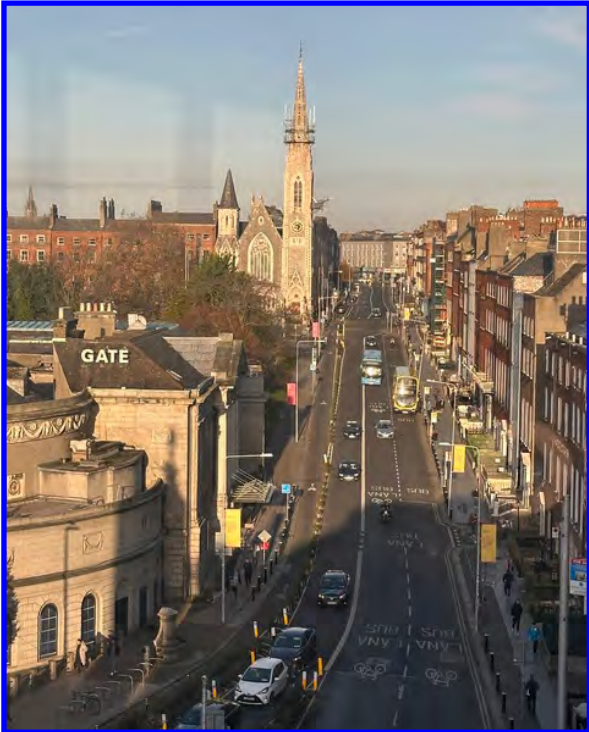
We landed at a crowded Dublin airport. Sean, our cabbie, played Irish music and explained the significance of the 1918 events, and soon we were singing together. When we reached the hotel, he came out of the cab, and we did an impromptu dance to *Danny Boy*. After that, what could possibly go wrong?

It was refreshing to know that the check-in lady at the hotel had a brother who did his Master's degree at the London School of Economics. We talked about my time at the LSE. We still had about three hours before we could get our room.

What better thing to do than to hop on a bus and tour the city. Dublin is a beautiful city. The Luas or tram ran parallel to the main street and led to historic buildings. The Samuel Beckett Bridge is well worth a visit. Trinity College in Dublin was the repository of historical records, and we wondered if we would ever get the chance to visit it.

But there were dangerous clouds on the horizon that would test our mettle.

It happened in the early Thursday afternoon. Reports came that a man had stabbed a child and injured several others. We saw from



Dublin shows a return to normalcy

our hotel the Garda or police in columns trying to protect the streets. But it was a lost cause for several hours. The disorder included fire, violence, and destruction of public property.

We ran from our hotel to the streets and took refuge in a church. The attack on the child ignited an anti-immigrant fuse. Dublin had seen nothing like it before, and the brave Garda was one step behind the rioters.

The following day was quiet and we were now off to County Cork. The couple in the train were back from Mauritius after spending three months there. They spoke of a country with a healthy economy, tolerance for other ethnicities, and a lively culture. They bemoaned what had happened in Dublin.

We pointed out that there was a migrant situation in New York as well. When you cut education and other services to fund the migrant crisis, it causes resentment.

We couldn't help noticing acres of open spaces in the Irish countryside. The train landed at Cork on a sunny morning. Cork is lovely. The river Lee led to the shopping centre, and the holiday bustle was in full gear. The people were charming and friendly, and after a walk-about, we were off to the *Oriel* hotel. Could we find the evidence that Bill Shanahan's family owned the land and get that pint of frothy black stuff?

After five miles of lush countryside, and with a cabbie who gave us a lesson in real estate in Cork, we arrived at the *Oriel*. It was an imposing building with a rounded stone facade that led to stately rooms, and it was built on a magnificent stretch of land.

Tony at the reception desk was polite. He couldn't recall the Shanahan family name. What does one do? The next best thing was to call Bill in New York and connect him with the *Oriel*. Bill was shocked that I was in Cork, and then he set about explaining to them his family connections to the area.

We went to the bistro, minus the Guinness. There was something bothering Tony. He arrived at our table and showed us documents about the *Oriel*, and before he could finish, we received literature from Bill that proved his family had owned 12 acres of land that included the *Oriel*. The luck of the Irish, you might say!

I had to accomplish another life-long dream. It was to visit Belfast. There was a time when Rev Ian Paisley, Gerry Adams, the IRA, Sinn Fein, and others, dominated the headlines. The peace accord was one of the best things to happen for Ireland.

I expected Belfast to be a city that was run-down, but that was not the case at all. Belfast was modern, busy, booming, and friendly. People were upbeat about peace and normalcy.

As in any big city, there are bound to be anomalies. Deepak from Pune, India, was buy-



City Hall in Belfast

ing souvenirs with his family. He could live legally in Belfast, but was leaving for Pune. He was offered an IT job there.

Ranji from Delhi was a student at Queens University in Belfast. He hoped to get a visa to say on after graduation.

I left Belfast with a sense of peace and admiration for Ireland, thinking that whether it was Northern Island, or the Republic, people were the same. They wanted to do well, be appreciated, feel secure, and to take care of their families.

Back in Dublin, there was Mahesh from Hyderabad. He too was in IT, but was having problems studying and living in a crowded flat. Rents were expensive, and sharing was the best option. He hoped to be sponsored after graduation so he could stay in Ireland.

Then there was Abdulla from Pakistan.

He was also a student, but with a different story. His family sold the rice factory to send him to study. If he could stay after graduation, he would repay them. If not, he would return and work with the family.

Obinna from Nigeria said that he drew strength from the Nigerian community in Dublin, but rents, food, and transportation are constantly rising.

I had to ask Mahesh and Abdulla about cricket. India versus Pakistan is like a war. They both smiled.

"It's not war anymore. Look at Babar, he is smiling, and being lovey-dovey with the Indian team. We need to get back to the old days," said Abdulla with a smile.

There is something that just had to happen. We left a whole day to visit Trinity College in Dublin. It is one of the oldest universities in the world, and houses the famous *Book of Kells*. This is the illuminated set of manuscripts that date to the eighth

century, and illustrates the four gospels of the *New Testament Bible*. One of the wonders is the visit to the Long Room where the original works are to be found in various disciplines.

Despite our efforts, we could not get in because of a glitch with the credit card. We looked for an exit to return to the hotel, but it was the wrong way. We went back to line and explained to the security our credit card problem. He motioned us to a place where we might get tickets, and we were in the hall with the *Book of Kells*. This wonder of the world proved to be one of the highlights of the trip.

The experience in Ireland was fantastic. It began with Jane in 1978 in an Old People's Home in London. It was nourished through Bill Shanahan, and that led us to a wonderful new universe. The Irish eyes are warm, friendly, and smiling, and are to be treasured.

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PT ROOPNAUTH SHARMA,
MISSISSAUGA RAM MANDIR

ASSISTED BY DEVI MANDIR PANDITS

Daily Program

6:45 - 7:15 PM ~ Bhajans and Kirtans
7:15 - 7:30 PM ~ Vyas Ji Puja
7:30 - 8:30 PM ~ Pravachan
8:30 - 8:45 PM ~ Appreciation and Aarti
8:45 - 9:00 PM ~ Bhojan

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Caribbean enters 2024 navigating multifaceted climate change impacts

The climate change crisis and its deleterious consequences remain existential threats as the Caribbean enters the New Year, with these Small Island Developing States facing ongoing multifaceted impacts from 2023, *Global Voices* reported late last month.

Among the worrisome and escalating impacts are rising sea levels that are eroding shorelines, threatening coastal communities and heightening the risk of saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources, and the disruption of ecosystems.

Also notable from last year's momentum are ongoing extreme weather patterns, uncomfortably hot temperatures, and the growing frequency and intensity of tropical storms and hurricanes.

In its year-end roundup by *Global Voices* of its 2023 climate change coverage, Janine Mendes-Franco noted that like "everywhere else in the world... the Caribbean experienced its fair share of triumphs and challenges".

It was also noted that "the ill-effects of climate change are right at [the] doorstep" of many of the small islands in the region.

As *Global Voices* stated, Caribbean island nations typically have smaller populations, and operate on a much lower scale when it comes to industrialisation. Also, the region produces fewer carbon emissions than many Global North countries.

"Yet, [these nations] bear the brunt of the worst effects of climate change because of their geographical vulnerabilities," Mendes-Franco noted.

For instance, six years after the great devastation following *Hurricane Maria*, Dominica is still trying to build climate-resilient homes for its citizens. It is an effort that is making its leaders even more resolute about advocating for proper Loss and Damage mechanisms to be put in place, as was highlighted at the COP28 conference that concluded last month.

Dominica has also been proactive in other areas, becoming the first country in the world to designate 800 square kilometres of its waters as a sanctuary for sperm whales, an endangered species that can actually help fight climate change, *Global Voices* stated.

However, while there were indicators of one small step taken forward, there were many instances where progress felt like two steps back, it declared.

For instance, as Mendes-Franco stated, while environmentalist Allison Ifield continued her fight to protect Belize's mangroves, Jamaicans found themselves fighting for access to their



Breach in the Ramsar sandbar in Barbuda. John Mussington photo

own beaches.

As was reported in Jamaica last year, plastic pollution on beaches also caused heightened levels of concern, leading to environmentalists speaking out about the need for sustainable development practices, and expressing anxiety over the pollution of water sources on the island.

Then in Antigua and Barbuda, its Ramsar site continued to be threatened by a sandbar breach that occurred in 2017, after the Category 5 *Hurricane Irma* pummelled the area. If not rectified, this breach can compromise the well-being of the lagoon's ecosystems and the livelihoods of many.

Another serious and deleterious climate change impact is the ongoing disruption that is happening to agriculture due to changing precipitation patterns, and more frequent droughts in the region.

As *Global Voices* stated, in many small island economies, small-scale farming is a vital source of income and sustenance. Consequently, Caricom nations such as Guyana and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have been grappling with increasing food production, and seeking out new ways to combat food insecurity.

Also in Trinidad and Tobago, the bunchgrass *vetiver*, noted for its deep roots and thick growth, is being used as a reliable and eco-friendly solution to mitigate the effects of flooding, landslides, slope destabilisation, and erosion.

Additionally, the warming of the oceans has been compromising the vibrant marine ecosystems that form the backbone of many Caricom economies, forcing many of the islands to seek out new solutions.

For example, Trinidad and Tobago has started building part-

nerships to protect its coral reefs. Then there is Suriname, which is turning to aquaculture now that its fisheries are being negatively impacted by climate change.

In the case of Belize, its move to a blue economy has seen it becoming the first nation in Central America in 1982 to designate a Marine Protected Area with the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument. Among other things, a blue economy seeks to conserve marine and freshwater environments while using this resource in a sustainable way to develop economic growth.

Climate change and its impact in Jamaica last year also saw prominence given to education. The International Seabed Authority, the UN agency with a mandate to organise and control the international seabed's mineral resources "for the benefit of humankind as a

whole", is headquartered in Kingston.

It was at the ISA's Jamaica location last year where deliberations on deep-sea mining reached a critical stage. Many young Jamaican activists and artists were intensively involved during these meetings, and spoke out about the importance of defending the seabed.

Global Voices also noted the end-of-year COP28 and a few of its achievements. As it stated, during the sessions, Caribbean leaders were urged not to squander the opportunity to make the climate conference "transformative", with more people becoming aware of the great potential of fossil fuel alternatives.

Additionally, "Even as some feared inaction at COP28 would deliver the death knell for vulnerable regions like the Caribbean, [SIDS] did their part in advocating for both renewable energy initiatives, and the need for ramped-up decarbonisation efforts."

A few wins did emerge for SIDS from COP28, Mendes-Franco noted. As she stated, "the big wins were the long-awaited launch of the Loss and Damage Fund, and the eventual recognition of the need to transition away from fossil fuels".

But there was no denying the COP28 ended with cautious optimism, Mendes-Franco added.

As was noted, with "no firm obligation or timeframe of deliverables in which to achieve [these wins], Caribbean nations are understandably cautious about their optimism".

Mendes-Franco added, "After all, mitigating the effects of greenhouse gas emissions to ensure not just sustainability but survival must be undertaken collectively in order to have any chance of achieving the Paris Agreement's objective to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels."

COP28 closes with 'beginning of the end' accord to fossil fuel era

Dubai - The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) closed on December 13 with an agreement that signals the "beginning of the end" of the fossil fuel era, the *UN Climate Change News* has reported. The agreement lays the ground for a swift, just, and equitable transition, and is underpinned by deep emissions cuts and scaled-up finance.

In a demonstration of global solidarity, negotiators from nearly 200 parties assembled in Dubai with a decision on the world's first 'global stocktake' to ratchet up climate action before the end of the decade - with the overarching aim to keep the global temperature limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach.

"Whilst we didn't turn the page on the fossil fuel era in Dubai, this outcome is the beginning of the end," said UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell during his closing speech.

He added, "Now all governments and businesses need to turn these pledges into real-economy outcomes, without delay."

The global stocktake is considered the central outcome of COP28, containing every element that was under negotiation, and which can now be used by countries to develop stronger climate action plans due by 2025.

The stocktake recognises the science that indicates global greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut 43 percent by 2030 compared to 2019 levels to limit global warming to the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal.

At the same time, it also notes that parties are off track when it comes to meeting their Paris Agreement goals.

Also, the stocktake calls on parties to take actions towards achieving, at a global scale, a tripling of renewable energy capacity, and doubling energy efficiency improvements by 2030.

The list also includes accelerating efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power, phasing out inefficient fossil



COP28 during its closing moments on December 13

fuel subsidies, and other measures that drive the transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly, and equitable manner, with developed countries continuing to take the lead.

In the short-term, parties are encouraged to come forward with ambitious, economy-wide emission reduction targets, covering all greenhouse gases, sectors, and categories, and aligned with the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit in their next round of climate action plans (known as nationally determined contributions) by 2025.

The two-week-long COP28 started on November 30 with the World Climate Action Summit, which brought together 154 Heads of States and governments. Parties reached an historic agreement on the operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund, and funding arrangements. It was the first time a substantive decision was adopted on the first day of the COP meetings.

Commitments to the fund started coming in moments after the decision was gavelled, and totals over (US) \$700 million to

date.

There was also more progress on the loss and damage agenda, with an agreement also reached that the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UN Office for Project Services will host the secretariat of the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage.

This platform will catalyse technical assistance to developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

Parties also agreed on targets for the Global Goal on Adaptation and its framework, which identify where the world needs to get to in order to be resilient to the impacts of a changing climate, and also to assess countries' efforts.

The GGA framework reflects a global consensus on adaptation targets, and the need for finance, technology, and capacity-building support to achieve them.

Also, climate finance took centre stage at the conference, with Stiell repeatedly calling it the "great enabler of climate action".

The Green Climate Fund received a boost to its second replenishment, with six countries pledging new funding at COP28. Total pledges now stand at a record \$12.8 billion from 31 countries, with further contributions expected.

Also, eight donor governments announced new commitments to the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund totaling more than \$174 million to date. New pledges, totaling nearly \$188 million so far, were made to the Adaptation Fund at COP28.

However, as highlighted in the global stocktake, these financial pledges are far short of the trillions eventually needed to support developing countries with clean energy transitions, implementing their national climate plans, and adaptation efforts.

Ramphal's latest Snapshots captures micro stories that are fun and humorous

An endorsement of Kennard Ramphal's forthcoming publication, *Snapshots*
By Gokarran Sukhdeo

The anthology *Snapshots*, compiled by Kennard Ramphal, Roop Misir, and Ram Jagessar, is an interesting autobiographical digest of micro stories, and serves, to my mind, three striking purposes.

First, they provide a moral compass, a structural blueprint, and the inimitable footprints for second and subsequent generations to study and follow, especially if they have an interest in socio-cultural and linguistic anthropology.

It is a sad truism that younger generations do not care much for the history, the privations and accomplishments of foreparents. Hopefully, the brevity and masterful literary presentations of these stories will attract them to want to read.

Secondly, these stories are the cave petrography, the hieroglyphics, the records indelibly carved in the walls of time. The three writers have taken their time to do so, and thus, shall not, like *Ozymandias*, be lost in the timeless dunes of wilderness. Because, man by nature is a creature that wants to build castles, dam rivers, plant trees, write books and throw



Kennard Ramphal

his image into the future, to leave footprints for his progeny to follow. The imagery that these three writers present are worthy of such preservation and emulation.

I personally know two of them since the early 1960s. Ramphal's illustrious career started out as a pupil teacher at Wales in 1957, and rose to Deputy Headmaster before joining the Guyana Defence Force, where he attained the rank of Captain and became *Aide de Camp* to Guyana's first President. Upon migration to Canada, he earned his doctorate and was a provincial education adviser in Toronto.

Misir and I became comrades caught up in the late 1960's bustling craziness of West Demerara teachers motorcycling to UG evening classes, most times barely making the four o'clock Vreedenoop ferry after work, a juggling act only superhuman youths could manage at the time. Upon migration, he too, earned his PhD.

I knew for years Jagessar to be a good writer. I knew his hometown, having also lived for several years near his village in Trinidad. I well-empathised with the rural communities from

whence the three came, the prevailing poverty and circumstances, and how they lifted themselves like phoenixes from the ashes and anchors of those circumstances.

Thirdly, I took my time leisurely ingesting these stories because I wanted to savour, appreciate, and prolong their delectability like I do when eating my gilbaker head. The stories are fun, humorous, and imagery-loaded, and grip your attention when you read them.

First, they transport you back to the idyllic 1960s' countryside of the unique socio-cultural and linguistic prosodies of Canals Polder, West Coast Demerara in Guyana, and Tunapuna on Saturday morning market day in east Trinidad.

Then we follow them in their anomic struggle for identity, higher education, security and comfort in cold Canada. But the writers have always been an umbilical part-and-parcel of their birth countries, and although they have successfully relocated in North America for half a century, they are still, as shown in their nostalgic writings, longing for the old country – like we all do.

Gokarran Sukhdeo is the recipient of the Guyana Prize for Literature, 1998.

AGO's 'Life Between Islands' exhibition explores Caribbean, British art

By Dhevin Indar

Toronto – An exhibition exploring the relationship between the Caribbean and Britain in the framework of British art history in the 20th and 21st centuries is now underway at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Titled *Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art, 1950s – Now*, the exploration is co-curated by David A. Bailey, Director, International Curators Forum, and Alex Farquharson, Director, Tate Britain. On the AGO side here in Canada, the presentation is overseen by Julie Crooks, Curator, Arts of Global Africa and the Diaspora.

Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art, 1950s – Now spans a range of media, from paintings to documentary photography, film, and sculpture.

At the same time, it addresses timely and relevant themes such as the role of culture in decolonisation, the meaning of home, the reclaiming of ancestral traditions, the nature of Caribbean and diasporic identity, racial discrimination, and socio-political conflict.

The works of art, and its many themes, reflect decades of Caribbean culture and thought, while celebrating the vibrancy, solidarity, and creativity behind this artistic legacy.

Many of the artists in this exhibit were born in Britain or arrived there as children, and many of their works reflect the Black British experience in the 1970s and 1980s. Among the experiences expressed in their works are high unemployment, hostile media, and police harassment.

At the same time, statements about collective power, community spirit, and solidarity also emerge out of these experiences.

These motifs are notable in the works that emerged out of the Caribbean Artists Movement, an alliance of writers, critics, visual artists, poets, dramatists, film makers, actors, and musicians, which was started in London, England in 1966.



Blue Curry (left to right), David A. Bailey, and Michael McMillan at the AGO exhibition

Works by CAM's artists focused on a modern and de-colonising Caribbean outlook across literature, painting, and other art forms.

While it dissolved in 1972, CAM's influence still resonates today. Most of the collective's membership remained in Britain, where debates shifted to developing a Black and British sense of community, and highlighted the struggles against racism and discrimination.

During the media tour earlier last month at the start of the AGO exhibition, artists Blue Curry and Michael McMillan spoke about their work and the significance behind their art.

Curry spoke to his artistry, saying, "A lot of stereotypes were associated with the Caribbean." A Bahamian-born artist living and working in London, Curry noted the detail of conch shells being associated with the Bahamas, adding that such a perception is corollary to much of the Caribbean depending economically on tourism.

He also noted that the region's very survival still relies on centuries-old colonial fantasies, and that here is no escape from this deafening chamber of *clichés* and stereotypes.

Working with these narratives, Curry's *Caribbean Queen*, for example, and other artworks, are reflections of Caribbean handcraft traditions that are used in the production of tourist souvenirs.

Another of Curry's work on display, *Islands*, sees the use of materials associated with touristic consumption of the region, which is delimited to being a space of leisure.

Meanwhile, Michael McMillan's *The Front Room* builds a narrative around fictional individuals inhabiting homes and other settings.

In so doing, his art speaks to the diaspora on the ways migrant communities expressed being Caribbean, and becoming Canadian, through material culture populating their inhabited spaces such as objects, photographs, and music.

As McMillan noted, he did not seek to create a room from the 1970s that was British. Instead, he wanted to do something Caribbean-Canadian, with the room designed for a family in the 1980s filled with Caribbean heritage but connected to the UK through its diaspora presence.

As he declared, "The room is a product of migration across the diaspora."

Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art, 1950s – Now is now open, and ends on April 1. It is located on Level 5 of the AGO.

Change, decay proliferate all around in the environment, politics

Christmas has come and gone. For many folks it was not a white Christmas – more like a red Christmas. Folks are finding themselves in the "red" with the rise in cost of living, food and shelter. The seasons are changing and generally for bad weather, dry weather, high temperatures, floods, storms, tornadoes...

In years gone by mid-November signalled the first fall of snow in southern Ontario, here on the shores of Lake Erie. We are yet to see any real signs of a snowfall. The trees and shrubs went ballistic in the summer. They grew by leaps and bounds and the foliage was thick. It made the clean-up of fallen leaves in the Fall a massive job for old folks like my wife and I.

After weeks of hard labour, we managed to dump leaves to the back of the yard, several feet high!

In the meanwhile, boughs of trees had fallen around the yard, one missing our bedroom by a few feet, and another one blocking the entrance of the garage. Clear-up of these required professional help, not easy to acquire these days, and they come at a price. In the end, our backs and muscles paid the price, taking a few weeks to recover. All services these days cost "a pound and a crown", as my father used to say.

Our backs and muscles are not what they used to be. This is not a job for folks of our vintage. The yard equipment is here, two lawn tractors, clippers, lawn mowers, cutters, carts – you name it. It is not unusual to see a guy high up in our trees swing-

Bernard Heydorn



ing like Tarzan in the jungle, hacking and cutting from a safety platform. That is not me!

We have planted a number of trees since we came here to live 20 years ago. They keep us cool in the hot summer and provide shade, cutting down on air conditioning costs. They play their part in the arrest of climate change. We are trying to do our part to save our planet. However, where we are in rural Ontario, folks still use wood burning stoves and fireplaces for heating.

On top of the dangers of climate change destruction, we have the spread of dictatorships, not for the first time, a real threat to humanity. From East to West, China, Russia, the Middle East, and "Trumpism" in the US, the evils are evident.

The result is war, rumours of war, civil disorder, civil war, divisions, uprisings, lawlessness, a rise of racism, and refugees travelling thousands of miles looking for a safe and peaceful life.

Countries locked into dictatorship like China, North Korea, and Russia, are advancing their tyranny to neighbours and beyond. They are hungry for more land, territory, the seas, and financial gain. Nuclear power is available. Imprisoned populations will provide the cannon fodder. We see the refugees in their tens of thousands, walking through the jungles, drifting across the seas and oceans, through the deserts and over the mountains, looking for a safe place to call home.

My family and others left Guyana because of the threat of

dictatorship in the 1960s. Now Guyana itself is being threatened by a dictatorship in neighbouring Venezuela. The ruling dictator of Venezuela is making a land grab of three quarters of the country, and the adjoining sea. A British warship has been dispatched to the area in support of Guyana. Thousands of Venezuelan troops have also arrived in the area.

A Guyanese helicopter with military leaders dispatched to the area crashed with the tragic loss of four of its occupants. It is being suggested that Britain could be involved in another war, similar to their last conflict in the Falklands War with Argentina in 1982.

Perhaps the biggest threat to the free world is the takeover of the US by Donald Trump. A ready-made tyrant facing 91 criminal charges is ready to go back into office, by fair or foul means.

Our own country Canada, facing elections in 2025, has characters waiting to test the waters of democracy, impressed by the gains made by "Trumpism" in the US. They see Trump as being a trump card in a world tilting to the evils of dictatorship, north, south, east, and west.

Democracy is being squeezed on all sides. Perhaps the Brits will save Guyana. Perhaps the Caribbean islands will come to the aid of Guyana as Barbados did for Britain with the famous refrain at the start of World War II, "Go right ahead Britain, Barbados is right behind you!"

Perhaps Canada will be saved from dictatorship. The die is cast. If the creeks don't rise and the sun still shines, I'll be talking to you.



Trinidad and Tobago-born Safia Hosein climbed Antarctica's highest peak Mount Vinson on December 25. In a Facebook post, Hosein said she arrived at the top at 18:14, where she proudly displayed Trinidad and Tobago's national flag. She also displayed the name of her town in Trinidad. As she noted, "it doesn't matter where I am on the planet, I will always be a 'Biche Girl'". Mount Vinson is the highest peak in Antarctica at 4,892 metres, and is in the northern part of Vinson Massif's summit plateau in the south portion of the main ridge of the Sentinel Range.

Inflation uptick likely in 2024

Port-of-Spain – The Central Bank last month warned there is a possibility of an uptick in inflation in 2024, according to its latest monetary policy report.

"Domestic inflation is expected to remain low in the final months of 2023, with a possible uptick in 2024, based on how global prices evolve and the timing and magnitude of utility rate changes," the Central Bank stated in its November Monetary Policy.

Additionally, "Some demand pressures could also materialise depending on the extent of wage settlements and payments of salary arrears."

The report was published in December.

It stated that momentum in the non-energy sector is expected to benefit from increased business activity alongside the ongoing resurgence in consumer demand.

"Energy sector performance hinges on the commencement of upstream projects to bolster supply. Production from Touchstone's Cascadura and EOG's Osprey prospects, expected before year's end, can support output in the second half of 2023," it stated.

Additionally, "Monetary policy will continue to focus on inflation, while taking into account domestic growth prospects and interest differentials with the rest of the world. At present, inflation is very low, there are signs that the economy's steady recovery continues, credit is recovering at a good pace, and short-term interest differentials with the US are still negative."

Also, "All of these factors could change in light of, among other things, international supply side uncertainties affecting global prices, the outcome of energy production plans, and the path of interest rates in the US and elsewhere."

It also noted that the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago "remains poised to calibrate its monetary policy in light of emerging developments".

The report stated that domestically, several indicators suggest economic activity picked up in the second quarter of 2023.

"Activity was driven by an improvement in the non-energy sector which countered a decline in output from the energy sector. This may have also contributed to an improvement in labour market conditions as the unemployment rate fell and labour force participation improved," it stated.

The report revealed that employment gains were noted in the construction (including electricity and water); wholesale, retail, restaurants and hotels; and community, social, and personal services sectors.

Meanwhile, headline inflation eased to 1.3 percent in October 2023 on account of a deceleration in both food and core inflation, it stated.



The report stated that the financial system liquidity decreased from May to November 2023.

"Fiscal operations, usually the main driver of excess liquidity, resulted in net injections of (TT) \$2.6 billion over the review period, compared to injections of \$7.8 billion one year earlier. Central Bank Open Market Operations resulted in net injections of \$2 billion over May to November 2023," the report noted.

It also noted that, "Simultaneously, the Central Bank's foreign exchange sales to authorised dealers indirectly removed \$5.6 billion from the system. Nonetheless, excess liquidity remained ample, underpinning expansions in private sector credit."

And, "As of September 2023, consolidated system credit remained favourable driven by robust growth in consumer, real estate mortgage, and business lending. Meanwhile, conditions in the foreign exchange market remained relatively tight."

The report stated that given this context, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago kept its monetary policy stance unchanged.

"During its June and September 2023 Monetary Policy Committee meetings, the Central Bank kept the short-term rate on its overnight collateralised financing to commercial banks, the Repo rate, at 3.50 percent."

Also, "The MPC took account of the economic recovery alongside the deceleration in domestic inflation in calibrating its stance," the report noted.

As it stated, "At the same time, the Committee noted that the (negative) short-term interest differential between Trinidad and Tobago and the US had widened."

It concluded that, "In this regard, particular attention needed to be paid to the interest rate trajectory of the US Federal Reserve, while balancing the implications of higher domestic rates on economic growth."

Govt issues warning to party-goers to not park elderly at TT's hospitals

Port-of-Spain – A stern warning has been issued to Carnival participants by the government to not use the nation's medical facilities as hotels for the elderly during the upcoming celebrations in February.

The warning was issued by Health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh, who revealed an historical trend of masqueraders wanting to party without hindrance, and who were leaving parents, grandparents, and the elderly in public hospitals.

Deyalsingh noted that many of the temporarily abandoned elderly were afflicted with NCDs illnesses as diabetes and hypertension.

Said Deyalsingh, "[Do] not treat our public health care system as a hotel for Carnival. Do not bring your parents and grandparents for us to house them for Carnival while you play mas."

He further explained, "[We notice] ...from about January 3-5, we get an upsurge of people coming to our A&Es with uncontrolled diabetes, uncontrolled hypertension, and that puts a burden on our public health care system."

Many of the patients are elderly, he revealed.

"They behave well for 11 months of the year, 11 and a half, and then, for that two-week period, they overeat, over-drink, over-indulge, and also stop taking their medication. I want

to urge people and families to make sure that your parents and grandparents who are diabetic and hypertensive take their medication," he stated.

Deyalsingh noted that some younger people do not monitor their elderly relatives' health properly, and consequently put them in public health facilities to be cared for while they enjoy the Carnival festivities.

"It happens; and then you want to know why we don't have beds (in public hospitals),"

he stated.

He added, "One of the reasons [for fewer hospital beds] is that too many elderly... and I would use the word 'dumped' ...I want to be very firm on this – are brought into this free public health care system (which we love to bash) because people want to go and play mas."

Then come Ash Wednesday, the children "miraculously" turn up to take their elderly relatives home, he declared.



Terrence Deyalsingh

Caution needed for growing economy

Port-of-Spain – While there were gradual and positive trends in Trinidad and Tobago's economy for 2023, the outlook for next year should be one of cautious optimism.

So said economist Mariano Browne, who added he is also looking forward to continued economic recovery.

Casting his gaze away from the energy sector, Browne stressed that the one element key to the economy rebounding healthily is the private sector. He is a former trade minister.

As he noted, the government must manage its fiscal position carefully to supplement the shortfall in earnings from the energy sector. Also, he pointed out that this support cannot continue indefinitely, and growth must come

from the private sector.

Also, Browne noted that the rebound will take time.

"You are immediately faced with the conundrum of trying to influence the private sector to grow in ways which are export-oriented; trying to improve construction in the short run, or trying to improve activity in domestic banking is not going to give you the 'bang for your buck' that you need," he stated.

Additionally, "At the end of the day, a small country survives on its ability to earn foreign exchange. So, anything we do must have a significant foreign exchange element in order to compensate for any possible declines in the energy sector."

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Businesswoman unintended victim in east TT gunfire rampage

Port-of-Spain – Residents and businesses were anxious and angry last week over the burgeoning state of crime in Trinidad and Tobago following the killing of 51-year old Lana Sahadeo.

She was an unfortunate and unintended victim during a murderous rampage by gunmen who were focused on primary targets driving along the Churchill Roosevelt highway in St Augustine last Wednesday.

According to the reports out of Trinidad and Tobago, Sahadeo was shot at by a gunman when she looked out from a window in her house during the gun rampage that left three men dead. Her sudden appearance at the window may have startled a gunman in hot pursuit of a fleeing victim.

She sustained a fatal shot to the head, and died immediately on the floor of her house, a relative later told the media.

Sahadeo was owner of Lana's Silver Spoons, an eatery and restaurant, which is located opposite the Kay Donna roundabout in St Augustine, east Trinidad.

Following her untimely and violent death, many residents in the area expressed concern over the state of crime, while describing her death as unfortunate.

Sahadeo's landlady, who requested anonymity, said crime in Trinidad and Tobago was so rampant that the only solution was prayer.

She added, "The best I can say is don't look out" a window when a crime was in progress.

Another resident told the media she constantly warns her children about gunfire on a regular basis.

"I always tell them children whenever they hear gunshots to stay inside," she said.

Sahadeo was described as kind and generous by a nearby businessman and staff members. Her industry and dedication



Lana Sahadeo (right) with partner Antonio Pereira

were also noted, with residents and businesses stating that her day started at 4 a.m., when she opened her doors for the breakfast crowd of taxi and maxi drivers, and early commuters.

There was also the universal lamentation about crime, and how it continues to impact on Trinidad and Tobago.

Among the statements made by business owners and staff were the challenges of working inside businesses that were sur-

rounded by tall walls topped off with razor wire, and entrances that were fortified with burglar-proofing.

Said one employee: "Look at this place and how we have to sit inside. It is like we are doing time here. It is like we are in jail."

Sahadeo died at her Spring Village residence in Valsayn. Mourning relatives visiting the house following her murder declined to speak with the media.

However, one resident in the area expressed the collective helplessness that was notable among the mourners, saying, "All I can say is these people are lawless, and there is not much we can do about it."

According to police reports, last Wednesday afternoon Damien Cross of St Paul Street, Port-of-Spain; Jerry Hollingsworth of Tilbury Place, Laventille; Kishon McShine of Besson Street, East Dry River, Port-of-Spain; and Kashiff Sankar of Clifton Hill, East Dry River, Port-of-Spain, were in a car driven by Ricardo Levi Cross of Anisette Street, East Dry River, Port-of-Spain.

The group was driving west along the Churchill Roosevelt Highway when their vehicle was approached by another. The victims were then assaulted with machine guns. In the ensuing car crash, surviving victims exited, and were pursued by the gunmen.

It was during the pursuit when Sahadeo looked out a window of her house.

According to what Sahadeo's relatives later told police, she was sitting in the living room of their house with her husband when the sounds of gunfire erupted.

Sahadeo ran to her bedroom on the eastern side of the home. Her husband followed right afterwards, and found her on the floor bleeding from gunshot wounds.

US issues security alert

Port-of-Spain – A security alert for US citizens in Trinidad was issued by the US Embassy with the warning for increased caution and vigilance in the St Augustine and surrounding environs, including Trincity.

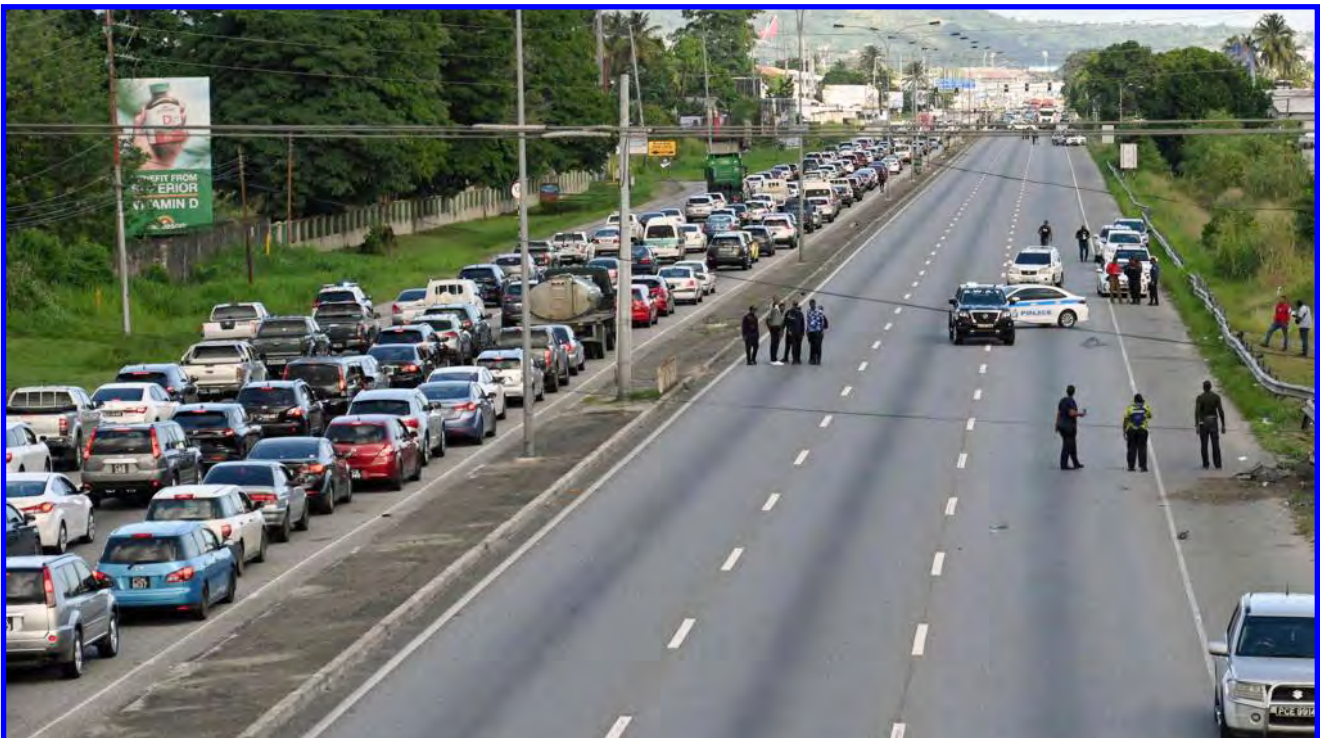
It came the next day following the quadruple murders that took place in the area on December 27, and urged US nationals to exercise caution as there is potential for increased crime.

Later, a US spokesperson in Port-of-Spain stated that the message was "a time and location specific alert sent to US citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not an update to the travel advisory."

The security alert noted that criminal activity often occurs in crowded public locations such as markets, shopping malls, airports, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, transportation hubs, schools and other areas.

"Due to recent increased gang activity in St Augustine, US citizens are advised to exercise extreme caution in the St Augustine areas of Trincity Mall, Grand Bazaar and Valsayn areas in the New Year," it stated.

It also noted that actions to take included exercising vigilance, or avoiding areas with heightened criminal activity; reviewing personal security plans; being aware of the surroundings; and monitoring the local media for updates.



Highway crime scene halts traffic in east Trinidad last week

Now another high-profile State-owned company hit by a ransomware attack

Port-of-Spain – The State-owned National Insurance Board was last week forced to close all its offices for a few days to assess the level of damage following yet another ransomware attack that hit Trinidad and Tobago in recent times.

Last week NIBTT was assessing its systems after experiencing the ransomware attack on December 26.

"All steps are being taken to protect our data integrity and technology hardware. We are also continuing to diligently work with our external technology partners to expeditiously resolve this matter," a release stated.

It added that NIBTT had reported the incident to the Trinidad and Tobago Cyber Security Incident Response Team, under the Ministry of National Security. Also, that it was working with this team toward a resolution.

Last week Finance Minister Colm Imbert said he had been briefed by NIB. However, he offered no further comment on the situation.

Later, the NIB noted all its scheduled commitments were completed for December 2023, and that it anticipated "all future commitments for January 2024 will be honoured".

Also, NIBTT stated it had engaged the services of local and international cybersecurity experts to lead the assessment to mitigate risk. It expects to resume all operations on a phased basis from January 2024.

According to the NIBTT's Audited Financial Statements for 2023, the number of contributors in the National Insurance

System during 2023 was recorded at 491,726, and the number of beneficiaries were 223,281. The contribution income collected for the 2023 financial year amounted to (TT) \$4.807 billion. As at June 30, 2023, the market value of the investment portfolio of the NIBTT was \$28 billion.

Commenting on the latest ransomware attack, Opposition MP Dr Roodal Moonilal said the incident vindicates his call for a serious approach to deal with this crime of the century.

Said Moonilal: "The establishment of a national cybersecurity agency. This type of white-collar crime has deep technological roots and requires cutting edge information and data processing tools. This government cannot get a food card right, I doubt they can deal with ransomware!"

He said the government had proven it cannot protect data, and noted electronic transactions were the means by which hackers can get credit card, banking, and other personal information.

Government agencies such as TSTT, the office of the Attorney General and the South West Regional Health Authority, as well as private entities such as Courts and PriceSmart, have been the victims of recent cyberattacks.

Moonilal noted the hacking of over 1.2 million customers at TSTT, including the prime minister and other Cabinet ministers, members of the Judiciary and the Police Service, which have been dumped on the dark web.

He reiterated that the time had come for the introduction of

a national cybersecurity centre to deal with crime, criminality, and cybercrimes.

"We have to be prepared to fight against such attacks, rather than wait until data are stolen before reacting," he said.

He added that such a centre, modelled after one in the UK, should be separate from the Strategic Services Agency, which could be in a position to ward off cyberattacks, but preferred to surveil the Opposition.

Said Moonilal, "We need to establish a cybersecurity centre whose job would be to take resources from various agencies of the State and independent experts outside of the public service, including industry experts, academic experts dealing with technology which would monitor data, coordinate, and respond quickly in a crisis to reduce damage and risk."

Moonilal added this centre could be a point of contact for all organisations that face cyberattacks.

The most notable cyberattack so far hit TSTT on October 9, and which was reported a month later.

The attack came from the hacker group RansomEXX, with TSTT claiming six gigabytes of data were accessed. The data included call records, transactional data, customer passwords, and financial information.

As TSTT noted, its investigation "found that no customer passwords or credentials were accessed".

In November the Judiciary was breached, along with Massy, Courts Caribbean, and PriceSmart.

The Courts Caribbean hack saw details of up to 200,000 customers stolen that included names, account passwords, ID information, dates of birth, and phone numbers.



Roodal Moonilal

The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

Bollywood's long, winding road of music, performers, entertainment

By Vidur Dindayal

Indian movies have been a highlight of India for years. Their film songs have been the main entertainment on radio and TV for the diaspora worldwide.

Coined in the 1970s, Bollywood is derived from two words, Bombay (formerly Mumbai), and Hollywood, and is one of the biggest film industries in India. Other centres of film production in India are Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Kochi, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, and Guwahati.

For a number of years, the Indian film industry has ranked first in the world in terms of annual film output. Bollywood produces more movies in a year than Hollywood. Overseas Indians account for 12 percent of revenue for the industry.

The history of Indian cinema extends from the beginning of the film era, following the screening of the Lumière and Robert Paul moving pictures in London in 1896.

In 1913, Dadasaheb Phalke released *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) in Bombay, the first film made in India. It was a silent film incorporating Marathi and English intertitles. *Raja Harishchandra* had a story based on the Hindu Sanskrit legend of Harishchandra, a truthful King. Its success led many to consider Phalke a pioneer of Indian cinema. He used an all-Indian crew. He directed, edited, and processed the film himself.

Raja Harishchandra had an all-male cast at that time, playing both male and female characters elegantly. Among other films that followed were *Lanka Dahan* (1917), *Satyavan Savitri*, and *Mohini Bhasmasur*.

Lanka Dahan was a box-office hit, which was the first. The movie, which narrated Sita's abduction, was first screened in the cinema at 7:00 a.m., and shown throughout the day until midnight. The film had a double role for the same actor, Anna Salunke, who played both roles of Rama and Sita!

In 1918, South India got its first film, *Keechaka Vadham*. It was the first silent Tamil film. Other films included *Shankuntala* (1920), a masterpiece; *Bhakt Vidur* (1921); *Bilat Ferat* (1921), a Bengali movie, the first love story of Indian cinema; and *Pati Bhakti* (1922).

Pati Bhakti starred Patience Cooper, an Anglo-Indian actress. Cooper had a successful career in both silent and sound films. She acted in over 40 films, including *Nala Damayanti* (1920); *Vishnu Avtar* (1921); and *Dhruva Charitra* (1921).

The low number of women, especially Indian, in the film industry during the 1920s (due to conservative attitudes), meant Anglo-Indian actresses like Cooper were in demand. She was regarded as the first ever female Indian film star.

In 1926 Kanan Devi, was only ten when she was cast in a small role in *Jaidev* (1926), followed by *Shankaracharya* (1927). From silent film roles, Kanan made the successful transition into talkie films, and was noticed in *Jorebarat* (1931); *Maa* (1934); and *Manomoyee Girls School* (1935).

Kanan Devi, the much talented Bengali actress and singer, was among the early singing stars of Indian cinema. She starred in over 50 films, even playing male leads in two. She was a play-back singer in 40 films.

She had a huge fan following and worked with the biggest names in Indian cinema – with K.L. Saigal, Pankaj Mullick, P.C. Barua, Pahari Sanyal, Trilok Kapoor, and Ashok Kumar. She finally set up her own label Shrimati Pictures in 1949.

As the first lady of the Bengali screen, Kanan Devi received many honours for her contribution to Indian cinema – an honorary degree from Vishwabharati, the Padma Shree in 1968, and the Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

The first Indian sound film was *Alam Ara* (1931) made by Ardeshir Irani. Born 1886, he was an all-round film showman in the silent and sound eras of early Indian cinema. He was the producer of India's first colour film *Kisan Kanya*. He also made the first Indian English feature film, *Noor Jahan* (1931). Irani made 158 films in a long and illustrious career of 25 years. New actors who came then into Indian cinema included Prithviraj Kapoor and Mehboob Khan.

In 1933, the East India Film Company produced its first Telugu film, *Savitri*. The film received an honorary diploma at the second Venice International Film Festival.

By 1935, studios emerged in major cities as filmmaking became an established industry, exemplified by the success of *Devdas* (1935). In the early years the large number of film producing companies included Kohinoor Film Company, East India Film Company, Ranjit Movietone, the Imperial Film Company, Asiatic Film Corp, and Hindustan Cinema.

There were also Madan Theatres Ltd, New Theatres, Radha Films, MP Productions, Maharashtra Film Company, Indo-British Films, Bharat Film Company, National Film Company, and Oriental Film Company. Between 1919 and 1929, nearly



Padma Devi (left to right), Patience Cooper, Kanan Devi, Satyajit Ray, Raja Harishchandra (centre), and Achhut Kanya at right

100 films were produced.

Bombay Talkies opened in 1934, and Prabhat Studios in Pune began production of Marathi films. *Sant Tukaram* (1936) was the first Indian film to be screened at an international film festival – at the 1937 edition of the Venice Film Festival. The film was judged one of the three best films of the year.

Bombay Talkies was established by Himanshu Rai and Devika Rani, and produced 40 movies. After Rai's death in 1940, Rani took over the studio.

Bombay Talkies set a high technical standard for film making in India. It was also renowned for producing films on (then) controversial topics such as those dealing with love between an untouchable lower caste girl and a high caste Hindu Brahmin boy, for example, *Achhut Kanya*.

The studio was similarly recognised as having launched the careers of several prominent Indian film actors including Devika Rani; Ashok Kumar; Leela Chitnis; Mehmood; Madhubala; and Dilip Kumar. Raj Kapoor worked with Amiya Chakravarty of Bombay Talkies before becoming a famous director.

Devika Rani was highly successful in sustaining the production values of the company, and the studio subsequently retained its dominance over the rapidly expanding Indian film industry. The most successful Bombay Talkies films produced during this period included *Kangan* and *Bandhan*, both of which featured Leela Chitnis and Ashok Kumar.

In 1943, *Kismet* created a local record for the longest continual showing of the same film. The movie continued to run for more than three and half years at the Roxy movie theatre in Calcutta, India.

After Rani's retirement, Kumar and Mukherjee took over Bombay Talkies. The company went out of business in 1953. A last film produced by the studio was released in June 1954.

In 1943, Shashadhar Mukherjee, Rai Bahadur Chunilal (father of music director Madan Mohan), Ashok Kumar, and Gyan Mukherjee left Bombay Talkies after the death of director Himanshu Rai, and founded Filmistan Studios.

Nasir Hussain, who joined Filmistan in 1948, was successful as a screenwriter for films such as *Anarkali*, *Munimji*, and *Paying Guest*. He started film direction with *Tumsa Nahin Dekha*, and became a successful director.

Filmistan produced a number of successful movies in the 1940s and 1950s, including hits as *Shaheed* (1948); *Shabnam* (1949); *Sargam* (1950); *Anarkali* (1953); and *Nagin* (1954). Other notable films were *Jagriti* (1954), which won the Filmfare Best Movie Award in 1956; *Munimji* (1955); *Tumsa Nahin Dekha* (1957); and *Paying Guest* (1957).

The studio wound down in the following years. However, the premises continued to function as a studio, with recent films such as *Ra One* (2011), and *Bodyguard* (2011), which were shot there. Yash Raj Films' television serial *Khote Sikkey*, and dance reality show *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa* are also shot there.

AVM Productions was founded 1945. The filming studios are located in Vadapalani, Chennai. It has produced over 300 films in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi. AVM has introduced numerous actors. Prominent actors are Superstar Rajnikanth, Sivaji Ganesan, Rajkumar, Vijayanthimala, Kamal Hassan, and many more.

S.S. Vasan bought from his friend K. Subramanyam a Film distribution business – Motion Picture Producers, based in Madras, Tamil Nadu. He renamed it Gemini Studios in the year 1940. Why the name change? Subrahmanyam had shown Vasan a photo of his very young sons, both twins, blowing on toy trumpets. Vasan chose the pose to craft the logo and hence the name Gemini – The Twins.

Gemini Studios was fertile ground for many artists for the south Indian Film Industry. The Gemini twins became a household symbol, and the Gemini flyover was named after the original studio at that junction. Gemini Studios is one of few producers in Tamil cinema to survive beyond 100 productions along with AVM.

Gemini productions included *Chandralekha* (1948), in Hindi, a magnificent movie – the first for a Tamil to achieve “all India” distribution; and it brought excellent returns. The 1948 movie *Kalpna* with music by Vishnudas Shirali was Uday Shankar's dance spectacular, which was shot at the studio. That set the trend for future choreographers.

Later movies included *Insaniyat* (1955); *Raj Tilak* (1958); and *Paigham* (1959). The music for all three movies was done by C. Ramchandra. Then there were *Zindagi* (1964); and *Shatranj* (1969) – with music by Shankar-Jaikishan.

The Golden Age of Indian cinema was from the 1940s to early 1960s. This period saw the emergence of the Parallel Cinema movement, which emphasised social realism. Early exam-

ples include *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946 film by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas); *Neecha Nagar* (1946, Chetan Anand); *Nagarik* (1952, Ritwik Ghatak); and *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953, Bimal Roy).

Neecha Nagar (1946) won the *Palme d'Or* at Cannes, and Indian films competed for the award most years in the 1950s and early 1960s. Multiple films from this era are included among the greatest films of all time in various critics' and directors' polls. These include *Pyasa*; *Kaagaz Ke Phool*; *Awaara*; *Baiju Bawra*; *Mother India*; and *Mughal-e-Azam*.

The Apu Trilogy won prizes at several major international film festivals, and firmly established the Parallel Cinema movement. The Apu trilogy – three Bengali-language films *Pather Panchali* (1955); *Aparajito* (1956); and *The World of Apu* (1959), with original music composed by Ravi Shankar, were directed by Satyajit Ray, and recognised as one of the greatest filmmakers of the 20th century.

During the 1950s, Indian cinema reportedly became the world's second largest film industry, earning a gross annual income in 1953 of the equivalent of (US) \$330 million in 2023.

Commercial Hindi cinema began thriving. Epic film *Mother India* (1957, Mehboob Khan), was the first Indian film to be nominated for the US-based Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. It spawned a new genre of films: *Gunga Jumna* (1961, with Dilip Kumar); *Madhumati* (1958, Bimal Roy), which popularised the theme of reincarnation in Western popular culture.

Actor Dilip Kumar rose to fame in the 1950s, and was the biggest Indian movie star of the time. He inspired Indian actors, including Amitabh Bachchan, Naseeruddin Shah, and Shah Rukh Khan.

Sivaji Ganesan became India's first actor to receive an international award, winning the Best Actor award at the Afro-Asian film festival in 1960, and was awarded the title of *Chevalier* in the Legion of Honour by the French Government in 1995.

The advent of sound to Indian cinema launched musicals such as *Indra Sabha* and *Devi Devyani*, marking the beginning of song-and-dance in Indian films.

The 1930s were the formative years for Hindi film music with some shining milestones. Jaddanbai (Nargis' mother), and Saraswati Devi, were the first two music directors on the world movie scene. The film *Indrasabha* (1932) still holds the world record for the number of songs in a single movie.

Two foremost singers – composers from that era hailed from Bengal: Pankaj Mullick and K.C. Dey. The singing sensation of that era was Kundanlal Saigal. Hired by Music composer R.C. Boral, Saigal's songs became a rage all over the country.

The 1940s Playback singers replaced the genre of singing stars. Though singers like Noorjahan went to live in Pakistan after Partition, Hindi film music had exceptional singers like Kanan Devi; Geeta Roy-Dutt; Surendra; Suraiya; Shamsad Begum; Rajkumari; Lata Mangeshkar; Asha Bhosle; Mohammed Rafi; Mukesh; Talat Mahmood; Manna Dey; Hemant Kumar; and Kishore Kumar.

Among the early singing stars of Indian cinema was Kanan Devi, who became a superhit singer, with films playing to packed audiences. Her song *Toofan Mail, Duniya Ye Duniya* from *Jawab* (1942), music director Kamal Dasgupta, is as big a hit today as it was years ago. The movie was the fourth highest grossing Indian film of 1942.

The 1950s coincided with the Golden Age of Hindi film music. Superlative music directors and composers like Saraswati Devi; Anil Biswas; Kamal Dasgupta; Naushad; C. Ramchandra; S.D. Burman; Vasant Desai; Shankar-Jaikishan; Madan Mohan; O.P. Nayyar; and Salil Chaudhury, among others, along with the earlier masters, created magic through their music.

No wonder so many soundtracks of that era have retained their popularity to this day, like those of *Andaz*; *Awaara*; *Barsaat*; *Baiju Bawra*; *CID*; *Deedar*; *Madhumati*; *Mughal-e-Azam*; *Anarkali*; and *Albela*, among many more.

Childhood star in Mother India, Son of India Sajid Khan passes

Known for his childhood character Birju in Sunil Dutt's *Mother India*, actor Sajid Khan died on December 22 following a battle with cancer. He was 70 years old.

Following the Oscar-nominated *Mother India*, Khan went on to further recognition via international films as *Maya* and *The Singing Filipina*.

According to son Sameer, his father was battling with cancer for some time. At the time of his passing he was residing in Kerala with his second wife.

Speaking to the family lineage, Sameer noted that his father "was adopted by Rajkumar Pitamber Rana and Sunita Pitamber, and raised by filmmaker Mehboob Khan."

He added, "After a period of inactivity in films, [Khan] primarily engaged in philanthropy. He frequently visited Kerala, developed a fondness for the place, remarried, and eventually settled here."

Khan was laid to rest at the Kayamkulam Town Juma Masjid in Kerala's Alappuzha district last month.

Following his notable role in *Mother India*, Khan then took the lead in Mehboob Khan's *Son of India*. From there he then

went on to achieve global stardom to become an international teen idol.

In *Maya*, Khan played the character Rajjia, a local boy who befriends Jay North's character, Terry. The film's success led to a series with the same name, further contributing to Khan's popularity.

He also made appearances in an episode of the American television show *The Big Valley*, and served as a guest judge on the music show *It's Happening*.

Khan's international profile also grew in the Philippines, where he starred in *The Singing Filipina*, *My Funny Girl*, and *The Prince and I* alongside Nora Aunor.

He also played the role of a robber chief in the Merchant-Ivory production *Heat and Dust*.

The success that Khan found on the international front, working in television, and global collaborations and with production houses for overseas content saw his popularity growing in the 1960s and 1970s.

During that time he was a well-known teen icon, and became a household name in North America and the Philippines.



Sajid Khan

Abhishek recalls challenging times when all he had was a sherwani



Abhishek Bachchan

There was a time when he did not have enough money to buy new clothes, Abhishek Bachchan told Galatta Plus Mega Hindi Roundtable 2023 late last year. He made the appearance, and the confession, at the roundtable in the company of other actors.

Bachchan is today an iconic name, along with father Amitabh, in the Indian film industry. He has appeared in successful films as *Refugee*, *Yuva*, *Sarkar*, *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna*, and others. However, not everyone knows that there was a time when he did not have money to buy new clothes, the website *Pinkvilla* has reported.

During the Galatta Plus Mega Hindi Roundtable 2023 with the other actors, he recalled attending a prestigious award function wearing the sherwani he wore to his sister's wedding.

He said, "Twenty years ago, you planned months in advance about what you would wear, and nobody was giving away free clothes in those days; you had to buy them yourself."

He added that stars would ensure they were not shooting that evening, and the entire industry would show up even if not

nominated.

"It was an occasion," he recalled. However, back then he would wonder what to wear to the coveted event.

"It sounds weird to [say it now], but I didn't have that many clothes, we couldn't afford to. We were going through a rough time, and trying to be as frugal as we could be," he revealed.

And as he recalled, Bachchan said he wanted to go formal for the event, but had nothing to suit the occasion.

"I didn't think it would be prudent to show up in jeans and a T-shirt. So, the sherwani that was made for my sister's wedding a couple of years earlier, I wore that," he stated.

Adding context to those days of impoverishment, Bachchan recalled that his father was in financial straits following the failure of a business venture. As a result, Bachchan left his education and flew back to be by his father's side.

"I left my college and came back. My father was going through a bit of a rough time financially. He had opened a company which racked up losses, so I said I need to be around my father, so I left my education, and I came back," he said.



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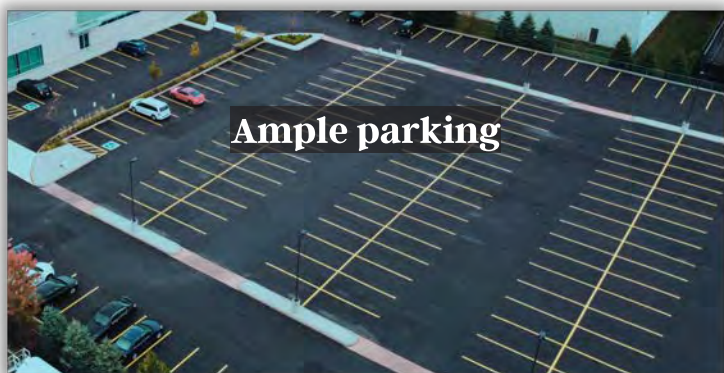


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Akeal Hosein

Motie, Hosein climb ICC Twenty20 ranks

West Indies left-arm spinners Gudakesh Motie and Akeal Hosein have climbed up the ICC Twenty20 rankings after strong performances in the recently-concluded five-match series against England. The strong showing by West Indies saw the series concluding with a 3-2 victory for the Caribbean side.

The team's success was attributed to Motie and Hosein. Together, the spinning pair restricted England to 132 in the last game, with West Indies' batters doing the finishing for a four-wicket win in the final over.

Hosein took away 2-20 from his four overs in the match, the figures pushing his standing up two notches to an all-time high of fourth on the list. His achievement saw him passing the

Sri Lankan pair of Wanindu Hasaranga and Maheesh Theekshana.

Also, Motie taking away 3-24 saw his standing lifted by 75 spots, a move that put him in the top 100 for the first time in position 91.

Pacer Alzarri Joseph did not play in the last two matches of the series, but is ranked at 19th. Fellow pacer Jason Holder is ranked at 26th. No other West Indies bowler that featured in the series appeared in the top 100. At this time, out-of-favour seamers Obed McCoy, Sheldon Cottrell, and Odean Smith are ranked 51st, 77th, and 85th respectively.

On the batting front, former West Indies white-ball captain Nicholas Pooran and opener Brandon King are the highest ranked batsmen at 12th and 13th respectively.



Gudakesh Motie

ICC accused of double standards over Khawaja's symbols

The ICC was last week accused of double standards by Australian cricketer Usman Khawaja.

The accusation was made following the ICC rejecting an application by Khawaja to display a peace dove on his bat in the Boxing Day Test in a move to raise awareness for the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Last month the ICC charged Khawaja for wearing a black armband during the first Test. It claimed that the armband was in breach of equipment regulations that bar players from displaying personal messages at international matches supporting "political, religious, or racial" causes.

However, Khawaja said the armband was for a "personal bereavement".

After discussions with Cricket Australia last week, Khawaja produced a dove sticker for the second Test against Pakistan, which was also rejected by the ICC.

Following the ICC's decision, last week Khawaja posted on *Instagram* a series of images of players with different stickers on their bats. Among the messages was a Bible reference that appeared on the bat of teammate Marnus Labuschagne. Khawaja posted the image alongside a screenshot of the ICC rules.

"Merry Christmas everybody. Sometimes you just gotta laugh. CYA at Boxing Day!"

He added the hashtags "inconsistent" and "double standards".

Khawaja had hoped to use images of a dove holding an olive branch, as well as a reference



Usman Khawaja

to Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on one of his boots and bat in the second Test against Pakistan at the MCG.

Meanwhile, he continues to receive support from the Cricket Australia chief executive, Nick Hockley, and the Australian captain, Pat Cummins.

"Over the last week or so we've been working really constructively with Uz, really to find a way that again is non-partisan," Hockley said last week.

He added, "The symbol of the dove is a

universally recognised symbol of peace. That being said, the ICC have got their rules and think they explained their rationale really clearly, and we respect that. What we've been really clear about is that we support Uzzy, and all our players really to share what they believe over their own channels."

Cummins also supported Khawaja, declaring there is little difference between the star opener's banned dove symbol and the eagle Labuschagne has on his bat.

Cummins described the dove symbol as

"pretty vanilla", and said it was "not really" any different to Labuschagne's eagle, which represents a Bible verse.

"We really support Uzzy. He's standing up for what he believes, and I think he's done it really respectfully," Cummins said.

He added, "[His initial message was] 'All lives are equal', and I don't think that's very offensive, and I'd say the same about the dove. That's Uzzy. I think he can really hold his head high with the way he's gone about it. But obviously there are rules in place, and I believe the ICC have said they're not going to approve that. They make up the rules and you've got to accept it."

Meanwhile, former West Indies pacer Michael Holding criticised the ICC for its decision, saying he was not "surprised" by the position taken by the apex group.

Holding cited what he said was an inconsistency in the ICC's messaging.

Said Holding, "The ICC says any message which is about politics, religion and racial activities will not be allowed... So how the [expletive deleted] cricketers were allowed to take a knee for the Black Lives Matter movement, and stumps were coloured with LGBTQ colours?"

Holding also declared, "If it would have been some other organisation with a consistent track record, I would have been surprised, but not the ICC. They are hypocrites, and have shown it again. They lack spine as a governing body."

CWI selectors consider bigger player pool in wake of T20 drain

There is understandable "concern" among Cricket West Indies selectors about the movement away from the longer format by key players, its chief selector Desmond Haynes said last week.

Additionally, he declared that a response to this drain in talent is to create a larger pool of players. Haynes' comments were reported last week in the region by the *Caribbean Media Corporation*.

As he noted, the emergence of the global Twenty20 franchise leagues means West Indian players now have choices among cricket's different formats.

With more choices available for players, it means selectors are left with major challenges in picking the best talents for the squads that are heading out on assignments.

Late last month West Indies announced a 15-man squad for the January 2024 two-Test tour of Australia minus leading all-rounder Jason Holder and top order batsman Kyle Mayers.

Both players declined selection after expressing "a preference to explore T20 Franchise opportunities in January", Haynes revealed.

Speaking to the Caribbean media, Haynes said, "Any panel would be concerned if there is a [choice] for [T20 matches], because we would obviously love to have a very strong

Test team."

He added, "A lot of people in the Caribbean still believe in Test cricket, but it is quite obvious that the players now have got a choice, and even though we might love to have them playing in the longer version of the game, some of the guys are making themselves available for the shorter version."

Also, "[We are] hoping that whenever they get the opportunity to play for West Indies that they would be committed, but it is very difficult for us to stop the guys from going after the shorter version of the game."

The development is the latest a saga that has seen many West Indies players transitioning to the lucrative Twenty20 format over the last decade. Exercising this choice means the West Indies Test side is often left without key and experienced players.

In the wake of these choices, the absence of both Holder and Mayers will be a blow for West Indies for the upcoming Australian tour.

At 32 years old, Holder is a veteran of 64 Tests. His Test figures include three centuries, and an unbeaten double century, which he scored four years ago. He has also taken 157 wickets, along with eight five-wicket hauls.

Mayers is now 31 years old, and came to prominence on the Test tour of Bangladesh two years ago with an unbeaten double hundred in his debut Test.

He followed up with another Test hundred against the same side last year in the Caribbean, and currently holds an average of 32 from 18 matches.

Mayers is also a lively medium pacer, and has taken 34 wickets at 18 runs apiece.

Haynes said CWI's focus now needed to be on ensuring there was a bigger pool of players, given the drain being caused by the lucrative lure of Twenty20 matches.

"It is a concern, obviously. You want to know the guys who can do a job for you [are] avail-

able," Haynes continued.

He added, "But the guys have got a choice, and if they make a decision, there's nothing we can do. What we need to do is to start looking at making sure we put things in place to produce cricketers so that when players are not available then we can still be very competitive in world cricket."

It was also reported in the Caribbean media last week that the selectors attempted to recall ODI captain Shai Hope and veteran left-hander Darren Bravo in a bid to add more experienced players to the squad for the Australian tour.

However, both players also turned down the opportunity, Haynes revealed.

The two-Test series between Australia and West Indies is set to run from mid- to late January. The white-ball leg of the tour will feature three ODIs and as many T20 matches, and is scheduled from early to mid-February.

Full Squad: Kraigg Brathwaite (Captain), Alzarri Joseph (Vice-Captain), Tagenarine Chanderpaul, Kirk McKenzie, Alick Athanaze, Kavem Hodge, Justin Greaves, Joshua DaSilva, Akeem Jordan, Gudakesh Motie, Kemar Roach, Kevin Sinclair, Tevin Imlach, Shamar Joseph, and Zachary McCaskie.

Match Schedule: January 17-21 – 1st Test at Adelaide Oval, Adelaide; January 25-29 – 2nd Test at the Gabba, Brisbane.



Desmond Haynes



India's women celebrate their historic Test win

India take historic Test win against Australia

The Indian women's team took its first Test win over Australia with an eight-wicket victory in a one-off match in Mumbai last week.

As the *British Broadcasting Corporation* reported, Australia began the final day with five second innings wickets in hand and a lead of 46. However, India dismissed the tourists for 261, leaving them to chase a modest target of 75. Smriti Mandhana contributed an unbeaten 38 to meeting the winning total.

"It's the reward for all the hard work we have done for so many years. It is the reward for the hard work and patience. We just wanted to play positive cricket," said India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur.

India's win was the first in 11 women's Tests against Australia. The Aussie women are ranked number one in the world in the format since the sides first played in 1977.

A first-innings lead of 187 had given India the upper hand in the contest after they posted a commanding 406 in response to Australia's 219.

Richa Ghosh (52), Jemimah Rodrigues (73), Deepti Sharma (78), and Mandhana (74) all made patient half-centuries for India,

while spinner Ash Gardner took 4-100.

Australia's batters then struggled, with vice-captain Tahlia McGrath the only player to make a half-century in either innings for the tourists.

India all-rounder Sneha Rana was named player of the match after her off-spin brought her match figures of 7-119 from 44.4 overs.

"A Test match in India is happening after a long time, so this win is right at the top. For Indian fans also this win is huge. The players who are growing will see this win, and want to play more Test cricket," Rana said.

It was a disappointing start to Alyssa Healy's reign as captain after she was named as Meg Lanning's permanent successor across all formats of the game last month.

Said Healy following the loss: "Except for the first day, we showed a lot of fight. Full credit to the Indian team; they just put too many runs on us. If we would have batted the first full day, we could have been in the game."

India's victory was their second in Tests this month after beating England by 347 runs in Mumbai.



Phoebe Litchfield (left) celebrates with Ellyse Perry after reaching her half-century

Australia record 2nd highest run chase in women's ODIs

The second-highest run chase in the history of women's ODIs was forged by Australia late last month when the team took a six-wicket win over India at Wankhede Stadium at Mumbai, the *British Broadcasting Corporation*, and other international media reported.

Both accomplishments came courtesy the batting prowess of Phoebe Litchfield with 78 runs off 89 balls, and Ellyse Perry with 75 off 72 deliveries.

Their knock set up Australia for the successful outcome that bested India's imposing 282 for eight.

A complementary run accumulation by Tahlia McGrath with 68 not out off 55 balls, and Beth Mooney's 42 off 47 deliveries, sealed Australia's victory, leaving a surplus of 21 balls to spare.

The higher successful run chase in women's ODIs was again by Australia, when the team accumulated 289 for six against New Zealand at the North Sydney Oval in 2012.

However, the game did not leave the station full steam ahead. Australia's early reply to India's total saw early anxiety when cap-

tain Alyssa Healy fell for a duck off the third ball of the innings in a stunning catch by a diving Sneha Rana.

Perry followed Healy with commendable aggression with an early attack in the bowling for a 148-run second-wicket partnership with Litchfield.

However, Perry eventually left the trenches after lofting Deepti Sharma to Pooja Vastrakar on the long-off fence. Her departure then saw Litchfield missing a sweep, with the ball making pleasant music among the timbers for bowler Rana.

But then the surging hope for the bowlers began flagging when McGrath and Mooney added 88 for the fourth wicket.

Finally, the looked-too timbre among the timbers came when Mooney was bowled by Vastrakar.

However, McGrath held the centre, scoring three 50s in seven days of cricket, acknowledging the achievement when Rana gifted her with an eleventh boundary.

Australia have never lost a bilateral women's ODI series to India.

Cricket Schedule

(Matches ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Wednesday January 3, 2024

Pakistan tour of Australia, 2023-2024
Australia vs Pakistan, 3rd Test, Day 1, Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM
India tour of South Africa, 2023-2024
South Africa vs India, 2nd Test, Day 1, Newlands, Cape Town, 10:30 AM

Thursday January 4, 2024

Pakistan tour of Australia, 2023-2024
Australia vs Pakistan, 3rd Test, Day 2, Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM
India tour of South Africa, 2023-2024
South Africa vs India, 2nd Test, Day 2, Newlands, Cape Town, 10:30 AM

Friday January 5, 2024

Pakistan tour of Australia, 2023-2024
Australia vs Pakistan, 3rd Test, Day 3, Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM
India tour of South Africa, 2023-2024
South Africa vs India, 2nd Test, Day 3, Newlands, Cape Town, 10:30 AM

Saturday January 6, 2024

Pakistan tour of Australia, 2023-2024
Australia vs Pakistan, 3rd Test, Day 4, Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM
India tour of South Africa, 2023-2024
South Africa vs India, 2nd Test, Day 4, Newlands, Cape Town, 10:30 AM

Zimbabwe tour of Sri Lanka 2024

Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe, 1st ODI, R. Premadasa Stadium, Colombo, 2:30 PM

Sunday January 7, 2024

Pakistan tour of Australia, 2023-2024
Australia vs Pakistan, 3rd Test, Day 5, Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM
India tour of South Africa, 2023-2024
South Africa vs India, 2nd Test, Day 5, Newlands, Cape Town, 10:30 AM

Monday January 8, 2024

Zimbabwe tour of Sri Lanka 2024, Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe, 2nd ODI, R. Premadasa Stadium, Colombo, 2:30 PM

Thursday January 11, 2024

Afghanistan tour of India, 2024
India vs Afghanistan, 1st T20I, Punjab Cricket Assoc. IS Bindra Stadium, Mohali, 7:00 PM
Zimbabwe tour of Sri Lanka 2024
Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe, 3rd ODI, R. Premadasa Stadium, Colombo, 2:30 PM

Friday January 12, 2024

Pakistan tour of New Zealand, 2024
New Zealand vs Pakistan, 1st T20I, Eden Park, Auckland, 7:10 PM

Sunday January 14, 2024

Afghanistan tour of India, 2024
India vs Afghanistan, 2nd T20I, Holkar Cricket Stadium, Indore, 7:00 PM
Pakistan tour of New Zealand, 2024
New Zealand vs Pakistan, 2nd T20I, Seddon Park, Hamilton, 7:10 PM

Zimbabwe tour of Sri Lanka 2024

Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe, 1st T20I, R. Premadasa Stadium, Colombo, 7:00 PM

Tuesday January 16, 2024

Zimbabwe tour of Sri Lanka 2024
Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe, 2nd T20I, R. Premadasa Stadium, Colombo, 7:00 PM

Wednesday January 17, 2024

Afghanistan tour of India, 2024
India vs Afghanistan, 3rd T20I, M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, 7:00 PM
Pakistan tour of New Zealand, 2024
New Zealand vs Pakistan, 3rd T20I, University Oval, Dunedin, 1:00 PM

West Indies tour of Australia, 2024

Australia vs West Indies, 1st Test, Day 1, Adelaide Oval, Adelaide, 10:00 AM

Thursday January 18, 2024

Zimbabwe tour of Sri Lanka 2024
Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe, 3rd T20I, R. Premadasa Stadium, Colombo, 7:00 PM
West Indies tour of Australia, 2024
Australia vs West Indies, 1st Test, Day 2, Adelaide Oval, Adelaide, 10:00 AM.



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Beeton For Sale \$1,149,000

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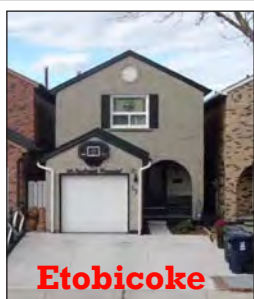
Port Dover For Sale \$699,990/For Rent \$2,550

Location! Location! Location! Welcome to this rare & highly-sought-after townhouse bungalow in Port Dover! This home boasts over 1,800 sq ft featuring 3 bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms, convenient main floor living with primary bedroom, ensuite shower, & walk-in closet. Living room features 23-foot high vaulted ceilings. Modern custom kitchen featuring granite countertops & huge eat-in island. Dining & kitchen space perfect for entertainment & family gatherings. Second floor features loft-style family room along with 2 bedrooms & full bathroom. Watch gorgeous sunsets from every bedroom. Close proximity to beaches, trails, vineyards, breweries & fresh farm food. Gorgeous location for nature lovers with close proximity to downtown restaurants & shops.



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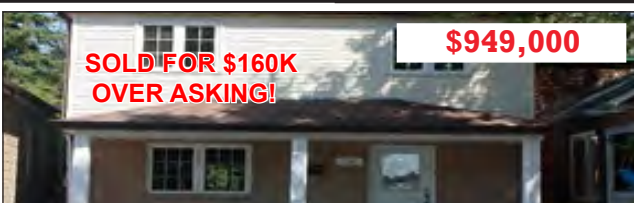
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