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INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

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A slice of Trinidad & Tobago was in evidence last weekend when its spicy preparation of fruit was featured at the United Association Local 46 Family Picnic. Known as 'Chow', it was a hit at the Local 46 event, with the seasoned Chowfest veteran, 'Chowmeister' Bob Pooran (left in photo) titillating visitors with his savoury fruit snack. See story on Page 12.

History was made earlier this month when Judge Andrea Sabita Ogle became the first Guyanese woman to be elected to the bench in Queens County, New York. Attending the historic June 16 swearing-in with Judge Ogle (second from right) were (left to right) Guyana's Consul General to New York, Michael Brotherson, Simone-Marie Meeks, & US Congressman Greg Meeks. See story on Page 15.

CGCC planning women in business trade delegation

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – In yet another signal indicating growing strength and an ongoing commitment to its mission of synergy, collaboration, and relationship-building, the Canada Guyana Chamber of Commerce is now making plans to take a trade delegation of Canadian women in business to meet counterparts in Guyana this fall.

To this end, the CGCC will host an information session tomorrow evening in Toronto. The event starts at 6:00 p.m., and will be held at the Canadiana Restaurant, 5230 Dundas Street West, in Etobicoke.

Launched in December 2020, and following its successful gala and fund-raiser in September last year, the CGCC continues to fulfil and build on its mission to facilitate two-way trade and investment opportunities between Canada and Guyana.

At this time, Guyana's economy is continuing to trend upwards, and remains on the radar as one of the fastest growing nations in the world.

The latest move by the CGCC with the trade delegation fulfils the organisation's mandate to build on the synergies between businesses in Canada and Guyana, one of its directors, Fareed Amin, told *Indo-Caribbean World* earlier this week.

Citing what he said was the CGCC recognising "an imbalance with women and men with the economic transformation", Amin said the group decided to forge closer ties via two-way collaboration with the recently formed Women Chamber of Commerce in Guyana, and with women in business here in Canada.



Fareed Amin

Also, doing so was acknowledgement of the presence, interest, and support shown to the CGCC by federal MP Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, he stated.

According to Amin, the CGCC recognised a notable attendance in the number of women in business during its inauguration gala that was held in September last year.

"I was pleasantly surprised at how many women in business came to the gala. They were in manufacturing, and in the food sector... it was quite an

impressive turnout," he said.

The strong number of women attending the gala helped to trigger the impetus to take a trade and investment delegation from Toronto to Georgetown, Amin said.

In what will be a five to seven day visit, the main agenda item will be to showcase the important work being done by women in business in Canada to their Guyanese counterparts.

In showcasing their enterprises, the objective would be to strengthen partnerships, and open up potential for two-way opportunities, Amin noted.

He also revealed that among the techniques to be utilised between the Canadian and Guyanese women representatives would be the business equivalent of speed dating, with quick and timed introductions, fast-paced pitches, and follow-up communications should workable equivalencies emerge out of the interaction.

Also, at this time, the CGCC is working on setting up meetings for the delegation with senior government officials, particularly those with responsibility for the economy and trade.

As Amin declared, "[The delegation] is an opportunity for trade and investment between Canada and Guyana, both with women and men. We are working on giving Canada, and our accomplished women in business, more exposure to opportunities for investment with their counterparts in Guyana."

Amin can be reached at 647-963-8757; other contacts for this event in the CGCC are Amita Sharif at 905-409-2265; and Radharani Rajaram at 416-732-0604.

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Displaying their awards are (second from left) Rokhaya Gueye, Carpenters' Local 27 Sisters in the Brotherhood Committee Chair, & (right) Juliet Hall, Carpenters' Local 27 Equity Committee Chair; also in photo are (left) Chris Campbell, Vice President, Local 27, & Carpenter's Regional Council Director of Equity Diversity & Inclusion; & (second from right) Jason Rowe, Carpenters' Canadian District Vice President.

Local 27 carpenters win prestigious UBC Equity, Diversity & Inclusion awards

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – Two Local 27 carpenters were earlier this month honoured with the UBC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Award of Excellence. The award recognises mentors, mentees, and employers who are demonstrating exceptional leadership towards creating an environment of acceptance, equality, and respect for all workers.

The award was conferred to Rokhaya Gueye, a carpenter apprentice and the founding Chair of the Sisters in the Brotherhood at Carpenters Union Local 27; and to Juliet Hall, also a carpenter apprentice at Local 27.

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* last week, Chris Campbell, Vice President of Local 27, and Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Carpenters' District Council, said he was proud to be a part of the planning and presentation that went into the success of the inaugural annual award.

The event took place in St John's, Newfoundland on June 10.

Said Campbell: "The Award of Excellence is a good start on the journey for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Canadian District Council. Under the leadership of its vice president, Jason Rowe, it is leading by example in encouraging equity and inclusiveness for all equity seeking groups."

Campbell also commended Gueye and Hall for their good work.

"Gueye is motivated and passionate about building our organisation. Her award is well deserved; she is a pioneer for women in the trades. Juliet is dedicated and is motivated in giving back and helping new apprentices to start a career in the growing construction industry of Canada," he said.

As the UBC has noted, the make-up of the award stands as a powerful reminder of the strength of unity, and the remarkable impact that can be achieved when individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives come together with a shared vision of progress and equality.

And as it stated, the careful handcrafting and design that went into the shaping of the award represents the UBC's commitment to inclusivity, and the collective efforts of its members, employers, and equity deserving groups.

As the UBC declared, "The craftsmanship of the UBC Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Award of Excellence reflects the belief in the importance of embracing and valuing our differences, and creating spaces where multiple voices and experiences are acknowledged and respected."

Additionally, "It reminds us that equity, diversity and inclusion requires a deliberate effort, collaboration, and a commitment to shaping an environment where individuals from all

backgrounds can thrive and contribute their unique strengths." Award recipient Gueye is a certified coach and mentor, public speaker, community organiser, and entrepreneur, and is fluent in four languages.

She also has more than a decade of experience in construction and volunteering, including mentoring international students, leading the sponsorship team for the Manyatta Network, building playgrounds for children with critical illnesses for Million Dollar Smiles, and serving as a crew lead for Habitat for Humanity GTA.

At this time, she currently volunteers and mentors with organisations such as the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the Toronto Community Benefits Network, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council, the Ontario Building and Construction Tradeswomen, and the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council. Gueye also serves on the Board of Directors for several non-profit organisations.

As the UBC noted, "[Gueye] is driven by her passion for social change, women and youth empowerment, construction, technology, community economic development, and philanthropy.

Her personal motto is 'Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful!'

Hall is currently working towards becoming a Red Seal Journeywoman. As a delegate for the CDC, she is an active member of several committees within Local 27, including the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the Membership Action Committee, and the Sisters in the Brotherhood Committee.

As the UBC stated, "[Hall] is committed to promoting a positive work environment and fostering inclusivity and diversity in the workplace. Her passion for volunteering and community outreach is reflected in her volunteer work with organisations such as Habitat for Humanity and persons with disabilities."

Additionally, "Through community initiatives and mentoring, she has been able to connect with diverse groups of people and individuals from various backgrounds."

Hall's dedication to raising awareness of the opportunities and experiences available through Local 27 membership and the trades is also noted in her collaboration with various organisations, among them being the Toronto Community Benefits Network and the Black Business and Professional Association.

The UBC adds, "...Hall is an exceptional individual who has demonstrated remarkable leadership skills and an unwavering commitment to promoting inclusivity and diversity in the workplace. Her volunteer work and community involvement serve as a testament to her outstanding character and dedication to making a positive impact in the community."



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David's musical journey started early with the mandolin

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Music enthusiasts who lived in Guyana between the mid-1960s and early 1970s, and who followed local Indian performing artistes, will readily recall David Singh.

There are many among us who would also recognise the face of this accomplished self-made musician, a regular presence on some of the biggest stages in Guyana, and who featured regularly on what was then the most popular radio station, Radio Demerara.

If not in Guyana, then those following the local Indian music scene in Toronto in the 1980s and 1990s would have seen David performing on stage, in mandirs, and at other entertainment venues.

If somehow David's face did not leave its imprint behind, it may be because he is such a quiet, unassuming, humble, and self-effacing person, who in spite of his eminent achievements in the field of music, remains unintrusive, and is not given to showmanship.

Born on June 6, 1943 to parents Baldeo and Dhanwanti Singh of Canal Number 1, West Bank, Demerara, David Komal Singh turned 80 earlier this month.

The milestone achievement was celebrated by the Indo-Caribbean Golden Age Association on June 11 at the Agincourt Recreation Centre in Scarborough. It was quite a memorable birthday dash.

David has been rendering his services *gratis* for the ICGAA for 31 years, since its inception in 1992, and has been that organisation's go-to person for musical entertainment. And does he



David Singh with his inimitable & signature mandolin



Indian Hot Shots Orchestra in Guyana (front row, l-r) Basdeo Sanchara, Sidney, Ricklall Rampersaud, Ayodhya Prashad, Cecil Singh, Tafazool Baksh; (back l-r) Ronald Appru, Hazrat Ali, Surat Singh, James Ramotaur, David Singh, Aurthur Boodhram, Mohan Lall, & Narine Bachu

ever fit the bill!

Co-founder and past President of ICGAA, Leila Daljit, offered a glowing testimonial to David, saying: "David Singh has donated his gifted talent to ICGAA for the past 31 years. The Association and their hundreds of members were entertained by him at all their events; his versatile skills allowed him to play many oldies for the singers, instrumental music that is reflective of the theme for the events such as Diwali and Holi, carols at Christmas time, New Year's Eve celebrations, Mother's Day, Indian and English Oldies, and many others. He loves playing music, and ICGAA members enjoyed being entertained by him."

The ICGAA honoured David with an award in May 2012 during its 20th anniversary celebrations, which was held at the Shingar Banquet Hall in Brampton, Ontario.

David's versatility is almost legend. Self-taught, he is a master of the keyboard and the

mandolin, and is also handy with the Hawaiian guitar, the drum machine, the harmonica, and the Univox.

His musical journey started out early in his teens with the mandolin. How did he gravitate to what then was not the most sought-after instrument in the Indian musical lineup?

Says David: "I got my first mandolin from my Mamoo [maternal uncle] Udaipal in Canal No 1, West Bank, Demerara. He got it from his brother-in-law Freddie Roopchand, who got it as a present from his Venezuelan friend. I am totally self-taught."

David built on that "mandolin foundation" to later become the *sine qua non* for many events, which, without his input, would have

lacked their fullest entertainment value.

Way back in Guyana in 1962, he joined the Indian Hot Shots Orchestra led by Tafazool Baksh, and soon afterwards, in 1964, founded the Indian Merry Makers Orchestra.

With his Merry Makers band in tow, David played for the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, the Gandhi Youth Organisation, and later, the Hindu Dharmic Sabha for the crowning of many Miss Diwali Queens and other cultural programs, spearheaded by Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud and other community leaders.

He also played for the recording of *Bhakti Bhajans* an album recorded around 1972 at Radio Demerara, which was produced by

See Page 5: Musical versatility

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Musical versatility strikes right chord with India's playback singers

From Page 4

Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud.

David's musical profile took a step further upwards, when he played music for the local movies – *Anmol Bandhan* and *Sounds of the Sugar Cane*. Maintaining that trajectory, he also played on stage in Guyana for visiting Indian playback singers and Indian movie stars, namely, Mukesh, Manna Dey, Hemant Kumar, Kishore Kumar, Rajendra Kumar, Asha Parek, and Rahul Roy.

It appears that given his musical versatility, David struck a harmonious 'chord', when many of those international personages commented they were not aware Guyana possessed such remarkable talent!

Keeping up with his abiding love for music when he migrated to Canada in 1983, David played for the Gems Orchestra of Toronto and several Hindu organisations. In 2013 he recorded the album, *Mandolin Serenade Instrumentals* in Toronto.

So, one wonders, what kind of music does such a consummate musician as David go for? As he states, "Some of my favourite numbers are *Ghar Aayaa Mera Pardesi* – movie *Aawara*; *Jadugar Saiyan* – movie *Naagin*."

For those among us who are familiar with those two particular tunes, especially rendered on the mandolin, we know how touching and emotionally uplifting they could be!

Apart from music, David also had a fulfilling professional life, starting with his early education at the McGillvary Canadian Mission Primary School in Number 1 Canal, then Guyana Oriental College in Georgetown, followed by a Land Surveying Program at the Government Technical Institute. In Toronto he did a CAD program at Seneca College, and electronic drafting at Centennial College.

His work history comprises 20 years with the government of Guyana as a Highway Design



In top photo, Guyana's Indian Hot Shots Orchestra (front row l-r): Ricklall Rampersaud, David Singh, Kamta Singh; (back row l-r) Tafazool Baksh, Basdeo Sanchara, Surat Singh, Freddie Sanchara, & Eddy Persaud; in photo at right (l-r) Pradip Bulsara, James Acosta,

Kennard Ramnarace, Roy Persaud, Dennis Sankar, Dheraj Ramnarace, Chardanand Ramnarace, David Singh, Darshan Prashad, & Ricky Ramnarace

and Land Surveying Technician; two years in Trinidad and Tobago as an Engineering Technician working on the Claude Noel Highway; two years as a Research Technician at the University of Toronto; three years at Federal Pioneer as a Draftsman, and 23 years at Toronto Hydro as an Engineering Technician.

David retired in March 2012, and as he says, is now "passing my time playing my music for ICGAA and many other organisations. My hobby is gardening."

David has been married to Rukhmani, also known as Jasso, for the past 50 years. They have three children – Sadesh, married to Diana; Geeta, married to Rajesh, and Vishal. They have four grandchildren – Matthew, Maya, Meera, and Deven.



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Editorial

Health matters

We note with approval the moves that are being made by the Beverage Coalition of Trinidad and Tobago to engage nationals in conversation about their sugar intake and a healthier lifestyle via the Balanced Calorie Initiative.

The initiative was launched earlier this month by a consortium of Trinidad and Tobago's leading beverage companies. Among them are Caribbean Bottlers Trinidad and Tobago Ltd, S.M. Jaleel and Company Ltd, Agostini's Ltd, and Blue Waters Products Ltd.

The initiative is part of a national education campaign that targets balancing the diets and exercise routines of Trinidad and Tobago nationals.

The ten-year plan is to introduce new beverage products, promote better reduced-calorie beverages, put a focus on providing clearer, easy-to-find calorie and nutrition information on packages, and enhance the marketing of existing beverage products with fewer calories.

Also, this initiative will be part of a larger education and consumer awareness drive in Trinidad and Tobago that seeks to encourage nationals to moderate their calorie consumption while keeping a healthier, more active lifestyle at the forefront of their lives.

The history of the Balance Calorie Initiative is it was started in the US in 2015, in a move to help in the battle against obesity. At that time, the goal was to reduce calorie consumption per person nationally by 20 percent by 2025.

Trinidad and Tobago faces a similar challenge with reducing the prevalence of obesity and NCDs. As [Global Nutrition Report notes in its website](#), this nation has shown limited progress towards achieving its diet-related NCD targets. And as it notes, 29.6 percent of adult (18+ years and over) women, and 12.9 percent of adult men are today living with obesity.

Also, while Trinidad and Tobago's obesity prevalence is lower than the regional average of 30.7 percent for women and 22.8 percent for men, at the same time, diabetes is estimated to affect 16.2 percent of adult women, and 13.6 percent of adult men.

The consequence is dire health issues for individuals, and increasing health care costs for the government. Last year, Trinidad and Tobago's Health Minister revealed that the country had one of the highest amputation rates due to complications from diabetes. As was reported by the media, Trinidad and Tobago saw 600 lower extremity amputations in 2021.

As Camille Chatoor, General Manager of Caribbean Bottlers noted with the latest move by industry leaders to influence and change the national health narrative, "Lifestyles have changed. [The Balance Calorie Initiative] is about creating that level of awareness of lifestyle change. So it is not just balancing your beverages. We are in the industry, and we are members of the industry, and so we are taking that leadership role in starting the conversation. Our hope is that the conversation starts to spread."

Meanwhile, we also commend the moves that are being made by the Guyana government to control tobacco use and its detrimental fallout. This is notable in the light of PAHO indicating that new products and misleading information from the tobacco industry are targeting young people, and are threatening to undo gains made over the past decade to eliminate its consumption.

As has been reported, Guyana's 2017 tobacco control law mandates adoption and implementation of a series of tobacco control policies, making it one of the most complete tobacco control laws.

Such legislation and its enforcement are commendable in the light of the regional statistics showing 15 percent of cardiovascular disease deaths, 24 percent of deaths from cancer, and 45 percent of deaths from chronic respiratory diseases are attributable to the use of tobacco. Global figures also paint a sombre picture indicating tobacco being responsible for over seven million deaths annually.

It must also be noted that even as we commend the moves that are being made in the Caribbean for better health, at the same time we urge our diaspora to similarly ensure wise calorie intake, and to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Importance of having discussions about Pride

It is June, and that means it is Pride Month in Canada. Rainbows are on display, from flagpoles to window decals and digital boards. I live and work in downtown Toronto, and it is quite noticeable on most storefronts, mainstream banks, and major institutions.

While I am apprehensive about writing about this topic, I believe it should be discussed.

My apprehension is not about my own views, since I am firm in my outlook on this topic. The concern is about how this might be received by our community. Would there be a backlash, or hate, or possibly threats?

The past several years are seeing more and more emergence in June of a growing number of displays of pride, equality, and acceptance. Without doubt, Canada is rapidly changing, and since the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2005, our nation has been at the international forefront of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and two-spirited (LGBTQ2S+) rights.

However, this still remains an extremely taboo topic within the Indo-Caribbean, and broader Caribbean community.

Before exploring LGBTQ2S+ issues within the Indo-Caribbean community, it is important to unpack and understand what are the core principles of Pride.

Despite what some might see on TV or social media, Pride is not a big party. In fact, Pride actually saw its beginnings as a riot. It was a protest against brutality, and a demand for basic human rights. This movement was galvanised by Black transwomen in New York City in the late 1960s.

With its genesis as a protest, and despite some advancement, the fight for equality and human rights continues, as these fundamental principles are still not universal.

In fact, people of colour who are LGBTQ2S+ still experience some of the most extreme and brutal acts of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. And a lot of that hate and discrimination comes from within their cultural communities.

Discussions of the importance of Pride that lead to conversations within the Indo-Caribbean community are vital; these will lead to recognition, to attention being paid to the discourse, and towards learning from those who are LGBTQ2S+.

Understanding their stories, many of which are unpleasant journeys, and their constant challenges, are vital to moving forward so we all do better. The abuse, loneliness, and internal struggles faced at times by LGBTQ2S+ people is almost inhumane.

Unfortunately, within the Indo-Caribbean community, we witness some of the most extreme hate against LGBTQ2S+ people. Derogatory words and abusive language are a constant,



Ryan Singh

despite our community settling in Canada.

This has not happened by accident. Many Caribbean nations (including Guyana) have harsh policies against LGBTQ2S+ persons. This is changing, but not as fast-paced as Canada, and is unfortunately bogged down by cultural impressions of LGBTQ2S+ people.

The legacy of homophobia comes from the historical influence of European colonial powers. As seen in many former British colonies, laws were adopted to criminalise consensual same-sex activity. These corrosive influences of hate seeped into the thoughts and minds of many, and the legacy remains.

For example, Guyana is the only country in South America, and in the Americas outside the Caribbean, where homosexual acts remain illegal.

As a community with a strong and developed diasporic footprint in Canada, we must begin shedding these archaic mentalities of hate.

One can argue that before colonisation, homophobic behaviour was limited to none, and even accepted through Hinduism. **As Dr Anantanand Rambachan, a Hindu theologian and Trinidad-American professor of religion has said, "Shri Ram acknowledges the third gender – the *napumsukas*, the people who are born different and they should not be treated differently or unfairly because they're different."**

Through South Asian culture, we have seen many other instances of acceptance and appreciation for non-binary, or bi-gender persons.

Ardhanarishvara is a depiction of the Hindu deity Shiva combined with his consort Parvati. Depicted as half-male and half-female, equally split down the middle, the earliest *Ardhanarishvara* images are dated to the Kushan period, starting from the First Century CE.

These provide evidence that homophobia was introduced by western culture, and not embedded within the origins of Indo-Caribbean peoples.

As we forge ahead as a community in Canada, it is time for the Indo-Caribbean community to further realise how our roots were violently tainted by colonialism. It includes the influences of homophobia, which are not tied to our actual cultural beginnings. This is something that we must leave behind.

Each person should be able to live their true authentic self without fear of discrimination or persecution.

Pride month is an ideal opportunity for us to reflect on, and to begin breaking down barriers to ensure that we respect each other as individual human beings, each of us possessing a unique soul.

In dual worlds, one gets shaken by sudden news

A few years ago I let it be known at the dinner table that I read the obituary section of the newspapers. Now I say "newspapers", since there are more than one that I peruse on a daily basis, which on a not-so-good day can make for extended reading, with my attention buried deep in the back pages if the obituaries are many, quite extensive with the biblical *begats* of generations, and details of a lifetime over-ripened with age.

The response at the dinner table, thankfully, was not a rolling of the eyes from the gathered siblings, since they were then entering young adulthood, and were leaving the impatience and presumed omniscience of teenaged life behind.

It was more with curiosity, which in hindsight, could have been a collective search for evidence that the old man was coming to that time in his life when he would appreciate a pair of Velcro bedroom slippers for Father's Day.

"Newspapers? How many do you read?" This was the query during the astonished pause in the rapid, highly-focused leveraging of the capacious fork and a tilted, inquiring knife.

"Well, I keep up with the newspapers back in the homeland, for one; then I read our city newspaper, followed by the national ones; and then there are the local community publications that land at the front door on weekends," I replied.

"And you read the obituaries in each of them?" This was the follow-up and incredulous question.

"Well, yes. Why should I keep up only with what are the comings-and-goings, and not who is going, going, gone?"

The conclusion I came to afterwards was that it would take some time before our young brood, who having taken a first step onto the threshold of adulthood, would only arrive later at the stage of life where now I could see my approach to what was a once-distant shoreline, and just beyond, masts of the waiting ships in the not-too-far-off distance.

So, perhaps my reading of obituaries was an act of futuring; and who knows, also one of vicariousness, but hopefully not schadenfreude over them, who having boarded the ship, could only stand aft and watch the receding shore.

But to back up a bit. For those of us who are unfamiliar with the writings of one of my more difficult-to-read writers, Homi Bhabha, there is a facet of his expositions on post-colonialism that speaks about us, as a formerly colonised people, living what he describes, to put it simply, as double lives.

And so it came to be that following my dining table discussion with the family, I understood in a brief flash that here it was in my daily life where unknowingly, I was quietly living within such a dual existence.

That I was simultaneously positioned in two spaces, and reading the newspapers from these two worlds: the dailies from back home; and of course, the publications here in the diaspora.

So it was that recently, during one of my daily peregrinations between the two worlds, I casually read an obituary; and then, backing up with consternation, returned to the top, and read down again with growing unease.

Moments later came the detachment that great astonishment brings, when the sudden landing of a significant moment causes an unmooring from the continuum of time.

Finally, and with finality, so to speak, it had come to pass that my reading of a newspaper obituary had hit close to my two homes.

For it was therein where I had recognised someone out of all the fine print, who from down the decades, had been a classmate during my youthful school days back home.

Herein was recorded the passage of a life, outlined in the reductive font that compresses a lifetime into text that is monetised by wordage. It was a lifetime so described, one that I had shared with a schoolmate, who sadly, had taken an untimely but final passage on the sailing ship with its funeral sails.

A well-written obituary compresses a lifetime into tight kerning and narrow leading of minimalist type to keep funeral expenses down. So it was with my classmate's passing, quite lengthy with his legacy of progeny and *begats*, but frustratingly short on the details about such an untimely passing.

I remain unmoored. Maybe I should stop reading obituaries.



Romeo Kaseram

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Fire safety response needed by State for national deficiency in standards

Dear Editor,

Post-Independence Guyana endured many years of economic challenges and Guyanese were largely in survival mode, trying to meet daily basic needs. This condition applied to the State, shouldered with limited budgets to meet the cost for provision of health care, education, and the many social services.

It can be reasonably assumed that maintenance and safety in buildings were never priorities in the planning and expenditure of the limited available finances.

Over this extended time, the culture of neglect and indifference to safety in buildings became the norm in Guyana, even as the economic fortunes of the country have improved significantly.

Recent tragic fires, notably the Mahdia Dormitory conflagration, are the consequence of a culture of complacency and apathy toward health and safety in buildings, which permeates Guyanese culture, and has now been imbued into the national psyche.

The Mahdia Dormitory fire will scar our collective memory forever with prolonged guilt and grief. The site should be transformed to a memorial garden, and the date it occurred be a time for reflection on our failures.

The level of complacency and disregard for safety in buildings are on display everywhere, and can be found in many public buildings, offices, supermarkets and stores on city streets, across the country, and even in our own homes.

The ardent search for culpability for the

recent fires is not the solution to a nationwide problem, as laxity in Health, Safety, and Environment proliferates in private and public facilities across the country.

The presence of a few fire extinguishers in a building does not constitute adequate fire protection for the occupants and physical assets. Fire safety commences with a design effort that are inclusive of an assessment of the fire load of the building and its contents, early detection with alarms, physical fire safety provisions (appropriate exits, corridor widths, emergency lighting and alarm, and so on), training, and periodical maintenance.

While an enquiry into the tragic Mahdia Fire will bring some measure of closure to the grieving families and communities, the ultimate response should not be reactive and instinctive – but a measured defined solution to a national deficiency, as it relates to safety in buildings that is ubiquitous across the country.

The focus on the details may result in a lost opportunity to stimulate change at a national level. The State can initiate the process with appropriate education materials, updated standards and codes, removal of tariffs on safety related items, subsidies, incentives for compliances, training, and enforcement.

The State should lead by example and effect appropriate laws and upgrade all State-operated facilities. A shift of mindset is required to reframe the way we think about the value and importance of safety to those given for our care and ourselves.

Deen Kamaludeen, Guyana, via email.



A lone fire extinguisher stands at the site of the tragic Mahdia Dormitory fire



A flooded roadway in south Trinidad last week

Yet again south T&T hit by floods

Dear Editor,

We are never immune to the annual intense flooding, and we are always amazed on how quickly flood waters destroy everything in its path, and then leave areas covered in unrelenting water for days.

The reality of these floods is that it reveals just how weak and incompetent this government is, not to mention biased and discriminatory.

Throughout the dry season, the minister of 70 percent good roads proclaims and then repeats how many rivers he dredged, how many pumps and sluice gates were vandalised and stolen, but now restored, and how many watercourses he cleaned.

So that when the rains come, there should be a defence against flooding.

However, in the space of three days last week, flood waters turned south Trinidad into the new Everglades.

So much for Minister of Works Rohan Sinanan.

Not to be outdone, his colleague, the local government minister at a press briefing read from a tablet about how many reports he had about floods, how many shelters were activated, and how many trees fell.

During this impressive recital, he was stopped by a reporter who asked about the people's well-being. To this, he had no answer.

But are we really surprised? In addition, Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley appears on the TV to say all agencies are activated and are moving to assist.

But there was no one in sight over the past week in flooded-out south. Soldiers were busy looking for a missing Galil rifle, so they had no time for flood victims; the Coast Guard does not do floods; and the police service was searching for an elusive jaguar.

The media were the only ones who paid attention to the south Everglades. They reported on how flood victims had to fend for themselves, while some begged for shelter, food, and dry clothes.

I am quite certain that not a cent has been paid in compensation by the Ministry of Social Welfare, especially since the majority of those flooded out are undeserving UNC supporters, who really should already be paying property tax on their flooded out properties.

Have any local government election hopefuls traversed these flood-decimated areas to meet with the victims, who in a few weeks time will be asked to go out and vote?

The southland's plight proves that for all of the property tax-funded local government reforms being touted, one thing is certain, the flooding will always rain on the PNM's parade.

Linda Capildeo, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

RE/GUYANA GUYANA PROPERTY MATTERS

Property Values Rising in Guyana

By Kal Juman-Yassin

In 2015 the population of Guyana was 755,031. Today it is officially 804,567, and unofficially about one million persons or more. The population growth is a direct result of its hydrocarbon driven economic boom and an inflow of unaccounted Venezuelan and other migrants. The result is a pressing need for everything including housing across all major municipalities.

The growing demand for land and the shortage of residential housing supply has pushed property values to record levels. Agricultural lands are being rezoned into housing with some landowners reaping significant windfalls. Guyana's Real Estate Association has noted the sharp rise of rentals where the cost of a two-bedroom apartment rental is triple the price in 2010. Rates for a modern two-bedroom apartment in Georgetown can easily fetch (all currency in USD) \$2,500 per month with updated detached homes in better neighbourhoods going for more than \$4,000 per month.

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

The economic hyper-growth is challenging the current infrastructure, which is barely adequate as is. In response, the government is investing heavily on many fronts with billions of dollars allocated for hinterland roads and bridges to better connect smaller communities. Construction is already on the way for new highways on the east coast, east bank, and west coast, which will open up many new areas for development.

Many property owners are asking themselves whether to invest and modernise their properties in Guyana, or whether to cash out at today's high land values. Georgetown properties now range from \$250,000 to \$1M plus depending on location, size of the lot, and condition of the building. Property values may be rising, but many owners have unrealistic valuation expectations. Estimating a property's potential value requires understanding several factors, including the current condition of the building, and the dynamics of the surrounding neighbourhood.

Overseas property owners are taking a renewed interest in the Guyana property market. Their real estate assets are likely worth more today, and could be excellent long-term investment assets, providing income and equity growth. For investors interested in the Guyanese property market, there are many opportunities with higher yields than available in the US or Canadian market.

RE/Guyana is a property services company dedicated to making it easier for overseas property owners to administer, divest, acquire and develop their real estate assets in Guyana. [Click here to check out our free online property risk assessment.](#)

Resounding victory as PPP/Civic takes lead in the LGE

As widely anticipated, the PPP/Civic secured a resounding victory in Guyana's recently concluded Local Government Elections, which was held on June 12. The ruling party won almost 80 percent of all Local Authority Area seats, and gained ground in several APNU strongholds.

However, it failed to take control of the major towns, including Georgetown, Linden, and New Amsterdam – although its performance improved in both Georgetown and New Amsterdam.

However, the PPP/Civic won in the seven other towns: Mabaruma, Anna Regina, Rose Hall, Corriverton, Lethem, Bartica, and Mahdia.

During the elections, eligible voters cast their votes for 1,220 council seats within 610 constituencies across the country's 80 LAAs, comprising 70 Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, and ten municipalities.

The LGEs, which were constitutionally due in 2021, were delayed because the Guyana Elections Commission was experiencing a number of administrative issues, including the non-appointment of a Chief Election Officer.

In October 2022, it was announced that the LGE would be held on March 13, 2023. However, the date was postponed by GECOM because it had to reopen the claims and objections process for the submission of applications for the approval of symbols for the LGE.

In addition, GECOM had to approve the work plan for the LGE, which paved the way for the secretariat to proceed with the implementation of the relevant statutory and administrative activities for the elections countrywide.

In spite of earlier signs of potential disruption at the polls, the elections were conducted relatively peacefully.

Leading up to the elections, GECOM came under scrutiny for its delay in holding the constitutionally due election; a dispute erupted over the demarcation of constituencies and the voters' list; while the Alliance For Change called for the postponement of the elections until the List of Electors was "purged of contaminants and fraud", noting that the current list of electors was not clean.

The Opposition also called for urgent electoral reforms to address ongoing challenges with the country's electoral integrity. It urged the government to implement the recommendations made by the European Union's 2020 Election Observer Mission follow-up team.

In a local press report, the Opposition claimed that GECOM failed to deliver credible elections, and eroded public confidence in the electoral process.

It stated, "Preparations for the 2023 LGE have amply demonstrated that the electoral process is still prone to political manipulation, corruption, and fraud." They further claimed that GECOM was "politically hijacked, is poorly chaired, is administratively unfit, and is unaccountable to the people".

A total of 46 parties, voluntary groups and individuals were approved by GECOM to contest the LGE.

APNU only contested 261 or 42.9 percent of the 610 constituencies, and 55 or 68.75 percent of LAAs, while the PPP/Civic contested in all 80 LAAs, which includes 70 NDCs, and ten municipalities.

The LAAs where the PPP/Civic was the only contesting entity include Leguan, Canal Polder, and La Jalousie/Novelle Flanders in Region Three (Essequibo Island-West Demerara); Herstelling/Little Diamond in Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica); Kintyre/No 37 Borlam, Ordanance/Fort Lands No 38, Kilcoy/Hampshire, Port Mourant/Johns, Bloomfield/Whim, and No 64/No 74 in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne); and the Aranaputa/

Upper Burro Burro NDC and municipality of Lethem in Region Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo).

While APNU managed to contest in all of the LAAs in Regions One, Two, Five, Seven, Eight and Ten, the party had no submissions for Region Nine, and struggled in most of

Region Three, where it only managed to submit PR lists for two of the 14 LAAs, and had candidates for six of the 124 constituencies in that region. In Region Six, APNU only managed to field candidates for 61 of the region's 152 constituencies, spread across 14 of the region's 22 LAAs.

The results of the 2023 LGE signified a major shift in public support for the PPP/Civic, which secured control over 66 of the 80 LAAs.

Comparatively, in the 2018 elections PPP/Civic had control over 52 LAAs, representing an increase of 14 LAAs. APNU, on the other hand won 14 LAA seats, down from 23 in 2018.

In terms of council seats, the PPP/Civic secured a 75 percent increase in the number of seats compared to the 2018 elections, winning 906 out of the 1,220 seats, a notable increase from the 779 seats secured in the previous elections.

Gains were made by the PPP/Civic in several traditional APNU strongholds. The PPP/Civic secured 12,250 votes in Georgetown,

compared to 6,815 in the 2018 LGE. As a result, it won five of the 15 seats in Georgetown, up from three in the 2018 LGE.

In New Amsterdam, the APNU got four seats, while the PPP/Civic won three. As a result, the APNU will hold eight seats in the council, compared to the PPP/Civic with six. This is an improvement over 2018, when APNU won 11 seats and the PPP three.

In Linden, the PPP/Civic attained two seats, while APNU received 14 seats. The PPP/Civic failed to make significant inroads in Linden in spite of tremendous effort to woo Lindeners, who benefited from a disproportionate level of government funding relative to other major cities since the PPP/Civic came to power.

In the town of Corriverton, PPP/Civic secured 13 seats while APNU received three seats, while in Rose Hall, PPP/Civic received 11 seats and APNU attained three seats.

In Anna Regina, PPP/Civic received 15 seats, while the APNU attained one. PPP/Civic and APNU have tied with nine council seats in Bartica and Mahdia. The PPP/Civic won the mayorship, since it received the majority of

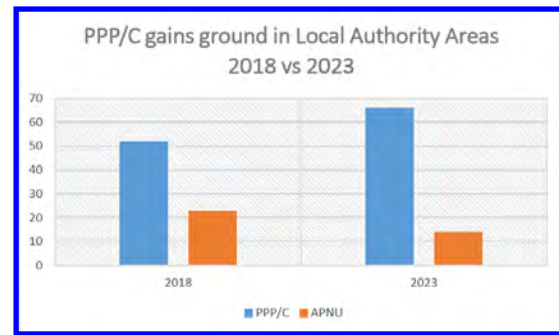
popular ballots.

The results of the 2023 LGE are a clear indication of the surging popularity of the PPP/Civic. Perhaps, the victory by a dead candidate in Corriverton demonstrates the rejection of APNU in some parts of the country, according to the PPP/Civic.

As the story goes: "A PPP/Civic candidate passed away in Corriverton and could not be replaced before the elections, but the dead candidate obtained 333 votes, while the

APNU candidate received 160 votes. People still voted for a dead candidate to prove a point: Even a living APNU candidate was rejected in favour of a dead PPP/Civic, because they did not want APNU's negative policies affecting their community."

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.



Ethnicity, equitable sharing key to future

By Ravi Dev

With the LGE over and the numbers crunched, analyses have been undertaken on what they indicate about our greatest political conundrum – ethnic voting.

Some say that they can discern for the very first time, evidence of a critical mass of African Guyanese voters crossing the old ethnic line of cleavage, and voting for the PPP that has been traditionally associated with Indo-Guyanese.

This, of course, has been the holy grail of the PPP, which its charismatic leader Dr Cheddi Jagan had pursued since Forbes Burnham split the ethnic conundrum that was the 1953 PPP.

Even though Fenton Ramsahoye remarked that "the party moves in mysterious ways" after Jagan intervened to ensure Brindley Benn be elected as PPP's chairman in 1962, there was actually nothing mysterious about Jagan's signal that his party was a home for African Guyanese also.

The PNC's subsequent rigging of elections until 1992 made the question of cross-ethnic support moot, but its policies solidified Indo-Guyanese conviction that it was an African Guyanese party.

For the 1992 "free and fair" elections, Desmond Hoyte's CREEP initiative and the PPP's Civic appendage signaled their desire to be seen as "multiracial".

However, the PNC gaining the same percentage of votes as it had done in the riot-polarised 1964 elections indicated that African Guyanese still identified with it as "their party",

even though they had a choice in the WPA.

Indo-Guyanese returned to the PPP, which they felt had been unfairly excluded for 28 years. The subsequent PNC-inspired riots only solidified the ethnic status quo.

But as we have been pointing out for over a decade, by 2010 our changing demographics had created a polity with no single ethnic majority.

As such, rational choice theory suggested that the PPP and PNC should now concretely pursue the "politics of accommodation" to attract cross-over votes since, if successful, either of them could win elections.

In a bold move, the PNC transmuted into APNU and in the 2011 elections, they, along with the AFC, reduced the PPP to a plurality, and in 2015 to a minority. The Rubicon of ethnic voting was crossed in 2015, when enough Indo-Guyanese voted for the AFC, which had coalesced with PNC/APNU.

It was Granger who chased them away when he cuckolded Nagamootoo on the promised "enhanced" Prime Ministership, and then kicked them in the groin by firing 7,000 mostly Indo-Guyanese sugar workers.

In 2020, the PPP had to have received enough cross-over votes to be elected, and they could not have come only from the Amerindian Guyanese bloc, but also from African and mixed-race Guyanese. The latter were turned off by the blatant PNC/APNU's attempt to rig the elections. But from a rational standpoint, this was the only way they could have returned to office.

Unlike the PNC/APNU, the PPP evidently understands that to balance the political equation it needs to attract even more cross-over votes, since its traditional Indo-Guyanese base keeps shrinking due to continued migration.



As such, its heightened post-2020 efforts to woo African Guyanese voters in traditional PNC strongholds is completely rational.

Questions about whether it was "cost effective" misses the point. In Guyanese politics with our demographics, the PPP has no choice since they do not have the option of rigging elections with the State institutions not reflexively in their corner, as it is with the PNC/APNU. There is the "principle of anticipated reactions".

As such, the PPP can be satisfied that in this LGE – which traditionally does not garner much attention since central government is seen as the "real" prize – it has created beachheads in PNC/APNU's enclaves, on which they must expand for that prize in 2025.

Their challenge will be to continue attracting Afro-Guyanese voters while ensuring their Indian and Amerindian supporters do not feel neglected. Much then depends on ensuring that the benefits of their impressive development plan is equitably distributed ethnically.

The dragon of ethnic voting is not going to be slain soon – it goes too deeply to non-economic imperatives like self-worth, and so on. But its dangerous effects can be tamed if the government accepts ethnicity as real in its effects, and address its demand of justice for all.

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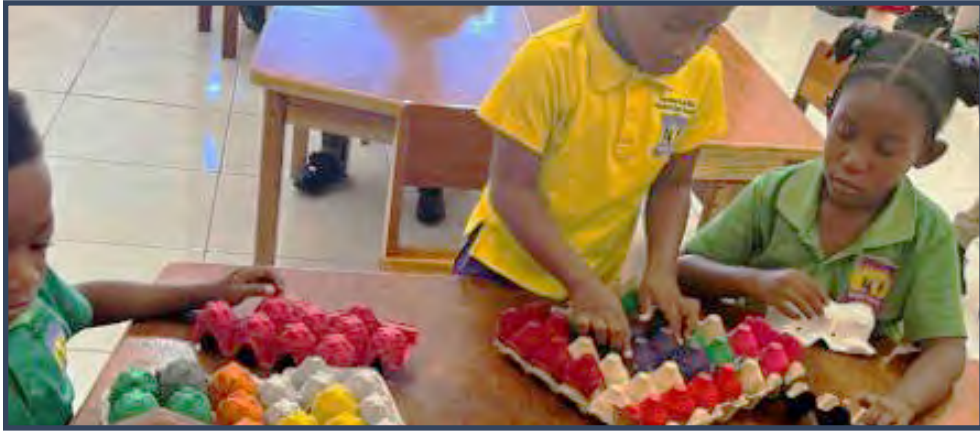
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School kids solve puzzles made from recycled egg cartons

Jamaican kids learn about climate change

Kingston – Young Jamaican children must be encouraged in initiatives to address issues regarding climate change, project director at the TUI Junior Academy, Sheneka Robinson-Wright told the media earlier this month.

Robinson-Wright said the younger generation of students must be exposed to environmental education while in school in order to help combat the negative effects of climate change on the environment, *The Gleaner* reported.

She added it was important to educate children on the advantages of sustainable living practices for the continuation of human life, and for the preservation of the environment.

However, education alone would not be effective, Robinson-Wright noted. It was also important to engage children in a practical way to ensure that the information passed on was being assimilated and put into practice.

It is an approach that is already being practiced in western Jamaica, *The Gleaner* reported.

Through a recent partnership between

the Rockhouse Foundation and TUI Care, a three-year initiative, the ‘TUI Junior Academy Jamaica’, was started in January.

The project is aimed at tackling issues surrounding climate change to involve the commissioning of solar energy and water harvesting systems at the Savanna-la-Mar Inclusive Academy, which is located in Westmoreland.

It is also working on development and implementation of a sustainability curriculum that will benefit approximately 1,400 children across six schools supported by the Rockhouse Foundation.

Additionally, the project empowers young people to become ‘Eco Champions’ within their communities while also inspiring them to see the value of protecting nature and wildlife.

“How you dispose of things, how you conserve energy, how you conserve water and use things, [are some of the things] we are working on for it to be a part of their psyche, and for it to be a part of the school’s culture,” Robinson-Wright said.



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World Bank President, Ajay Banga (second right) & Ritu Banga (third from right), speak with a farmer during a tour of the Content Greenhouse Cluster project

World Bank head praises Jamaica

Kingston – Jamaica was last week commended for its current economic health, with new president of the World Bank Ajay Banga saying it has managed the macro situation well. He visited Jamaica last week.

Said Banga: “It is not the same for many developing countries, which took on a great deal of debt when interest rates were low, both international and domestic debt.”

“The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as part of the G-20 Common Framework, are trying to work through how to restructure some of those debts in a way that makes it more palatable and easier for these countries to work their way through,” he said.

Banga also toured the Content Greenhouse Cluster in the central parish of Manchester, a project that involves revitalisation of former bauxite lands for agriculture production.

Farmers are engaged in cultivating crops such as cucumber, sweet potato, cabbage, lettuce, hot pepper in greenhouses, supplying hotels, supermarkets and other markets.

The project is being implemented by the Jamaica Social Investment through its Rural Economic Development Initiative, and is financed by the World Bank.

It also involves collaboration with the Winalco Kirkvine/Jamaica Bauxite Institute Joint Communities Council.

Banga commended Jamaica for undertaking the project and for use of greenhouse technology in helping to build climate resilience.

Such actions were key for developing countries, he noted, while adding, “As just one hurricane could damage your [GDP]... and change everything we see today within three hours”.



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Chowfest organiser & Local 46 Business Agent Roodney Clark (at right), patiently awaits his turn for a helping of spicy pineapple Chow. Photos by Roth Media

Slice of T&T at Local 46 picnic

Toronto – The seasoned taste of summer was taken up a notch last weekend at the United Association Local 46’s family picnic when the organisers of Chowfest landed at the event with bowls of spicy ‘Chow’.

The tasty snack is a slice of Trinidad and Tobago, where many of its tropical fruits are prepared with spicy seasonings, among them *chadon beni*, aka culantro, and hot peppers, with salt added to taste.

Chow was made available at the Local 46 event by Toronto Chowfest promoters, Roodney and Suzette Clarke. Roodney is Business Agent at Local 46. The union is made up of over 10,000 plumbers, steamfitters, and welders.

As Suzette noted, the insertion of Chow into the event was Roodney’s palatable way of introducing an enticing and spicy item of Caribbean

cuisine into the union’s ongoing commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The well-attended family event saw family, friends, and supporters of Local 46 enjoying the spicy snack made by a team led by Bob Pooran, a past Chowfest competition winner, and a seasoned veteran in its preparation.

Chowfest is now a Toronto summer tradition. It is organised by the enterprising Suzette and Roodney, and a cohort of volunteers and supporters. This year’s event will take place on August 19 at Island People West Indian Supermarket, 249 Queen Street East, Brampton. Call Suzette at 647-569-6041.

Chow will also be available at the upcoming Junior Carnival Parade in August, and at Trinidad and Tobago’s Independence celebrations in Toronto, to be held later this year.

[Click here to visit Chowfest’s website.](#)



Suzette Clarke (left) with Champion of Champions ‘Chowmeister’ Robert Mohammed, during Trinidad & Tobago’s Independence Day celebrations in downtown Toronto last year



An appreciative Roodney Clarke, at the Chowfest event



Tassa drummers spice up the Chowfest event with peppery rhythms



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RENTAL INCREASE GUIDELINE CONFUSES LANDLORDS & TENANTS

The GTA rental market is rattling. The combination of high levels of immigration, steep borrowing costs, and low inventory are sending rental prices higher from pre-pandemic to now; the cost of renting jumped by 41 percent in the GTA. An average two-bedroom condo is renting for around \$3,200 plus monthly hydro. When a tenant adds hydro and insurance, the total is around \$40,000 after-tax dollars in a year. Ouch!

With escalating rent, the new rental increase guideline is confusing to landlords and tenants alike. The rent increase guideline is set every year based on inflation. For 2023, the rent increase guideline is 2.5 percent for rental properties built before November 15, 2018. This guideline is the maximum a landlord can increase most tenants’ rent for a given year without approval from the Landlord and Tenant Board.

New buildings, addition to an existing building, and most new basement apartments occupied for the first time as a residence after November 15, 2018, are exempted from rent control.

Here is an example of how to calculate the rental increase. Suppose you signed a lease on July 1, 2022, for \$2,000. Since the guideline for 2023 is 2.5 percent, the monthly rent can be increased by \$50. A landlord can increase the rent on July 1, 2023. Landlords must give a tenant written notice 90 days before July 1, 2023, using the [N1 form from Tribunals Ontario’s website](#).

The recent spike in rental rates leaves many landlords with underperforming properties. Some landlords seek reasons to evict tenants so that they can rent the property at a much higher rent. One reason for eviction is constant late payment of rent.

A landlord can also evict a tenant in good standing if they want to use the unit for themselves or a family member, or if they are selling the property, and the buyer wants it for their own personal use. If a landlord is evicting a tenant for personal use, the landlord must give the tenant a minimum incentive of one month’s rent.

The Landlord and Tenant Board can fine landlords or purchasers who evict tenants for personal use and then rent the property to someone else. The fine for acting in bad faith for an individual is now \$50,000, and for a corporation, \$250,000.

My advice is to respect each other. A tenant should endeavour to take care of the landlord’s property, and a landlord should take care of the tenant.

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The Indelible Red Stain
By Dr Mohan Ragbeer

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

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

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How the Canadian Presbyterian Church rooted in Guyana

By Harry Hergash

Between 1838 and 1917, East Indians were recruited and brought to Guyana, then a British colony called British Guiana, under the Indentureship scheme to provide manual labour on the sugar plantations, almost all in the hands of British and Scottish owners. Through this system, an overseas individual was contracted to work on a specific plantation for a fixed period of time under stated terms and conditions, including a fixed wage rate. East Indians were neither the first, nor the only group of labourers recruited under this arrangement.

However, most of the non-Indian immigrants withdrew from the plantations soon after their introduction, and by the early 1850s, India became the primary source. According to the *British Guiana 1924 British Empire Wembley Exhibition* report, of the 343,019 immigrants recruited between 1835 and 1921, India provided 239,979.

Subsequent studies have indicated that around 75,800 of the Indians returned to their homeland, and the rest remained as settlers. A 1959 study by Raymond T. Smith (*Some social characteristics of Indian immigrants to British Guiana, Population Studies: A Journal of Demography, 13:1, 34-39+*) shows the religious affiliations of the East Indian immigrants as follows: 83.6 percent Hindu, 16.3 percent Muslim, and about 0.1 percent Christian.

For centuries, beginning with the *Inter Caetera*, the Papal Bull (Papal decree) of Pope Alexander VI in 1493, the Catholic rulers of Spain and Portugal were authorised to claim non-Christian lands discovered by their navigators and convert the inhabitants, termed “heathens”, to Christianity. The decree granted Spain the rights to the Americas and Portugal the rights to Africa, Asia, and Australia. Indians, as part of the Asian continent, were thus labelled and targeted for conversion.

Subsequently, during the rule of India by the East India Company of Britain, a crusade in Britain by the Clapham Sect, an Evangelical Christian group, led to passage in the British Parliament of the Charter Act of 1813 (known as the East India Company Act of 1813) with specific provision for Christian missionaries to enter India and engage in religious proselytisation.

In 1830, Scottish Reverend Alexander Duff entered India as the first overseas missionary of the Church of Scotland, and had profound effect on the Indian education system. According to *Wikipedia*, he devised the policy of “using a western system of education to slowly convert Hindus and Muslims to Christianity... In 1844, governor-general Viscount Hardinge opened government appointments to all who had studied in institutions similar to Duff’s institution”.

In 1844 Reverend Duff toured Canada, and in every major city he addressed audiences on the need for foreign evangelism. His message spurred Canadian missionary activity abroad, and his approach in India of using education to gain converts was adopted by Canadian Presbyterian Reverend John Morton in his Mission in Trinidad. The Trinidad model was later adopted in Guyana.

In Guyana, from around 1852 when it became apparent that the Indentureship scheme was firmly established, and many Indians were choosing to remain in the colony, some of the established Christian churches commenced attempts to convert the Indentured Hindus and Muslims.

However these attempts were unsuccessful, as noted by Reverend H.P.V. Bronkhurst, a Wesleyan Methodist minister who arrived in 1861 to work among the East Indians. In his 1876 report to the mission board in England, he stated that between 1876 and 1881, the church membership of Indians was as follows: 48, 47, 38, 43, and 45.

In 1880 Reverend John Morton, who was heading the Canadian Mission in Trinidad, a Branch of the International arm of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, came to Guyana at the invitation of Reverend Thomas Slater of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, to review, and to offer advice, on how the Church could bring the Indentured Indians into their fold.

After reviewing the situation, Reverend Morton wrote to the Canadian Presbyterian Church and recommended that they establish a CM body in Guyana.

In his Masters’ thesis to Queen’s University on the Canadian Presbyterian Mission in Guyana, Alexander Dunn notes that Reverend Morton, in his recommendation to the Canadian Presbyterian Church for a mission in Guyana, states, “The Canadian church should push on to do something for the 60,000 to 70,000 Heathens there”.

The push for the entry of the Canadian Presbyterian Church into Guyana came from Reverend Thomas Slater, Scottish Presbyterian Minister of St Andrews Kirk, Georgetown, 1864-1887, and Alexander Crum-Ewing, absentee Scottish owner of sugar plantations in Guyana at the time.

Following a request by Reverend Slater to the Canadian Presbyterian Church in 1883 via the Trinidad Mission, Reverend John Gibson arrived in July 1885 after his appointment in



Harry Hergash

Toronto and a year of training in Hindi at the Trinidad Mission.

However, as his work in the West Coast of Demerara was beginning to have an impact, he contracted yellow fever and died in 1888. By then Alexander Crum-Ewing was seeking a Minister for the church, manse, and school he had erected in 1868 on his plantation at Better Hope, East Coast Demerara, where Reverend Slater in old age and poor health was ministering on an interim basis after retiring earlier from St Andrews.

In response to a request from Crum-Ewing, James Basnett Cropper, a graduate of Pine Hill Seminary, Halifax, Nova Scotia, was appointed and arrived in 1896.

James Cropper was the right person at the right time for the appointment. He was the son of R.P. Cropper, Protector of East Indians in St Lucia. There as chief clerk to the Governor, he had worked among the East Indians, learned to speak Hindi fluently, and started Presbyterian work among them.

Prior to going to Halifax for studies in Theology, he had taken over Reverend Morton’s field in Trinidad while the latter was on furlough, and was highly commended for his work. He arrived in Guyana at the time when the Government was making its third attempt at inducing the immigrants to forego their rights to return passages to India in return for land, and to become permanent settlers in Guyana.

Shortly thereafter, Indians villages started to develop along the coast, and along the banks of the Mahaica and Mahaicony rivers. These developments provided the opportunity to establish churches/schools in these areas, and Cropper grasped the chance to act. He even served as Superintendent of Settlements for a few years, thereby enhancing his position with the Church and the immigrants.

Over the years until his retirement in 1935, he headed the Canadian Mission, the name ascribed to the Canadian Presbyterian Church in Guyana. He, together with other Canadian Presbyterian missionaries in the country, worked assiduously to establish the Church in Guyana among the East Indians. Two of his key lieutenants were Reverend Gibson Fisher, and Reverend James Scrimgeour. In 1903 Reverend J.D. Mackay arrived, and went to work in Essequibo, where he was making good progress. However, a disaster occurred in 1905 when he drowned on way to Wakenaam.

Gibson Fisher, an English Methodist minister in Essequibo, then joined the Canadian Mission and took control of the Essequibo region. Fisher proceeded to use Mission funds to purchase a large house in Johana Cecilia, previously owned by a judge, which became known as the Sarnia Manse.

In addition to being his residence, it housed catechists on weekends for training sessions, and was the home of youth volunteers from Canada. Reverend Fisher extended the mission in Essequibo and passed away in 1933. The Fisher Government (formerly Gibson Fisher Canadian Mission) School in Golden Fleece, Essequibo was named in his memory.

Reverend Scrimgeour arrived in 1912 after spending three years at the Mission in Trinidad, and was assigned to the Berbice region, previously managed in addition to Demerara by Reverend Cropper. He saw the need for a High School, and in 1916 set up the Berbice High School for boys in the lower flat of his residence in New Amsterdam. He wanted the school to produce a better boy for Guyana, even if he remained a Hindu or a Muslim.

This was contrary to the view of Cropper, who felt strongly that “education must be secondary to the all important work of soul saving in Evangelical work”. In 1920 the Berbice High School for girls was opened in a separate building. Decades later

the two schools were merged and became co-educational.

In 1927 after a split in the parent church in Canada, Reverend Scrimgeour returned to Canada. Of his departure Cropper remarked that his loss was the greatest blow the Mission had ever suffered. As for Cropper himself, in an article *Christian History of East Indians of Guyana* Clifmond Shameerudeen, citing Alexander Dunn, writes, “Cropper was well-received and respected by the East Indians. His celibacy and long white beard earned him a title given only to holy men. He was called a *sadhu*, which earned him respect and permission to be a teacher among the East Indians. He was also given the nickname *sahib*, a father figure title in the culture of East Indians. This demonstrates that he was seen as a person of maturity and authority. In essence, Cropper became an insider among the East Indians rather than just a foreign white missionary”.

The Cropper Government (formerly Canadian Mission) School in Albion Front, Berbice was named in his memory.

The Canadian Mission, like the other churches that were attempting to evangelise the East Indians, relied on Indian catechists to reach out to the Indian immigrants. Often, these catechists were recent converts to Christianity whose mother tongue was Hindi, and they were the go-between with the missionaries and the immigrants.

They were responsible for visiting homes and hospitals, giving religious instruction in the Mission’s schools, teaching Sunday school, conducting services, holding outdoor evangelistic meetings, and teaching reading at nights. A catechist received around \$10 per month for his work, and was expected to augment his earnings by growing his own rice and vegetables.

According to Dunn, these workers received weekly training in areas such as “comparative religions, Bible subjects and English. Such training prepared them for debates with their fellow Indians who remained Hindus or Muslims, and they were generally aggressive or at times even belligerent in deference of their new faith.”

The overriding business of the Canadian Mission in Guyana was the evangelism of the Indian immigrants, and the missionaries worked exclusively among them. As Hindus were the overwhelming majority, and also because Muslims with their monotheistic belief proved more difficult to evangelise, many Hindu terminology, concepts, and practices were adopted and used to gain Hindu converts.

An early Canadian Presbyterian Church on the Essequibo Coast is called *Akashvani* (Voice from Heaven), and another on the Corentyne coast is called *Mukti Bhawan* (House for liberation of the soul). A Christian prayer was called *prarthana* (equated to a Hindu prayer), and a hymn was called a *bhajan* (equated to a Hindu devotional song). Jesus Christ, called *Yesu Masih*, was communicated by the catechists as an incarnation of Hindu *Ishvara* (God as a person).

The *Katha*, a Hindu prayer service with reading of excerpts from a Hindu holy book, was adopted in the form of *Yesu (Jesus) Katha*. Not only was the story of Jesus communicated in a similar fashion, but it was followed likewise by distribution of Indian sweets called *Prasad* (food first offered to a deity then distributed to followers).

Also, the story of Jesus was written in Hindi poetry of *doha* (couplets) and *chowpai* (quatrain), patterned after the Hindu Holy book, *The Ramayana*, and sung in the same manner. At times too, preachers used sections of the other Hindu holy book, *The Bhagavad Gita*, to support their claim that Jesus Christ was an avatar of Brahma (Hindu God in his role as Creator).

Cropper retired in 1936, and by then the Church passed into the hands of other Missionaries from Canada. However, local leaders were emerging who eventually gained control as the Church evolved into the Guyana Presbyterian Church.

While the number of converts remained relatively small, the greatest achievement was in the area of Indian education. The majority of Indian children in the colony were educated in primary schools, which until 1961 were operated under the Canadian Mission banner, and by then Berbice High School was one of the top four secondary schools in the country.

Alexander Dunn, whose father was one of the Canadian Missionaries to then British Guiana, and who grew-up in the colony in the 1930s and 1940s, reflects the collective feeling of the missionaries when he notes, “It grieved the early missionaries to see these children growing up ignorant and illiterate, and they felt that the children must be educated in East Indian schools. Part of what was taught, of course, was the Christian religion, so that children who attended Canadian Mission schools might be won for Christ. The missionaries also reasoned that they might win the parents to the path by what they were doing for the children.”

Irrespective of the motivation of the missionaries, Indian-Guyanese owe a debt of gratitude to these dedicated souls, many of whom suffered extreme hardship, disease and death, for educating their ancestors, and laying the foundation for their success in the now Independent Guyana.

Verdict is out: Judge Andrea Ogle has made us all proud

By Dhanpaul Narine

Andrea Sabita Ogle personifies the American Dream. She is the first Guyanese woman to be elected to the bench in Queens County, New York. Andrea Ogle comes from an inter-racial family that prized education, an untiring work ethic, honesty, and respect for others. She put those values to good use by displaying a selfless commitment to duty and to helping others. Ogle was educated in New York, and is a product of the American judicial system. She has a most impressive résumé.

Over 21 years, as an attorney, she represented hundreds of litigants on complex matters in the Family Court, Housing Court, Criminal and Supreme Court. She also represented clients in New York Family Treatment Court, where alcohol, depression, or substance abuse was alleged. Her job has led her to work with different organisations, including New York City Council members, New York State and Senate members, Federal legislators, the NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, the Sullivan County Human Rights Commission, the New York City Police Department, and others.

Ogle's hard work, commitment to duty and altruism were recognised and has earned her several accolades. She is a valued supporter of the Queens Book Fair and Literacy Festival that promotes literacy among young people in Queens, New York. Her outstanding service to legal jurisprudence and community service caught the attention of Queens County. In 2022, she was elected as a Judge in the Civil Court of the City of New York. This was a great honour for her, and she was happy to see other women, Karen Gopee, Soma Syed, and Cassandra Johnson become Judges as well.

Ogle's induction ceremony took place on June 16, 2023. It was impressive, well-attended, and drew some of the top names in the community. The Master of Ceremonies was the Hon. Judge Shahabudeen A. Ally of the Civil Court, New York County. Judge Ally is also a Guyanese. The Pledge of Allegiance was delivered by Alexander Ogle, while the National Anthems of the US and Guyana were sung by Joey Grant and Nesta Nelson respectively. The invocation was given by Pastor Brenda Jack.

Supervising Judge Alan J. Schiff described Ogle as a competent Judge that has integrity, and who will be an asset to the bench. Congressman Greg Meeks remarked that her elevation was historic. He said, "Queens is the most diverse county in the US, and the court system has to reflect this diversity. We need judges to understand the people."

He lauded the fact that Judge Ogle was the first woman from Guyana to be elected as a judge in Queens County. He added that her induction was a proud moment. He thanked her for making the sacrifice and for the hard work that went into her election.

Donovan Richards, the Queens Borough President, said it was an honour to be present at the induction. He said that persistence and resilience were the words to describe Judge Ogle's rise to this distinguished position.

A judge is an esteemed position, as that person is required to understand the law and also the values and experiences of the Borough. New York State Senator Leroy Comrie congratulated Judge Ogle for her hard work, and singled out her mother, the matriarch of the family, for her dedication to duty and for being there, every step of the way. District Leaders Daneek Miller and Pamela Bluford added their words of praise and congratulations for Judge Ogle, and also wished her well.

Mohabir Anil Nandlall, Guyana's Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs sent a message in which he congratulated Judge Ogle, and described her as a distinguished daughter of the soil. Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, a Stanford law graduate, applauded Queens County for putting women on the map, and recognising their worth in the legal and other professions. She also thanked the community for supporting her to make Diwali a holiday. She was confident that Judge Ogle would continue to inspire others.

Ali Najmi, of the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean Bar Association of Queens, said Judge Ogle is a wonderful example to emulate as she stood for transparency and excellence.

"She is an inspiration to many. They see in her that the impossible can become possible," he said.

Guyana's Consul General to New York, Michael Brotherson brought greetings and best wishes from Guyana's President Irfaan Ali and the people of Guyana. Brotherson said that Judge Ogle has distinguished herself in New York. Guyana is proud of her. She has maintained the integrity of the judicial system with distinction, and her achievements go far beyond the shores of America. He invited her to visit Guyana and celebrate her appointment with Guyanese at home.

It was time for the introduction of the inductee. This was done by Simone-Marie Meeks, the wife of Congressman, Greg Meeks. She traced her history to Guyana and said she was proud of Judge Ogle. She added that Judge Ogle was ordained for something far bigger than herself.

The oath was administered by the Honorable Edwina



Judge Andrea Ogle takes the oath of office surrounded by members of her family

Richardson-Mendelson, while the robing ceremony was conducted by Ivy Ogle, Nigel Ogle, Adreana Ogle-Crawford, Dr Kevin Ogle, and Dr William Ogle. Judge Ogle looked resplendent and regal in a blue sari with green shimmers that caught the eye.

In her reply, Judge Ogle thanked the people of Queens County for placing their trust in her. She also thanked her family for their sacrifices to help her realise the American Dream, and promised to uphold the law at all times.

"The two words that sum up how I feel today are gratitude

and honour. I stand on the shoulders of those that lifted and carried me and held my hand," she said.

A classical piece was conducted by Damien Escobar two-time Emmy award-winning violinist, while the musical entertainment was provided by the Angels Entertainment Group of Companies, led by Amar Bisram and Geeta Bisram. The food was catered by Nanking Restaurant and Sybils Bakery. The verdict from those present spoke of a wonderful event and a Judge who has made all of us proud. Congratulations, Judge Andrea Ogle.

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Gardiner exhibition features experiences of Indo-Caribbean women

By Nalini Mohabir

Ceramic artist Heidi McKenzie's compelling exhibition, *Indo-Caribbean HerStories*, is on now at the Gardiner Museum until August 27, 2003. McKenzie brings women's experiences to the forefront through an interplay between ceramic tiles, photography, archival images, and jewelry. This is the first time an exhibit focused on the Indo-Caribbean, in particular, has ever taken place in a mainstream arts organisation in Toronto. It is a landmark.

McKenzie, herself of mixed Trinidadian-Irish heritage, sourced *Coolie Belle* postcards from professor Amar Wahab (York University), and from the Montgomery Collection at the AGO. These postcards feature Indentured Indian women exotically posed in sarees and jewelry by commercial photography studios. McKenzie, surprisingly and to great effect, transfers these images onto hand-rolled translucent ceramic tiles, to provide a window onto this history.

In contrast to the anonymous and objectified women in the postcards, stripped of their identity, McKenzie has also included a series of contemporary photographs of ten Indo-Caribbean women: Ramabai Espinet, Kamala-Jean Gopie, Lezlie Lee Kam, Cheryl Khan, Shanta Saywack Maraj, Suzanne Narain, Talisha Ramsaroop, Lancelyn Rayman-Watters, and Preeia Surajbali. The women range in age from their 20s to their 70s; they hail from Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, or the diaspora, and are a mix of Hindu, Christian, and Muslim backgrounds. Each one holds a portrait of their mothers or grandmothers.

McKenzie also transferred these images onto ceramic tiles, displayed in staggered lightboxes. The warmth of ceramic tiles allows the viewer to also hold these images together in an intricately and intimately linked shared history. The images we see are not merely family photographs, free of history or politics. By having her subjects hold portraits of their ancestors, the camera reveals how we live inside these histories.

Lancelyn Rayman-Watters, for instance, holds a picture of her mother, as a child dressed in Victoria finery. In another image, Rayman-Watters' great aunts are dressed up in saree costumes (as opposed to their everyday western, Victorian era clothing), posing against a painted backdrop, highlighting their negotiations between Victorian Caribbean and Indian culture.

Like many others who worked as unskilled laborers, Eugene was forced to walk the deserted streets at the risk of arrest during curfew. His growling tummy compelled him to pick up odd jobs during a pandemic that took the lives of many of his friends and neighbours. He had already lost his apartment and had to social distance in an alleyway with other displaced residents living in cardboard shelters.

A conversation between two of his neighbours awoke Eugene one night. They spoke of a third resident who went to work a few days before and never returned. One asked the other where he worked and uttered an expletive when he was told that the unfortunate man was a porter at the hospital, helping to bury dozens of dead bodies per day. They speculated that the virus had claimed another victim and set fire to his belongings for their safety.

"Pauly said that he worked for the three meals they provided, since the paychecks were useless." Eugene recognised the voice of a man named Zeke.

"True." The second speaker known as The Dutchman agreed. "Unscrupulous persons take all our money for a few expired cans of beans." He spoke with a foreign accent.

"Pauly invited me to come to work with him, but I'd rather eat earth." Zeke sighed. "They always need porters because they lose them to the virus every night."

"That's like walking into certain death." The Dutchman chuckled. "Maybe he wanted to commit suicide."

Eugene knew what they were talking about. At the first announcements of the pandemic, ruthless individuals seized the opportunity to buy every available item from the stores before anyone became aware of their evil intentions. They knew that the pandemic would grind manufacturing to a halt and cut delivery lines, leaving them in control of life sustaining goods. Consumers were forced to pay prices that increased daily, to the greedy human predators.

Eugene wondered if The Dutchman had heard that a



These family photographs have been carried with migration. The interesting choice of backgrounds, that is, where the subject chooses to pose, for example, Ramabai Espinet in her yard; Suzanne Narain in front of a TTC streetcar; Heidi McKenzie in a boat, also shine a light on our continuing relationships to home and diaspora.

Several of our readers from Guyana may have heard of Evelyne Rayman, whose jewelry store in Georgetown burned down during the racial violence of the 1960s. Rayman collected traditional East Indian jewelry from the late 19th and early 20th century – such as beras, and churiyaans. Rayman managed to save a few pieces, and brought them with her to Canada.

These extraordinary pieces, were generously loaned by Rayman's daughter, Lancelyn Rayman-Watters, as part of the exhibit (the last time this private collection was publicly displayed was 1992).

Joy Mahabir whose research examines Indo-Caribbean jewelry, notes "for the Indentured women, jewelry was 'the Indian way of banking,' a way of storing wages. Indentureds were paid with silver shillings, and the women had these melted into various pieces. By wearing their wages, women drew attention to the commodities they produced, such as sugar or cocoa". McKenzie's reinterpretation of the jewelry, scaled up into abstract elements, such as the coins below, highlight the importance of women's resistance to

what Mahabir describes as "the real conditions of poverty, labour exploitation, and hazardous working conditions on plantations".

The images and art work selected, created, and reinterpreted by McKenzie, assert an Indo-Caribbean presence in the Caribbean and in the diaspora; despite powers that obscure our presence.

As Kamal-Jean Gopie memorably states in the online video portraits that accompany the exhibit: "[When] I came here I found it unusual people would ask me about my background and I would say Indian, but their notion of Indian was the Aboriginal people... I was betwixt and between. While I viewed myself as Indo-Caribbean, I had no

real close connections to India. And when I would say I was Jamaican and Indian. People couldn't quite come to terms with that. Jamaica is primarily a Black nation so they didn't have space in their thinking for me."

McKenzie's work also highlights Indo-Caribbean women histories that have been obscured through Empire. Due to the anthropological work of *Coolie Belle* postcards that focused on cultural retention or persistence of Indian traditions, Indo-Caribbean women were portrayed as if they were outside of history, unchanging and forever linked to an ancestral past.

The staggered lightboxes challenge these traditional roles of Indian women, even in the original photographs, the representations of self, which in the clothing choice and stance, challenge the idea of victimised woman, and show us women making moves.

As Espinet wrote in the short story, *Barred*, "I am Indian, plain and simple, not East nor West, just an Indian. I live in the West. My travel across the water to this land has not been easy and many a time I have squatted in the dirt of this or that lepaved hut, a few coins knotted in the corner of *ohrni*, waiting, waiting – waiting to make the next move."

The Supernatural Death's Revenge

person matching Pauly's description was seen running in fright from the hospital in the middle of the night and jumping off a bridge over the raging river half a mile downstream.

Eugene's mind returned to his current predicament, which evoked a cynical smile of life's irony. He wondered if the agony of slow death by starvation would be worse than the torture of prolonged suffocation from the virus' strangulation.

With death only a breath away, he did not have many options.

The morgue was a morbid place that smelled of decaying flesh. Covered in protective gear from head to toe, kept everyone unrecognisable and anonymous. Fighting the urge to throw up, Eugene gulped mouthfuls of saliva, triggered by the kitchen's aroma tantalising his tastebuds. Frequent glances as the snail-paced clock stabbed his stomach with pangs of hunger that made his legs weak, but he had to continue picking up dead bodies while trying to avoid looking into their eyes, left wide open with shock when the sinister grin of the Grim Reaper struck terror in their hearts.

The thuds of the bodies landing on each other and twisting to fill

empty cavities, in the long trenches behind the hospital grew louder each time Eugene and his partner upturned their stretcher to dump them off.

Eugene joined the long line for meals served every four hours. He intended to push his aching body into agonising 12-hour shifts to get his three meals of soup and sandwich every night. Eating required bathroom breaks. Porters were restricted to the basement toilets. He wondered why people suffered in lines longer than the food queues. What Eugene thought was a disgusting act when he first arrived, became

uncomfortably necessary.

Without glancing into the trench, he asked the dead

for their pardons and joined a line of colleagues who took the chance of unzipping their hazmat suits to ease their torturous tummy rumbles over the edge.

When his shift ended at six the next morning, Eugene's legs refused to walk him home to his cramped cardboard box living quarters. He joined other porters in the vacant upper floor of the visitor parking lot of the hospital to fall asleep in his hazmat suit. He wondered if Pauly had never returned to his shelter because he was also using the garage as his sleeping quarters.

After an hour of sleep, a nasty smell penetrated his senses, and a shadow came over him. His eyes popped open, and he froze. He gagged at a stomach-churning odour that emanated from brown smudges on the grimacing face of the man blocking the bright sunshine. The figure loomed over him and pointed to a three-foot high perimeter wall of the parking lot. In his moment of terror, Eugene's eyes followed the man's line of vision, but his body was too paralysed to move. When he turned to look at the man again, he had vanished. With the figure no longer blocking the sun, Eugene squinted with an instant headache from the sun's rays penetrating his pupils.

After a few deep breaths, he raised his aching body to a sitting position, curious to find out what message the man was trying to give him. He pulled his legs under him and rose to his feet. Shaky legs took him to the wall. He leaned over and wondered about the dark stain on the concrete pavement below. The nasty odour returned to burn his nostrils. He turned to face the presence at his side. It was the same man who had stood over him.

"You did this to me." The man glared at him and pointed to the brown smears on his face. "You must suffer the same indignity." His angry voice hurt Eugene's eardrums.

Before he could respond, a vicious force pushed Eugene over the edge. While he was on his way down, split-second answers flashed into his head. He realised why the porters waited in line for the washroom. The stain on the concrete below was blood from many people, including Pauly's.



Kamil
Ali

Imbert's media criticism unfair: Dukharan

Port-of-Spain – It was unfair criticism that came from Finance Minister Colm Imbert after Trinidad and Tobago journalists utilised the most recent data on the performance of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund that had been provided by his ministry, economist Marla Dukharan said last week.

As was reported in the Trinidad and Tobago media earlier this month, for the financial year ending in September 2022, the country's HSF recorded its first-ever annual loss in a total of (US) \$913,456,918.

The loss was revealed in the Finance Ministry's 2022 annual report, which was laid in Parliament in February.

However, it was not published by the government on the Finance Ministry's website until earlier this month.

Following revelation of the loss, Imbert and Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley criticised the *Trinidad Express* newspaper for highlighting the HSF's haemorrhage, saying the media were deliberately spreading misinformation and using old data.

Imbert then gave the latest update, noting that the HSF's current net asset value stood at (US) \$5.5 billion.

Said Imbert, "This is an increase of (US) \$754 million in the actual value of the fund over the last nine months since September 2022."

However, Dukharan told the media last week that while the 2022 annual report may contain outdated numbers and information, it had only recently been published on the ministry's website.

Said Dukharan: "And indeed, on June 7, three reports on the HSF were released on the ministry's website – the reports for Q3 2022, Q4 2022, and the annual report. This means that the public is seeing these reports about six to nine months in arrears."

She added, "Prior to June 7, the last time a report was released was for Q1 and Q2 2022, and these were released in November 2022. So for six months we saw no updates."

Dukharan continued: "That the ministry or minister would

berate the media for using 'outdated' information, which is in fact the latest information provided by said ministry/minister, is unfair and unbecoming at best."

Commenting on the loss in the HSF, Dukharan said it was "quite interesting since the benchmark used to measure the fund's performance against, also saw negative returns of 15.49 percent..."



Marla Dukharan

This suggested that the fund's performance was not unusual, she noted. However, she added that the fund was not invested in according to the approved strategic asset allocation.

Said Dukharan, "This shows that the fund is not being operated and managed in accordance with the approved strategy, and this could have contributed to the extent of losses seen. Sixty-five percent of the fund was supposed to be invested in fixed income, and 35 percent in equity. However, in December 2021, only 49 percent of the fund was invested in fixed income. This means that about 15 percent of the fund was mis-allocated to equity at that time."

However, she added that even if the returns on the fund were positive, there should not be material, long-standing deviation from the approved strategic asset allocation.

"Such deviation speaks to possible mismanagement and weak governance. If the approved [allocation] is somehow no longer appropriate, then the managers of the fund and the governance structure should have used the proper process to change it," she said.

Additionally, "Markets will gyrate and volatility is the new normal, hence the logic behind an approved strategic asset allocation, because the managers of the fund have decided on an investment strategy that they believe will meet the desired outcome of the fund. That there was such significant deviation from the investment strategy demonstrates that there is some breakdown in management and governance of the fund."



Air Canada flights resume between Toronto & Piarco

Port-of-Spain – Air Canada will once again be flying between Pearson in Toronto to Piarco in Trinidad starting November 1.

The return of AC flights to Trinidad was announced last week by Tourism Trinidad Limited. As it noted in a media release, air service will recommence with three flights per week arriving in Trinidad at 11:25 p.m. Trinidad and Tobago time on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. The return flights will depart at 12:30 a.m. on Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays.

Service will then be expanded starting December 3 to March 9, 2024 to four flights per week. These flights will arrive at 12:25 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and will depart at 1:30 a.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays.

As TTL noted, AC's data for the twelve months of January to December 2019 indicate a total of 22,918 passengers disembarked at Piarco International Airport in Trinidad.

Said Carla Cupid, Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Trinidad, "This is a positive development for our tourism industry, and we look forward to using this connection to continue to promote Trinidad as a top travel destination."



Arif Keshani

Also commenting on the latest AC move was High Commissioner for Canada to Trinidad and Tobago, Arif Keshani, who noted, "The ties between our countries are significant and I am very pleased that [AC] will be resuming their flights between Port-of-Spain and Toronto this fall."

He added, "This, combined with the expansion of Canada's electronic travel authorization program to include Trinidad and Tobago, will further serve to enhance our bilateral economic, social, and people-to-people connections."

And Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Tourism, Culture, and the Arts, Randall Mitchell, said, "We continue to work with our international partners and stakeholders in the Air Transportation industry to increase our connectivity and seat capacity from our traditional source markets while at the same time, reducing the cost of travel to Trinidad and Tobago."

Additionally, "This marries well with the recent announcement by the Canadian government of visa-free travel to Canada to the diaspora located there."

Both TTL and the tourism ministry are confident that the commencement of Air Canada's service between Toronto and Port-of-Spain will be a major boost to the tourism industry.

AC's flights will provide a convenient and affordable way for Canadians to travel to Trinidad and vice-versa while helping to attract more visitors from other parts of the world.



More than half the average rainfall for June fell last week within 36 hours that put parts of southern Trinidad underwater with widespread flooding across the South Oropouche River Basin. Central & south Trinidad saw rainfall totals between 75 and 100 millimetres, with isolated totals exceeding 150 millimetres across southwestern regions. An average June produces 243.4 millimetres of rainfall. In photo, residents in south Trinidad navigate a flooded roadway on a tractor on their way to conduct rescue operations.

Mohit calls on govt to take action on escalating home invasions

Port-of-Spain – Cunupia residents are not reassured by National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds saying a special team has been designated to respond to home invasions across the country, the area's representative, UNC Chaguanas East MP Vandana Mohit has said.

The central Trinidad area is among those identified by Hinds that has recorded a spike in home invasions between 2022 and 2023.

Hinds' revelation that a special team had been deployed did not meet much enthusiasm by the residents of Cunupia. Neither did it sit well with Mohit, who represents the residents.

Speaking in the Senate last week, Hinds said Cunupia was among the communities which saw an increase of home invasions from five percent in 2022 to 12 percent this year. The government and its security forces were very concerned about the growing numbers of invasions, Hinds added.

He was quickly questioned by Mohit on why he was sitting

on such alarming statistics and doing nothing about it.

Mohit also recalled correspondence, press releases, and public statements she had made regarding the alarming increases in home invasions, which she claimed that Hinds had failed to address or acknowledge over the years.



Vandana Mohit

Now that Hinds is fully cognisant of the alarming increases of this scourge rampant within the Cunupia region, and given that he provided the empirical data supporting the escalation, Mohit wondered what immediate plan of action was being taken by the government and the police.

"Those dastardly acts perpetuated on the innocent, hardworking citizens must now be urgently addressed, and a sense of normalcy must be availed and subsequently restored to their everyday lives," Mohit said.

She added, "It is widely recognised and accepted that it is

the duty and responsibility of the government to provide a safe and secure environment to its people. Sadly they have failed miserably in this facet."

Mohit also questioned why no concerted action was taken since 2022, when the statistics were collected and presented to Hinds' office. And as she noted, there were no increase resources, no additional patrols, and no heightened security.

"What is the minister proposing in order to allay the fears of those Cunupia residents, bearing in mind that he is and was in possession of these statistics? This is a clear manifestation of the incompetency of the minister," she said.

She added that statistics were of no use if preventative and protective action did not follow.

"Now that figures are out in the public domain, the people of Cunupia, and by extension central Trinidad, are demanding of the minister full protection against the criminal elements," she said.

Mohit called on Hinds to act quickly to prevent the next home invasion.

Persad-Bissessar's inheritance tax claim gets govt negative

Port-of-Spain – The political rhetoric rose a few degrees last week as Trinidad and Tobago heads into Local Government Elections on August 17 with Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar calling out on government to confirm whether it intends to launch a 25 percent “inheritance tax” on beneficiaries.

In what was a swift answer, the government quickly responded with a similar political rhetoric, with Finance Minister Colm Imbert saying Persad-Bissessar's statement was a “figment of her imagination”.

Persad-Bissessar made the claim at a meeting last week, saying, “...I have to warn you, that worse is yet to come. The property tax is only the beginning. The [Dr Keith] Rowley PNM plans on imposing a 25 percent inheritance tax on citizens – is this true?”

She added, “I have been informed of this, and I call on the PNM to come clean to the country about this 25 percent inheritance tax. How long has the government been having discussions about implementing this on the population? An inheritance tax is a tax that you pay when you receive money or property from the estate of a deceased person. Unlike an estate tax, the beneficiary of the money or property is responsible for paying the tax, not the estate.”



UNC supporters attend a meeting where Persad-Bissessar spoke last week

Persad-Bissessar went on to add that the government will establish a threshold value under which the inheritance tax will apply.

Said Persad-Bissessar: “Once that threshold value is surpassed the inheritance tax will be applied. So, when you die, and you leave money or property for your children, they are going to have to pay a 25 percent tax on the value above the threshold amount – is this true?”

Additionally, “They going to tax you even when you dead.. The PNM must scrap the property tax, and we are totally against an inheritance tax.”

However, in a swift response, Imbert described Persad-Bissessar's statements were a “figment of her imagination”.

A statement from the Finance Ministry said Imbert had “taken note of a ludicrous, fabricated and outrageous claim made by the Leader of the Opposition on a political platform, but without a shred of evidence or basis, that the government plans to impose a 25 percent inheritance tax on citizens on money or property received from the estate of a deceased person”.

The statement added that the government was not contemplating any such inheritance tax in any amount whatsoever, nor any other similar new tax in any form or fashion.

It further stated: “This malicious allegation is totally untrue, and is a figment of the imagination of the Leader of the Opposition. There are no such plans to impose such a tax, no proposals, and no discussion taking place on this. No planning whatsoever is taking place at the Ministry of Finance on even the idea of such a tax.”

Additionally, “It is truly disappointing that in a desperate attempt to confuse and panic the population in the upcoming Local Government Election, the Opposition would sink to such depths to make up such a ridiculous story.”

WHO cites T&T's Covid-19 leadership

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley was commended last week for his leadership in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic by Director General of the World Health Organisation Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

In his commendation, Ghebreyesus noted that the tough decisions Rowley took helped prevent infections and save lives in Trinidad and Tobago.

“I also very much appreciate the Prime Minister's strong advocacy for vaccine equity on behalf of Caricom and other small states,” he said.

Ghebreyesus also described Trinidad and Tobago's “unique” parallel healthcare system as a “very good response” during the pandemic.

The government established the parallel healthcare system in the early days of the pandemic to treat Covid-19 patients, while leaving the traditional healthcare system unaffected.

In response, Rowley recalled that as the government responded to the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the first pieces of advice it received was to establish a parallel healthcare system.

Under the system, new hospitals that had not yet been opened for traditional healthcare were used to treat Covid-19 patients, while other facilities were re-purposed as step-down and quarantine centres.

“Picture it – if we were handling Covid-19 inside of our normal health system, we would have had a different experience,” he said.

He added that while this “unique” response to the pandemic was not perfect, Trinidad and Tobago was able “punch above our weight”.

Rowley also noted that if there is a possible outbreak of Covid-19 within a year's time, Trinidad and Tobago would have at least one new hospital available as a parallel facility, the Sangre Grande Hospital, which is currently under construction.

The official count from the Covid-19 pandemic saw close to seven million deaths worldwide after it was declared a global public health emergency by the WHO on January 30, 2020.

On May 5 this year, Dr Tedros declared “with great hope” an end to the emergency status of the virus.

However, while in Trinidad, he reiterated that although the emergency was over, the virus remains present, and countries need to continue to be vigilant.

“So we must be ready and we are the generation that lived through Covid-19, so we must be the generation to learn the

lessons it taught us, and make the changes we need to keep ourselves and each other safer,” he cautioned.

Ghebreyesus said one of the important directions countries were taking was via negotiation of a new international accord on pandemic preparedness and response, which is designed to protect countries and communities from future pandemic emergencies.

He said the pandemic accord will also seek to ensure products like vaccines can be shared in an equitable manner.

“Unfortunately, there has been a significant amount of misinformation and disinformation about the accord, with some people and media saying that countries will cede sovereignty to WHO, and the accord will give the WHO the power to impose lock-downs on countries,” he said.

This was “fake news”, and “simply untrue”, he declared.

He explained: “WHO will not gain any power to override domestic policy decisions, nor would we want to. The pandemic accord is an agreement that is being negotiated by countries for countries, and will be implemented by countries in accordance with their own national laws.”

He said negotiations on the accord were ongoing, and the WHO was aiming for an agreement to be reached by countries by May 2024.

Rowley later indicated that Trinidad and Tobago will support the pandemic accord, “[Because] one can accept that

there are volumes/reams of documents about how we behave with regard to world wars and wars in general and also international trade. But what the pandemic experience has demonstrated is that we need equivalent commitment to govern behaviour in circumstances like that. And that has to be anchored in the whole issue of moral responsibility, equity, and respect for human life in general,” he said.

Additionally, “The conduct of some high-income countries to oversupply themselves with the vaccines at the most dangerous stage in the pandemic, even if it led to wastage while others could not get one for many dollars, that was one of the worst experiences of the pandemic.”

Rowley also noted that small developing countries, such as Trinidad and Tobago, need to ensure that while “we are small in size and income levels, we are not insignificant in the defence of the human condition”.

“Trinidad and Tobago will continue to advocate that the international standards be established, and to the doctrine that we subscribe to with respect to behaviour,” he said.



Dr Tedros (left) with Dr Rowley



Nafeesa Mohammed

Decisive action needed on human trafficking

Port-of-Spain – Decisive action needs to be taken with regard to refugees and human trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago since there has been too much talk from politicians.

Such was the conclusion from human rights attorney Nafeesa Mohammed following last week's release of the US State Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report.

The report placed Trinidad and Tobago on the Tier 2 watch list for the third consecutive year.

It stated that the Trinidad and Tobago government did not meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but was making significant efforts to do so.

As a result of these efforts, Trinidad and Tobago was granted a waiver, which allowed it to remain on Tier 2, and so was not downgraded to Tier 3.

Following the report, Mohammed called on the government to take the US report seriously.

“The fact that we have been placed again on [Tier 2] is a reflection of the institutional collapse taking place all around us. Anyone can access the report, and the information would have been provided to the US by the government. So... despite the red flags raised, those in authority have not seen it fit to address the issues and shortcomings?”

She added, “I am very disturbed at the pace of the requisite attention this matter is being given by the government.”

Mohammed said she was not going to remain “silent about the apparent lack of attention these matters are getting”.

Citing the US report, Mohammed said it was clear the government needed to tighten up the mechanisms that exist in dealing with what she described as a “serious situation”.

The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

Bharat Milap drew viewers to Rosignol cinema from afar

By Vidur Dindayal

Bharat Milap was the biggest film I ever saw. It drew huge crowds. More films in later years drew big crowds too. It was shown at Rosignol cinema, circa 1940s.

I was a young boy then. The cinema was the only one on the West Coast of Berbice County. It was a Hindu religious movie, and drew crowds from as far as Golden Fleece, about 20 miles from Rosignol cinema. By the way, in those days, cinema was pronounced, *Tee-a-taa*.

The crowds for this movie included people who didn't regularly see 'pitchas'. They came from far off on bicycles. Few hired cars to bring them and take them back home. Some from closer villages like Cotton Tree came on donkey carts and dray carts. The dray carts were bigger, could hold more people and were drawn by bullocks.

So big were the crowds for *Bharat Milap* that the *Tee-a-taa* showed it all through the weekend. That was not normal. They would show an English picture on Sunday matinee and night time.

But for *Bharat Milap* the *Tee-a-taa* was full every night. There was standing room only in the circle and balcony, and my uncle who lived nearby suddenly found he had lots of 'friends'. People came to him to borrow chairs to sit on, wherever there was space, since all seats were taken up.

Bharat Milap was a very special movie. Because it was about Lord Rama many people saw it not as a 'pitcha', but as 'real life' – like the news.

Also, what made it so special was that the people who acted as Rama and Sita were then unknown to all but a few people. So, they looked the part, so much so that for most people who are not regular 'pitcha' goers, they were Rama and Sita.

People would have to be forgiven for embracing them the way they looked like real-life Rama and Sita.

The person who played Lord Rama was Prem Adib. In my young days and even up to recently I have never seen Prem Adib acting in any other role. Literally, when I think of Rama, the face of Prem Adib comes to mind. Please forgive me. Not long afterwards when we saw Nutan in movies, we got to know she was the daughter of Shobhana Samarth, who acted so beautifully as Sita in *Bharat Milap*.

Many people took *Bharat Milap* to their hearts. The people and scenes were taken as the best pictures of real-life Rama and Sita.

Copies of film clips of Rama and Sita were enlarged and made into 'photos' and framed. They were proudly and reverently displayed in many homes of my parents' friends at



Prem Adib

Blairmont and Rosignol.

These framed photos of Rama and Sita taken from the film were being sold at Blairmont market, held weekly on Saturday afternoons.

The movie was extraordinary. I am sure the producers were seeking to make the movie ultra-convincing, and so it was as I remember it.

The settings were lavish in everything. The chariots of the King, Queen, Princesses and Princes looked gleaming and golden, although the movie was black and white. The interior of the palaces was grand with decorations and sculptures of Gods, Goddesses, and elegant dancers. Every room was filled with ornaments, vases, and flowers.

For Prince Bharat's birthday, elaborate celebrations showed him swinging gently on a large *jhoola* with cushion seat, and flowers everywhere. In front were lady attendants beautifully dressed, each wearing a coronet, walking slowly past holding large *thalis* each with offerings of a *dia* in the middle of flowers and fruit and singing their birthday songs to Prince Bharat.

One sentence spoken many times by Lord Rama in *Bharat Milap* has made an indelible imprint in my brain ever since my childhood. I didn't know the meaning until years later, but the sound of the words and the way they were spoken made me feel the meaning was profound, and so it was.

It said much that is the core of the highest of human values. The sentence was *Bhawna se Kartavya Ucha Hai* – meaning, 'Duty is superior to wish or feelings'.

We know the story of Lord Rama. His father, King Dasratha, wanted to retire, and to take his place, he was going to crown Rama, his favourite son, as King. At this point Queen Kaikeee demanded of the king to fulfill a promise he had made to her many years ago: her demand, to banish his favourite son Rama into the forest for 14 years.

A kind of sequel to *Bharat Milap* was *Ram Rajya*, with the same main actors and actresses. This was also a successful movie, followed by *Ram Baan*.

I think *Ram Rajya* was an equally crowd-pulling movie. I learnt many of life's lessons from both movies, *Bharat Milap* and *Ram Rajya*.

From *Bharat Milap*, the lesson about duty being superior to feelings is of immense value. From *Ram Rajya*, I came upon a lesson that was about democracy, relevant today as never before, and in the future.

After Rama returned to Ayodhya and was crowned King, one of his subjects made public that he did not respect the queen Sita. He questioned her righteousness, since she was in Ravan's custody after he abducted her. He said she would only get his allegiance if she could prove she was righteous.

Sita proving she was righteous following her abduction and being in the custody of Ravan was a 'life or death' matter. She could only do so by subjecting herself to *agni* – fire. If she was righteous, she would not suffer, but if not, she would burn to ashes.

Lord Rama was distressed that the man – a subject in his kingdom – raised the question of the righteousness of his Queen Sita.

Lakshman, the 'no-nonsense 'brother' of Rama, told Rama that he did not have to pay attention to what the subject, an ordinary man in the kingdom, said about his queen.

Lakshman said, "You are the king. You can do whatever you like."

In response, Lord Rama, said these words: "I hear what you say Lakshman. I am your brother Rama, I am indeed aggrieved that Sita, the love of my life, would have to subject herself to the fire. But 'King Rama' cannot hear of such grief or feelings. King Rama has to acknowledge the rightful request of one of the citizens and accede to it by subjecting Sita to the fire and accepting the consequences."

That was an example of democratic practice, by Lord Rama, in India, thousands of years ago, according to Hinduism.

Ignoring societal censure, Nargis chose movies & stardom

By Sampada Sharma

Hindi cinema was still trying to find its feet when Nargis first appeared on screen as a teenager in the 1940s. No one knew that a 14-year-old who was starring opposite a 33-year-old Motilal would one day be known as one of the finest actors of all time, and while she worked in the movies for a relatively short time, Nargis left an impression that still remains unmatched.

Nargis first starred in a lead role in 1942 in *Taqdeer*, and by her own admission, she had no interest in being a part of cinema. Born to a physician, Abdul Rashid, and an early pioneer of Indian cinema, Jaddan Bai, Fatima Rashid née Nargis wanted to be a doctor, as she realised that cinema as a profession was looked down upon.

"I wanted to be a doctor because in those days, people didn't think very highly of films. It was thought that girls from good families should not join movies. Women who worked in movies had no place in society," she shared in a radio interview in the early 1960s.

One could say that the teenager at the time was mildly manipulated into being in the movies as the producers, including her co-star Motilal, told her that they would lose lakhs if she chose not to participate. She gave in and made them promise that they wouldn't force her to do any more movies.

That accident soon became Nargis' career. And soon after, she found herself as one of the most celebrated and refined actors at the movies.

However, the societal censure followed as her school teacher made her feel bad about her choice of career.

"I cried till I could cry no more. But when the tears were exhausted, I began to think. I thought, my mother works in films. But she is not bad. She is the most wonderful woman in the world..." she told *Filmfare*.

The 1949 film *Andaz* is widely considered as Nargis' breakthrough role, and for her, it was the one of the roles that



Contemporary newspaper advertisement for *Jogan*, which foregrounds Nargis, with Dilip Kumar she thoroughly enjoyed.

The film had her starring with Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor, and playing a woman who is surrounded by bossy men. Yet, it was her personality that never made her come across as a pushover.

Dilip Kumar believed that the versatility that Nargis showed on screen was admirable, and even though she was a much

bigger star than him when they worked together initially, she made sure that he was treated as an equal.

"The kind of versatility she had, no other artist has shown it. She was a delightful person, easy to work with. There was no pressure while working with her, you didn't feel like you were working with a star," he shared in a documentary made by Priya Dutt on the late star.

Her 1950 film *Jogan* was another landmark film in her career. Here, Nargis played a sage-like character who has dedicated her life to God.

Until *Jogan*, Nargis had earned the reputation of playing the modern-Indian woman who was miles away from the *abla naari* (damsel in distress) that was often seen on screen.

With *Jogan*, she still wasn't playing the *bechari*, but a woman who had deep faith in her God, and was decisive enough to take a stand for herself.

Such was the impact of this film on her that Nargis even thought about giving up the materialistic world and living the life of a *sanyasi*.

"I clearly remember *Jogan*. There was a time when I started feeling that it would be better if I give up on the materialistic world because I was deeply into the role," she shared in an *All India Radio* interview.

A very significant part of Nargis' career was her on screen partnership with Raj Kapoor and in many ways, it laid the foundation for RK Studios. In fact, much of RK Studios' earlier success came about thanks to Nargis' presence in those films. Their 1951 film *Awaara* cemented their place as icons of Indian cinema, and while Raj had the titular role here, Nargis' character was just as important. Her screen presence had a certain sense of rebellion. Her character appeared like she didn't have the baggage of any inhibitions, and that transparency was evident to the audience.

But even an actor of her calibre was up for a challenge when she played a double role in *Anhonee* (1952). One of the

See Page 21: Daubed in earthly mud

Daubed in earthly mud, Mother India placed Nargis among the stars

From page 20

characters was that of a courtesan, and to understand what it meant to play this role, Nargis decided to visit a *kotha* and learn the delicate movements that enchanted the visitors in these places.

In another *AIR* interview, Nargis shared that since it was a “difficult role”, she dressed up in men’s clothing and secretly visited a *kotha* with her brother.

“I listened to the *mujra* that was performed there, and I observed the dancer’s gestures closely so I could use it in the movie,” she shared.

Anhonee also had her taking up smoking because her character in the film smoked.

“Even when I was not in the shot, I would have a cigarette in my hand,” she said.

Even though Nargis was one of the most respected actors in the 1950s, the 1957 film *Mother India*, directed by Mehboob Khan, put her on a pedestal that no other female actor had seen before.

Playing a woman through the span of her life – from a young bride to mother of two adult children – Nargis pushed the boundary of what an actor could do on screen. Her co-stars here Sunil Dutt, Rajendra Kumar, and Raaj Kumar were



Nargis with Sunil Dutt in *Mother India*

relatively new and Nargis was the star, so she knew how to lead by example.

Sunil Dutt, in Priya’s documentary, shared that when they were shooting for the scene which required her to be daubed in wet mud, Nargis would quietly put it on every single day.

“The wet mud had started smelling. But everyday she would get ready, get that mud on herself without any hesitation and she would be ready for the shot,” he recalled.

Nargis won many accolades for her work in *Mother India*, and she deserved them all.

“I believe I deserved the award I got for *Mother India*. I put in a lot of hard work. If people had not liked it, then I would have been upset,” she told *AIR*.

But soon after *Mother India*, Nargis retired from the movies. She finished a few of the projects that were still pending, including *Raat Aur Din*, which shot for almost ten years, but Nargis had decided that she would bid adieu to the world of movies after she got married.

She liked to immerse herself in her characters and was of the belief that balancing the two worlds – of family and movies – was a tough road for a woman.

“I thought that I can’t manage both these lives at the same time. Either my personal life would suffer, or my work would suffer,” she said. But she believed that she would come back to the movies after her kids were grown up. Unfortunately, that never happened as she passed away at the age of 52 in 1981.

Nargis wanted to come back to the movies, but even at time she was keenly aware that playing stereotypical mother roles was not going to be her cup of tea. But if they made something worth her time, she would jump at the opportunity because her work was her religion.

“If I like that role, I would have no objection. I love my art and I think of it as a religion,” she said.

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Selectors unlikely to overhaul India for WI tour

While India's tour of the West Indies is the first series in the 2023-2025 World Test Championship cycle, it is expected that the selection panel is unlikely to make wholesale changes to the team.

As the cricket website *Cricbuzz* reported last week, only a couple of players are set to be rested or dropped. Also, it appears that Rohit Sharma will continue as India's Test captain in the foreseeable future.

A source told *Cricbuzz* about India's reluctance to do a complete overhaul, saying, "Every Test is important, and its result contributes to the World Test Championship points table. We cannot experiment in a Test match."

Four out of the top five batsmen: Rohit, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, and Ajinkya Rahane, are certain to retain their places in the squad for the two Test matches in Dominica and Trinidad. However, Cheteshwar Pujara's place is still being questioned.

As *Cricbuzz* noted, there are likely to be discussions regarding India's long-standing No 3, who has scored only one century in 52 innings (28 Tests) since 2020 at a disappointing average of 29.69.

While Pujara has registered 11 half-centuries, his average further drops to 26.31 when his scores of 90 and 102* in the Chittagong Test in December 2022 are excluded.

His shot selection, and not just in the WTC final, could also be subject to discussion. It is not yet confirmed if the 35-year-old veteran, with 103 Tests under his belt, will be left out of the squad. However, it appears that his position in the side is far from tenable.

Even if he makes the squad, there is no guarantee that he will

make the Playing XI. In the scenario where he is not considered, Yashasvi Jaiswal could be the one to replace him at No 3.

In addition to the deliberations surrounding Pujara's position, the selectors are likely to consider resting Mohammed Shami. There is a perception that the Indian spearhead has been overworked. He has been bowling continuously since the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

He also played in 17 IPL games, the maximum one can play in a season, before the WTC final.

However, the veteran fast bowler may return for the ODIs that follow the two Tests in view of the World Cup later this year, *Cricbuzz* noted.

Mohammed Siraj has also shouldered a heavy workload recently, and discussions are likely around him too. As one of the most improved pacers of

late, Siraj may travel with the squad, but could be used sparingly to ensure he is in good shape for the limited-overs assignments later in the year, such as the Asia Cup and the World Cup.

Arshdeep Singh and Umran Malik are likely to be included in the squad as well. Malik was only able to find a place in only eight out of 14 games this season for SunRisers Hyderabad. It is likely he will receive a national recall, although it is unclear whether he will be considered for Tests, or both ODIs and T20Is.

K.S. Bharat, the wicketkeeper from Andhra, may retain his position in the Test squad despite his less-than-impressive performance with the bat at the Oval.

However, Sanju Samson, highly regarded for his abilities if not for consistency, may make a comeback in the ODI and T20I squads alongside Ishan Kishan. The squad for the five T20Is will be without the seniors, and will be led by Hardik Pandya.



Rohit Sharma



Cheteshwar Pujara



Rishabh Pant

Pant now on final leg on road to recovery

The fast pace on the road to recovery for Rishabh Pant has surprised the Board of Control for Cricket in India, and the medical staff at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru, the cricket website *ESPNcricinfo* reported last week.

The India wicketkeeper is now undergoing rehabilitation after he survived a serious car crash last December.

As *ESPNcricinfo* also reported, while the BCCI is attempting to fast track Pant's rehab to try and get him ready for the ODI World Cup late this year, the recovery process is likely to last longer.

However, the prospect of potentially not playing any cricket in 2023 has not affected Pant, who recently started to walk without crutches, and is now climbing stairs without any support.

It is also believed he is largely pain-free, and while skill work is still "quite some time away", he is currently increasing his lower-body and upper-body mobility exercises under the guidance of S. Rajnikanth's physiotherapy.

Rajnikanth has previously worked with several India age-group teams, and has also been part of the Delhi Capitals support staff. He had previously helped rehabilitate Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah, and M. Vijay from serious injuries.

Thulasi Ram Yuvaraj, another NCA physiotherapist, has been with Pant ever since he was airlifted to Mumbai in the days following the car crash.

Pant is said to be mixing his rehab with sessions of aqua-therapy, light swimming, and table tennis. He has also been spending time conducting interactive sessions with batches of age-group cricketers – male and female – who have been attending training camps at the NCA.

These sessions have been facilitated by NCA chief V.V.S. Laxman to help break the monotony, while also boosting the morale of young cricketers.

Pant last played during India's tour of Bangladesh in December 2022. While being away from the field has been a big disappointment, it is understood he has been keeping himself occupied and positive.

It was also reported by *ESPNcricinfo* that he watched the World Test Championship final with some of the other India players doing rehab at the NCA, among them Bumrah, Shreyas Iyer, and Prasad Krishna.

Both Bumrah and Shreyas underwent back surgeries recently, which made them miss the IPL and the WTC final, and are now at the NCA for their recovery.

The NCA medical staff is optimistic about both players being available for the Asia Cup in September.

Bumrah suffered a recurring back injury, and had surgery in New Zealand in March. He has not played since the home T20Is against Australia last September.

It is understood he is mainly doing physiotherapy, but has recently started light bowling workloads, which will gradually increase.

Shreyas has been troubled by a bulging disc in his lower back. As a result, he had to cut short playing the final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in March in Ahmedabad. He then underwent surgery in London in May, and is now undergoing physiotherapy.

India, WI play 100th Test match at Queen's Park Oval

The historic 100th Test between West Indies and India will take place at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad, which has been chosen by Cricket West Indies to host the final Test of the two-match series that takes place next month.

The game will bowl off July 20, and will be the first Test staged at the celebrated venue since Sri Lanka toured the Caribbean five years ago, the *Caribbean Media Corporation* reported last week.

The itinerary will see all formats played during the tour, with India playing three One-Day Internationals and five Twenty20 Internationals from July 12 to August 13.

"We are delighted to be able to confirm the schedule and venues for the highly anticipated visit by India," said CWI chief executive, Johnny Grave.

He added, "One of the highlights will be the 100th Test at the Queen's Park Oval, and this promises to be a fantastic occasion as we celebrate this historic event between these two proud cricketing nations."

However, the tour will open with the first Test taking place at the picturesque Windsor Park in Dominica, which is hosting its first Test in six years.

Following the second Test, the two teams will clash in the opening two ODIs at Kensington Oval in Barbados on July 27 and 29, before returning to Trinidad for the final game on August 1 at the Brian Lara Stadium in Tarouba.

Two days later, the Brian Lara Stadium will host the first T20 International, before

the tour heads to Guyana for the next two at the National Stadium there on August 6 and 8.

Florida's Central Broward Regional Park Stadium will be the stage for the last two T20Is on August 12 and 13, with North

America providing the scene for the series finale.

Grave added, "We also look forward to hosting India in the white ball fixtures and welcoming fans to attend the matches across the region, as well as in the US. It will be 18 days of entertainment for cricket lovers to enjoy and savour."

West Indies are staring at a difficult tour in all formats, *CMC* noted. They have not beaten India in a Test series in two decades, and have not won a single Test during that period.

The Caribbean players have also not won an ODI series against the Indians in 17 years, while losing the last five T20I series and managing just two wins in their last 17 matches.

Official West Indies Tour Operator packages, including match tickets will be announced first. The Windies Tickets service, presented by Mastercard, is available [here](#).

Ticket sales were launched yesterday. Fans can also sign up to receive [ticket sales news here](#).

Match Schedule

India tour of West Indies 2023

Test Matches: 12-16 July: 1st Test Match, Windsor Park, Dominica; 20-24 July: 2nd Test Match, Queen's Park Oval, Trinidad.

CG United

ODIs: 27 July: 1st CG United ODI, Kensington Oval, Barbados; 29 July: 2nd CG United ODI, Kensington Oval, Barbados; 1 August: 3rd CG United ODI, Brian Lara Cricket Academy, Trinidad.

T20 Internationals

3 August: 1st T20I, Brian Lara Cricket Academy, Trinidad; 6 August: 2nd T20I, National Stadium, Guyana; 8 August: 3rd T20I, National Stadium Guyana; 12 August: 4th T20I, Broward County Stadium, Lauderhill, Florida; 13 August: 5th T20I, Broward County Stadium, Lauderhill, Florida.



Johnny Grave



Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad



Beth Mooney

Mooney's ton seals opener spot for Ashes Test

A dominant century against England A last week put Beth Mooney firmly in her spot as Australia's opener for the women's Ashes Test, *ESPNcricinfo* reported last week.

Mooney scored 107 from 133 balls at Leicester, with Australia all out for 284.

With Meg Lanning out of the tour with illness and Rachael Haynes having retired since their last red-ball match, Australia gave their strongest indication yet of their line up for this week's Test in Nottingham.

Captain Alyssa Healy moved down the order to No 5, after indicating last month she did not want to shoulder the load of wicketkeeping and opening.

That promoted Phoebe Litchfield and Mooney to open, in an entirely new-look combination after Healy and Haynes opened in Australia's last Test.

Litchfield scored only 19 against England A, but may still earn a Test debut at the top of the order at Trent Bridge.

However, Mooney had no such trouble ahead of the one-off

Test against England that kicked off the multi-format series. She was dominant square of the wicket and punished an England A attack that was sometimes too wayward.

Mooney has opened previously in Test cricket, but has traditionally batted at No 3 or in the middle order before Haynes' retirement. Her score was the only Australian one above 40, as others fell to loose shots around her.

"I seem to do that in warm-up games and not transfer that to the real thing... The first few days in England it is nice to hit a few off the middle," she said.

Kim Garth also pushed her case for a Test debut for Australia, taking 2 for 24 late in the day. Veteran seamer Megan Schutt was not used, with Australia likely to leave her out of the Test attack and play former Irish international Garth instead.

"Kimmy G is a ripper, she has contributed hugely to this group off the field, and it is nice to see her getting some games on the field," said Mooney.

She added, "She presents a real threat to the England top order, so it is nice to see her get a couple in this game."



Danielle Gibson (left) with Lauren Filer

Uncapped Filer, Gibson in Ashes 15-player group

England last week named uncapped Western Storm duo Lauren Filer and Danielle Gibson in their 15-player group for this week's Ashes Test at Trent Bridge, *The Independent* has reported.

The English team is looking to take the Ashes for the first time since 2014 with the five-day Test against Australia that starts on June 22.

Twelve members of the English team have featured for England before in red-ball cricket, but Filer and Gibson, alongside Alice Capsey, are looking to earn their Test debuts.

All-rounder Gibson travelled as a reserve to the T20 World Cup in February, and has had a fine season with recent half-centuries for the Storm in the Charlotte Edwards Cup.

Seamer Filer has claimed eight wickets in four Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy matches in 2023.

Said Women's Coach Jon Lewis: "We are looking forward to

what promises to be an exciting Ashes series. We are fortunate that our talent pool is growing fast, this has enabled us to pick a nicely balanced squad."

Lewis added, "Dani [Gibson] is one of the form cricketers in the country, she is improving both with bat and ball, and if selected in the team, offers us a dynamic cricketer who can change the momentum of the game. We are looking forward to what promises to be an exciting Ashes series."

Also, "Lauren is a genuine wicket-taking threat with good pace and swing. Again, if selected in the playing 11, she offers us a point of difference in our bowling attack that could impact a Test match at any point in the game."

England Test squad to face Australia: **H. Knight (captain)**, **N. Sciver-Brunt (vice-captain)**, **T. Beaumont**, **L. Bell**, **A. Capsey**, **K. Cross**, **A. Davidson-Richards**, **S. Dunkley**, **S. Ecclestone**, **L. Filer**, **D. Gibson**, **A. Jones**, **E. Lamb**, **I. Wong**, **D. Wyatt**.

Cricket Schedule

(ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Wednesday June 21, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
Ireland vs Scotland, 7th Match, Group B, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM
Oman vs UAE, 8th Match, Group B, Bulawayo Athletic Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM
Africa Continental Cup 2023
TBC vs TBC, Final, Gymkhana Club Ground, Nairobi, 2:00 PM

Thursday June 22, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
Netherlands vs US, 10th Match, Group A, Takashinga Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM
West Indies vs Nepal, 9th Match, Group A, Harare Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM

Friday June 23, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
Sri Lanka vs Oman, 11th Match, Group B, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM
Scotland vs UAE, 12th Match, Group B, Bulawayo Athletic Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM

Saturday June 24, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
Zimbabwe vs West Indies, 13th Match, Group A, Harare Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM
Netherlands vs Nepal, 14th Match, Group A, Takashinga Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM

Sunday June 25, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
Sri Lanka vs Ireland, 15th Match, Group B, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM
Scotland vs Oman, 16th Match, Group B, Bulawayo Athletic Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM

Monday June 26, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
Zimbabwe vs United States, 17th Match, Group A, Harare Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM
West Indies vs Netherlands, 18th Match, Group A, Takashinga Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM

Tuesday June 27, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
Sri Lanka vs Scotland, 19th Match, Group B, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM
Ireland vs UAE, 20th Match, Group B, Bulawayo Athletic Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM

Wednesday June 28, 2023

The Ashes, 2023
England vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 1, Lord's, London, 11:00 AM

Thursday June 29, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
TBC vs TBC, Super Sixes, Match 1, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM
The Ashes, 2023
England vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 2, Lord's, London, 11:00 AM

Friday June 30, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
TBC vs TBC, 7th Place Play-off Semi-Final 1, Takashinga Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM
TBC vs TBC, Super Sixes, Match 2, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM
The Ashes, 2023

England vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 3, Lord's, London, 11:00 AM

Saturday July 1, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
TBC vs TBC, Super Sixes, Match 3, Harare Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM
The Ashes, 2023
England vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 4, Lord's, London, 11:00 AM

Sunday July 2, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
TBC vs TBC, Super Sixes, Match 4, Queens Sports Club, Bulawayo, 9:00 AM
TBC vs TBC, 7th Place Play-off Semi-Final 2, Takashinga Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM
The Ashes, 2023

England vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 5, Lord's, London, 11:00 AM

Monday July 3, 2023

ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers 2023
TBC vs TBC, Super Sixes, Match 5, Harare Sports Club, Harare, 9:00 AM



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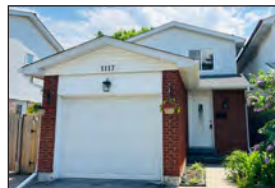
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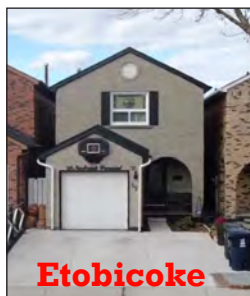
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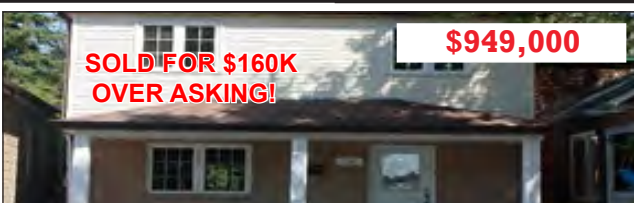
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Beautiful 4 bedrooms, 4 washrooms, 2 storey home located in the quiet neighbourhood of Angus. Minutes to Barrie. Open concept main floor w/ walkout to fenced backyard. Finished basement with rec room, full washroom & laundry area. Large driveway w/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



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

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