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Aujla & family give back generously to community

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – Brampton and Ajax Crematorium & Visitation Centre held its 4th annual Holiday Food and Toy Drive last month that saw yet another outpouring of support from the local community and small businesses. In the end, the effort collected \$15,000 in toys, and \$10,000 in foodstuff.

“We started this drive four years ago to thank the community we serve. We have always felt that we are in business due to our communities’ support, and it is vital to give back to those who need help the most,” said Puneet Aujla, the Crematorium & Visitation Centre’s General Manager.

As Aujla noted, these are challenging times, and more than ever, the need to support food banks and charities is critical. A record number of people are using these services to feed families in these tough economic times, he noted.

The foodstuff proceeds from the drive went primarily to Seva Food Bank. As its website notes, Seva Food Bank is an initiative of Sikhs Serving Canada that addresses the challenges of food security and underlying poverty in order to spur economic renewal in Mississauga.

There are two Seva Food Bank locations, one in Malton, and the other in Wolfedale. Both food banks work to ensure equitable access to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to people experiencing, or who are at risk of poverty, in the communities being served. The Malton



See Page 5: Community help

Puneet Aujla (centre) with the generous gift of toys handed over to Peel Regional Police officers



Members of the participating groups in the Dhal & Rice Food Drive with some of the collected foodstuff

Dhal & Rice food drive gets a stirring community response

Toronto – Working with three other Indo-Caribbean organisations, the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association last month held a unique food drive with the objective to get typical Indo-Caribbean ingredients into food banks across the Greater Toronto Area.

The effort, realistically named ‘Dhal and Rice: Indo-Caribbean Food Drive’, saw the ICCA working together with its friends, Building Togetherness, Divine Designs by Natasha, and The Caribbean Network, ICCA President Ryan Singh told *Indo-Caribbean World* earlier this week.

Said Singh: “The response was amazing, and the community came out and delivered.”

He added, “Collectively, we partnered with numerous small businesses and

organisations across the GTA to host a food drive with the purpose of serving culturally appropriate food products for Caribbean communities.”

According to Singh, the logistics of this unique effort saw the groups setting up 23 drop-off locations around the GTA to collect donations for the culture-specific food drive.

“In an effort to ensure that making a donation is convenient for members of Toronto’s Indo-Caribbean community, Shereen’s Bakery in Scarborough also allowed customers to make a donation in cash. She also added packages of chow mein to the collection box in her shop,” Singh said.

It was so successful that “we had to do four pick-ups at that location alone,”

See Page 10: Successful launch

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Imdadul Islamic Centre held its successful trip to Niagara Falls for the Festival of Lights last month. The all-day event included lunch & dinner, & saw the group in photo above visiting the Falls, the Chocolate Factory, spending time at the Outlet Mall & at the Lavender Store (Supplied photo)

Ontario pharmacists now prescribing for common ailments

Toronto – As of January 1, 2023, Ontarians can visit pharmacies across the province to receive prescriptions for 13 common ailments, including rashes, pink eye, insect bites, and urinary tract infections with just their health card.

This service makes it more convenient to access care by removing a doctor's office visit, and will come at no extra cost to Ontarians.

"Stopping by your local pharmacy for quick and easy access to treatment for some of your most common ailments increases your access to the care you need closer to home," said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

She added, "Expanding the ability of pharmacists to provide care is one more way we're putting people at the centre of our health care system, making it easier, faster and more convenient to access health care in their community."

Pharmacists are now able to offer prescriptions for hay fever (allergic rhinitis); oral thrush (candidal stomatitis); pink eye (conjunctivitis; bacterial, allergic and viral); dermatitis (atopic, eczema, allergic and contact); and menstrual cramps (dysmenorrhea).

Also on the list are acid reflux (gastroesophageal reflux disease – GERD); hemorrhoids; cold sores (herpes labialis); impetigo; insect bites and hives; tick bites (post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent Lyme disease); sprains and strains (musculoskeletal); and urinary tract infections (UTIs).

"Empowering pharmacists to use their expertise to assess and treat minor ailments helps patients get the care they need sooner and closer to home – but the benefits go much further," said Justin Bates, CEO, Ontario Pharmacists Association.

Bates added, "It reduces demand on hospitals, emergency

departments, walk-in clinics, and family physicians. It also frees up time for our healthcare partners, allowing doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers to focus on more complex care cases."

Allowing pharmacists to prescribe for these common ailments will make it more convenient for Ontarians to receive the care they need, while offering patients more convenient choices for how they access and receive health care.

With a large, provincewide footprint, pharmacist prescribing will help to increase access to care in rural parts of Ontario.

In addition to providing more convenience, pharmacy prescribing will also help free-up doctors' bandwidth to provide care for more complex needs, helping to reduce wait times for these services.

Said Jeff Leger, President of Shoppers Drug Mart: "Shoppers Drug Mart applauds the Ontario government for helping make

it easier for patients to access health care right in their own communities. With over 800 locations across the province, our pharmacy teams stand ready to help provide this service at no cost to Ontarians."

President of Rexall Pharmacy Group, Nicolas Caprio, was also supportive of the move, saying, "Our Rexall pharmacies and pharmacists are proud to call hundreds of communities across Ontario home. We know that pharmacists are critical to the delivery of accessible healthcare in the province, and we are excited to be able to assess and prescribe the necessary medication for the 13 identified minor ailments. We're pleased that all our Rexall stores in Ontario will be participating and continue to be part of the solution to help a strained healthcare system, for the benefit of the people in Ontario."



Sylvia Jones

York Catholic District School Board conducts first census

Aurora — York Catholic District School Board conducted its first census in 2021 as part of its ongoing commitment to support its mission of educating and inspiring all students to achieve their full potential in a safe and caring environment.

Parents, guardians, and caregivers of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6, and all students from Grades 7 to 12 were invited between January and April 2021 to participate in the voluntary and confidential questionnaire.

The collection of demographic data is a Ministry of Education directive that is intended to foster policies, procedures, and practices that are equitable and inclusive for all students regardless of background, social identity, or personal circumstances.

In addition to the demographic questions, both students and parents were asked about students' experiences in school and outside of school, that is, safety, sense of belonging, well-being and engagement.

"At York Catholic, we fervently believe each student is a beloved child of God endowed with gifts from God and sent to make a difference in the world," said Frank Alexander, Chair of the Board.

He added, "We are committed to helping every student achieve their God-given potential and experience success as a creative and critical thinker who integrates Catholic values into their daily lives to become a socially responsible global citizen."

Said Domenic Scuglia, Director of Education: "While most students and parents who participated in the census were

positive about their school experience, the data show that more work is needed to improve student well-being and equity."

For the Kindergarten to Grade 6 Parent, Guardian, Caregiver Census, over 25,000 families were invited to complete the parent census with their children in Kindergarten to Grade 6.

Of these families, 7,954 respondents voluntarily provided information to help their schools better understand their children, their needs, and their experiences. This number represents 32 percent of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 enrolled in York Catholic elementary schools.

For Grades 7 to 12 Student Census, approximately 26,000 students were eligible to participate in the student census. Of these students, 16,015 students in Grades 7 to 12 voluntarily provided information to help their schools better understand who they are, their needs, and life experiences.

This number represents 62 percent of students in Grades 7 to 12, who are enrolled in York Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

The YCDSB serves the Regional Municipality of York, located in the Greater Toronto Area. It supports and inspires approximately 50,000 students and their families through an innovative curriculum of Catholic Education rooted in Gospel values. More than 5,000 dedicated staff are committed to building strong faith-filled communities of lifelong learners, guided by a commitment to critical thinking, inclusion, and active social responsibility.

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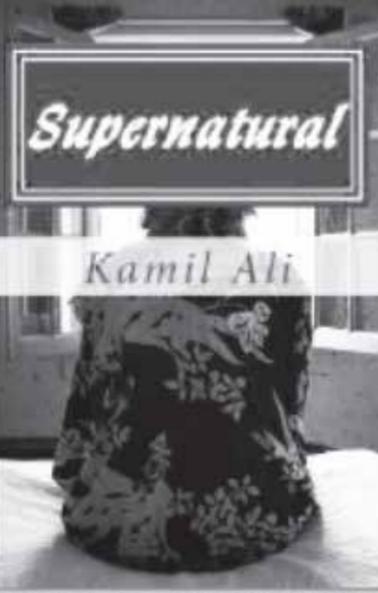
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Mississauga making preparations for climate change effects

Mississauga – Climate change is affecting Mississauga. In 2019, the City declared a climate emergency because climate change is taking a toll on people, health, infrastructure, services, and ecosystems.

Mississauga's ten-year Climate Change Action Plan was endorsed by Council in 2019. The plan sets out to decrease the City's carbon footprint, and prepare for the effects of a changing climate. It includes 89 actions, of which more than 70 percent have been completed, or are currently underway.

Coming out of last year's COP15 in Montréal, the City of Mississauga has joined more than 40 other municipalities around the globe in pledging their commitment to protecting biodiversity.

It is taking a comprehensive, holistic approach to protecting biodiversity, and to supporting the health of our natural systems as outlined in the Parks and Forestry Master Plan, Climate Change Action Plan, and Official Plan – which aligns with the 15 tangible actions outlined in the Montreal Pledge.

"The impacts of climate change can be felt in Mississauga, and we've already seen warmer temperatures, extreme storm events, and increased flooding right in our own backyard. There's an urgency for continued action to address these impacts and prevent them from growing worse," said Mayor Bonnie Crombie.

She added, "At City Hall, we're taking action, including signing onto the Montreal Pledge to protect our biodiversity and strengthen resilience to future climate shifts to protect our health and economy. We will continue to work with businesses, other levels of government, and our residents to help safeguard our future and achieve our vision of a low-carbon and resilient community."

As of December 2022, the City has installed 59 electric vehicle chargers for the City's fleet, and 22 public EV chargers; it has also added 38 kilometres of cycling infrastructure; and installed 15 low-impact developments throughout the City's road right-of-ways.

The City has also acquired 38 acres of parkland, and has developed a Zero-Emissions Vehicle Strategy in partnership with the Region of Peel, the City of Brampton, the Town of Caledon, and the Conservation Authorities to help accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles throughout Peel region.



Mississauga's Mayor Bonnie Crombie (right) & Ward 4 Councillor John Kovac test the City's electric chargers (photo above) last year

As well, it has added more than 60 low and zero-emissions vehicles to the City's fleet, and replaced more than 40 diesel buses with second-generation hybrids. Also launched was the City's first-ever Urban Agriculture Strategy to help grow more

food locally and increase access to healthy foods.

It has also moved forward with a feasibility study on district energy in the City's downtown, launched the We Are Resilient outreach and exhibition program to help raise awareness about climate change in Mississauga, and is designing a home energy retrofits program for single-family homes to support improved energy efficiency and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

Also, it has studied the feasibility of a shared micro-mobility system in Mississauga, Joined Partners in Project Green's Circular Economy Leaders Consortium, and partnered with Project Neutral to provide residents with a tool to calculate their carbon footprint.

More than 460,000 trees have been planted since launching the One Million Trees program, and a comprehensive inventory has been collected for each of the City's 36 priority woodland locations that provides valuable baseline information required for future management decisions that will support City woodland objectives.

It is also continuing with the monitoring and controlling of invasive species as part of the City's Invasive Species Management Plan and Implementation Strategy.

"Mississauga is vulnerable to climate change, and time is not on our side. We have witnessed more extreme and frequent climate-related events in the last several years. If we don't take action now, things will only worsen," said Jodi Robillos, Commissioner, Community Services.

Robillos added, "We're investing in low-carbon technology, infrastructure and assets like low and zero emissions vehicles and buses. We're exploring the latest technologies and innovations, and hope to move forward with district energy in key neighbourhoods, and introduce shared micro-mobility systems. We're making informed decisions and evolving our plans around transportation, buildings, construction and infrastructure to decarbonise our built environment and run as efficiently as possible."

She also noted, "Every year, we review and analyse the City's progress on climate change action. Based on the data, we're looking to accelerate the goals outlined in the Climate Change Action Plan to be more ambitious."

Click here to learn more about the [City's Climate Change Action Plan](#) and its progress.

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A Peel Regional Police officer packs toys into a cruiser

Peel Regional Police @Peel... · 3h ·
 Talk about Generosity!
 Thanks to Brampton Crematorium and Aujla Salon Spa, They collected a mountain of toys and \$15K worth of donations!
 Thanks to Cst Gill, Det Singh from IPV and members from 21 A platoon who attended this drive
 Another successful Toys for Tots event!

Peel Regional Police tweet acknowledging the generous donation



Donated foodstuff for the food bank

Community help with compassion, care

From Page 1

location serves over 1,000 families.

Foodstuff donations were also given to other food bank locations in Scarborough, Aujla told *Indo-Caribbean World*.

The foodstuff was gathered in partnership with Global Medic, a registered charity that assists with disaster relief.

Donations were made in exchange for healthy food that included chickpeas, lentils, rice, and wheat.

Aujla also indicated that the toys collected were donated to Toys for Tots in partnership with Peel Police. The toys were collected from the Brampton Crematorium by Peel Police officers, with its staff filling many police cruisers.

“Our goal has always been to get the com-

munity involved. You can accomplish so much more when you join forces, and that is why we are grateful for the families we serve, our friends, and our community who donated to this initiative,” Aujla said.

Aujla and his family at the funeral home had pledged to match donations dollar for dollar. Last year was of extra significance since it marked their tenth year in business. Brampton Crematorium & Visitation Centre opened in November 2012.

“In these last ten years, we have learned so much. We are always focused on improving our services. We know that families who are coming to us are going through one of the most difficult times of their lives, and it is our duty to help with compassion and care,” Aujla said.



Punet helping with the packing



Officers took away lots of toys!

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Editorials

Thanks, Mohan!

We extend our sincerest gratitude to our now-retired columnist Dr Mohan Ragbeer, who has written for *Indo-Caribbean World* for close to two decades. He wrote his first column in October 2004, and when he retired last month, had written a total of 438.

Mohan occupied the real estate to the right of this space with an admirable gravitas, punctuality, and aplomb. It is no easy feat to have written 438 engaging and topical columns on wide-ranging issues that touched on our lives as a diaspora; or critically examined our homelands; or commented eruditely on national and global affairs, with what can only be described as Mohan's incisive, unique, and perhaps cutting, surgical take on our troubled world.

He has modestly described his tenure with *Indo-Caribbean World* elsewhere as writing on current affairs, politics, and community issues; but maybe "surgical societal examinations" come closer to the body of output, required reading for many in our community, that is his focused, original, and inexorable, diasporic voice.

Among Mohan's other eminent and distinguished roles is his career as a medical doctor. He attended Queen's College in Guyana, and later qualified as a physician in England. He was also Dean of the UWI medical school in Jamaica, and a Professor of Pathology and Medical Education at McMaster University here in Canada.

He is also an author, with the two large volumes of his *The Indelible Red Stain: The Destruction of a Tropical Paradise, A Cold War Story*, notable among his tremendous, writerly output. Then there is his voluminous output of over 250 journal articles on medicine, including scientific, technical, and academic reports; and over 450 published articles on non-medical topics.

No doubt about it, Mohan's global exposure contributed to the uniqueness that he wove into each column he wrote. His global reach saw him working at the King Fahd Armed Forces Hospital; also, he was physician to the Royal Family in Saudi Arabia from 1982-1984.

There are also plenty of awards, which are no doubt crowding his mantel, from what are his many illustrious careers: the OSSICC Award for Academic Excellence in 1995; a UWI 50th Anniversary Gold Medal in 1998; and an eminence among RBC's Top 75 Immigrants of 2018, are among his many stellar recognitions.

Our gratitude to Mohan is heartfelt; thank you for your commitment, and for your efforts, in assisting *Indo-Caribbean World* to take our voice out from the margins and into the centre. Your good work is truly appreciated, both by this publication, and our thriving community.

Troubled T&T

Trinidad and Tobago has been described by its outgoing President Paula-Mae Weekes as quickly becoming a "brutish and hostile society". Additionally, this nation's ceremonial philosopher queen has expressed the fear that its nationals have become a "savage people".

"My overarching wish for the nation is for grace and peace. I fear that we have become a savage people. Lines drawn between ethnicities, political affiliations, the haves and have-nots, worker and employer, citizens and migrants have solidified into intolerance, impatience, unkindness, vitriol, and in many cases, downright nastiness," Weekes told the nation in her year-end address.

Weekes' words were unusually forthright, hard-hitting, and may have raised an eyebrow or two, coming from what has been a presidential tenure notable for its timidity, which is least among the other more critical observations that are being articulated about her unexceptional legacy.

However, her observations about Trinidad and Tobago are not without substance. Last year this nation marked the terrifying and tragic milestone of 600-plus homicides. And without a hiatus in the killings, with the year less than a week old, already the homicides have started to add up.

Here in the diaspora we too share Weekes' desire for the new year to bring safety and security to the homeland.

Meanwhile, as we continue to reiterate in this space, please be vigilant when visiting Trinidad and Tobago.

'Lang rope': Why the cane cutter knows better

As I exited the metro in Montréal, there was an elderly Asian man, sitting on the ground, wearing layer after layer of T-shirt, shirt, sweater, jacket, possibly all the clothes he owns, and holding a paper cup in his outstretched hand. His face seemed familiar to me. I put a toonie into his empty cup. In return, he gave me the most generous smile. And my internal reaction was that of surprise. I realised that I had become habituated to passing strangers, without recognition.

If Uncle Ram (Rampersaud Tiwari) was still with us, he would have taken this moment to remind me that *sewa*, service done for others, is a service done for the self. Similarly, I think of *Indo-Caribbean World* as *sewa*, a selfless service to the community. None of us want to live in isolation, but rather in interaction. That's one of the reasons we come together, whether in person, or virtually through the pages of this publication. I'm grateful that *ICW* has invited me to share my occasional opinions, and to commune with you.

As we begin a new year, with all the hope for positive change that 2023 brings, I return to a familiar topic, multiculturalism, migration, and integration. Despite a political multiculturalism closely linked to the idealised image of Canada, multiculturalism categorises migrant communities by racial backgrounds, focusing on demographic trends and economic flows.

As we know, Indo-Caribbean people are often identified as "South Asian" in Canada, a term that refers geographically to countries created following the partition of India/Pakistan/Bangladesh – in other words to a geography (and accompanying politics) that occurred long after Indentured labourers left colonial India.

While members of a broadly defined "South Asian" diaspora may share a similar religious heritage, the passage of serial migrations has transmuted identity, complicating our representation. For example, even though members of the Indo-Caribbean community successfully advocated for an Asian Heritage Month in Canada, they are hardly recognised within this commemoration. Furthermore, a Caribbean identity in Canada, is often exclusively seen as someone who is African descended. Impulses to understand "race as place," have contributed not only to a misunderstanding of the Indo-Caribbean community in Canada but also to its invisibility, making advocacy difficult.

Varied estimates (ranging from 80,000 to 200,000) have been produced about the number of Indo-Caribbean people living in Toronto, as a result of the multiple ways in which they might

identify on the Canadian census categories – for example, as "South Asian," "Black," "Caribbean," or "Other." Of those living in Calgary, Winnipeg, Halifax, or other cities in Canada, figures are even harder to come by.

Yet we know of the strength of our community, and the wide reach of our cultural legacies. We don't have to look far. The commercial form of roti created by Indentured workers in Trinidad and Guyana are available for sale at hundreds of restaurants in the Greater Toronto Area alone, as explored by Richard Fung's 2012 documentary *Dal Puri Diaspora*. Fung's film also hints at some of the health and social problems that stem from the long-term consequences of Indentureship, such as the high rates of alcoholism, diabetes, heart disease, suicide, domestic violence, and mental health struggles that characterise our largely working-class communities, at home, and in the diaspora.

David Dabydeen's poem *Coolie Mother* captures an aspiration to move away from hardship and seek a better life as we migrate. The poem also captures ambition and education as a way out of the sugar estate. But there are dangers in higher education, where hierarchical relationships play out. As our community becomes upwardly mobile, is there a stigma to Indentureship or the plantation? Can we assume our youth with the 'passport' of a Canadian education and accent have made it? We should be very proud of those who have. We know how hard our elders have worked to make that possible, but does this society require we forget some things in order to remember?

As we move into a new year, I remember Taresh Bobby Ramroop, who migrated from Berbice to Toronto in 1993. In October of last year, his family called the police, hoping that he would receive support for his mental health struggles. However, the police cornered him, *en masse*, in his Jane/Finch high-rise apartment while he was in a state of distress. He fell to his death.

Sometimes, a situation doesn't call for an academic, but for a cane cutter. The cane cutter might tell us, "*Evry lang rope gat an end*" (One may run as far as one likes, but must reach an end). Those of us who have crossed the threshold of 'sink or swim,' might think we wear a cloak of acceptance. But the cane cutter knows better. The cane cutter resists and protests institutionalised violence, because the survival of community depends on it.

Nalini Mohabir is an Associate Professor at Concordia University in Montréal



Nalini Mohabir

Contents in a box offer glimpse into brave new world

Over the holiday season the mailbox began filling up with the typical and predictable junk mail, with the quantity refreshed so quickly after my daily toss into the recycling bin, that I started wondering whether its voluminous replenishment was somehow being fed by a noisome spring below.

It came to such a point that inserting the key into the mailbox's lock had to be performed with caution, a strategic care fed by the springs of anxiety that is the attendant dread of an avalanche, the tentative turning of the key a kind of hint into what should have been done instead in that infamous story, a wholly preventable foretaste to our present-day dystopia, when we opened up Pandora's box.

Within the detritus of newsprint, admail, and pitches by credit card companies, the pleasing frontage of real estate, minimalist restaurant menus morphed into flyers, and an occasional, quite attractive, but unsettling, personalised invitation from a funeral home – yet another foretaste, but this one unpreventable – there resides in this constant refreshing of our commodified world an archaeology of the quotidian.

It is evident in the layers of glossy content in the containing space of the mailbox, which has been tossed in by just the hand of the postal worker, who does so with a repetitive action, and without prejudice; and, of course, with cerebral detachment from the utopic make-believe of photoshopped families contented and smiling inside a drug store.

Indeed, it is all tossed in by just the hand of the postal worker; this hand being just a disconnected body part reduced to a function of unceasing repetition; such is the path our troubled world is stumbling along on today.

But sometimes sifting through this detritus of our modern days and lives, where our gaze and attention are constantly titillated and pursued with predatory, monetising intent, there turns up a gem buried among the layers.

So it is with the archaeology of sifting through post-day mid-dens, when a box tumbles out from between a layer of newsprint fronted with a dental floss advertisement, and a five-by-seven glossy postcard offering possible fulfilment of the eternal itch to easily win millions of dollars with just a mere scratch.

It was a book sent by a new friend as a gesture of camaraderie following the serendipitous discovery of our lives lived in a different time, yet sharing a similar archaeology in the structure

of boyhood shenanigans and hijinks: a fishing rod fashioned from a whip of young bamboo; purloined lengths of thin string; a safety pin surreptitiously curved into the eternal lethality of a hook; and a universal floater in space and time: coveted cork, sliced as thin as five-cent pieces, used for visible amplification after its rest on the tympanic surface of the placid pool is disturbed by tentative nibbling below.

"What's this?" The query was bound to come from family members, the anomalous package, fronted with horizontal rows of stamps, the address hand-written in a flowing script, all of this noticeably anachronistic among the kitchen-table wash of modern-day advertising, some with its ornamental text floating on highly-polished architecture of femininity reduced to the superficiality of primary bright clothing highlighting an easy visuality of curvatures.

Included with the book was the bonus of a pen. This information trickled through the encircled family pride that was gorging on the contents of the eviscerated package.

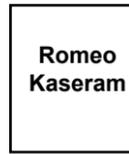
I guessed, inaccurately, that it was a fountain pen, my thoughts sailing on the current of the shared archaeologies of the new friendship, even as I put feelers out to penetrate the closed circle of eyes blazing with Pandora's curiosity at the contents of the box, my name and address written in a non-fungible script, and my claim to ownership, being totally ignored.

What curiosities did this box open up? One item was the ball-point pen with its writing tip on one end; but then there was a shift in the form that had reshaped its top, rendering it into a modern-day duality that enabled an economy of purposes.

A sign of our times – while it was still a pen for writing on one end, on the other was a stylus for navigating with, and also for writing, on the touch screen of a computer, tablet, or a cell-phone. Now an instrument of the oxymoronic, here were two different times, two different worlds inhabiting the same form at polar ends; it was an artifact re-incarnated, hybridised, and so morphed that it now had a foot in two worlds, so to speak.

I thought, "This would not leave an indelible ink stain in a shirt pocket." In my day, this was a hanging offence at home.

Said gift of a pen was promptly filched by a family member, not for rendering non-fungible script, but for its modern-day stylus. I was allowed to keep the book, saved by its form, which was thankfully analog; however, I was strongly advised to charge my dusty eReader.



Romeo Kaseram

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication. Letters to be published will be edited where necessary. Publisher: Harry Ramkhalawan Editor: Romeo Kaseram Columnists/Writers: Frank Birbalsingh, Vidur Dindayal, Bernard Heydorn, Adit Kumar, Dwarka Laxhan, Dhanpaul Narine, Harry Persaud, Arti Panday, Mohan Ragbeer, William Doyle-Marshall. Contact Information: Indo Caribbean World Inc. 312 Brownridge Drive, Thornhill, Ontario, L4J 5X1 (905) 738-5005; indocaribbeanworld@gmail.com Website: www.indocaribbeanworld.com

Reservations over legacy left behind by T&T's President Weekes

Dear Editor,

Whereas I note that the term of Her Excellency President Paula-Mae Weekes will end in January 2023, and the Electoral College will meet to elect a new President, it goes without saying that already this does not augur well for a happy new year.

Quite aside from the rumour that a serving politician may step down and seek such election, which will only be met with the loudest chorus of dissent and disgust ever heard in the Caribbean, with the exception of Haiti, I do not expect anything but acute political discord, animosity, political partisanship, and mudslinging of the highest order.

Be that as it may, I would be among the first to say goodbye to Her Excellency.

I will not be politically correct, bordering on hypocrisy and thanking you for your service: I can't. May I also be permitted to say: "Good Riddance". After all, I am part of the electorate which created an Electoral College to elect you, albeit with great regret and disappointment.

I regret that you have not served the nation well at all. Instead of an office that was above reproach, your term of office was scandalised and indelibly stained by the action of being kowtowed and browbeaten into subverting the constitutional duty of re-routing a certain merit list.

One of the consequences of this redirection into the facilities of the Solid Waste Management Company Limited is arguably a vacationing Police Commissioner, while the murder toll surfs to 600, and an otherwise crime wave of immeasurable proportion.

This also created a constitutional hullabaloo at what should be an apolitical service commission. You have chipped to sweet pan, swayed to Nelson's 'Gih mih the ... ooh... ooh', while all of the office holders entrusted with the safety of the nation have given up, passed the buck, and now look the other way, hoping that a crime like a missing cellphone found in the Beetham, or running over a pet poodle does not affect them, and not a syllable of concern from you.

None of your periodic addresses and greetings to the nation has had any impact. You also embarrassed yourself like many

other politicians at the Divali Nagar. Pathetic... Madam, you have hurt and disappointed a nation. You were the Commander of the Armed Forces: an illustrious, exalted title. Yet, you sit quietly pretending not to see the mayhem of criminals, you did not respond to the severe flooding of citizens.

And so while you pretended that you didn't know where Bamboo was, all of the equipment and manpower on display for Independence Day celebrations were not put into use. Compare this to how they, the Coast Guard and others, were mobilised for Greenvale.

As I am here, four persons perished in a diving accident: no response from your charges, or you; seven persons perished in Carli Bay, and the so ill-prepared was the Coast Guard, that the father of one of the fishermen had to drag his son's body with a rope tied to his boat and wait for hours, because the same fantastic Coast Guard did not have a body bag.

How this man must have cried and agonised watching his own child... and no one to help him... God have mercy on the souls of the persons who stood idly by. The government that elected you tried to malign this as a drug killing.

How many mistakes has your good office made in appointing, revoking, appointing and revoking persons in the government: shall we remind you? The Office of the President is no longer a beacon of competence, but has sunk into odium and derision for its operational faux pas.

Madam, the nation had to goad and cajole you into say something about the murder of women by bandits, rapists, serial killers, and close relatives. Madam, the nation put you in a palace, and when they were hurting from immeasurable grief, you quarantined, Presidentially.

Excellency, while we grind in hours-long traffic to reach a destination 15 minutes away, your police entourage, immaculately clad in dress uniform, chases like stray dogs the people who looked up to you: no more, "Move from Dey!!!!"

We dread seeing the Coat of Arms in our rearview mirrors, since it is accompanied by a threat and a frightful "bawling up", as though we are the ones intended to harm you.



Paula-Mae Weekes

Madam, you have not spoken out over the punishing poverty caused by import bureaucracy, bi-annual increases in the price of fuel, millions owed in VAT returns released only as a Covid-19 'meggie', which stalks the nation, with people barricading the gateway of every State official, calling them for a hamper of half-rotten vegetables that even [vultures] refuse.

My dear President, good riddance to you, milady. May God forgive you.

Linda Capildeo, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

Scholars speak on humanities, social sciences in education

Dear Editor,

Every year, the Caribbean Examination Council and other examining bodies and education ministries in the region announce CXC results in the same format:

- (1) the number of public and private candidates who sat the exams in the respective country or school;
- (2) the sex ratio of students;
- (3) increases or decreases in overall student performance compared to prior years;
- (4) the number of students who achieved full certificates (passes in five subjects); and,
- (5) the pass or failure rate in percentages in respective subjects such as Mathematics or English.

Then there is the usual fanfare and photoshoot of the top scorers. For example, this year in Guyana, Ramoll Baboolall topped the country, and perhaps the Caribbean, with 27 CSEC subjects (24 Grade Ones and 3 Grade Twos), while Uotam Heeralall came second with 25 subjects (24 Grade Ones and one Grade Two). The two boys were from Anna Regina, one of the top-performing schools in Guyana.

What is rarely disclosed in these public releases is the increase or decrease in the number of, and total, students taking specific subjects. For example, a Guyana Ministry of Education official said the pass rate for Caribbean History had declined from 70.7 percent to just above 64 percent last year.

What was not declared is how many students in the country took Caribbean History, and the percentage of students.

Are the Humanities and Social Sciences (for example, history, languages, literature, philosophy, psychology, and the visual and performing arts) in decline in schools, community colleges and universities worldwide? How are Indians – an ethnic minority in most of the diaspora countries – impacted by education trends in the choice of subjects? Can their preferences for subjects leading to careers in medicine, engineering, law, accounts, business, and finance work against them by causing them to be unprepared to participate in public debates and written communication?

These questions were discussed in a ZOOM Public Meeting last year. It was hosted by the Indo-Caribbean Cultural Centre, and the Ameena Gafoor Institute.

The four speakers were Professor Hemchand Gossai, an Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at Northern Virginia Community College in the US; Derek Dabee, a three-term provincial school trustee in Canada as well as a former Chair of

Manitoba's Disaster Appeal Board, and the Founding President of Caribbean Canadian Heart Health Education.

Also speaking was; Dr Bhoie Tewarie, a former government minister in Trinidad and Tobago, and former Principal and Pro Vice Chancellor of the St Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies; and Dr Tara Singh, a former lecturer in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Guyana, and a former Senior Commonwealth Researcher and Fulbright Scholar.

Gossai discussed the etymology of the word "Humanities". He also pointed out that education should be an ongoing process "to remain unchanged, human stagnancy is not a virtue".

He concluded that, "Humanities and Social Sciences ensure that, in fact, we become better as human beings, and this should be a part of the core of who we are as educated persons."

Dabee highlighted the importance of advocacy to encourage inclusionary practices in education systems that can help support Indo-Caribbean students, as well as other minorities in Canada. He disclosed that Indian music, Filipino music, and folk music are taught as well as the use of Indian musical instruments, for example, the tabla, harmonium, and the sitar, which are purchased by the community.

Tewarie said: "Trinidad and Tobago's national collective performance, which most will agree is not good, is actually better than the average for the region. Caribbean-wide, about 40 percent of the age cohort for CSEC (16 years) do not even take the exam, and of those who take it (60 percent) over 50 percent get two subjects or less. That means that 30 percent of Caribbean 16-year-olds get more than two CXC passes. This is a human capital disaster."

He added, "We must not have an education system that is failing our children, when there are schools that are like beacons of light; living, functioning examples of what to do and how to do it, that we can easily take a cue from and make things better school by school. And there are other schools in the country, including some government schools, that perform well and where the climate is conducive to learning and human development."

Singh focused mostly on New York City and pointed out that, in general, about four out of every ten of persons, aged 25 years and over, in the City have at least a college degree, while the comparative rate for Indo-Caribbeans is two to every ten. He pointed out that while Indo-Caribbeans have done well economically, they must do better in higher education in order to access better-paying jobs.

Dr Kumar Mahabir, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Carol Christine Hilaria Pounder

We missed the opportunity to celebrate our own 'star'

Dear Editor,

I seldom use the description "Icons" and "Celebrities". But sometimes, from my youth, I say or write "stars". Though she is not as well-known as she should be in her Guyana homeland, Carol Christine Hilaria Pounder is an acclaimed movie and television actress now resident in New Orleans, Louisiana in the US. [Click here for Google](#) to discover her stellar achievements.

Three score and ten (70-years-old) on this past Christmas Day, Madam CCH came off to me as an unassuming, confident but accommodating international star when she tolerated me in a one-on-one encounter late last month for 45 minutes (she even laughed when I revealed that that was the very first time I ever ventured into our Kingston, Georgetown Marriott).

One thing puzzled me with a heavy touch of disappointment: Why did not any top-tier official authority recognise and pay tribute to this Guyanese-American actress-celebrity, even as President Ali has invited a younger achiever, Letitia Wright, of *Black Panther* fame, to visit us formally?

Pity that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport seems to be (exclusively) all about "sport". Poor us.

Allan Arthur Fenty, Guyana, via email.



Ramoll Baboolall



Uotam Heeralall



Narine's supporters & protestors outside the Georgetown Magistrates' Courts
Narine's action has a deeper agenda?

Dear Editor,
 Regarding the ruckus that took place on New Market Street in Guyana that saw charges laid against the Mayor of Georgetown, Pandit Ubraj Narine, in his letter **The Mayor and Mr Norton should be ashamed of their conduct**, Dr. Josh Kanhai writes: "Mr Narine, along with Mr Norton, the leader of the APNU, [have] shown their natural ability of politicising every issue and playing the race card as their first line of defence... Mayor Narine would not have done his job over the two years, and his recent actions support the theory that this was with the pure intention of gaining political points".

In his letter, Kanhai identifies himself as an "Independent Candidate, Municipality Five, Georgetown". In 2020 he was also the founder and chairman of The New Movement, one of the new political parties that contested the March 2, 2020, General and Regional Elections.

At the recent Commission of Inquiry into the elections, Kanhai stated that during the declaration of the results of the elections, when fraudulent figures were being declared at the Ashmins' building, and GECOM's Chairperson Retired Justice Claudette Singh was in a locked room and could not be reached, he kicked open the locked door of the room to find her as a result of his concern over her safety, security, and the fate of the elections.

Kanhai is a young politician who is not aligned to any of the three major parties in Guyana, and he speaks with honesty and objectivity based on his involvement in the political process at the national and the municipal levels. The points raised by him in the above quote from his letter are informative, and should not be easily dismissed.

Stabroek News' Editorial **The Mayor and the vendors** states, "In a press release the GPHC said that the relevant authorities had been written to on the matter (requesting removal of vendors from New Market Street) in 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2022. It did not indicate which authorities had been contacted, although it might be remarked that in the years 2016 and 2019 as well as possibly 2015, the hospital perhaps thought that it would not have made much difference since the local authority and the government were under the control of the same party".

Kanhai's letter states: "I recall that a portion of time when the APNU held power, that very strip of New Market St was cleared of vendors and 'Taxi Only' signs were erected up to a point. However, during September of the Covid-19 pandemic, I noticed a few stalls popping up back along the stretch of roadway, and then caravans and other stalls opened up, putting the taxi zone out and leaving a narrow space for motor vehicles to pass."

This informs us that APNU, which at the time controlled both the Central Government and the City Government, did remove vendors from the street prior to the beginning of the

Covid-19 pandemic. The stand now taken by the leader of APNU and the Mayor of the City is hypocritical, to say the least.

Mayor Narine's statement about President Ali being a Muslim and he being a Hindu cannot be easily dismissed when one looks at the history of attempts to siphon votes from the PPP based on religious grounds.

In the 1950s leaders of the Christian churches warned their members to stay away from the communist PPP, who were described as being godless. Then, for the critical 1964 general elections, as was revealed a few years ago, the Guyana United Muslim Party came on the scene with funding from the British Colonial Office in the hope of splitting away the votes of Indo-Guyanese Muslims from the PPP.



Josh Kanhai

As well, PNC stalwart Hamilton Green, supported by prominent anti-PPP muslim leaders, converted to Islam, assuming the name Mohamed Bilal. And in 1969, a *coup d'etat* was engineered in the premier Hindu organisation, the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha to deny Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud the Presidency.

In a **Kaieteur News article of April 14, 2013 'A Hindu Leader'**, Ravi Dev writes, "I also saw up close the rigging of the 1969 elections in the SDMS. Scheduled to be held in Essequibo, by the time Pandit Reep, Hari Persaud and others reached the stelling, they were told the elections were already over. Sase Narine, who I was told had been passed over by Dr Jagan to be a PPP candidate in favour of Pandit Reep, had taken over the SDMS and pledged fealty to the PNC".

The fact that the government ferry from Georgetown to Essequibo with Pandit Reep on board was delayed in port Georgetown for several hours past the scheduled departure time for no apparent reason speaks volumes.

In 1971, Sase Narine was appointed Speaker of Parliament, and held that position until 1992, that is, throughout the many years of rigged national elections in Guyana. As for the SDMS, that was the beginning of its demise as the major Hindu organisation in Guyana.

Kanhai's statement "[Mayor Narine's]... recent actions support the theory that this was with the pure intention of gaining political points" is interesting. While, it may be just a coincidence, one cannot fail to note that Geeta Chandon-Edmond, who was on leave from the position of General Secretary of the PNC, has just resigned from that post. At the next general elections due in two years time, Chandon-Edmond, an Indo-Guyanese, a high profile female attorney, and former Magistrate, would have been a suitable Prime Ministerial candidate for the PNC/APNU, in light of the expected departure of the AFC from the APNU-AFC coalition.

Is Mayor Narine, a Hindu Pandit, now rehearsing for that number two spot on the next PNC/APNU ticket?

Harry Hergash, Toronto, via email.

Time to lower inter-regional airfares

Dear Editor,

The airfare to Miami is less than to Barbados. So tell me, why should I visit Barbados?

If Caricom is to realise the goal of promoting economic integration and co-operation among Caribbean people, then we must have access to each other.

High regional airfares between countries act as a disincentive to regional travel. Taxes, Fees and Charges account for 40 percent of airfares. Imagine the boost to intra-regional travel that would occur if airfares went down by 40 percent.

In 2019, over 20,000 citizens in the Caribbean and the diaspora signed a petition asking Caribbean leaders to review the current TFC regime on intra-regional travel, and take action to reduce the high taxes applied to regional travel.

The petition was championed by the lobby group Citizens Against High Intra-Regional Travel Taxes. So far, there has been no response to those tens of thousands of citizens who have tried to make their voices heard.

In seeking support for their petition, CAHIRT commented, "Over-taxing regional travel is counter-productive to regional connectivity and the growth and productivity of our economies."

The region's annual hotel occupancy averages 60 percent, which means that in a 100-room hotel, 40 rooms are continuously empty. Imagine if another 20 or 30 rooms could be occupied continuously. Decreased airfare is one way to stimulate intra-regional travel for both business and leisure.

Studies have shown that increased visitor arrivals lead to increased economic activity, more tax collection, increased employment, and general stimulation of economies. If the region ever needed economic stimulation, then the time is now.

A recent article in the Trinidad Express by Asha Javeed reported Caribbean Airlines Ltd as commenting: "As part of our strategic plan,



we continue to focus on improving regional connectivity. Caribbean Airlines enjoys the largest network in the region, with plans to expand, within the ambit of our resources."

I welcome this focus because regional connectivity is important for our region to thrive.

It is our reality that measured on a per-mile-flown basis the Caribbean region tops world airfares. As the primary owners of CAL, the Trinidad and Tobago government must lead the charge and reduce the 40 percent TFC on airline tickets in the region.

Such bold action will help CAL achieve its strategic objective of "improving regional connectivity", and provide support for Caricom to achieve its main purpose of promoting "economic integration and co-operation among its members".

So, we must aim for the day when a ticket to Barbados is lower than the price of a ticket to Miami. This Barbados-Miami analogy is used to make the point that the price of intra-regional travel must inspire citizens to travel both for business and pleasure.

Dennise Demming, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

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Guyana's economy to stay on the road to prosperity in 2023

Coming off a year of record-breaking economic growth, Guyana's economy is expected to record another world-leading performance in 2023, with GDP growth forecasted at 34.3 percent. While the oil-sector will be the largest contributor to growth, the non-oil sector will also be one of the fastest growing in the world.

Although the government has indicated that it has a plan to pursue its development agenda, its approach to development planning has been haphazard, and will continue to lead to inefficient allocation of resources and unequal patterns of development across the various regions. This will lead to dissatisfaction among varying segments of the population, with some getting too much, some too little, and some mere promises.

That is not to say that the government will not make tremendous strides in leading Guyana to prosperity, but just that a more co-ordinated path to growth will probably lead to a greater and more measurable path to prosperity, which will in turn lead to greater political satisfaction.

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. The government, in the meantime, 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.

As the economy steams ahead, oil will remain the primary growth driver, with the non-oil based sectors, particularly the industrial and construction sectors showing improvement over 2022. Agriculture, the principal non-oil sector, will struggle to show marked improvement over 2022 in spite of the government's commitment to promote the sector's development. Poor strategic planning and resource allocation, combined with continued flooding and a shortage of labour will continue to hamper the sector's growth.

Oil production is forecasted to increase to over 360,000 barrels per day in 2023, with estimates as high as 500,000 barrels per day, while oil and gas revenues will edge close to (US) \$2 billion for the year. With a current reserve of 11 billion barrels of oil, the government has announced that it will be licensing another 14 offshore oil blocks early in the New Year, which has the potential to vastly increase production.

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, and noted that the country has a golden opportunity for Guyana 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.

In fact, the government will enact a new food security bill in 2023 that will set some

parameters around its food security efforts.

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 crops 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.

Energy generation will remain a primary focus during the year. The Amaila Falls Hydroelectric Project is slated to come back on stream, with investors from the US and Canada set to fund the project.

The much-touted Gas-to-Energy Project is also set to come to fruition. The government announced in December that following successful negotiations that resulted in a reduced cost, it was finalising a (US) \$759 million contract for US bidders to build the 300 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant and a Natural Gas Liquids Plant at Wales.

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.

In his New Year message to the nation, President Irfaan Ali announced that he plans to intensify the digital transformation of Guyana, including plans relating to coding, telemedicine, smart classrooms, virtual education for the hinterland, electronic health records management, and establishing a single window for business and building permits. He also said work will commence on a hospitality institute; healthcare will be boosted, and more training will be provided to teachers.

In the agriculture sector, he said that shrimp production will be increased, more shade houses will be used, and the Ministry of Agriculture will promote large-scale cultivation of high-value crops, such as broccoli and cauliflower, and large-scale dairy production.

At a personal level, 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 are made.

In the meantime, optimism about the country's future will continue to be clouded by persistent attempts by the country's main opposition party to incite racial tensions, which has historically been plagued by racial divisions.

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.

On the political front, the alliance between



Dwarka Lakhan



Amaila Falls Hydroelectric Project back on stream in 2023

APNU and the AFC will end, while APNU will continue to be in disarray. Local Government Elections will be held during the year, but disputes over the voter's list will taint the results and create court challenges, which are the order of the day in Guyana.

It is anticipated that the long-standing Guyana-Venezuela border issue will be settled before the end of the year.

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, co-ordination and implementation will leave much to be desired.

Meanwhile, crime continued unabated, creating fear among the population – although the

government will remain in denial that crime is rising.

All in all, Guyana appears set for a prosperous future that needs careful management. The government will remain popular in spite of efforts to taint its reputation. However, the lack of strategic planning could put holes in its efforts. Attention should be paid to the host of social problems – from crime to drugs to prostitution to money laundering – which will plague the country if left unattended.

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

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Successful launch for 'Dhal & Rice' food drive

From Page 1

he said.

The energy driving Dhal & Rice was to bring awareness, and to better facilitate more culturally appropriate food items in food banks around Toronto, Singh noted.

"Unfortunately, too many individuals and families are turning to food banks at an increasing rate. With the rising cost of groceries, food insecurity is increasing, with one in seven Canadians relying on food banks regularly," he added.

Also, "As volunteers that operate various Indo-Caribbean-led organisations, we decided that we would collectively operate a food bank to inspire and mobilise our community to give back this holiday season."

The plan was to also ensure that the foodstuffs acquired were in sync with common Caribbean non-perishable groceries.

"We decided to host this food drive to ensure that non-perishable ingredients commonly used by Indo-Caribbean households are made available in food banks across the city. Just because an individual or family may need the support of a food bank, doesn't mean they shouldn't have access to culturally appropriate foods," he said.

Thanks to generous community support, the ICCA and its friends collected and delivered approximately \$2,125, and 1,644 non-perishable food items, which were given to five food banks serving the Caribbean community in the GTA.

Singh also indicated that the Society for the Living Food Bank, which serves the Jane/Finch community, indicated it will take foodstuff commonly used in Caribbean households. Among these items are curry powder, geera, masala, green seasoning, chow mein, Milo and Ovaltine, and other foodstuffs.

The groups are currently in talks to establish permanent year-round donation locations to ensure culturally appropriate foods are always available in food banks in the GTA.

The ICCA was established in early 2021 to amplify Indo-Caribbean voices in Canada, while discovering and sharing Indo-Caribbean culture and heritage. It is currently composed of over 25 volunteers, and conducts virtual and in-person programming to build connectivity in the community, and provide space for discussion and action in areas that are felt to be important, or lack awareness.

Building Togetherness is a mother and daughter team. They focus on acquiring donations of foodstuff and clothing, which



Donor drops off food items



A volunteer with a donation box



Food items collected for Dhal & Rice



Dhal & Rice Food Drive items

are primarily shipped to Guyana. Boxes and barrels are typically shipped to persons in need, and are delivered in Guyana via the team's network.

The Caribbean Network was launched in 2021, and is an organisation that aims to provide accessible professional and leadership development opportunities for youth in the Caribbean community.

It has led a job mentorship program for young Caribbean students in the GTA, and recently launched an entrepreneurship series.

Divine Designs by Natasha is a small business that provides decorative services. A one-woman enterprise, it provides specialised services for the community, and utilises that network to encourage others to give back.

Romeo Kaseram - LJI Reporter

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Top UG honour for scholar & philanthropist Ameena Gafoor

By Dr David Dabydeen

Hon. Fellow, Selwyn College, Cambridge University
Director, Ameena Gafoor Institute

Congratulations to our Founding Member, Ameena Gafoor, for receiving an Honorary Doctorate in Letters in recognition of her significant scholarly and philanthropic work.

Ameena was born in Guyana in 1941. Her paternal grandparents were Indentured immigrants who hailed from Basti in the Uttar Pradesh State of India, arriving in Guyana in 1898. After a five-year Indentureship at the Success Plantation in Demerara, they settled down to farming at the backlands at Triumph.

As Ameena wrote: "Each morning they went to their farm in a narrow bateau and each evening they returned with the bateau laden with produce, my grandfather sitting in the stern like a Rajah while my grandmother fixed the fat rope attached to the bow across her right shoulder and walked barefooted on the grassy left bank of the middle walk canal pulling the boat, produce, and grandfather with her."

Her maternal grandmother, the daughter of Indentured labourers, was born in Guyana in 1889, and was one of few young girls given a primary school education. She owned a small shop selling washing soap, matches, tomato paste in tiny tins, and little squares of Ricketts blueing tablets.

Ameena said she owed her love of learning to her: "At nights she read aloud, by the light of a small 'speak easy' lamp, from the Taleem Islam, about the Hijra and the Battle of Kerbala, and recounted to me the lives of the Prophets and many tales from the Arabian oral tradition. What I did not know then was that she infused in me a thirst for books, for knowledge, with a curiosity and an appreciation for storytelling, so that in decades to come, I was drawn to the literary arts."

Ameena's mother was also a mysterious fount of knowledge, both philosophical and literary.

As she wrote, "My mother also used to spew out quotations from Confucius, Shakespeare, and other poets to keep us children in the line of moral rectitude, lines that are indelibly engraved on our minds; to this day I have no idea from where she learnt them. In addition, my mother had the most melodic voice, and she constantly sang and hummed such Scottish and



Ameena Gafoor

Welsh classics as *Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes*; *By Yon Bonnie Banks*; *The Ash Grove*; as well as Surahs from the Qu'ran, Munajats, and Quaseedas. These sounds seemed to lift our spirits above our poverty."

From such humble beginnings, Ameena acquired the Higher Senior Cambridge Certificate, and went on to study at the University of West Indies, graduating with BA and MA degrees. Having taught at Central High School (Literature and French), and at Tutorial High School (French and Latin) she went on to a stellar literary career, publishing the first major study of the fiction of Roy Heath, *Aftermath of Empire: The Novels of Roy A.K. Heath* (2017), as well as a *A Bibliography of East Indian Writing 1838-2018* in 2018.

Her fictional memoir, *A Lantern in the Wind: A Fictional Memoir* (2020) is described as "a rare insight into Muslim life in Guyana... rich in detail, its realism enhanced by her equally rich imagination".

However, it was her role as founder and editor of *The Arts Journal*, which marked her out as an outstanding contributor to Caribbean cultural history. *The Arts Journal's* purpose was to provide, "Critical perspectives on contemporary literatures, arts and cultures of Guyana, the Caribbean and their Diasporas."

Thirteen volumes were published between 2004 and 2018. Not since the pioneering literary journal, *Kyk-Over-Al* (1945-1961), edited by the legendary A.J. Seymour, has such a monumental publishing project in the arts been undertaken.

Apart from giving a platform to writers and scholars like Michael Gilkes, Frank Birbalsingh, Sister Mary Noel Menezes, Stephanie Correia (a pioneering Amerindian poet and potter), Brinsley Samaroo, Mark Tumbridge, Ryhaan Shah, Charlene Wilkinson, and dozens of others, *The Arts Journal* also showcased the work of artists like Philip Moore, Darshanie Kistama, Bernadette Persaud, Betsy Karim Philbert Gajadhar, and many others.

That Ameena almost singlehandedly commissioned and edited articles, reviews and creative work, designed the layout for the volumes, then presided over their publication and distribution, is testimony to her amazing commitment to the cultural and intellectual development of the region.

Whilst undertaking this work, Ameena was also involved, with her husband Sattaur, in a myriad of charitable activities, the Gafoor Foundation funding a dozen and more medical, educational, and sports projects.

Her many roles include being Patron of ChildLink Guyana, an NGO that seeks out and counsels abused and neglected adolescents, and Chairman of the Doobay Medical Centre, a non-profit medical clinic that offers dialysis treatment to patients suffering renal failure.

In 2020, the Ameena Gafoor Institute for the Study of Indentureship and its Legacies was established, the only such body in Britain or Europe. Indentureship involved many thousands of freed Africans, many thousands of Chinese and Portuguese, and millions of Indians.

The Institute works closely with Cambridge University in establishing posts in Indentureship Studies. The Cambridge Visiting Fellowships in Indentureship Studies will begin in 2023, the very first such posts anywhere in the world.

Gafoor transformed personal triumph into public & national gain

In the week before Christmas, on the occasion of its 56th Convocation Ceremony, the University of Guyana conferred upon Ameena Gafoor the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters. The petition was ceremonially presented before the Chancellor on behalf of Gafoor, *in absentia*, in recognition of her extraordinary contribution to the nation of Guyana and the Caribbean region in the field of culture.

UG admitted her into membership of the institution by awarding her the highest degree, *honoris causa*, for the totality of her work in the advancement of the study of literature, the arts, and the enlargement of cultural understanding.

Ameena Gafoor, D Litt (UG), MPhil, MA, BA (UWI), MS, is a literary critic, editor, publisher, author, curator, businesswoman, philanthropist, social worker and cultural activist, who has devoted a lifetime of tangible and intangible contributions to the arts and humanism.

Her very acquisition of a formal education, her personal advancement in academic study, is an emphatic statement of her triumph over personal, cultural, ethnic, family history, gender-related, social, and political circumstances. The details of her continuous, consistent and unflinching public work, deepen that statement to include the way she transformed that personal triumph into public and national gain.

Gafoor is the founder and editor of *The Arts Journal*, which is among her most important contributions to literature in the Caribbean. It has been a precious outlet for intellectual work and academic research as one of the few standing academic journals in the region.

She is the founder, director and curator of *The Arts Forum*, an intellectual institution through which she has been able to do much of her cultural activism, particularly in the field of the visual arts and in East Indian culture in Guyana.

She has published several articles and papers on Guyanese literature in journals, and through a number of conferences. She has also contributed articles to newspapers, including a weekly column on literature and matters of the arts and letters.

Her publications have accounted for her most valued contributions to West Indian literature. These include the books *Aftermath of Empire: The Novels of Roy AK Heath*, UWI Press, 2017; *A Bibliography of East Indian Writing 1838-2018*, (2018); and, *A Lantern in the Wind: A Fictional Memoir*, Hansib



Patients can now access dialysis at a reduced cost in Region Three at the Ameena Gafoor Medical and Dialysis Centre, which was opened at Gafoors' Parika in November last year. She is working with other members of the private sector to assist Toronto Vishnu Mandir's leader, Dr Budhendranauth Doobay, to reduce these costs. In photo, Gafoor cuts the ribbon to open the centre; Dr Doobay is on the right

Publications, 2020.

A Lantern in the Wind is Gafoor's autobiographical work, in which her family history assumes much importance in the context of Indentureship, the significant place of gender, and of women in the colonial Muslim society. It has been described as a rare insight into Muslim life in Guyana. Its most moving quality may be found in the way the narrative is a tribute to Gafoor's mother, the bravery and resolution of a Muslim wife in years of hardship.

Gafoor has played an exceptional role in the Guyana Prize for Literature, serving as a member of the jury on four different occasions. It was for her extended service to Guyanese literature and the arts that she was conferred with the national award, the Medal of Service.

However, her public service knows no boundaries. She is a director of one of Guyana's leading industries, Gafson's Group of Companies; chairman of the Board of Directors of Doobay Medical Centre; and administrator of the Gafoor Foundation.

Through these roles, she has been outstanding in philanthropy and a wide range of social services carried out, along with her husband Sattaur Gafoor.

It is untiring work, which has not gone without high recognition. An outstanding example of this is the recognition afforded her by her peers in literature and the arts. A very important institution was established in her honour in the United Kingdom in 2020: the Ameena Gafoor Institute for the Study of Indentureship and its Legacies.

Gafoor's paternal grandparents arrived in British Guiana in 1898 from Uttar Pradesh in India. They left the plantation at Success after the five-year Indentureship, and took up farming in the backlands at Triumph.

Also, as Gafoor has written, her maternal grandmother "was one of the very few East Indian girl children who possessed primary education at the time as she formed friendships with the Creole children and tagged along with them to school".

She also provides biographical insights into her early life with her parents, writing, "[My] father joined the RAF in 1944 and left my mother to take care of us with a meagre allowance from the Home Office".

Gafoor also valorises the contribution made by her grandmother to what was then her incipient thirst for the literary arts. As she has written, her grandmother read aloud at nights from the *Taleem Islam*, about the

Hijra and the Battle of Karbala. She also recounted the lives of the prophets and many tales from the Arabian oral tradition."

"What I did not know then was that she infused in me a thirst for books, for knowledge with a curiosity and an appreciation for story-telling, so that, in decades to come, I was drawn to the literary arts. My mother also used to spew out quotations from Confucius, Shakespeare, and other poets to keep us children in the line of moral rectitude..."

Such maternal interventions "seemed to lift our spirits above our poverty", Gafoor has noted.

"[When] people referred to us as 'poor', we were puzzled, as we lived a rich cultural life and did not think of ourselves as poor even, though we had not a second pair of shoes. My mother was a far-seeing woman, and insisted we all go to high school," she wrote.

Extracted from a longer article by Al Creighton, courtesy Stabroek News

Slavery apology lacked Caribbean input

While welcoming Netherland Prime Minister Mark Rutte's public apology for this nation's slave trading past, at the same time the Dutch government should have sought input from, and consulted with Caribbean countries, Suriname's President Chan Santokhi has said.

The apology was issued in The Hague on December 19.

Santokhi's comment was reported last month by the *Dutch News*.

In his speech, Rutte apologised for the past actions of the Dutch State to enslaved people globally, who suffered as a consequence of its actions.

The apology was also issued to their daughters and sons, and to all descendants to the present day.



Chan Santokhi

Rutte gave the apology at the National Archives in The Hague, in the presence of representatives of organisations that have pressed for acknowledgement of the deleterious effects of slavery.

In response, Santokhi was positive about the content of Rutte's speech, calling it a "clear" statement of "Dutch involvement in the inhumane treatment of people who were taken to Suriname by force over a long period to work as slaves for the Dutch economy".

However, he was critical of the way the apology was drafted and delivered.

As Santokhi noted, it was done on a date

determined by ministers in The Hague, with no input from Suriname, or the Caribbean islands.

Said Santokhi: "A collective approach from the start would have been a more acceptable way of working towards a moment of rehabilitation. This is about centuries of oppression and exploitation. Offering apologies also means acknowledging the momentum, cultural aspects of the descendants of enslaved people, and making the moment when you apologise meaningful."

Santokhi also noted, "Specifically, the preparations for offering apologies are just as important as how you apologise in practice."

As the *Dutch News* reported, there were

positive responses to Rutte's apology.

"It's really a historic moment," said Kathleen Ferrier, who is chair of the Dutch UNESCO commission.

She added, "I saw a prime minister who was humble, who took note of the facts and said he had learned, and is looking to the future."

Aruba's Prime Minister, Evelyn Wever-Croes, said her Caribbean nation was "grateful for the first step", while describing it as "a turning point in the history of the kingdom".

Additionally, "We now have the chance to work together on a better future as equal countries."

Economist says caution needed in 2023

Bridgetown – Nationals in Barbados should not expect relief from the cost of living in the new year despite indications that inflationary pressures are easing up.

The caution came from regional economist Marla Dukharan, and which was reported last week by the publication, *Barbados Today*.

Dukharan is a regional advisor on Caribbean economies.

As she cautioned, economies that are dependent on tourism should taper optimism this year in the wake of several external factors that are still impacting on the cost of living in key source markets.

She also expressed concern over the too-little improvements in domestic conditions that drive sustainable growth.

"Inflation is still elevated, but is easing

across the Caribbean as well, and this is likely to accelerate next year, as the year-over-year change in prices decreases," she said

She also noted that the cost of living is not likely to decrease.

"I can't remember this ever happening. Certain food items may see fluctuations, but in general, the overall cost of living does not come back down. So we should expect much of the same into next year," she stated.

Dukharan's assessment was made just under a month before expiration of the six-month social agreement between the Barbados government and the private sector to keep a cap on the prices of 47 items.

She also noted that the global economy slowed significantly last year, and that the International Monetary Fund has predicted 2023 to be a recessionary year.

According to Dukharan, some of Barbados'

main trading partners and tourism source markets are already experiencing fiscal and monetary pressures, and there will be spill-over effects.

Said Dukharan: "In 2020-2021 we saw unprecedented fiscal and monetary stimulus globally to ease the pressures of the pandemic. At the beginning of [2022], interest rates were near zero. Then from the first half of [2022 there was] unprecedented monetary tightening – higher interest rates and tighter liquidity – all in effort to address the inflation, which resulted primarily from Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24."

She added, "The US, UK, and Europe have, by design, therefore, slowed down significantly, with some countries already contracting and in recession, such as the UK."

Higher interest rates are intended to do this, which is to slow down economic activity and job creation, so that lower consumption will put downward pressure on prices and so bring inflation down, Dukharan noted.

She added, "And inflationary pressures have in fact been easing in the US, UK, and to a lesser extent Europe, whose energy prices in particular, remain quite elevated."

Dukharan suggested Barbados' tourism industry could still face headwinds, with recovery slower than anticipated. With this in mind, she recommended changes be urgently made to ensure improvement in the business climate.

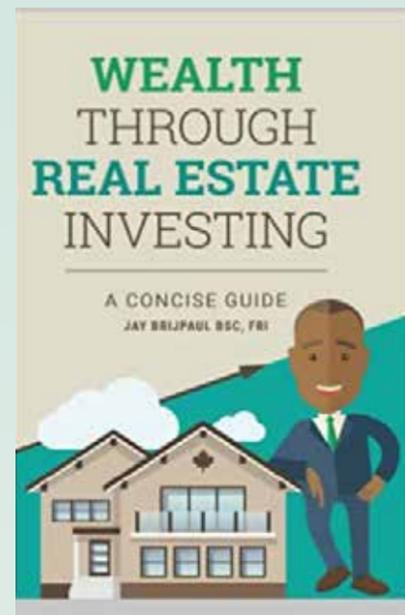
"I think tourism numbers and overall economic activity are likely to be softer [in 2023] than we would ordinarily expect, given the engineered slowdown in the US, UK, and European economies," she said.



Marla Dukharan

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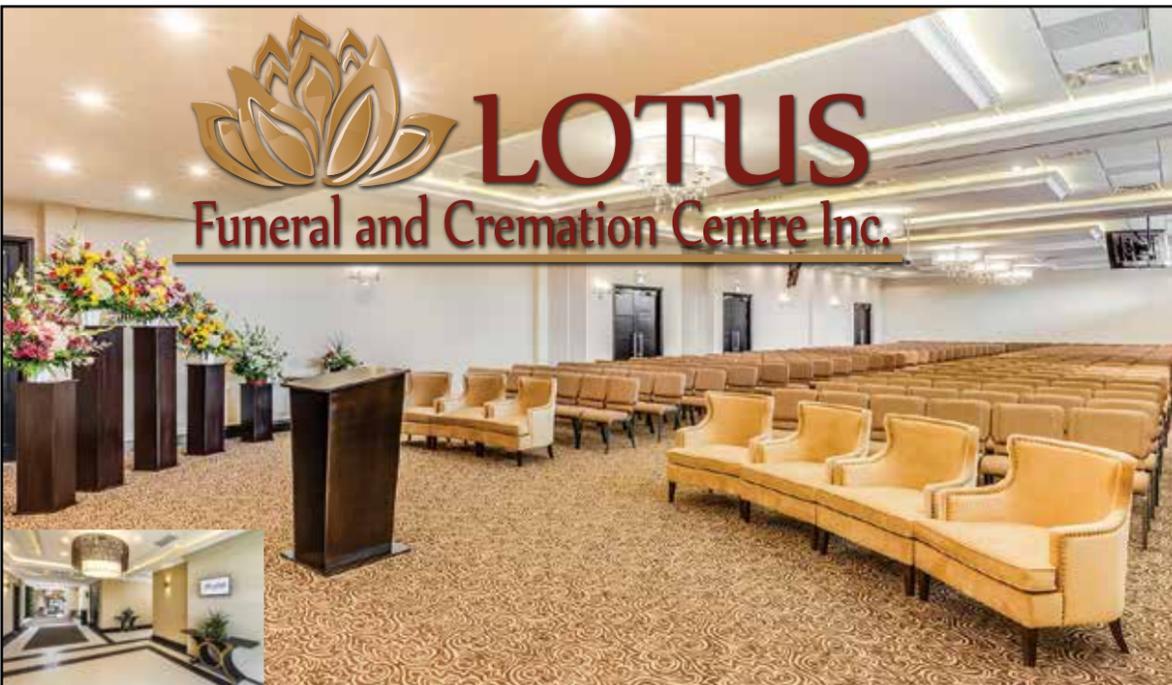
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Finding my centre

2023 & Me:
Rediscovering my Indo-Caribbean identity



Dad Neeraj Gopi, me, & mom Anita



Cousin Anjali Persaud & myself at Toronto Carnival



Circa 1997-1998 in 1st Grade

By Felicia Gopi

Special to *Indo-Caribbean World*

I can remember the exact moment when I first had to clarify to someone that I was Guyanese, not Ghanaian, to someone whose background was neither. Yet, she insisted on correcting me, until I pretty much gave up. I was five years old, I didn't have the tools, or the fight I have in me now.

I remember when my second grade teacher repeatedly told me I was Indian, despite me telling her that my parents were from Guyana. She then quickly sniped at me that I was Canadian since I was not born in Guyana. True, I am Canadian, but why didn't I feel like it? It's worth noting she was also at least partially right about my Indian heritage as well, but it wasn't as simple as she was making it out to be.

I grew up not knowing exactly where I fit in, I wasn't Indian enough for the Indian kids, and as much as I identified with my Afro-Caribbean peers they knew, and I knew, that I was different. Still, that's where I found the most acceptance. In high school, things were divided even further, at least in my new neighbourhood of Woodbridge that is. Cliques were racial, period. After that, there were secondary groups that mirrored your typical high school TV expectations (athletes, music/theatre kids; and of course, those who peaked in high school – no shade).

It was at that point in my teenage years I started to shy away from my identity, evading the non-stop questions because otherwise I was subjected to explaining all the things I wasn't. And so it began, my young adulthood where I never wanted to appear "too Guyanese", and where I did my very best to embrace being Canadian, or rather mimic being white, or at least racially ambiguous. Looking back, we know it was cringe, but it also felt a lot like survival.

Of course, I was never going to be white, and so at some point, I shifted – again. My cousin/aunt (if you know, you know), was pivotal for me in our mid-twenties. Together, we went out a lot. During that time she got me to bring my walls down and embrace our culture through music. It's not like I had shut off the Guyanese part of me completely, but like many of you reading this, I just sort of, left it on the back burner. I needed that time spent with her, and it was a crucial part of reigniting my pride while also making me really protective over my identity.

I was braver, more confident, and had no room for any amount of self-loathing. However, I do have compassion for those who exhibit signs of self-loathing, or who wrestle with accepting their own identities. I'm sure many of our friends from different ethnic backgrounds battle with this as well. While I wouldn't categorise myself as ever self-loathing my identity, I know where it stems from: from systemic racism, from the absence



Felicia @ Wasaga Beach

of our history being told, and from not being seen.

In 2020, I advocated for my employer to change their diversity, equity, and inclusion survey to include Indo-Caribbean as an option. I was so proud that they swiftly made the changes – it felt like progress. When I went for a routine check up I noticed the doctor's office (albeit based in Toronto) had Indo-Caribbean listed as one of their check boxes. I was so overjoyed I may have shed a tear... maybe. It's important, representation matters; it matters a whole lot.

The Indo-Caribbean identity is anything but simple; it's layered, its history is loaded, and its characteristics are blended. Thanks to all the Indo-Caribbean content creators out there, there seems to be a revolution of sorts when it comes to reclaiming our lost identity. The sense of community online and in-person that I found when connecting with the [Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association](#) is one of the ways that helped me continue to feel a sense of belonging.

There is also great power in vocabulary. Our terminology, words, and language as a whole empower us to describe, identify, and validate our feelings, our experiences, and not to be dramatic or anything – but also, our entire existence. Hearing and reading content creators repeatedly refer to our community as Indo-Caribbean give legitimacy and validation to the term. Suddenly, we have a unified sense of being and a name to house our experiences.

Accounts like [@CutlassMagazine](#) or [@BrownGyalDiaries](#), and of course, [@IndoCaribCdn](#) spend their time pouring out content that's educational, historical, funny, community-building, and newsworthy. The discussions they've started have bonded us in ways that have undoubtedly provided much-needed validation. If you haven't already, I urge you to check these accounts out, and share them as well as other resources with your friends and family; it's truly a gift.

We, as Indo-Caribbeans, have many roads ahead of us when it comes to advocating for one another, but it all begins with letting the rest of the world know who we are. That's when the check-boxes will start to look more and more like something we're proud to check-off, and let's face it, Caribbean people are nothing if not proud. So this year, and in those that follow, I am going to channel that pride and continue to work to make inroads for us to be seen and heard. It's about time.

Felicia is the editor in chief of [Story](#), a newsletter published by the [Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association](#). She also works in digital marketing with a background in beauty in fashion. She began volunteering with the ICCA to contribute directly to her community, and to learn from other like-minded individuals. [Click here to visit her website.](#) Article reproduced courtesy ICCA's Newsletter, [Story](#).



Maternal grandmother Rita Persaud (l-r), mom Anita Gopi, Felicia, sister Tricia Gopi, & cousin Anjali Persaud



Cousin Camille & Felicia



Felicia in Toronto (2021)



Celebrating with family members



Engaging in chit-chat at an outdoor event (Supplied photos)

Community feels the love:

One Love Family Services says thanks for the support in 2022



HAPPY NEW YEAR!
The management & team of **One Love Family Services** would like to express our gratitude for your support throughout 2022. Because of you we were able to feed thousands with food hampers, hundreds of hot meals, turkeys, chickens, engage in seniors wellness, produce a podcast about unsung heroes, and observe diversity celebrations in the fight against racism.

We also hosted the first Pepper Pot Festival in Canada! Thank you very much, and we look forward to your continued support, and working with you to help those in need in our community.

All the best for 2023.

The management & team of One Love Family Services



Sir Hilary makes a case for reparations & sustainability

By Dhanpaul Narine

Sir Hilary Beckles was like Moses on the mountaintop. He was making a passionate case for justice for the descendants of natives, slaves, and the Indentured. It was simple and compelling. But then British Prime Minister David Cameron was not buying into it. He said that reparations were not the answer.

When Cameron addressed Jamaica's Parliament in September 2005, he admitted that slavery was "abhorrent", and that the "wounds run very deep", but he did not give much hope to the pro-reparation argument.

In fact, Cameron wanted the Caribbean to move on and put the past behind.

He said, "I hope that as friends who have gone through so much together since those darkest of times, we can move on from this painful legacy and continue to build for the future."

Cameron's "building for the future" included money to upgrade the Jamaican prisons so that criminals can be sent from British prisons to serve out their sentences in Jamaica. There is also a \$600 million grant to develop infrastructure in the Caribbean.

While some welcomed these proposals, there were those that saw the British package as a band-aid treatment to forget what is a major wound to the psyche of the Caribbean.

In other words, the British response did not go far enough.

It is no secret that slavery and Indentureship uprooted families, and imposed a culture that was alien to the victims.

The statistics show that around six million Africans were transported to America and the West Indies during the period 1610 to 1865. When slavery ended, East Indians, Chinese, Portuguese and poor Whites were taken to the Caribbean to supply labour on the plantations.

Native Indians also faced the wrath of the masters, as their culture and economy were disrupted. Many Indians were ordered to hunt runaways, and spent months away from their communities. There was no program in place to attend to their welfare.

The idea of reparations has never really included slaves or their descendants. In 1852, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill ending slavery in the District of Columbia that called "for immediate emancipation and compensation to former owners who were loyal to the Union for up to \$300 for each freed slave".

This emancipator of slaves cared little about the future of Blacks.

By the end of 1862, a total of 930 petitions were approved from former slave owners. When the Civil War ended, General William T. Sherman proposed 40 acres and a mule apiece for former slaves, but nothing materialised.

In 1825 Haiti agreed to pay France 125 million francs with interest in compensation for lost property that included slaves. The sum was finally repaid in 1947, which helps to explain why Haiti has remained poor.

In 2010, former French President Nicholas Sarkozy visited Haiti, and said that Haitians "have been wounded but they are standing". No offer of reparations was made.

Over the years the call for reparations has been intensified. Ta-Nehisi Coates argues that the system has made it difficult for Blacks to move up the ladder, and that America has a duty to repay its debts to Blacks.

In 1998 Representative John Conyers introduced a bill H.R. 40 in Congress to discuss reparations, but that bill is still to be passed.

In 2007 Prime Minister Tony Blair said that slavery was "shameful", and a year later, William Hague called the system "inhumane". These statements fell short of an apology, and added little to the debate.

In 2014, Caribbean governments unveiled proposals to demand reparations for the sufferings inflicted by the slave trade.

Sir Hilary, Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, became one of the principal

Now on to multilateral Caribbean input

The following statement was issued late last month by Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies, and chairman of the Caricom Reparations Commission, in response to an apology for African enslavement issued by Prime Minister Mark Rutte on behalf of The Kingdom of the Netherlands on December 19, 2022.

It has been near a decade since the governments of Caricom established a Reparations Commission to promote regional and global understanding of the enslavement of African people and native genocide with the objective of securing reparatory justice and development for the still suffering people of the Caribbean.

With the formal apology from the Dutch Prime Minister acknowledging that the transatlantic slave trade in enchained African bodies and chattel enslavement were crimes against humanity, the reparatory justice movement has moved into a new phase.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte must be commended for this enlightened development that establishes The Netherlands as the European country best poised to bring global leadership to this long and sustained call for justice. His statement moves us closer to closure in respect of the crippling, criminal chapter in human history.

We recognise, however, that this development is best understood as an internal conversation within the Dutch state. The Prime Minister did not bring to the table those who are the survivors of the crimes. The victim communities in the Caribbean and Africa are not stakeholders to this statement.

Historic though it is, the statement is

flawed on the basis that the Prime Minister did not seek the organised input and support of the Caribbean. The unilateralism of the apology and acknowledgments must now move to a multilateral basis. The marginalisation of these victim communities will undoubtedly be experienced as an ongoing approach steeped in the imperial culture we are seeking to replace with a deeper democratic sensibility.

The Dutch state was Europe's pioneer of the global slavery enterprise. For most of the 17th century it monopolised the transatlantic slave trade and provided the finance and technology that enabled the English, French,

Spanish, and Portuguese to establish their own slave-based empires. As a result, Amsterdam became the financial centre of Europe and the leading supplier globally of capital for colonisation.

The national enrichment from African enslavement was large and unprecedented. The Dutch community, with the slavery wealth derived from human enslavement, and crimes against human-

ity, became a sustained developed nation. It continues to be an imperial nation holding Caribbean people impoverished in colonial bondage.

Critically, nonetheless, we acknowledge that the honourable Prime Minister described his statement as ending with a "comma" rather than a "full stop". This metaphor is encouraging and offers hope for the future. The Caricom Reparations Commission is keen to enable the Prime Minister to complete the Dutch sentence. It looks forward to the next step, which must be a dialogue with nations and communities that continue to suffer and expect to be treated with the dignity of participation in the dialogue.



Mark Rutte

spokespersons for the pro-reparations lobby. He spoke at the House of Commons on behalf of Caribbean governments, and made a passionate plea for reparations.

He pointed out that British slave ships "brought 5.5 million enslaved Africans into their Caribbean colonies and when slavery was abolished there were just 800,000 remaining".

He called for the terrible wrongs to be corrected, as it was the same House of Commons, in which he was speaking, that enacted legislation to enslave millions.

Sir Hilary also made a case for the East Indians and Amerindians, who along with Africans "were three acts of a single play", a trifecta in chains in an imperial domination. They were part of a process in which the British extracted wealth through exploitation.

As in the case of America, slave owners were compensated by the British Parliament, and not a penny was given to the enslaved since they were seen as property. In fact the ex-slaves were required to work for free for four additional years after 1834 in a system of Apprenticeship.

It was fitting then that Sir Hilary's sterling advocacy should take him to New York, a city that was also built with slave labour. The setting was Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn at

the Caribbean Research Center.

The Center was celebrating its 30th anniversary, and some of the leading lights in education were present. They included college President Dr Rudy Crew, Dean Dr George Irish, and Provost Dr Augustine Okereke; and a wonderful singer, Ayanna Irish.

Crew, a former Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, hailed the work of the Center and supported the call for reparations. Irish thanked Crew for his magnificent work at Medgar Evers College, and said that reparations were long overdue.

Okereke said that he was pleased that visits were made to Nigeria, and referred to the important links between Nigeria and the Caribbean.

Sir Hilary gave the keynote address, *From Reparations to Sustainability*. He described Medgar Evers as a place of communion. He said that he was grateful for the support of Danny Glover, who has lent his voice for reparatory justice.

Sir Hilary praised the work of the Caribbean Research Center, and defined the Caribbean as a unifying civilisation of modernity. But the Caribbean is much more. He said that an anchor from Columbus' ship, *Santa Maria*, and a portrait of Toussaint L'Ouverture in the

national museum in Haiti, represented the beginning of a new world.

According to Sir Hilary, "[This] was the thesis and antithesis, the beginning of a world based on the genocide of our native peoples and the chattel enslavement of Africans. This was a world constructed on those principles. The Caribbean is a civilisation dedicated in its intellectual energy, its cultural force, its philosophical mission to turn that world upside down and create a world of justice."

This position was impressive, and it set the tone for a healthy discussion on the role of the reparatory movement.

Sir Hilary pointed out that it was in the Caribbean where the idea of destroying slavery was first institutionalised to create a just society.

In Haiti, for instance, the Constitution of 1805 stated that any person of African or Native American descent that arrived in that country will be classed as free and be given citizenship. This was ground-breaking in a hemisphere built on chattel slavery.

Sir Hilary added that whether one listens to the music of Bob Marley, or reads the works of Walter Rodney, one is bound to feel the energy of the Caribbean. The idea is to build sustainable societies. The ex-slaves are leaders of their countries, and are responsible for governance, and this makes them unique.

The struggle continues for a just society, and it has taken hundreds of years to come to terms with genocide and apartheid. Conflict and struggle have become the hallmark of Caribbean societies in Haiti, Cuba, and the English-speaking Caribbean.

A number of leaders went to prison as part of the Independence struggle, including Guyana's former President, Dr Cheddi Jagan; and former Jamaican Prime Minister, Alexander Bustamante.

One of the legacies of colonial rule was to keep the subjects in a state of dependency. In Haiti, as we have seen, it was to repay a huge debt. In other countries, such as in Jamaica, only a fraction of the people were literate at Independence.

The colonial powers had extracted wealth from the colonies through a mercantile economy. But many countries have done well after Independence.

As Sir Hilary puts it, "Jamaica has done magnificently in converting a colonial mess into a nation state."

It is fitting that Marlon James should win the 2015 Man Booker Prize, and praise Jamaica's rich literary tradition.

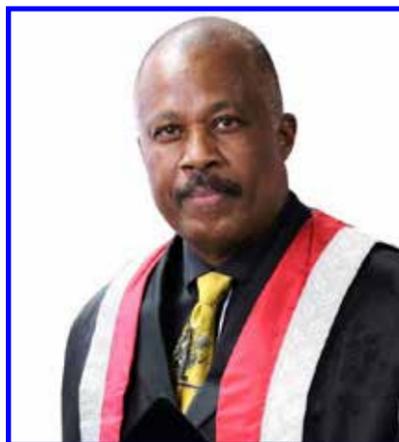
The Caribbean has come a long way. It has shown resilience and fortitude despite the forces of history being against it. Sir Hilary discussed two concepts as part of reparatory justice. The first is that the Caribbean will take responsibility for its future. This means that the Caribbean does not want imperial donations.

Sir Hilary said that given the complicated nature of the global financial system, the Caribbean is moving ahead with building societies that celebrate human freedoms.

He then proceeded to make the point that, "all of those colonial and slave-owning powers who have extracted the wealth and enslaved the peoples of the Caribbean have a responsibility and a duty to return to the scene of this impoverishment and enslavement and participate in the process of human development".

This is a powerful statement that strikes at the heart of the problem. Sir Hilary has made the case for reparations. The Caribbean is not interested in pittance. Debt write-offs, the building of educational institutions, the setting up of viable industries, reconnecting with the motherlands, and programs that foster a sense of pride within the region are good starting points for sustainability.

The Caribbean is lucky to have Sir Hilary Beckles to lend his vision to the reparatory justice movement.



Sir Hilary Beckles

McClean wins Bocas Lit Fest Children's Book Prize

A juvenile fantasy novel that draws on Trinidad and Tobago's folklore has won the 2022 Bocas Lit Fest Children's Book Prize.

The novel, *The Whisperer's Warning: Secrets of Oscuros*, written by Trinidad-born author Danielle Y.C. McClean, is packed with exciting and dramatic plot twists, and takes readers into the shadowy world of folklore characters as Papa Bois, La Diablasses, jumbies, and douens, while harmonising reality, myth, and imagination along the way.

McClean lives in the US, and is an author, translator, interpreter, and a teacher. Her latest achievement follows the



Danielle Y.C. McClean

success of her YA novel *The Protectors' Pledge*, which was named among the top three books in the Bocas 2016 Code Burt Award for Caribbean Young Adult Literature.

The Whisperer's Warning also blends a heartwarming exploration of the values of friendship and solidarity, its characters are vivid, and is written in a piquant and engaging style.

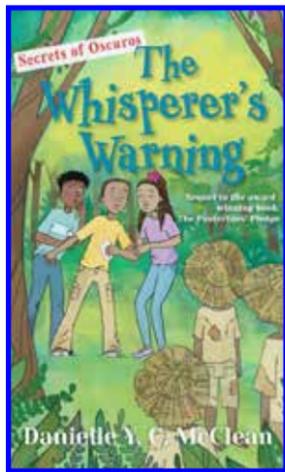
Bocas Lit Fest's judges for the Children's Book Prize shortlisted four books from the many that were submitted from the Caribbean.

Judges were Joan Osborne, former executive director of Trinidad and Tobago's National Library and Information System; Janet Smyth, a UK children's literature consultant; and Imam Baksh, a Guyanese writer, and 2015 winner of the Code Burt Award.

They were joined by young writer Josse Franco in the final round of judging. Franco is the winner of the 2020 Dragonzilla's Short Story Writing Challenge.

Commenting on the novel, Franco said, "[The] friendship among the three main characters is used not only for story-driven purposes, but for comedic relief; the plot twists were unexpected and came at the right times... The local flavour makes it more exciting and familiar for Caribbean readers."

The Whisperer's Warning: Secrets of Oscuros is available on Amazon.



Wanderers, Kings, Merchants 'path-breaking'

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Peggy Mohan's *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants: The Story of India through its Languages* delves into the early history of South Asia to reveal how external and internal migration has shaped Indians and Indian languages from ancient times.

Such is the objective of Mohan's scholarship as noted by the *Hindustan Times* and the *Press Trust of India*, which adds that her book is "an incisive study of languages, such as the story of early Sanskrit, the rise of Urdu, [and] language formation in the North-east", while presenting the argument that "all Indians are of mixed origins".

Mohan is a noted linguist, author, and teacher. She was born in Trinidad, with her father Indo-Trinidadian, and her mother from Newfoundland.

As she writes in her book, "... Hindi, Marathi, all the northern languages we call 'Indo-Aryan': they have words that were taken from the Prakrits and Sanskrit, but the way these words string together is strikingly different. There is another parent in this family that we have been ignoring!"

According to *HT* and *PTI*, Mohan's text is "path-breaking in its revelation of the hidden story of Sanskrit", even as it "explores the surprising rise of English after [Indian] Independence and how it may be endangering India's native languages".

Mohan also writes, "Urdu, too, has a story, starting with men who spoke Uzbek coming to Delhi and finding early Hindi, but preferring to speak Persian, the way so many of us opt for English. The north-east has a separate story too, starting near Banaras, where there is a different history and a totally different 'maternal' substratum - no gender, for example. And English, which took to the Indian landscape like a hardy and determined weed."

In her review of *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants* in *The Telegraph Online*, Papiya Sengupta similarly notes Mohan's objective to question "the notion of 'purity of languages'", and to reveal it "to be an illusion".

As Sengupta writes, "Mohan begins her journey of India through its languages. These are a result of mixing and

interaction [among] different variants of languages, especially the local and the native tongues of the travelling migrants."

Additionally, "[Mohan] substantiates this with research findings from genetics, linguistic archaeology, anthropology and a web of connecting phonetics and syntaxes. In the process, [she] examines bilingualism, diglossia, Sanskritisation, creolisation and pidginisation."

Sengupta also comments on the uniqueness of Mohan's narrative, declaring that "it seems autobiographical in many places, such as the conversation with her grandmother while trying to decipher her recorded notes".

She adds, "[Mohan's] quest to seek answers to her questions on language takes her across oceans and countries without losing sight of her objective. Probing the hidden story of Sanskrit, she chronicles how it was the result not of an Aryan invasion but of an influx, with male-only small groups entering from northwestern India in search of resources and mating with local women, speaking local languages."

Sengupta further states, "She found that women and men spoke different tongues wherein the language of the menfolk - the 'father-tongue' - became the language of prestige and power, which boys were meant to learn to maintain patrilineal kinship. But local women/wives continued speaking in the local language variants with their children."

It is such elucidation in Mohan's narrative that brings out the correlation between the patriarchal enterprise of power-shift and language mixing, Sengupta declares.

Award-winning journalist-author Tony Joseph has praised *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants*, saying, "...Mohan takes the reader on a fascinating journey into the world of Indian languages. Weaving linguistics and history tightly together, she

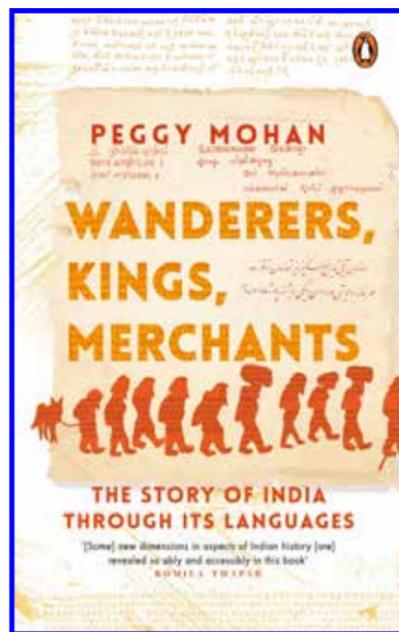
explores how waves of migration over millennia have left their mark on what we speak and how we speak. *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants* is an accessible account [and] a necessary read."

Mohan studied linguistics at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad, and at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her PhD dissertation is on Trinidad Bhojpuri.

She moved to India in 1979, where she taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Western music at the Vasant Valley School. *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants* is available on Amazon.



Peggy Mohan



Chilling details on how we endured the 'Storm of the Century'

The 'Storm of the Century' descended on us and left its mark in history! Forecasted to be a "once in a generation" event, it lived up to its billing and beyond. Coming in from the north and the Arctic, it swept in over the Northern Plains, through Canada and the US to the Gulf of Mexico. Climate change has been held responsible for this Christmas blast, according to the weather forecasters, and we are likely to experience more storms like these.

The call was for very bad weather, stretching over four days. The message was simple. Stock up. Stay off the roads. "Hold strain" till you get an all clear. The weather forecast was for blizzards with life-threatening wind chills affecting over 100 million folks. Curtail your Christmas travel plans by land, sea, or air. The temperature will drop 30-40 degrees Fahrenheit in a few hours. The messaging was clear and ominous!

By December 23, my wife and I had decided to cancel a car ride with a relative down to Virginia to spend Christmas with our daughter and family. I am of "the old school" who believe in listening to the authorities, and not endangering yourself and others in potentially very hazardous travel and road conditions.

Our daughter then gave us a chance to get a ticket to fly from Buffalo to Richmond Virginia on a flight out on December 23. We checked with an airport hotel in Buffalo, and the news was grim. They had no parking, and the airport would close, probably for a few days; which it did. Little would we realise that by the end of this storm, Buffalo would be described as the "Ground Zero" of the storm, with the highest number of storm related deaths.

We were about to pack to drive to Buffalo but our guardian angels were looking after us and we hunkered down to face the

storm at home.

Living close to the shores of Lake Erie, we soon tasted the lash of the storm on the morning of December 23. It snowed throughout the next four days! Sitting by our front window, we witnessed a blizzard had developed into fast flying snow, drifts several feet high, and howling winds for several days!

I had never seen the likes of this in the close to 60 years I have lived in Canada. We could not see our neighbour's house across the street through this cloud of snow.

Birds were trying to take shelter in the shrubs outside our window. Then a couple tried to escape by flying through our window into the house! They didn't make it. It was all I could do to prevent my wife from opening the door to let them in!

We had barely settled down when the hydro went. We had no heat or electricity for 17 hours after that!

We huddled in bed with a doubling of blankets amounting to nine blankets on top. I was still cold, hands, head, body, no sleep. I decided to get up and walk around (inside the house). I then got the brilliant idea of covering my head with a toque. Then I grabbed a pair of warm gloves, an extra pair of socks, a winter coat and headed to the basement to sit in front of our gas powered fireplace.

My wife and I sat there into the next day - Christmas Day. We managed to boil some water on our gas-fired stove and had a warm drink. Our Bell telephone was out for five days. A number of folks were trying to contact us. Luckily we had a cell phone.

We got up and looked across the street after two days and saw our neighbour's huge barn flattened to the ground, like it had been bombed! Contents spilled out in the yard. When we checked, our elderly neighbour had been rescued by her son

and taken to his place. Her poor cat was left behind, looking forlornly through the window.

After the hydro came back, we still did not have heat, as the thermostat had shut down, and had not turned on automatically. I fiddled with it and called for furnace repairs. The first repair technician said he was on his way. Then he called back and said he was blinded by snow on the road and couldn't come. Then his phone went dead.

Another appointment was made for a couple of days after, and he didn't show. A third appointment was made; seven days later we saw the technician.

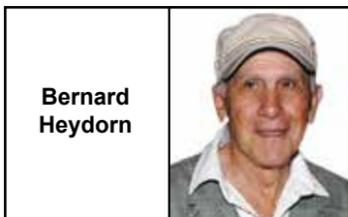
Incidentally, we have a new furnace and have had two breakdowns in three months! Fortunately, I was able to fiddle with the thermostat and got it working again. The temperature in our house had dropped to 10 degrees Centigrade. It took the better part of a day to warm up to comfort level.

Writing this seven days since the storm hit, and we have not been able to clear the driveway from the ice and drifting snow. We are still house bound. Luckily we have food and drinks to keep us going, and a gas stove to heat our supplies.

We thank our battery radio for keeping us informed and lifting our spirits. We thank the gods for protecting us. Branches have fallen in our yard, but not on our house. Our neighbours were not so lucky.

Many folks across the land in Canada and the US have been hard hit, with some citizens losing their lives. The number of lost lives is rising.

I have made an attempt to clear our driveway with our snowblower, but the layers of ice and snow were too much for the motor. I hope the thaw we are having now will set us free. Our family in Virginia was very disappointed that we could not get together, as are we. The Christmas of 2022 is one to forget! If the creeks don't rise, and the snow doesn't fly, I'll be talking to you.



Bernard Heydorn



President Paula-Mae Weekes during her 2018 inauguration; also in photo, from left, are former T&T President Anthony Carmona, Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, and Chief Justice Ivor Archie

Weekes' legacy tainted by PSC imbroglio

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago's Electoral College will meet on January 20 to appoint a President to replace the incumbent President Paula-Mae Weekes, who indicated last week that she will not seek a second term in office.

Weekes was appointed as Trinidad and Tobago's first female President on March 19, 2018, coming from a career in the legal fraternity that started in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in 1982. Following this, she served as a Justice of Appeal in Trinidad and Tobago, and later in the Turks and Caicos Islands. She retired in January 2018, ahead of her nomination to become President.

Weekes' exit from the presidency will see her leaving behind a legacy of public discontent with her tenure, mostly played out in social media, over her statements on some issues, and her silence on others.

She was often criticised by nationals for her perceived silence or inaction on national issues. However, at times she also outlined that she was acting within constitutional boundaries.

Last October she came into the public's glare following the opening of the Divali Nagar for stumbling over her pronunciation of several Hindi words.

She was thoroughly berated, mostly on social media, for what appeared to be a failure to prepare for, and to pre-read, her Divali Nagar speech, and for being unfamiliar with terms of Hinduism in a multi-cultural society. Among the words that were mispronounced were from the Sanatanist, Arya Samaj, Kabir Panth, and Ramanandi Sampradaya denominations.

However, key among the public's displeasure with Weekes' performance in office were the questions that were raised over the public figures at a private meeting at the Office of the President, which later became central to accusations that she had facilitated interference in the selection process of a Commissioner of Police in 2021.

She was asked to clarify whether Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley had met with her and former Police Services Commission chairman, Bliss Seepersad, over the reappointment of former Commissioner of Police Gary Griffith to the position. Griffith was replaced by current acting CoP, McDonald Jacob.

Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar later filed a motion in the Parliament pursuant to Section 36 of the Constitution, seeking the establishment of a tribunal to investigate the removal of the President in respect of the collapse of the PSC, and the aborted process of appointing a Police Commissioner.

Weekes then defended her office in a paid advertisement, which stated that the PSC had delivered an Order of Merit List for a substantive Police Commissioner on August 11, 2021, but withdrew it on the same day.

Her statement did not explain why the list was withdrawn. Earlier, she had indicated she would not address the question of who the official was that visited the Office of the President.

While the UNC's motion was unsuccessful, the PSC debacle has since left a lasting stain on her presidency.

Last week the media in Trinidad and Tobago reported on the views of political analysts, who were mostly negatively critical in their evaluations of Weekes' tenure.

Days before it became known that Weekes' would not seek a renewal, one analyst, Dr Indira Rampersad, said nationals should not rule out the possibility of Weekes returning, as any person would aspire to the office since it was more than likely the "best job" in the land.

"[Weekes] may very well want to go back, because it is really

a very cushy position. It is well paid [with] lots of benefits, and with little, not much to do... [You] have some portfolios.... but not much to do really. Anyone would want that. It is probably the best post in the land," Rampersad said.

Also weighing in on Weekes' legacy, political analysts Dr Hamid Ghany, Dr Winford James, and Dr Bishnu Ragoonath, all expressed disappointment over the PSC debacle, saying it had marred her term. The consequence of this was Weekes was vacating the office with disgrace, and not dignity.

As Ghany noted, Weekes's handling of the nomination process for the police commissioner placed her office, and her legacy, in a lot of difficulty.

Said Ghany: "I have a difficulty in the manner in which she received the notification from the [PSC], and then appears to have allowed herself to return it at the request of the chairman of the Police Commission, as opposed to the whole Commission, and [so] the nomination never made it to the House of Representatives."

This remains a controversy for which Weekes has not provided an adequate explanation to the public, he declared.

As Ghany noted, the statement Weekes provided as a paid newspaper advertisement fell "far short" of what could be considered a reasonable explanation.

He added, "I think that has tainted her presidency. She has a reputation for being a no-nonsense stickler for proper procedure, but when it came to that matter, her performance was less than stellar."

Ghany also noted the UNC took issue with the PSC imbroglio, and had the first-ever convening of the Electoral College for the impeachment of Weekes.

In his comments on Weekes' serving just one term, James speculated that it may have to do with the government withholding its support.

"There seems to be a fallout between her and the Prime Minister over the question of the merit list that the chairman of the [PSC] took to her, and took back. I can't understand why in the first place you have given a letter to the President, and then you are able to take it back," James said.

The list would have to be "handed back" to the person who gave it, he stated.

"It seems to me that something very wrong took place, and that has not been explained," he added.

Also, he declared that if the Prime Minister can intervene and cause that letter to be withdrawn, then the public ought to know what transpired.

James was also not satisfied with the Weekes' justification via the paid advertisement.

"I think there are questions still unanswered as to what happened and that uncertainty tarnished and tainted her reputation somewhat," he said.

Ragoonath also focused on the PSC imbroglio, adding that an explanation from Weekes would be too late now.

"Clearly, the debacle with the [PSC] would be a stain on her tenure, and not even an explanation at this point in time would suffice, because the legal luminaries would have to tell us under what grounds that should be able to happen, and that has not been, so that would always be a stain on her tenure," he said.

He added, "I am disappointed with her tenure. I was there at the inauguration. I heard her first speech. I thought it was the start of changes to come. I don't think she has made a mark of distinction in holding the office of the presidency, and there is a taint on her tenure."

2022 homicides cross 600

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago hitting 600 murders for the year was "a new and unwanted milestone", acting Police Commissioner Erla Christopher said last week.

The total number of homicides was the worse year ever for Trinidad and Tobago. The 2021 murder toll was 448.

In response to 2022's high total, Christopher said while it was easy to hold the police culpable, the "incessant and expected calls" by citizens for them to do something had not fallen on deaf ears.

"I know it is easy to blame us and shame us, and that comes with the territory. While others shoot, the target is always on the police's back," Christopher said.

Seizing illegal guns, anti-crime operations, increased and better training for officers while trying to prevent more young people joining gangs, were among some the initiatives being carried out by the police as they try to quell gang violence, she said.

Christopher added, "In the wake of a toll quickly rising to 600 murders recorded for the year 2022, the big questions on everyone's lips are, 'Why?', followed by, 'What is the TTPS doing about these murders?'"

Also, "Our data points to gang activity as the prevalent probable cause, and the prevailing weapon of choice as firearms. The choice that some make to be committed to gang ideals, and the availability of firearms remain our greatest vulnerabilities," she revealed.



Erla Christopher

With her role as a national "tasked with the responsibility to address issues of crime and security", Christopher said the present drives her "to resolve and sense of urgency to strategise and implement swift short-term and long-term interventions".

These interventions are meant to impact crime-reduction efforts and murders, which she stated would "improve the overall sense of safety for all who call Trinidad and Tobago home".

She also pointed to new initiatives that were launched last year, among them the GRACE Project, which was aimed at strengthening the society's ability to resist gang entry, and to enhance lifestyle choices away from criminal behaviour generally.

Another initiative now underway is The Community Policing Section, which she said is charged with engaging with communities across all ten policing divisions.

Meanwhile, UNC MP Dinesh Rambally last week said 2023 is positioned to become an even more violent and horrific year if there is no substantive plan to deal with the new and unprecedented levels of violent crime that was evident in 2022.

"We don't make this statement lightly. However, we're condemned to a most unfortunate fate if we don't learn from our past mistakes. Recent history has revealed how the government is unable to deal with crime," Rambally said.

He added "The year 2022 has been an historic year for all the wrong reasons. Over 600 fellow citizens have been murdered... their families and friends live with this trauma. Worse, the entire nation is witnessing members of the Rowley-led PNM government effectively abandoning their posts."

Rambally pointed out that the primary function of a government was to ensure the safety and security of the liberty and property of citizens.

However, he noted the present government has failed to meet this basic standard, and that the Rowley-led PNM government was "a catastrophic failure".

Rambally declared that nationals are now living in fear as criminals run rampant, with brazen home invasions, daylight robberies and killings now a regular part of life in Trinidad and Tobago.

Meanwhile, despite such a dire situation, the present government now in its second term has requested that nationals pray.

Said Rambally: "[Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley], I want to assure you that since you became Prime Minister, citizens have been praying non-stop! Instead of asking for divine intervention, try State intervention and doing your job as head of the National Security Council!"

He added, "Instead of solely seeking refuge in prayers and sympathetic spokespersons, we need to start acting on substantive data and actively pursue calculated policies that target criminals..."



Dinesh Rambally



Property damage from flooding at a beach house in Manzanilla



Flood waters undermine a foundation at a beach house in Manzanilla

Looters target flood-affected businesses in Manzanilla-Mayaro

Port-of-Spain – Homes affected by flooding along the Manzanilla coastline are being targeted by looters, with homeowners complaining of property being carted off worth thousands of dollars.

In the absence of homeowners in the abandoned houses, the thieves have been stealing household appliances, furniture, water tanks, air condition units, water pumps, 100-pound gas cylinders, and generators.

Residents in these houses were forced to evacuate after floods damaged the Manzanilla-Mayaro Road during heavy rainfall in November.

The landslips, roadway erosion, and flood waters also disrupted the operations of several beach houses after collapsed roads were closed by the Ministry of Works and Transport. Following the damage, as a temporary fix, the ministry is now constructing a (TT) \$12 million access roadway alongside the impassable area.

However, even as contractors Kallco Ltd and Namalco Construction work on the temporary roadway, thieves have been visiting and emptying the abandoned houses.

Resident Mangree Sookhoo lost her entire beach house when it collapsed during the floods. Last week she told the media that looters had since carted away numerous items from the seafront commercial property.

“They stole quite a lot. My gas tank, a big stove, water tanks,

and other stuff are gone,” a sobbing Sookhoo said.

Sookhoo revealed that she sold her clothing store in Arima, and had invested in the beach house.

“This is how I started earning a dollar. Now everything is gone... the house, and what was inside it. It’s really a hard blow, not only for me, but all the other residents who were affected. I would say it is heart-breaking.”

Late last week she was removing the few items that were not looted for safekeeping elsewhere.

“I have three beds in the house. I [returned for them] otherwise they will take it. I have to move fast,” she said.

Sookhoo added, “I had no idea these bandits were stealing me out. If the neighbours didn’t notify me, I would not have known.”

Meanwhile, Sookhoo’s neighbour, Sanjay Lingo, has been keeping a vigilant eye on, and closely guarding, the A La Manzan Beach House property, which was partially destroyed during the flood.

According to Lingo, late last month he saw four men lurking around the property after midnight.

“I created an alarm and they ran to the back of the house and disappeared. I was too scared to come out,” he recalled.

Lingo said on checking the premises the next morning, he discovered that the thieves had been unsuccessful in breaking into the storage room with the water pump and a generator.

“They tried to break the lock but were not successful,” he said.

The spate of looting have left homeowners anxious and apprehensive, Lingo stated.

“These bandits don’t care. In the middle of our troubles and adversities, they are coming to thief from us. Some of them are so desperate and thirsty, the flood water [has not] even subsided, and they coming after us. What will they do next?” he said.

Additionally, “Imagine you going through stress and frustration not knowing how you will bounce back, and they distressing you further. And to compound matters, the police not helping.”

Another resident, Arfhard Mohammed, told the media he alerted family members after seeing a group of 20 men wading through knee-high water in his yard.

“I know they were coming to steal, so I started to bawl out to four family members who were upstairs and they rushed outside. When the men saw all of us they backed down and hastily left. This happened shortly after noon. So, they are coming in the day and night to steal.”

Mohammed said the men were eyeing his all-terrain vehicle that was parked in the yard, and which he uses at night to patrol the area.

“I could tell you many homes have been targeted. We have become sitting ducks up here,” he said.



Colm Imbert

T&T govt adds funds to HSF

Port-of-Spain – The government of Trinidad and Tobago has deposited (US) \$345 million (TT \$2.3 billion) into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund for 2022, Finance Minister Colm Imbert said last week.

Imbert made the revelation via Twitter, saying that on December 23 the government had deposited (US) \$182 million (TT \$1.2 billion) in the rainy day fund. It was a move aimed at preserving wealth for future generations, he added.

The funds for the deposit came from higher than-estimated revenues from petroleum, a result of higher-than-expected oil and gas prices.

In the last quarterly report of the HSF on the Ministry of Finance’s website at the end of June 2022, the total value of the HSF stood at (US) \$4.77 billion, around (US) \$528 million lower than the previous quarter’s closing value of (US) \$5.29 billion.

Economist Dr Vaalmikki Arjoon described Imbert’s revelation as “quite welcoming, especially since in 2016 the government withdrew approximately (US) \$2.5 billion to meet budgetary shortfalls – moreso during the pandemic”.

Arjoon added the deposit would help to restore part of the HSF’s value lost early last year, a result of contraction in global equity and bond markets during the first six months of 2022.

Barbados’ PM Mottley pays tribute to Black Stalin

Bridgetown – Anyone who knows anything about me knows that I love music. It is key to all that I do. The truth is one of those early artistes who centred me and gave me context and perspective was Black Stalin [Leroy Calliste – died December 28, 2022]. He had a way of drilling down always to the core – his message always rooted in truth, justice and solidarity.

Black Stalin was one of our region’s finest masters of calypso; both his lyrics and his melodies expertly captured the rhythm and vibe and voice of the Caribbean.

He was acutely conscious of our shared history, culture, passions and concerns, and expressed them in his songs in a way we never could ourselves. In the true tradition of calypso, Black Stalin was also a *griot*, chronicling the issues and philosophies impacting our daily lives.

No more so was it evident than in that iconic Caribbean anthem that remains our holy grail of the Caribbean civilisation. Who else has more poignantly reminded us that “we are one people on the same trip coming on the same ship”; “pushing one common intention for a better life for we women and we children. That must be the ambition of the Caribbean man”, even more so, as we get ready to celebrate 50 years of Caricom in 2023.

Not to be limited to the Caribbean region, Black Stalin emboldened those of us fighting the consequences of colonialism and the horror of apartheid with his exhortations to Peter in *Bun Dem*. This was a powerful reminder of the exploitation and the oppression of black people by whoever and wherever. Yes, his intention was achieved – to empower us with the resolve to keep fighting the battle for justice.

Black Stalin’s songs were really about nation-building, a task to which he was as committed as any Caribbean leader. Yes, he reminded us early on that ‘Dorothy’ and the tales of jamming

her would have to take second place to his concerns as to where the oil money went.

But perhaps his most far-reaching song was yet another anthem – that of the Black Man. After centuries of dehumanisation of the Black man and the Black woman, Black Stalin validated the importance and dignity of the Black Man (after all his hard work and struggles) to be able **just** to fete with his woman.

Yes, he saw us all!

Our Black Stalin reminded us of the real concern of “sufferers” – not to be wallowing in bigotry nor to be used as a background for many others in their causes, but in being singularly concerned as to where the next meal is coming from. Never forget it!

We give thanks for the life, work and passion of Leroy Calliste, who at the time of our Caribbean nation-building reminded us always that “We can make it if we try”.

I was unapologetic in using its power of inspiration. A song without boundaries and sovereignty – a tribute simply to the human spirit.

This was one of the key songs that I chose during the Covid-19 pandemic to use on the highways and by-ways across Barbados as we worked to encourage our people to stay the course and to keep our heads above water.

We urged as he would – as we all knew – that if we simply try and work together, *Better Days are Coming!*

We in the Caribbean have lost one of our greatest nation-builders. Each word of his, each sentence of his, carefully crafted by a maestro to tell **our** story of the Caribbean and **our** people. **Our Story!**

May we work hard to keep his music alive across this Caribbean with each succeeding generation.

May his work inspire others, as it has me on my life’s journey.

Tribute posted on Mia Mottley’s Facebook page



Mia Mottley



Black Stalin

The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

Top composers who have given Bollywood its memorable & eternal music



R. D. Burman

He is unquestionably one of the music composers who revolutionized the music of Indian cinema. His style of music was greatly influenced by Western, Arabic, Latin, Oriental music, which he fused with Indian music to create his compositions.

He is a recipient of three Filmfare Awards and innumerable other accolades in his three-and-a-half decade long career.

Some of his many immortal musical tracks include his compositions in films like *Yaadon ki baarat* (1973), *The Great Gambler* (1979), *Padosan* (1968), *Caravan* (1971), and *Sholay* (1975).



Jatin Lalit

Jatin Pandit and his brother Lalit Pandit, popularly known as Jatin-Lalit are a music composer duo renowned for their mellifluous compositions, especially in the 1990s. It is quite impossible to come across a playlist of musical hits from the 1990s without a Jatin Lalit track in it.

They have composed music for films like *Dilwale dulhania le jayenge* (1995), *Jo jeeta wohi sikandar* (1992), *Kabhi haan kabhi na* (1994), *Kuch kuch hota hai* (1998), *Ghulam* (1998), *Yes Boss* (1997), *Sarfarosh* (1999), *Fanaa* (2006), *Hum tum* (2004), and many more.

It is hard to believe that despite the popularity and acclaim their music received, Jatin Lalit did not win a Filmfare Award.



Vishal Shekhar

Vishal Dadlani and Shekhar Ravjiani, popularly known as Vishal Shekhar, are a music composer duo known for their compositions in films like *Salaam Namaste* (2005), *Tararum pum* (2007), *Om Shanti Om* (2007), *Anjana Anjani* (2010), *Student of the Year* (2012), *Chennai Express* (2013), *Hasee toh Phasee* (2014), *Bang Bang* (2014), *Bharat* (2019). They started their career in the late 1990s with the film *Pyaar mei kabhi kabhi* (1999) and have composed music for over 50 Bollywood films.

Bollywood wouldn't be Bollywood without its music. It wouldn't be wrong to say that music is the soul of Bollywood. Here are some of the composers who have given Indian cinema some of its best and eternally memorable music over the years.



A.R. Rahman

Known as the Musical Wizard, A.R. Rahman is indubitably one of the greatest music composers of Indian cinema, with 15 Filmfare Awards to his name. He is also a recipient of numerous other accolades, including two Academy Awards and two Grammy Awards for the 2008 film *Slumdog Millionaire*.

He started his career in 1992 with Mani Ratnam's *Roja*, for which he also won a Filmfare Award and a National Film Award for Best Music.

Rahman's music is acclaimed not just in India, but across the globe. Some of his prominent compositions in Bollywood include tracks from films like *Lagaan* (2001), *Saathiya* (2002), *Swades* (2004), *Rang de Basanti* (2006), *Guru* (2007), *Jaane tu ya jaane na* (2008), and *Jab tak hai jaan* (2012).



Kalyanji Anandji

The music director duo Kalyanji-Anandji were among the most acclaimed music composers of Indian cinema. In their four-and-a-half-decade long career, Kalyanji Virji Shah and Anandji Virji Shah together composed music for over 200 films, including *Don* (1978), *Muqaddar ka Sikandar* (1978), and *Kora Kagaz* (1974), for which they also won a Filmfare Award.



O.P. Nayyar

One of the most prominent music composers of Indian cinema is Omkar Prasad Nayyar, more popularly known as O.P. Nayyar. He started his career in the early 1950s and was renowned for his melodious peppy music. In his four-and-a-half-decade long career, he composed music for several films including *Mr and Mrs 55* (1955), *CID* (1956), and for the 1957 film *Naya Daur*, for which he also won the Filmfare Award for Best Music.



Sneha Khanwalkar

Sneha Khanwalkar is an Indian music director best known for her score for the film, *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!*, and for *Gangs of Wasseypur Part 1 & Part 2*. She was nominated in Best Music Director category at the 58th Filmfare Awards for *Gangs of Wasseypur Part 1 & Part 2*. She is only the second woman to gain a nomination in this category 28 years after Usha Khanna.

In 2004, she scored the movie *The Hope*, which competed at the Internationales Filmfest Emden in Germany. She also did the title track for Ruchi Narain's film, *KAL - Yesterday and Tomorrow* (2005). Her big break came with the movie *Go* (2007), which was produced by Ram Gopal Varma.



Shankar Ehsaan Loy

The trio of Shankar Mahadevan, Ehsaan Noorani and Loy Mendonsa, popularly known as Shankar Ehsaan Loy, are among Bollywood's finest of music composers. They started their career in the late 1990s with the film *Shool* (1999), but their major breakthrough came with the 2001 film *Dil Chahta Hai*, for which they won the Filmfare RD Burman Award for new music talent.

They are recipients of five Filmfare Awards, and have composed music for several commercially successful films including *Kal Ho Na Ho* (2003), *Rock On* (2008), *Taare Zameen par* (2007), *Wake up Sid* (2009), *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011), *2 States* (2014), and many more.



Bappi Lahiri

Known as the Disco King, Bappi Lahiri is one of the most eminent music composers of Bollywood. He started his career in Bollywood in 1973 with the film *Nanha Shikari*, and is considered to be one of the pioneers in introducing disco music to Indian cinema. He has composed music for over 50 Bollywood films, including *Disco Dancer* (1982), *Namak Halal* (1982), and *Sharaabi* (1984).

Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2, The Kashmir Files among the best 2022 films from India

By Sweta Kaushal

Now that all major releases of the year are done with, I am fairly comfortable charting out my list of best films from India.

In the year 2022, movie buffs finally flocked to theatres (after a gap of nearly two years since the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak) and Anees Bazmee's *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2* revived the theatrical business for Hindi cinema. But the sequel to the Akshay Kumar-starrer 2007 original, came months after the commercial success of non-Hindi films in the traditional Hindi circuits across India.

Kartik Aaryan's *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2* was the first Hindi film to score a box office numbers in the same ranks as those of films such as *KGF Chapter 2* and *RRR*.

Before the horror-comedy, *The Kashmir Files* also made impressive figures at the box office, but the film was marred with political controversies, and the subject and its treatment in the film also made it impossible for *The Kashmir Files* to be bracketed as the typical Bollywood film.

Through the year 2022, movies such as *Monica O My Darling*, and *Badhaai Do* matched steps, and proved that Hindi films are here to not just stay, but to entertain one and all.

Here is my list of best films that came out in the year 2022 (This is not a ranking):

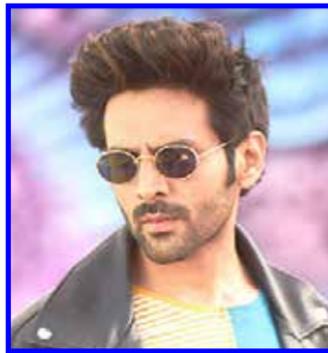
Monica O My Darling: Directed by Vasan Bala, the movie features Rajkummar Rao, Huma Qureshi, Radhika Apte, and Sikander Kher. An adaptation of the Japanese novel *Burutasu No Shinzou* by Keigo Higashino, Netflix original *Monica O My Darling* is a well-crafted, quirky murder mystery. And Bala does not restrict the film to the genre – the film is peppered with the most enjoyable pop references, and also offers a fun take on life, machines, and human behaviour.

Qureshi is in her best elements as Monica in the film. She is playful, smart, beautiful, and also villainous. Writers Yogesh Chandekar and Bala have come up with the quirkiest lines, and the ones for Monica are hilarious, mean, and empowering at the same time.

While I see her villainy, it is sheer joy to see a Hindi

film's woman modeled with complete femininity (no traits of masculinity are enforced to denote the power she wields), as someone who behaves with such power and strength as Monica. The same goes for Apte's fun cop act. These may not be the first ones, but they certainly are rare.

Badhaai Do: This is one of the best Hindi films that talks about queer spaces, marriages, and their positioning in the contemporary Indian society. It is directed by Harshvardhan Kulkarni and Rajkummar Rao; Gulshan Devaiah, Chum Darang and Bhumi Pednekar play the lead roles of a cop, a lawyer, a paramedic, and a physical education teacher.



Kartik Aaryan

Through the story of a lavender marriage, *Badhaai Do* builds the much-required bridge to bring the queer, and their families together. It also features one of the most lovely, warm and playful acts by Devaiah. Right from his first scene, to the last one where the entire worlds of the lead characters come together, he is a sumptuous treat each time he is in the frame.

The Kashmir Files: This movie is about the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits, who were killed in the 1990s in the Indian valley of Kashmir. The film was surrounded by controversies, and a few even questioned its authenticity. The makers insist the film is based on the personal accounts of several families of the victims. The politics of the director – Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri – may be a subject of debate, but *The Kashmir Files* is undoubtedly a deftly-written, tightly-edited cinematic experience that is backed by strong performances.

The opening sequence of the film outlines the innocence of childhood and also showcases communal harmony. Throughout the film, Agnihotri brings a horrific genocide that is part of Indian history, and does so with a film that is also a visual spectacle. In a film featuring veteran actors such as Anupam Kher and Mithun Chakraborty, it is surprising to see Pallavi Joshi outshine all of them. Joshi's introductory scene outlines the politics of the film, but it also brings out the best of her skills.

Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2: Kartik Aaryan hit the jackpot of his career with Anees Bazmee's directorial venture *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*. The film also stars Kiara Advani and Tabu in important

roles. It is unapologetically a Bollywood masala film, but it also wonderfully packs all the elements of an entertainer.

Tabu's and Aaryan's performances particularly lift up the movie. She plays a double role and aces both the aggressive and sweeter parts equally.

Aaryan, on the other hand, carries the entire film on his shoulders. His acts as a possessed man, and the dance to the song *Aami Je Tomar* deserve special mention. Vidya Balan danced to the same song and gave a hair-raising performance in the 2007 film *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*. Aaryan's craft ensures you do not miss her.

RK/RKay: Rajat Kapoor's latest is the trippy film *RK/RKay* – a meta film about the process of film-making. It also showcases the identity crisis where one wonders whether life is driven by predestination or by free will.

Interestingly, it is a crowd-funded film that displays the names of all those who contributed in the opening credits. It has clear references to Woody Allen and Guru Dutt, and the film also interweaves humour with the existential questions of commerce versus art.

Chup: The Revenge of An Artist: R. Balki's 2022 outing was another trippy film – it was about a killer who targets movie critics and carves out stars on their foreheads (for each fake star they give to a film). The film was like an ode to Guru Dutt – his famous frames oft-used for the film, his songs double-up as the backdrop, and his passion for films is a major trigger for the narrative, as well as the killer. Amitabh Bachchan composed a music piece for the end credits of the movie. The movie stars Dulquer Salmaan and Sunny Deol in lead roles.

An Action Hero: An entertaining Bollywood film about a Bollywood hero weighed down with how his stardom and a series of chance events render him a murder suspect. Debutante film-maker Anirudh Iyer manages to weave the edge-of-the-seat suspense drama with all the elements of an entertainer – a special song-and-dance sequence, fight scenes, picturesque locations, and a hero who is not apologetic for his flaws, but is still the one who gets to win it all.

An Action Hero features some brilliant performances by Jaideep Ahlawat and Ayushmann Khurrana. The film also has special appearances by Akshay Kumar, Malaika Arora, and Nora Fatehi.



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Nicholas Pooran



Sam Curran



Akeal Hosein



Sunil Narine



Andre Russell

Pooran scores big-time with hefty Lucknow Super Giants' purchase

Trinidad and Tobago international cricketer Nicholas Pooran became the most expensive wicketkeeper and Caribbean national in Indian Premier League auction history when he was bought by Lucknow Super Giants for a record (US) \$1.93 million late last month. He is the ex-West Indies white-ball skipper.

Pooran was well sought after at the mini-auction in Kochi, the capital of Kerala in India, with Chennai Super Kings, Rajasthan Royals, Delhi Capitals, and Lucknow Super Giants placing huge bids. His 2022 IPL outfit, Sunrisers Hyderabad, released him after just one season, in which he scored 306 runs from 14 matches. He has also played with the Punjab Kings.

Over his four IPL seasons, Pooran averaged 26.06 with a strike rate of 151.24.

Pooran will play alongside fellow West Indians Romario Shepherd (Guyana), who was also bought by the club, and Kyle Mayers (Barbados), who was retained.

However, despite Pooran's record-breaking buy as a West

Indian player, England all-rounder Sam Curran was sold for a record price of (US) \$2.2 million to Punjab Kings.

Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians, Lucknow Super Giants and Rajasthan Royals all got involved in the bidding for Curran, forcing the price up, before Punjab won out.

Curran was outstanding in the 2022 ICC T20 World Cup, taking 13 wickets – including 3-12 against Pakistan in the final, for the eventual champions England.

Additionally, Trinidad and Tobago left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein will make his IPL debut for the 2023 edition, as he was bought in the second round by Sunrisers Hyderabad for just over (US) \$120,000.

Hosein is 29 years old, and is the only West Indian player on the team's player list. However, he will be joined by countryman Brian Lara, who was appointed coach of the franchise in September. Hosein is currently playing for Melbourne Renegades in the Big Bash League.

Trinidad and Tobago's Sunil Narine and Jamaica's Andre

Russell were retained by the Kolkata Knight Riders. Guyana's Shimron Hetmyer was also retained by Rajasthan Royals, with the franchise purchasing Jason Holder for (US) \$390,000.

Jamaican Rovman Powell (Delhi Capitals) and Antiguan fast bowler Alzarri Joseph (Gujarat Titans), were both retained by their respective teams. Jamaican, Odean Smith, was bought by Gujarat for just under (US) \$34,000.

Two noteworthy omissions from IPL player lists for the 2023 season are former players turned coaches: Trinidad and Tobago's Kieron Pollard (Mumbai Indians), and Dwayne Bravo (Chennai Super Kings).

In November, Pollard announced his retirement from the IPL as a player, after 11 years, and was appointed as the franchise's batting coach.

A few days later, in early December, Bravo also retired from his IPL playing career to take up the role of CSK's bowling coach. For Mumbai Indians and CSK, Pollard and Bravo are the only West Indians on each team.

Pandya takes India lead for Sri Lanka T20Is

Hardik Pandya is now leading India in the three-match T20I series that is underway at home against Sri Lanka, with Suryakumar Yadav in the role as vice-captain, *ESPNcricinfo* has reported.

Meanwhile, Rohit Sharma is set to return for the three ODIs that follow.

Virat Kohli and K.L. Rahul are also not part of the T20I squad. Also, Shikhar Dhawan was omitted from the ODI set-up after a poor run in Bangladesh, where he scored only 18 runs in three innings at a strike rate of 51.42.

Rishabh Pant has not been included in either the ODI or the T20I squad against Sri Lanka, having been given a break from the ODI series in Bangladesh. However, he returned for the two Tests to score a rapid 93 in the victory in Mirpur.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India's release that followed the selection meeting did not specify which players had been rested, dropped,

or injured. The meeting was led by BCCI's Chairman of the Selection Committee, Chetan Sharma.

While Rahul is part of the ODI squad, he was not named vice-captain, with Hardik taking over as Rohit's deputy in his first 50-over series since the tour of England in July. Rahul had recently led India in the third ODI in Bangladesh after Rohit was ruled out with a thumb injury.

Ravindra Jadeja did not feature in either squad, as he continues his recovery from a knee injury. He last played for India at the Asia Cup in UAE in August-September last year, and subsequently underwent surgery.

Jadeja's inclusion for the Bangladesh tour was provisional, but he was later withdrawn after NCA medical staff deemed him "not fully fit".

According to *ESPNcricinfo*, Jadeja's recovery is taking longer than expected, and while an exact date for his return is unknown, the team is keen to have him back for the four-Test series against Australia starting in February.

He could play in a Ranji Trophy game for Saurashtra, subject to permission, to prove his match fitness ahead of that series.

The selectors chose a young pace attack for the T20Is against Sri Lanka, with missing faces being Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Mohammed Shami. They were both part of the 2022 T20 World Cup squad

However, Shami is back in the ODI setup for the first time since the tour of England in June-July last year. He was with-

drawn from the recent tour of Bangladesh because of a shoulder injury.

After fetching big money at the IPL 2023 auction late last month, Uttar Pradesh's Shivam Mavi, and Bengal's Mukesh Kumar earned maiden T20I call-ups. In last year's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, Mavi had picked up ten wickets in seven games at an economy of 6.64, with Mukesh performing six in six at 7.04.

The T20I squad also features Harshal Patel and Umran Malik, whose most-recent T20I was in June last year against England.

According to the *ESPNcricinfo* report, Harshal had contracted Covid-19 upon his return from New Zealand, and was asked to rest from the first two rounds of the Ranji Trophy as a precautionary measure.

He was subsequently given a fitness clearance ahead of the selection meeting.

Arshdeep Singh is back in the ODI squad after making his debut on the recent tour of New Zealand but missing the subsequent trip to Bangladesh. He is yet to take a wicket in ODIs after going wicketless in two matches in New Zealand.

Middle-order batter Rajat Patidar and spin allrounder Shahbaz Ahmed are the other omissions from the ODI squad after the recent series in Bangladesh, where neither played a game. Neither was Deepak Chaharwas, who had pulled out of the tour of Bangladesh with a hamstring strain.

At the start of an ODI World Cup year, India begin their home season by hosting Sri Lanka for three T20Is in Mumbai (January 3), Pune (January 5) and Rajkot (January 7), and three ODIs in Guwahati (January 10), Kolkata (January 12) and Thiruvananthapuram (January 15), after which they will also host New Zealand and Australia before the IPL.

India's squad for Sri Lanka T20Is

Hardik Pandya (captain), Ishan Kishan (wicketkeeper), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav (vice-captain), Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Sanju Samson, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi, and Mukesh Kumar.

India's quad for Sri Lanka ODIs

Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, K.L. Rahul (wicketkeeper), Ishan Kishan (wicketkeeper), Hardik Pandya (vice-captain), Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umran Malik, and Arshdeep Singh.



Andre Coley

Coley now WI interim coach

Head coach of the Cricket West Indies Academy programme Andre Coley has been reassigned as interim coach of the men's team for two upcoming tours, the *Caribbean Media Corporation* reported last week.

However, assistant coaches Roddy Estwick and Monty Desai will not have their contracts renewed, CWI announced.

Coley will oversee the team for the two-Test tour of Zimbabwe from January 28 to February 16, as well as the multi-format tour of South Africa, which includes two Tests, three ODIs, and three T20Is from February 21 to March 28.

The decision followed a meeting of CWI's Board of Directors last month. Following the meeting, Director of Cricket Jimmy Adams said Coley was a good fit for the job.

"With his wealth of knowledge of the game, player-management skills, dedication and hard work, as well as attention to detail, we know he is well-equipped," Adams said.

Coley will temporarily replace Phil Simmons, who resigned following the West Indies' shocking exit from the group stage of the ICC T20 World Cup in October.

Adams also confirmed that the contracts of Estwick and Desai had ended.

"I'd like to thank Roddy and Monty for their hard work and dedication in supporting the team over the last few years and wish them the very best in the future," he said.

Coley was honoured to have been chosen for the position.

"To be asked to oversee the West Indies team on the upcoming tours of Zimbabwe and South Africa is a special honour. West Indies cricket holds a special place in my heart," he said.

He added, "The upcoming assignment will be challenging as we will come up against two teams in their home conditions. We will need to ensure that our planning and preparation are appropriate, and demonstrate consistency in the execution of these plans, to give ourselves the best opportunity to achieve positive results."



Shikha Pandey

Pandey makes return to T20I & World Cup

All rounder Shikha Pandey has made a return to India's T20I squad for the tri-series, and for the World Cup in South Africa this year, the cricket website *ESPNcricinfo* reported last week. Meanwhile, Pooja Vastrakar has been included "subject to fitness".

Pandey last played for India on the tour of Australia in October 2021. Since then she has been working her way back onto the international field with strong performances at the domestic cricket level.

India's seam attack will now see her taking the lead, along with Renuka Singh and Vastrakar. Rookie left-armer Anjali Sarvani is also included in the lineup. Sarvani made her debut in the recent five-match T20I series against Australia at home.

Seamer Meghna Singh is not part of the squad, but will be in the reserves alongside batter S. Meghana and all rounder Sneha Rana.

Singh featured in the Australia T20Is, but went wicketless in the two matches she played against Australia. She conceded runs at 13.66 an over.

However, all three reserve players, are part of India's squad for the tri-series in South Africa in the lead-up to the World Cup.

Pandey took 11 wickets in seven matches in the senior women's domestic T20 competition, with an impressive economy of 4.28. She was also equally impressive for South Zone in the inter-zonal T20s, picking up five wickets in three games at an economy of 4.05. She also captained Goa.

Meanwhile, Vastrakar is currently recovering from an unspecified injury, which has kept her out of action since October last year.

India have stuck to their strengths by picking a spin-heavy attack for the T20 World Cup, led by allrounder Deepti Sharma and Rajeshwari Gayakwad, with Devika Vaidya's ability to bowl legspin in addition to her middle-order batting strength.

Richa Ghosh will be the first-choice wicketkeeper in the Harmanpreet Kaur-led squad. Ghosh is set to play in the inaugural Under-19 World Cup this month. Yastika Bhatia, the left-hand middle-order batter, has been named as back-up.

There were no major surprises in the batting line-up, with

Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, and Harleen Deol all in the mix. Like Ghosh, the India Under-19 captain Shafali will head into the competition on the back of the junior World Cup campaign.

With both Shafali and Ghosh missing from the tri-series involving West Indies and South Africa, the selectors have rewarded Punjab batter Amanjot Kaur with a maiden India call-up for her domestic form.

Amanjot was Punjab's top run-getter in the domestic T20s, hitting 192 runs in six innings at a strike rate of 105.49.

There was also a comeback for wicketkeeper Sushma Verma, who was picked in the tri-series squad. Sushma was the third highest run-scorer in the Senior Women's T20 Trophy, making 237 runs in seven innings at a strike rate of 105.80. She had played the last of her 19 T20Is in 2016, and is one of two wicketkeepers in the squad alongside Yastika.

India are still searching for their maiden world title, and were runners-up to Australia at the previous T20 World Cup in 2020. The team sits alongside England, West Indies, Pakistan, and Ireland in Group B.

India will open their campaign against Pakistan on February 12 in Cape Town. The first match in the tri-series that precedes the World Cup is slated for January 19 against hosts South Africa.

Squad for Women's T20 World Cup 2023

Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Yastika Bhatia (wicketkeeper), Richa Ghosh (wicketkeeper) Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Devika Vaidya, Radha Yadav, Renuka Thakur, Anjali Sarvani, Pooja Vastrakar, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Shikha Pandey. Reserves: S. Meghana, Sneha Rana, Meghna Singh.

Squad for tri-series in South Africa

Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Yastika Bhatia (wicketkeeper), Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Devika Vaidya, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Radha Yadav, Renuka Thakur, Meghna Singh, Anjali Sarvani, Sushma Verma (wicketkeeper), Amanjot Kaur, Pooja Vastrakar, S. Meghana, Sneha Rana, Shikha Pandey.

Lanning returns to helm for ODIs in Pakistan

Australia captain Meg Lanning will return to international cricket for the upcoming ODI series against Pakistan, *The Guardian* reported last week. She took an extended break in August following Australia's ODI World Cup triumph and the Commonwealth Games gold medal in Birmingham. She is returning as captain.

Lanning said she would miss the WBBL season, and would instead embark on an international holiday to explore alternative career options.

When Lanning took her leave it was unclear whether she would return at all, or would regain her role as captain. She is now 30 years old.

Meanwhile, during Lanning's absence, vice-captain Alyssa Healy led the side in the 4-1 away T20 series win over India, but injured her right calf during that trip. Healy will miss the Pakistan games.

According to *The Guardian*, Lanning was spotted training in Melbourne late last year. The sighting fuel speculation she might

be returning to the game.

All rounder Tahlia McGrath will act as Lanning's deputy throughout the series, with the first three matches taking place from January 16 to January 21 in Brisbane and Sydney.

McGrath captained Australia for the first time for the last game of the India series after Healy's injury.

National selector Shawn Flegler is delighted to once again have Lanning available. "Meg brings so much to the side both on and off the field, and it's pleasing to welcome her back at such an important time with the [upcoming] T20 World Cup," he said.

He added, "While we welcome Meg back, Alyssa won't have recovered from her calf injury in time, so that presents an opportunity for Beth [Mooney] to take the gloves in her absence."

The squad for the following three T20Is against Pakistan and the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa is yet to be announced.



Meg Lanning

Cricket Schedule

(ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Monday January 2, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2022-2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 2nd Test, Day 1,
National Stadium, Karachi, 10:00 AM

Tuesday January 3, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2022-2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 2nd Test, Day 2,
National Stadium, Karachi, 10:00 AM

Sri Lanka tour of India, 2023
India vs Sri Lanka, 1st T20I, Wankhede Stadium,
Mumbai, 07:00 PM

Wednesday January 4, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2022-2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 2nd Test, Day 3,
National Stadium, Karachi, 10:00

South Africa tour of Australia, 2022-2023
Australia vs South Africa, 3rd Test, Day 1,
Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM

Thursday January 5, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2022-2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 2nd Test, Day 4,
National Stadium, Karachi, 10:00 AM

South Africa tour of Australia, 2022-2023
Australia vs South Africa, 3rd Test, Day 2,
Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM

Sri Lanka tour of India, 2023
India vs Sri Lanka, 2nd T20I, Maharashtra
Cricket Association Stadium, Pune, 07:00 PM

Friday January 6, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2022-2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 2nd Test, Day 5,
National Stadium, Karachi, 10:00 AM

South Africa tour of Australia, 2022-2023
Australia vs South Africa, 3rd Test, Day 3,
Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM

Saturday January 7, 2023

South Africa tour of Australia, 2022-2023
Australia vs South Africa, 3rd Test, Day 4,
Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM

Sri Lanka tour of India, 2023
India vs Sri Lanka, 3rd T20I, Saurashtra Cricket
Association Stadium, Rajkot, 7:00 PM

Sunday January 8, 2023

South Africa tour of Australia, 2022-2023
Australia vs South Africa, 3rd Test, Day 5,
Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 10:30 AM

Monday January 9, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2022-2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 1st ODI, National
Stadium, Karachi, 2:30 PM

Tuesday January 10, 2023

Sri Lanka tour of India, 2023
India vs Sri Lanka, 1st ODI, Barsapara Cricket
Stadium, Guwahati, 01:30 PM

Wednesday January 11, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2022-2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 2nd ODI, National
Stadium, Karachi, 2:30 PM

Thursday January 12, 2023

Ireland tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs Ireland, 1st T20I, Harare Sports
Club, Harare, 1:00 PM

South Africa tour of Australia, 2022-2023
Australia vs South Africa, 1st ODI, Bellerive
Oval, Hobart, 1:30 PM

Sri Lanka tour of India, 2023

India vs Sri Lanka, 2nd ODI, Eden Gardens,
Kolkata, 1:30 PM.

Friday January 13, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2022-2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 3rd ODI, National
Stadium, Karachi, 2:30 PM

Saturday January 14, 2023

Ireland tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs Ireland, 2nd T20I, Harare Sports
Club, Harare, 1:00 PM

South Africa tour of Australia, 2022-2023
Australia vs South Africa, 2nd ODI, Sydney
Cricket Ground, Sydney, 12:40 PM

Sunday January 15, 2023

Ireland tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs Ireland, 3rd T20I, Harare, 1:00 PM

Sri Lanka tour of India, 2023
India vs Sri Lanka, 3rd ODI, Greenfield Int.
Stadium, Thiruvananthapuram, 1:30 PM.



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