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Our Community Is Thriving!



Member of the House of Commons, Scarborough North, Shawn Chen, addresses members of the Trinidad & Tobago 50+ & Seniors Association of Canada during Black History Month celebrations in Scarborough last month. *More BHM celebration photos on Page 11*



It was quite a party in Scarborough when the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association held its Fete Gala. The event was energised to music by the eminent Terry Gajraj, above with guest Sandra Walti (at left). *More on Page 15. Photo: Rayzuh Photography*

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: THE PATH FORWARD



Campbell (left to right), Rokhaya Gueye, and Premier Ford, who is holding a No 2 Construction Battalion commemorative coin from the Carpenters' Union



Ivan Dawns (centre), Roodney Clarke at right, with Wilson Anoff from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

Carpenters' issue call to next generation

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – Its message was a clear and unequivocal call that went out to the next generation to build on the foundation laid down by Black stalwarts of the past, and by those who are toiling in the trades today in continuing to clear the path forward.

This message was a main pillar in the notice communicated to future nation-builders in the trades, which was issued by the Carpenters' Union on February 21, when the group sponsored its commemoration of Black History Month at Queen's Park. It was in keeping with the BHM theme this

year, "Black Excellence: A Heritage to Celebrate; a Future to Build".

Organised and coordinated by members of the Carpenter's Union, among them Chris Campbell, in collaboration with Ivan Dawns from the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, and Roodney Clarke from the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters, the event was a non-partisan BHM celebration that saw Ontario's Premier Doug Ford in attendance, along with ministers from his administration, and other government ministers.

Attending the event with Ford were MPPs Patrice Barnes,

See Page 4: Carpenters' call

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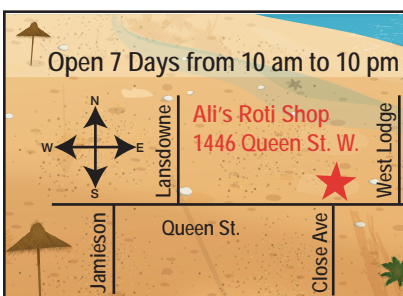
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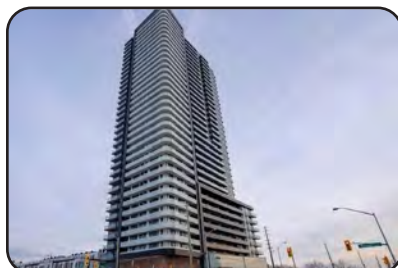
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MPPs David Smith (l-r), Vijay Thanigasalam, Raymond Cho (second, right), and Aris Babikian (right); at centre is performer Dwayne Morgan

MPP Cho and colleagues mark Black History Month

Scarborough residents celebrated Black History Month at the Malvern Town Centre on February 24 in an event that was an enjoyable Meet 'n Greet, with special guests in attendance, and performances by top artists.

The event was titled, *Black Changemakers: Giving back, inspiring others, and shaping our future.*

In attendance at the event were MPP Raymond Cho, who represents Scarborough North; MPP Aris Babikian, who represents Scarborough-Agincourt; MPP Vijay Thanigasalam, who represents Scarborough-Rouge Park; and MPP David Smith, Scarborough Centre.

As Thanigasalam noted, it was an exciting opportunity to “meet with members of the community, while showcasing Black talent and experiences”.

In addressing the gathering, Cho indicated the immense pride he felt for the contributions made by Ontario’s Black population and its communities in not only building the province, but for their stellar role in nation-building as well, he stated.

At the same time, Cho also recognised his peers who attended the event, while commending Smith and Thanigasalam for their ongoing work in bettering our communities, and for the positive impact they were making in the lives of all Ontarians.

Walnut Foundation holds 3rd ‘PSA Detect and Protect’ day

Toronto – The Walnut Foundation will hold its third travelling prostate cancer screening day, ‘PSA Detect and Protect’, on April 6 at Durham Community Health Centre in Oshawa.

Working together with its partners Princess Margaret Hospital, Taibu Community Health Centre, and Durham Community Health Centre, TWF’s travelling screening clinic will take place at the Durham Community Health Centre, 115 Grassmere Avenue in Oshawa.

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood testing will be performed at the centre at no cost for men 40 years and older.

There is also the option for a free haircut, massage, and refreshments. It takes place between 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Email info@thewalnutfoundation.com for more information. Also, [click here to register](#).

TWF has been very active since its inception in deploying peer to peer support and education around prostate cancer. Over the past few months the group has engaged various stake-



Dwayne Morgan performs at the event



A section of the guests at Malvern Town Centre

He also noted that Smith was one of the first Black MPPs to be elected to the Ontario caucus.

Smith is Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development; he is also a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

What was notable in his address to the guests was Smith’s reminder that BHM did not end with February.

Instead, it was a celebration that continued throughout the year in acknowledgment of the building blocks Black Canadians are continuing to add to Canada’s national foundation.

The celebratory event also saw delivery of an inspiration and reflective address by poet, writer, and performer, Dwayne Morgan.

holders in hosting prostate cancer screening days in select Black communities.

The first clinic took place at Taibu Community Health Centre, with the second held at The Jamaican Canadian Centre.

As TWF reports, both events were well-received and executed, and the impacted patients are currently being followed up on by their medical provider, and at the Princess Margaret Hospital.

TWF has also requested that information about the screening day be shared among networks, and for the community’s proactive support for its latest effort.

“Speak to the leaders, influencers, activists, and family members of Black men age 40+ in the area who do not have a medical provider; have not had a PSA Blood test in 12 months; or who do not qualify for a free PSA Blood test via OHIP,” TWF said.

According to the research, Black populations have a higher risk of developing prostate cancer.



Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir & Cultural Center held its music and dance fund-raiser Sangeet Ki Kahani 3 last weekend at the Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham. The event featured music, songs, and dances, and was hosted by community leader, Joe Jaglal (second from left). See Page 14 for story and more photos

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Carpenters' call on next generation to continue building a better Canada

From Page 1

Charmain Williams, and David Smith, and other officials.

In what was a poignant and heartfelt address, Dawns spoke to the stellar gathering about building on the foundation for future and upcoming generations that was laid down by Black pioneers in the trades despite the many difficulties and challenges they faced.

Dawns is the first Black union representative with the IUPAT in Ontario.

He said: “[A friend] of mine always said to me, ‘Everyone should plant a shade tree that they will never sit under’. Because our ancestors planted a shade tree years ago, I was able to become the first Black representative in Canada. We’ve come a long way, but the work is not done as yet. Now it’s our turn to plant that shade tree, so that the next generation can benefit from it.”

Looking down at the track-record of activism and struggle in the assertion of humanity, self-determination, and the assertion of belonging, Dawns spoke briefly on the history of Black workers and trade unions in Ontario.

As he stated, “As a member of the labour union, I think it is very important for us to talk, and to say, that Blacks weren’t always welcome.”

Dawns also looked down the tracks, speaking to the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. He recalled that the majority of sleeping car porters were Black men, and the role was one of a few job opportunities available to them in Canada. The group signed its first collective agreement with Canadian Pacific Rail in 1945, he declared.

Clarke also spoke to his role in helping to put together a better world via the trades. He is president of the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters, and the first Black leader of the plumber’s union.

“I have made it my duty and my responsibility to document our diverse history in our union. We had an influx of members while they were building the Pickering Nuclear Plant... Since then we have been growing slowly and steadily,” he said.

But the main message that evening was delivered by

Campbell, who is Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the Carpenters’ Regional Council. He is also Vice President at Local 27 in Toronto.

In his address, Campbell noted that the event was a “powerful reminder of the strength found in unity” as he cited with gratitude the untiring efforts put into organising the evening by Dawns and Clarke, in setting aside their “labour relations differences to honour our culture and history”.

Campbell then spoke to one of the major themes that evening, which was looking ahead to building a better, more dynamic, and equity-driven future.

Said Campbell: “I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge, thank, and encourage the next generation to emulate and follow in the footsteps of our Queens Park Legislative Assembly trailblazers who have paved the way for us.”

He then cited the hard work and achievements of Lincoln Alexander, first Black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from 1985 to 1991; Zenana Akande, who was the first Black woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; Leonard Austin Braithwaite, the first Black Canadian to be elected to a provincial legislature; and Alvin Curling, the first Black Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Let us take this moment to reflect on their remarkable contributions, and commit ourselves to continuing their legacy of progress and unity in our community,” Campbell declared.

He then pivoted to pioneers in the trades, where he acknowledged “the profound impact of trailblazers within our union and the construction industry, much like the esteemed parliamentarian icons in the province of Ontario”.

As Campbell affirmed, among the Black pioneers were Lister Tennant; Ucal Powell; Dory Smith; and Phillis Gallimore.

“These individuals have not only shaped the course of our industries, but have served as beacons of inspiration for all of us,” he declared.

Additionally, “Their dedication to excellence has motivated us to step forward, to aspire for executive board positions, and to actively engage in our local communities through volunteering. These remarkable men and women have instilled in us the

courage to champion equity, diversity, and inclusion for every worker within our sphere.”

Campbell also addressed Ford, informing him that according to the statistics, one in every five jobs in Ontario will be in the skills trade. At the same time, he extended gratitude to Ford for “the positive impact of the Skills Development Fund Training Stream”.

Said Campbell: “Its influence resonates not only within local Black community organisations as Toronto Community Benefits Network, Building Up, and Trade Linx, but has also made a substantial difference for the Carpenters’ Union and our valued industry partners.”

The Carpenters’ Union has been in Canada for over 140 years, and represents over 75,000 men and women.

Attending the event that evening was Rokhaya Gueye, whom Campbell described as one of the industry’s leaders. Gueye is the community partnership coordinator with the Carpenters’ Regional Council, and chair of the Sisters in the Brotherhood in Ontario. At the same time, Campbell also indicated there was more work to be done.

“In a world where half the population is comprised of women, it is imperative that we address the imbalances within the construction trades,” Campbell said.

To this end, Campbell called on Ford and his ministers “to persist in their efforts to level the playing field”.

Said Campbell: “Let us ensure that women have a fair chance to start and thrive in the construction trades. By fostering an environment of inclusivity, we can tap into the full potential of our workforce, and collectively build a stronger, more equitable future for Ontario.”

The evening also saw Gueye reading a message from Jason Rowe, Vice President of the UBC Canadian District.

In his message, Rowe said, “This month and every month the Carpenters’ Union recognises the important contributions Black Canadians have made in our province for generations. We’re proud to participate in tonight’s celebration to acknowledge their achievements.”

With files by Dhevin Indar





Brian Mulroney: March 20, 1939 - February 29, 2024

Mulroney remembered for stand against South African apartheid

Ottawa – Canada’s 18th Prime Minister Brian Mulroney died last week. He was 84.

The announcement of his passing was made on February 29 by his daughter, Caroline Mulroney, who posted the news on social media.

“On behalf of my mother and our family, it is with great sadness we announce the passing of my father, The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, Canada’s 18th Prime Minister. He died peacefully, surrounded by family,” she wrote on the social media site X, which was formerly Twitter.

The news of his death was reported by the Canadian media, among them the *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*.

As the *CBC* noted, among Mulroney’s many legacies on the Canadian landscape was his success in brokering a free trade deal with the US. Also, he sought, and failed, to introduce constitutional reforms to secure Quebec’s signature on Canada’s supreme law.

Mulroney would also be remembered for his introduction of the now normalised, but at the time highly-criticised, national sales tax, the GST.

Also, he would now be recalled by immigrant communities and people of African and Caribbean descent living in Canada, among others, for the strong position he took against racial apartheid in South Africa.

As *CBC* noted, Mulroney was often associ-

ated with two other leading conservative figures during his time at Canada’s helm: US president Ronald Reagan, and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Mulroney’s position saw him breaking ranks with some of his closest allies on apartheid and sanctions against South Africa’s white minority regime.

As *CBC* noted, in that time Reagan and Thatcher were both vehemently anti-communist, and feared that South African Black leaders like Nelson Mandela were Marxists, who were intent on turning the country away from liberal democracy.

However, Mulroney had long admired John Diefenbaker’s anti-apartheid stance, and saw the South African system of racist repression as being fundamentally unjust.

Mulroney led an aggressive Canadian push within the Commonwealth for sanctions to pressure the South African government to dismantle its racist caste system. He also sought to have Mandela released from prison. Following his release, Mandela thanked Mulroney for his advocacy.

“We regard you as one of our great friends because of the solid support we have received from you and Canada over the years. When I was in jail, having friends like you in Canada gave me more joy and support than I can say,” Mandela is reported as saying in Mulroney’s book, *Memoirs*.

up against apartheid in South Africa.

“After leaving office, Mr Mulroney continued to lead an active life, serving on corporate boards and becoming chair of Quebecor Inc and Forbes Global Business and Finance. He was also a senior partner at Norton Rose Fulbright Canada, a Montréal-based international law firm, for almost 30 years. Mr Mulroney never stopped working for Canadians, and he always sought to make this country an even better place to call home.

“For his many accomplishments, Mr Mulroney received numerous honours and awards, including the Order of Canada, the *Ordre national du Québec*, and the Woodrow Wilson

Award for Public Service. A globally respected and recognised leader, Mr Mulroney was also awarded some of the highest recognitions from governments around the world.

“As we mourn his passing and keep his family and friends in our thoughts, let us also acknowledge – and celebrate – Mr Mulroney’s role in building the modern, dynamic, and prosperous country we all know today.”



Justin Trudeau

‘A globally recognised, respected leader’

Ottawa – Following is the statement issued by Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, on the passing of the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney:

“I learned with great sadness [on February 29] of the death of the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, former Prime Minister of Canada.

“Mr Mulroney loved Canada. After a distinguished business and legal career, he became Prime Minister in 1984 and made significant progress on important issues here at home and around the world.

“He negotiated the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, and later, the expanded North American Free Trade Agreement with the US and Mexico. He worked hard to build bridges between French and English Canada.

“He was at the forefront of environmental issues, helping secure an air quality agreement with the US to reduce acid rain, championing the first Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and creating several new national parks. And he exemplified Canadian values, standing



Pierre Poilievre (l-r) with wife Anaida; and Mila and Brian Mulroney. *FB Photo*

Grateful for his sacrifice and legacy

Ottawa – Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and the Official Opposition, released the following statement on the passing of Brian Mulroney:

“It is with great sadness that Canadians learn of the loss of one of our greatest ever statesmen, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney. The love and prayers of all Canadians go to his beloved children, Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas, and the love of his life, his best friend and wife, Mila.

“From Baie-Comeau, the son of an Irish electrician, raised in a working-class community, Mr Mulroney had achieved prodigious success in business by the time he was in his late 30s. He led the Iron Ore Company as President and played leading roles in many of Canada’s other brilliant companies.

“His success in politics was even greater, winning the biggest majority in Canadian history, along with an impressive re-election. But it was the transformational change he brought to his nearly a decade as

Prime Minister that is most important. He unleashed free enterprise, crushed inflation, restored fiscal sanity, and concluded one of the greatest free trade agreements the world has ever seen, which remains largely in place today.

“These changes gave thousands of working-class families the same opportunities he had, that is, the chance to work hard, buy a home, and build their dreams.

“On the world stage, he stood firmly on the side of Western allies against communism and for freedom. He was among the first and most strident to fight against South Africa’s apartheid policy and champion the cause of Nelson Mandela, who later went on to thank Mr Mulroney for his essential role in ending this racist policy.

“I will always be thankful for his candid advice and generous mentorship to me personally. All Canadians are grateful for his immense sacrifice and the lasting legacy he leaves us all.”

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Editorial

Investment in women

As we celebrate International Women's Day on March 8, we acknowledge United Nations Secretary General António Guterres IWD 2024 message that globally women and girls have made great gains in forging ahead, and in building a more just and equal world.

However, as he also declares, while women and girls have taken strides in their fight for equality, there are many obstacles before them that are yet to be overcome.

As Guterres notes, "Women and girls have demolished barriers, dismantled stereotypes, and driven progress towards a more just and equal world. Women's rights were finally recognised as fundamental and universal human rights. Hundreds of millions more girls are in classrooms around the world. And pioneering leaders have smashed glass ceilings across the globe. But progress is under threat. And full equality remains light years away."

As he noted, today billions of women and girls still face marginalisation, injustice, and discrimination; also, that the persistent epidemic of gender-based violence disgraces humanity. He also notes we still live in a world that reflects millennia of male-dominated power relations; that this is a world where progress is under attack, and which is accompanied with deployment of fierce backlash against women's rights.

Guterres adds, "Meanwhile, global crises are hitting women and girls hardest. Wherever there's conflict, climate disaster, poverty or hunger, women and girls suffer most. In every region of the world, more women than men go hungry. In both developed and developing countries, a backlash against women's rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, is stalling and even reversing progress."

Also, "New technologies – which have such potential to dismantle inequalities – too often make matters worse. That can be because of unequal access, algorithms with baked-in bias, or misogynistic violence – from deep fakes to targeted harassment of specific women."

His lamentation over such a slow pace progresses to a pessimistic outcome; which makes it incumbent that we challenge such a bleak end game.

As he states, "At our current speed, full legal equality for women is some 300 years away; so is the end of child marriage. This rate of change is frankly insulting. Half of humanity can't wait centuries for their rights. We need equality now. That means accelerating the pace of progress. And that relies on political ambition, and on investment – the theme of this year's International Women's Day."

'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress' is this year's IWD theme. Speaking unequivocally to this theme, Guterres declares there is urgent need for both public and private investment in programmes to end violence against women; also, to ensure decent work, and to drive women's inclusion and leadership in digital technologies, peace-building, climate action, and across all sectors of the economy.

And again, he adds even more forcefully, "We must also urgently support women's rights organisations fighting against stereotypes, battling to make women's and girls' voices heard, and challenging traditions and cultural norms. Currently they receive a paltry 0.1 percent of international development spending. That must change."

As Guterres declares, "[It] takes investment to build inclusive communities and societies with the full participation of women and girls of all backgrounds."

He adds, "Putting money behind equality is the right thing to do, but it also makes financial sense. Supporting women to enter formal labour markets grows economies, boosts tax revenues and expands opportunities for all."

It means money must be put on the table; also, that women's organisations be supported on the front line; that we invest in programmes to end violence against women; and that we drive women's inclusion and leadership. It means unlocking finance for sustainable development, so countries have available funds to invest in women and girls.

As Guterres affirms, "Women's rights are a proven path to fair, peaceful, prosperous societies. It is good for us all."

Indeed, we must all take urgent action to make these worthy objectives towards equality become a reality.

On a journey to ensure that our voices are heard

Oh! What a night! Fete Gala by the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association was an event to remember. Unlike many other cultural events, Fete Gala provided guests with a unique experience.

Guests attended a lush setting, with a feeling of glitz and glam. From the red-carpet entry, to the family-friendly environment, and of course live interactive performances by Guyanese legend, Terry Gajraj, this was an event not to be missed.

The sold-out event was a fund-raiser for ICCA, with proceeds going to the organisation's community projects and programs.

The crowd enjoyed a surprise live performance by participants of the Star Bhai program – boys and young men from Canada's Indo-Caribbean community, who wrote the original song *No, No, No, Don't Touch Essequibo* under the stewardship of Terry Gajraj.

The group of young performers and Gajraj entered the room wearing matching black T-shirts with the Star Bhai logo. Apportioning the verses, the boys of the program sang the song live, with Gajraj in the background.

This was a highlight to see boys and young men in our community take the stage to perform, mentored by a well-known singing icon from the community.

This performance was a demonstration of the spirit of ICCA, an organisation made to empower and amplify the voices of Canada's Indo-Caribbean community.

I have always been proud of our organisation, but it was at that moment when I felt that this group wasn't just any ordinary project; that this was something phenomenal.

At Fete Gala, I addressed the audience in my capacity as a co-founder and Chair of the ICCA. And I knew I not only needed to thank our guests for attending, but I needed to emphasise why they were in the room.

Leveraging the remarkable performance of the Star Bhai participants, I shared the importance of upholding, preserving, and amplifying our community and culture.

Recognising my parents who were in the room, and my biggest supporters, I shared my mother's response to me on why they chose to come to Canada: Opportunity.

My parents left their families, and flew hours to a land they had never visited, all in search of a life where their then future



Ryan Singh

children would have the opportunity to be successful.

Their interpretation of opportunity was receiving a good education, finding a decent job, and building a successful life. However, the opportunity in Canada was limited to just that.

The opportunity here, in a self-declared multicultural nation, was to be who we are, to not forget where our family came from, and to be proud of our culture and heritage.

This is what is at the core of ICCA. This is why the Fete Gala was so important.

Not only did we bring the community together for a fun event, but for the first time, an organisation built for Canada's Indo-Caribbean community took a serious step forward to solidifying its future.

Unlike many other ethnic communities, the Indo-Caribbean community is still in the early stages of organising. We have many days ahead of community building, and defining our place in Canada.

This January, the ICCA was incorporated under Canada's Not-for-Profit Act. This move further cemented our intent to be a true organisation ready to serve Canada's Indo-Caribbean community differently.

As we continue to grow, as we continue to learn, and as we continue to serve the community, we are on a path to ensure our voices are heard; and to ensure that we are not left behind.

Fete Gala impressed me that the work we're doing is not only important, but that it was also necessary.

Beyond the fete, we will continue to focus on issues that impact our people, and contribute to building an ecosystem that truly represents and serves Indo-Caribbean people here in Canada.

We may not be able to address all issues, or achieve all our goals, but if we don't act now, then nothing will be done.

The donors and supporters along the way have proven their agreement that we need an organisation like the ICCA.

And I know that the many volunteers who have joined me on this journey are not only ready, but we are committed. We will work hard, to the best of our ability, to build a robust organisation ready to connect, amplify, and serve Canada's Indo-Caribbean community.

For more about the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association, [click here to visit our website.](#)

Our cups run over with modern-day consumerism

It was not a drum roll at the dinner table, and not even a dinner roll tumbling off a plate, but the rolling of many pairs of eyes to an accompaniment of fingers lightly drumming on the table during my light bulb lit *Aha!* moment.

This was the response at the table after my brain had finally and fully decoded that the latest drink container craze, namely the Stanley tumbler, was not the mecca of all trophies annually awarded to the successful ice hockey team.

"And this cup is how expensive!? For a single, solitary cup!? And there is no silver or gold in it, just pretty colours!?"

Ascending usage of the interrobang, that punctuation conflation of the question and exclamation marks, is a legacy from my dearly departed grandmother.

Except that Ma's deployment of the interrobang in rapid-fire, machine-gun bursts typically preceded the escalation of astonishment up to incredulity, and finally, a woeful shake of the head at how her world had turned over on its head.

That was way back then, in my grandmother's time, decades ago when I was a young boy back home.

Ma would exclaim, her voice rising and shrill with anxiety, "You went where alone!? By yourself!? And then you went inside the river to catch what!? And a crab hold you where!?"

Today, it has come to pass that like my dear grandmother, I too must conclude that our world is yet to right-size from its capsized state; that unlike a tumbled dinner roll, it is instead now a turnover, and is still securely planted on its head, and perhaps would stay capsized for a long, long time.

And true to the role model that shaped my youthful upbringing, in my later adult life I find myself emulating my dear grandmother, and invoking yet another of her legacies.

This time it was her final recourse in dealing with the layers of life that were too complicated to unpack; so before moving on to more pressing chores, she tumble-dried it all into a giant ball, packaged it up neatly, and then left it all in the competent, but at times inattentive, hands of the Great Ironer in the sky.

Like myself today following the eye-rolls and those daunting *Aha!* moments of consuming wonderment after comprehension, Ma would say, "Hai, Ram! Show me how to manage. This world is surely sending me to the madhouse!"

Of course, I am one to capitalise on a teaching moment, particularly to a captive audience gathered at the dining table.

I find it refreshing most of the times when I recall sensory

moments from my rich storehouse of childhood memories. But there are always exceptions, and one among them is my recall of Ma preparing a green calabash as a homemade tumbler for storage of her rainwater drinking water.

This was the water vessel that she dipped into the rainwater barrel so it bubbled in the depths, and then swung dripping like a pendulum as she journeyed to the cane fields in her youth, and later in her adult life, when she was employed, underpaid, and heavily exploited by the sugar barons back in the bad days of empire and colonial rule.

Indeed, said equivalent of today's Stanley cup in my grandmother's time was this humble container; but without the exchange value of desire and fashion statements that drive its exorbitant cost.

So, on the one hand, the calabash was self-contained pragmatism; and dangling from its wooden handle held by a piece of wire in the other hand, it was as organic as green renewal gets in today's capsized, turnover world of desire-driven, conspicuous consumption; and of course, over-consumption.

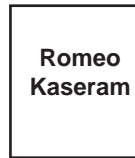
Known as a calabash, and archived in Lise Winer's famous *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago: On Historical Principles* by its more familiar name 'boley', it was a water vessel fashioned from the round, mature fruit that grew on the trunk and branches under the low, spreading canopy that was the calabash tree.

Converting this green gourd into a hardened, brown container suitable to carry water made it an exception to most of my happy sensory memories as a young boy, since it took a hardened, olfactory constitution when it came to hollowing out the insides by scooping out the rotting flesh with a stick.

Have a few villagers simultaneously fashioning their water carriers following discovery of a fatal crack in the 'boley', and soon the entire village was uninhabitable, the rot visiting at night to terrorise the inhabitants with a scent similar to the unwholesome perfumes worn by the walking dead.

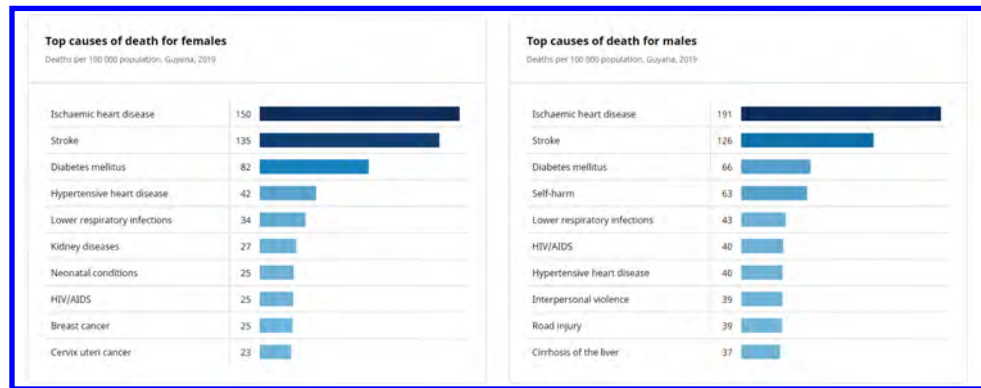
But times change, and technology sweetens our lives. So it was the time came when I made my daily peregrinations to school with a bookbag weighted down with texts, a lunch of fried plantains and roti, and to slake the thirst, a Thermos, also known as an Icy Hot, filled with water and many ice cubes.

Archaeological moments as these at our dining table are not accompanied by a drum-roll of eyes; instead, eyebrows are raised with curiosity, which gives me brief validity.



Romeo Kaseram

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



WHO Health data overview for Guyana - leading causes of death. WHO graphic

Guyana at risk for increased obesity

Dear Editor,

I would like to bring to light a pressing issue that often remains in the shadows of economic discourse – the risk of obesity in newly oil-rich countries such as Guyana.

While the discovery of oil promises economic prosperity, it also brings about lifestyle changes that can have detrimental effects on public health.

As the wheels of progress turn, the influx of revenue from oil exploration leads to increased consumer spending and elevated living standards. However, alongside these improvements, there is a lurking threat of obesity, driven by shifts in dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles, and cultural perceptions associating larger body sizes with wealth and health.

The rapid economic growth triggered by oil discovery leads to increased consumer spending and improved living standards.

However, it also brings about a shift towards Westernized diets characterized by processed foods, fast food, and sugary beverages. Coupled with sedentary lifestyles, due to urbanisation and cultural norms associating larger body sizes with prosperity, the stage is set for a surge in obesity rates.

The healthcare implications of this trend are dire, with obesity being linked to a multitude of health problems such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

It is imperative that we take proactive measures to address this issue before it overwhelms our healthcare systems.

I propose several strategies to mitigate the risk of obesity in newly oil-rich countries. For example, the government should invest in awareness campaigns targeting individuals, families, schools, and communities to educate them about the risks of obesity and promote healthier lifestyles.

Moreover, providing education about nutrition, healthy cooking, and portion control empowers individuals to make informed choices about their diet. Schools can play a crucial role in teaching children about balanced nutrition and regular exercise.

Separately, instead of allocating land for the likes of hotels and casinos, the government should invest in infrastructure that promotes physical activity, such as parks, sidewalks, bike lanes, and recreational facilities, to encourage more active lifestyles.

Lastly, my favourite is implementing policies to regulate the marketing, sale, and distribution of unhealthy foods and beverages that can help curb their consumption. Taxation on sugary drinks and high-calorie snacks can further deter excessive consumption.

It is crucial that all stakeholders act swiftly to address the growing threat of obesity in newly oil-rich nations like Guyana. By implementing these measures and fostering collaboration among governments, communities, healthcare providers, and individuals, we can safeguard the well-being of our populations for generations to come.

Keith Bernard, Guyana, via email.



Amartya Sen

Guyana has its own flavour of capitalism

Dear Editor,

All too often columnists, letter writers and politicians in Guyana deploy the construct “neoliberalism” to indicate displeasure with a particular form of global capitalism.

Without fail, neoliberalism is taken to be a form of exploitative market-based structure of accumulation that privileges the rights of businesses over and against the economic rights of workers and communities.

While there are legitimate concerns about the economics of what used to be called Reaganomics, or about the institutional expression of the latter as the “Washington Consensus,” we need to recognise that there are varieties of capitalism.

For instance, Canadian and American capitalism are remarkably different. While the former is based on a combination of market-based economics combined with significant social welfare protection, the latter is an aggressive form of what I described elsewhere as personal responsibility capitalism.

Nowhere is this more pronounced than in

the differential pricing for prescription medications. Drugs produced in the US are not only cheaper in Canada, but cheaper in the US when re-exported. Social market capitalism in Germany and the Scandinavian countries are also remarkably different from the neoliberal model.

It is fundamentally incorrect to label Guyana’s political economy in the language of neoliberalism. This is because of numerous measures that constructively alter market conditions and subsidise end-user goods and services.

Of these measures, government subsidised house lots, combined with a progress mortgage-rate structure, best exemplify the unique model we have here.

In my view, Guyana’s political economy is based on the capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen. In this approach, the focus is on what people are empowered to do in terms of political, civic, and economics freedoms. That is the Guyanese variety of capitalism.

Dr Randy Persaud, Guyana, via email.

TT govt must deal head-on with crime

Dear Editor,

Trinidad and Tobago is in the most deadly period in Trinidad and Tobago’s history. The average number of murders per year between 2020 and 2023 is 506. The previous highest average was 484 murders per year between 2015 and 2019, under the same government.

Our nation is in crisis and yet Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley’s biggest concern at the moment seems to be directed at the music we listen to.

Music, and art in general, have always stood as a reflection of the experiences of the makers. Calypso, for example, has a history of criticising the economics, social issues, and the government of the country.

People have always and will always sing about what they see and what they have lived through.

The prevalence of Trinidad music, then, is not the problem. It is a result of the crime situation in the country.

The state of crime in the country is such that just last year, there was a national conversation on whether or not people should invest in owning private firearms as a means of home and business protection. Why has it been allowed to get to this point, where innocent civilians, many of whom in that conversation were part of the older generation, were resorting to such extreme considerations?

Along with this, and the growing distrust of the police, and National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds saying “my duty is not to ensure that people feel safe” is an indictment of the government.

The fact of the matter is that our taxes are already used by the government to purchase firearms; put those tools in the possession of police officers, pay those officers, purchase the vehicles they drive, top up the gas needed to use those vehicles, and pave the roads they drive on.

Taxpayers’ dollars pay for each step in the process of getting an armed police officer to your location to protect you from break-ins, robberies, and so on. It means that any ineffectiveness in this system cannot be held against the public. Rather, it speaks against the management of the government.

It is shameful that instead of improving and using the already built and financed systems more effectively, Rowley and his government choose to accuse our music of being

the cause of criminality in the country.

More embarrassing is that this misguided step does not seem to be his own idea as it is just a parroting of Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali’s sentiment during the 46th regular meeting of Caricom heads that concluded last month in Georgetown, Guyana.

A total of 4,445 people have been murdered in Trinidad and Tobago since Rowley became Prime Minister in 2015. We are in the bloodiest decade that our twin islands have ever seen, and instead of properly and effectively utilising the tools given to him, he decides to disrespect the voters of this country by shifting the blame and responsibility onto his own electorate.

Stevon Jaggasar, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Keith Rowley

GUYANA PROPERTY MATTERS

Prescriptive Title Explained

By Kal Juman-Yassin

Guyana’s laws allow a person residing in or in possession of a property to claim ownership after 12 years if they can prove the paper owner has abandoned it. The law originated to allow Guyanese to claim ownership of land historically owned by overseas colonial entities, and has allowed for both the legitimate and fraudulent transfer of property ownership to occur.

In some cases, overseas Guyanese property owners have deliberately allowed their relatives to claim ownership with their consent. Property owners who intend to retain and pass on assets to their heirs need to actively engage in the administration of their properties to avoid losing it to an unchallenged prescriptive rights claim.

The process would include filing an application with an updated survey, interviewing and obtaining statements from witnesses, preparing an Affidavit, and serving a Petition to the neighbouring occupiers of the land in support of the Claim.

The applicant would then be required to file an advertisement of the Petition in the *Official Gazette*, and a daily newspaper for three consecutive Saturdays. After these steps, the applicant would then appear in court and obtain the grant where there is no opposition, and then files to become the owner of the property by Transport, Certificate, or Title of a Lease.

Any person can file an opposition to the grant of a Petition by filing and serving an Opposition, which would trigger a court trial to determine whether the Opposition should be upheld or dismissed.

Challenging the court’s ruling years after can be difficult unless proof of fraud can be adequately demonstrated. If the property has subsequently been sold to another party, then the property is likely irretrievably lost.

The lesson for every overseas owner of Guyanese property is to ensure that the property is effectively administered and managed. Owners should ensure they pay the rates and taxes, have an up-to-date rental agreement with their tenants, and visit the property at least once per year. Don’t assume everything is fine; check up on your property today.

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 go to our free online property risk assessment.](#)



Guyana's 54th anniversary as a republic celebrated in Toronto

The Guyana Consulate General, Toronto held two historic flag-raising ceremonies on February 23 and February 26 to mark Guyana's 54th anniversary as a Republic.

The first event took place at the North York Civic Center. In attendance were members of the Diplomatic Corps, among them Fitzgerald Huggins, Consul General of St Vincent and the Grenadines in Toronto; Gerry Hopkin, Consul General of Grenada in Toronto; and Mrs Sonia Marville-Carter, Consul General of Barbados in Toronto.

Also present were interfaith leaders Reverend Patricia Rollox; Pandit Ram Ramgolam; and Hafeez Hamza Ally. Guyana Ex-Soldiers' Gordon Winter, Jay Jairam, Pertab Singh, and Chaman Prasad raised the Golden Arrowhead.

Among the special guests was Nazie Mohamed from Caribbean Airlines. The celebration continued later that evening with a social at the Guyana Consulate.

The second event took place on February 26 in Brampton, and was attended by Deputy Mayor of Brampton, Harkirat Singh, several of Brampton's councillors, its executive staff, and many members of the Guyanese diaspora and friends of Guyana in the GTA.

Guyana's Golden Arrowhead was hoisted by two army veterans, Jay Jairam and Clyde Gulliver from Guyana Ex-Soldiers.

Deputy Mayor Singh delivered remarks on behalf of the City of Brampton, while Artie Ricknauth spoke on behalf of the Guyanese-Canadian diaspora. The feature address was delivered by Consulate of Guyana's Honorary Consul Mani Singh.

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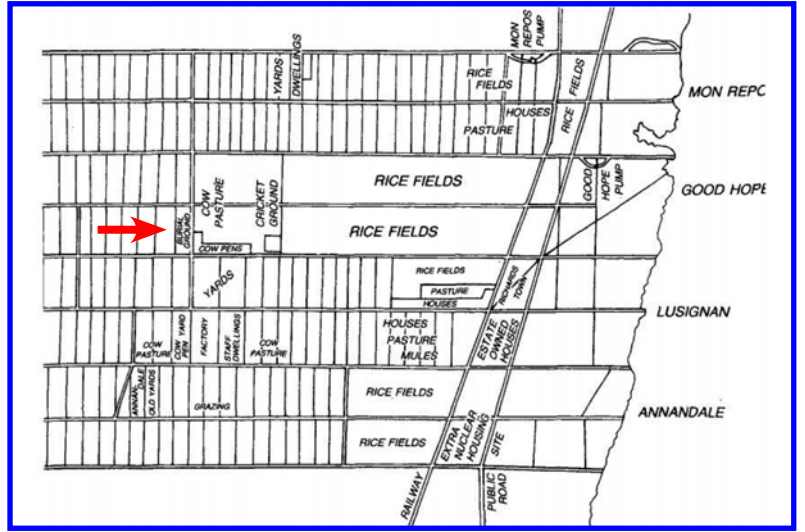


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Aerial screen capture of Huntley; Sanctuary is on the east bank of the Mahaicony River, opposite Perth Village, eastward to the south of Grove and Huntley. Photo: YouTube Screen capture

The 1949 map in Basdeo Mangru's book *Benevolent Neutrality* showing the Burial Ground (red arrow) and "The Yards"

Questions on place of refuge for slaves, and a burial ground in Guyana

By Harry Hergash

In the light of our recent celebrations of Black History month in Canada, I wish to share two pieces of information on Guyanese history that I believe are not generally known by most Guyanese. It is my hope that those with more knowledge on these matters can add to what I have written, or that this article could lead budding historians at the University of Guyana to pursue further research.

During my pre-adolescent years growing up in Eastern Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara, in the 1950s, I was aware of a place called Sanctuary, located on the eastern bank of the Mahaicony River, opposite Perth Village, and extends eastward to the south of the villages of Grove and Huntley.

This place was covered with dense bushes and tall trees, interspersed with patches of green grass. From time-to-time, my Dad and I would visit in search of our cows that escaped from the nearby fields, where they would usually graze after the rice harvesting season.

When asked about the owners of Sanctuary, my Dad would reply, "It is children's property, owned by the descendants of slaves, but they have all moved away and the place is now abandoned".

Years later, after I learned about slavery, I surmised that Sanctuary was so named because it was a place of refuge for the slaves who had escaped the cruelty and hardship of life on plantations.

Up to 1974 when I emigrated from Guyana, Sanctuary was still covered in bushes and unoccupied.

I hope that someone with more knowledge will be able to provide more information on the history of this place, and why it was abandoned.

Also, were there similar areas of refuge in the counties of Berbice and Essequibo?

The second part of my article is about a cemetery, which I am now sharing with my readers.

During the 1960s, when I lived in Annandale, East Coast Demerara, and taught at the Annandale Government Secondary school, I heard ghastly stories of a cemetery that was located next to the former logies in Lusignan Estate, and which was ploughed over and planted with sugar cane.

These stories were told to me by individuals who had previously lived in the logies of Lusignan, and who had moved to the housing schemes of Annandale when the schemes were developed to provide better housing for sugar workers.

I was able to confirm the existence and location of this cemetery, when in 1987 I read eminent historian Dr Basdeo Mangru's book, *Benevolent Neutrality*, based on his doctoral dissertation at the University of London.

In the first edition of his book, published in 1987, he reproduces on Page 211 a Plan of Plantation Lusignan, dated 1949, which shows the location of a cemetery next to "The Yards". As we know from the famous poem by Guyanese Poet Laureate, Martin Carter, *I come from the N... Yard*, Yard refers to the location of the logies on the plantations. The word "Yards" shown on the Plan points to the segregation on the estates where each group, Africans and Indians, lived in its own Yard. Indeed that cemetery shown in the 1949 Plan no longer exists as it was converted into sugar cane fields with thriving sugar cane plants.

This raises the question, where are the graves of the thousands of slaves who lived and died on the more than 100 cotton, coffee, and sugar plantations from the seventeenth century to 1838 when slavery was abolished? As well, where are the graves of the Indentured workers who lived and died on the sugar estates from 1838 to 1917 when Indentureship ended?

It seems that in life these poor souls toiled on the sugar cane fields, and in death they became sugar cane fields.

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Gold sponsor Lotus Funeral and Cremation Centre's representative Patricia Joseph (left), with Nisha Sharma



Gold Sponsor Lakeridge Collision Center's Sherry (at centre) and Steve Jainarine (right), and Sam Persaud



Silver sponsor Ajax-Brampton Visitation & Cremation Centre's representative Mani Virdi (left) with Cecil Ramnauth



Singer Vedant Panwar (with microphone at centre) with band members (from left) Amin Jiwa on electronic drums; Shivo Mohabeer on Dholak and electronic drums; Nari Mahabir on Saxophone & Bansuri; and Harold Boodoo at right on keyboard

Devi Mandir holds successful gala

An evening of entertaining music and dance by acclaimed performers in the GTA came to a successful conclusion when Devi Mandir of Pickering hosted its gala at the prestigious Woodbine Banquet and Convention Centre. The event took place on February 24, and was a fund-raiser to help the

mandir's building renovation. The event saw over 500 guests in attendance, and received solid support from the Hindu community, business enterprises, and from prominent leaders in the GTA.

The program was organised by Sam Persaud, Chair of the Devi Mandir Board of Directors. Sam's commitment and industry were encapsulated by the evening's presenters when they described him as being a "unifier", a "coordinator", and a "community builder."

It was also noted that Sam's indefatigable energy, his ubiquity, and his unifying leadership are well-regarded and respected qualities among the numerous Hindu temples across Toronto and its suburbs.

Therefore, it was little wonder that several of the more prominent temples and community activists responded to his call, and consequently, were present at Devi's fund-raiser.

Among them were Mississauga Ram Mandir (Pandit Roopnauth Sharma); Vishnu Mandir (Pandit Bhoj Sharma); Bhavani Shankar Mandir (Pandit Hardat Ashwar); Brampton Triveni Mandir (Dr Yudhishtir Dhanrajh);

and Radha Krishna Mandir (Dwarka Persaud). Also in attendance were BAPs Shri Swaminarayan Mandir; Hindu Forum Canada; Bharat Mata (Jeff Lal, President); Ramesh Chotai (Bromed Pharmaceuticals, President); and Dhaman Kissoon (Toronto lawyer and community stalwart).

Aside from ticket revenues, there were four gold sponsors that contributed \$5,000 each: Lotus Funeral and Cremation Centre; Lakeridge Collision Centre; and two anonymous sponsors. One silver sponsor, Ajax-Brampton Visitation & Cremation Centre, contributed \$3,000; while 33 VIP Table Sponsors each contributed \$1,000.

The event raised a net total of approximately \$75,000.

The cultural performances were of remarkable quality. Singers Mohua Parial and Bisram Deokinandan were backed by renowned Harold Boodoo and his orchestra of accomplished musicians. The young Vedant Panwar's vocal renditions were simply mesmerising.

Dances, both classical and light Bollywood styles, were rendered by three of the dance schools that operate out of Devi Mandir (Panwar Music and Dance; Shobha Talent and Cultural Centre; and West Indian Fusion Dance Centre). The Mayoura Dance Troupe were guest performers.

Following the highly successful event, the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees of Devi Mandir expressed its sincere appreciation to all who supported this worthy cause.



Sam Persaud



Dhaman Kissoon



Performance by the Mayoura Dance Troupe



Shobha Talent and Cultural Centre dancers. Photos by Ramesh Ramkalawan



Uzima Women teach MP Chen a few dance steps

MP Chen celebrates BHM

Member of the House of Commons, Scarborough North, Shaun Chen, celebrated Black History Month with a number of visits to the community.

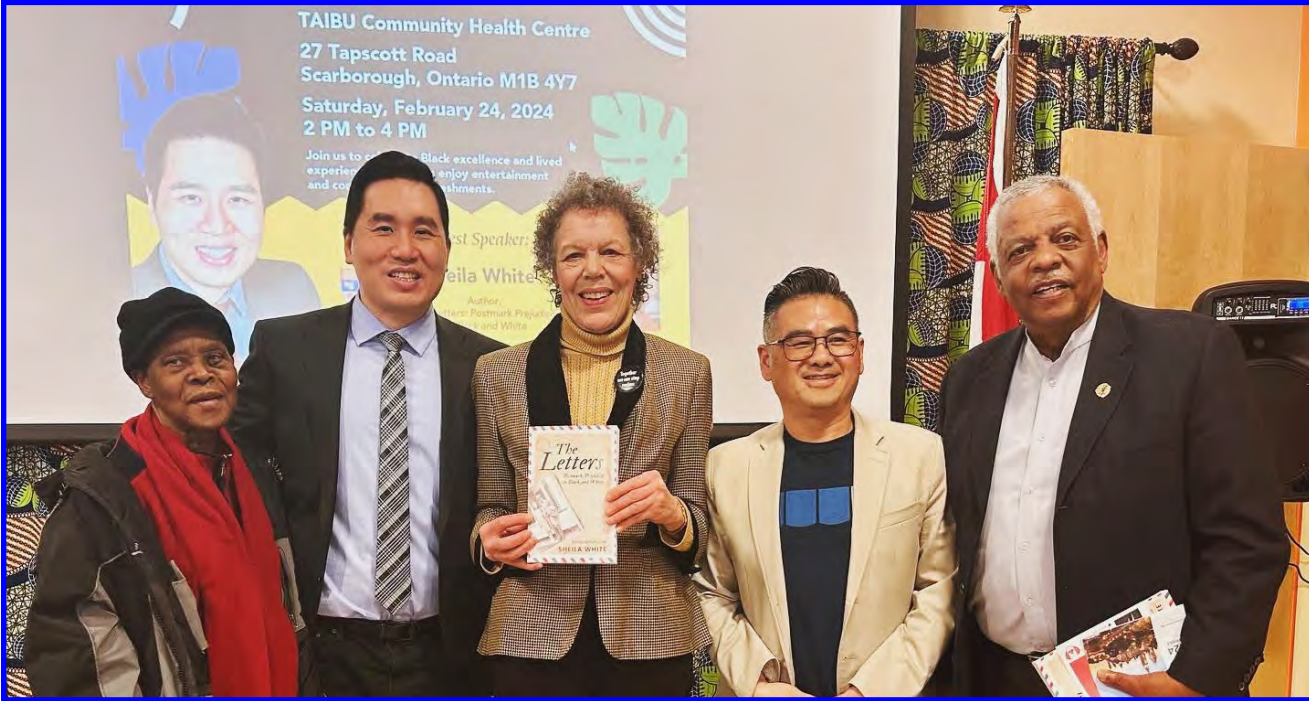
During his outreach, Chen highlighted the cultures, recognised the traditions, and celebrated the lived experiences of Canadians with Caribbean and African heritage.

Among the events where he addressed the gatherings and participated in BHM activities were with members of the Trinidad & Tobago 50+ & Seniors Association of Canada, and the Uzima Women Relief Group International that saw African drumming, dances, and commentaries.

And in what was another outstanding event at The TAIBU Community Health Centre in Scarborough, Chen celebrated Black excellence alongside Sheila White, author of *The Letters: Postmark Prejudice in Black and White*. An eminent author, White's book is based on the trials and triumph of her parents' 1940s inter-racial marriage.



MP Chen with UWRGI guests



MP Chen (second from left) with Sheila White at centre, Alvin Curling (right), and guests





MP Chen with a guest at TAIBU

Happy International Women's Day!

DR. JILL ANDREW, PH.D
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Oil spill clean-up underway in Tobago last week

Tobago oil spill now travelling into the wider Caribbean region

The Dutch Antilles went on alert last week in the wake of oil from the Tobago spill drifting across the Caribbean Sea to its shores. The country is made up of a trio of islands, and is located about 1,000 kilometres west of Tobago.

Also, last week the Bonaire government indicated it was talking with the government of Trinidad and Tobago about compensation. Media reports in the Caribbean also indicated the possibility of Bonaire taking legal action against those responsible for the environmental disaster.

According to the reports about the spill, it originated from a tanker, the *Gulfstream*, and started in early February outside Tobago.

It is believed the tanker was carrying intermediate fuel oil or bunker fuel when it capsized. The oil first started washing up on Tobago's coastline on February 7.

The spill has since travelled out of Trinidad and Tobago's maritime waters towards Grenada and Venezuela, and arrived on the shores of the eastern-most Dutch island of Bonaire on February 26.

Early last week it was reported in the Caribbean media that Stichting Nationale Parken Bonaire, an environmental conservation organisation, began coordinating clean-up efforts in Sorobon, Lac, and Lagun in Bonaire in late February.

The environmental group also reported sightings of dead fish coming ashore on the island's eastern coastlines.

Bonaire's acting governor Nolly Oleana said at a media conference that efforts for the clean-up in the area of Lac and Sorobon were underway. He added the areas were being prioritised, since it is vital for fisherfolk, businesses, and tourism.

It was also reported that oil from the spill had arrived on the island's eastern coastlines, but did not penetrate to dive sites and heavily trafficked tourist areas on the island's western coast.

Oleana also announced that a request had been submitted for military assistance to be sent out to Bonaire.

"Military units will be deployed to assist in cleaning up the oil spill," he said.

Concerns were also raised about the possibility of further oil arriving in several inlets on the island. Swift action would be taken to

prevent further damage to wildlife, Oleana declared.

It was also reported that Bonaire had indicated it is liaising with the government of Trinidad and Tobago regarding compensation for the clean-up.

Said Oleana: "We are in contact with Trinidad and Tobago. Together, we do want to prosecute. A legal expert from the Netherlands is in contact with a lawyer from Trinidad and Tobago.... We both just don't know who owns the ship yet. And we also don't know who owns the oil product on the ship. Once this is known, follow-up steps will be taken."

Meanwhile, Curaçao's Ministry of Health, Environment and Nature (GMN) issued a statement last week indicating that multiple institutions were monitoring and making preparations to deal with "eventual sea pollution in northern/western parts of Curaçao".

The statement added that all maritime institutions were on a state of alert following the arrival of the travelling oil on Bonaire's coastline.

It was also revealed by GMN's sector director, Gabriel Murray, that Curaçao did not have oil booms to close off the mouths of critical streams and bays.

As Murray told the local media, the island is yet to invest in booms,

and suggested that the oil is unlikely to come ashore. However, in the event that the spill did penetrate their shores, Murray said it will be removed manually with excavators.

Last week Aruba was also on alert, with satellite imagery indicating that the oil from the Tobago spill was drifting and crossing to the southern Caribbean Sea. The island of Aruba is furthest west of the Dutch Antilles.

Director of Aruba's Crisis Management Office, Rino Hermans, told the Caribbean media, "We have divided Aruba's territory into four sections so each department is monitoring."

Additionally, he indicated that turtle nesting sites and tourist beaches will be protected.

Hermans also indicated that the Aruba government was making plans to activate a 60-person team of first responders, and a clean-up plan, as soon as the oil arrives near its shores.

Also, that Aruba's government was ready to help Bonaire with clean-up, noting it was "human resources [that were] needed, not equipment, in this phase."



Nolly Oleana



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
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BEST PLACES TO BUY REAL ESTATE NEAR GTA

Ten years ago, if you had bought a home in Toronto for \$500,000, it would be worth around \$1,000,000 today. This increase in value is due to inflation, where the dollar's worth decreases over time, making things more expensive. That's why keeping savings in a regular account, or a GIC with fixed terms is unwise.

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is experiencing rapid population growth. Around 20 percent of immigrants buy property within their first three years, and 50-60 percent purchase within a decade. This trend suggests that home prices will keep rising in the long run.

When investing in real estate, consider cities with high population densities for better potential returns. Toronto stands out as an excellent spot for investment properties. While the average price for a detached home is \$1,100,000, the demand for investment properties is high. For a good buy, focus on homes in well-established neighbourhoods.

The city is currently experiencing a significant transformation. Grand mansions are replacing tiny homes, causing property values to soar. Toronto is also adapting to its growing population by allowing more high-density dwellings. Expect to see an increase in garden suites and laneway properties, and soon, the possibility of converting a single-family home into multiple flats. Keep an eye on this evolving landscape for exciting investment opportunities.

Durham will expand to the east of Toronto with more room for growth than Peel or Halton regions. It could grow by over ten percent in the next five years. The average price for a detached home is about \$850,000. Thanks to the overflow from Toronto, Durham makes for a great investment opportunity. Durham has plans to manufacture electric vehicles, attracting talent from other areas. The perfect location offers convenient access to Highway 401, 407, and the GO. Consider investing in promising regions, particularly in North Oshawa.

Hamilton is one of the most diversified economies in Canada. It is a large city with a wide range of neighbourhoods. The average house price varies from \$650,000-\$850,000 based on neighbourhoods. Hamilton is a great place to invest because about 35 percent of people rent. Homes with secondary suites are premium, and are excellent investments because of the cash flow.

Imagine investing in the charming Niagara Peninsula, nestled between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, just 60 minutes from Toronto. It is a prime location with four easy border crossings to the US. The average price for a detached home ranges from \$500,000 to \$600,000 – quite affordable compared to the Toronto scene.

Metrolinx is expanding the GO with stops in Grimsby and Lincoln, making these spots perfect for investment properties. Rental properties are in high demand here, so why not get ahead of the competition and dive into this promising opportunity?

Welcome to Kitchener-Waterloo, the Silicon Valley of the North! Just an hour from the GTA, this tech hub boasts top companies like Google and Shopify, thanks to a brainy workforce and stellar universities. A transit hub linking Toronto is in the works. With the highest household income in Ontario and lower living costs, it is a sweet deal. Condos are half the price of Toronto, and with high rental demand, the investment return is solid. Home prices have been rocketing up by ten percent yearly since 2017. Welcome to your tech-savvy, wallet-friendly dreamland!

Are you thinking of a lucrative investment move? Meet Barrie, the rising star in real estate. With a population of around 180,000 and a growth rate of 3.1 percent per year, this city is on the upswing. You won't break the bank here, with an average house price of \$650,000. Brace yourself for an eight percent annual increase in real estate value, and the rental market is buzzing.

Situated just 45 minutes from the GTA along Hwy 400, Barrie is a modern hub with a progressive vibe. There is a diverse workforce spanning from manufacturing to health care. There is a demand for good homes in Barrie. Many businesses are relocating to this area, making it a great investment place.

Today's home prices might make you double-take, but fast forward five to ten years, and you will call them a steal. There is a hunger for homes in fantastic neighbourhoods, and guess what? Prices are gearing up for a surge. Here's the magic – one home purchase leads to another in about five to seven years, thanks to equity appreciation. The day you get an investment property, your wealth stays put, but now, here is the game-changer: a tenant starts paying you. As time passes, your mortgage shrinks, the property value swells, and *Voilà!* You're savouring the sweet fruits of intelligent investing. Don't just dream about it; make it happen!

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Shiv Sewa Sangh holds its Sangeet Ki Kahani 3

It was a job well done by **Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir & Cultural Center** last weekend when the mandir held its music and dance fund-raiser *Sangeet Ki Kahani 3*.

The show saw a tremendous effort by the mandir's president, Nadira Raghunandan-Dyal (in photo below, centre), Pandit Dave Ramotar, and the artistes and volunteers who dedicated their energies and talents to make the event a success.

Also, mention must be made about the energy by Joe Jaglall (photo, top right), whose charismatic work with the microphone kept the guests mesmerised, entertained, and engaged.

Joe's renowned work as leader and a community builder was amply evidenced throughout the evening with his mix of humour, inspiration, and motivation that contributed tremendously to the evening's spectacular success.





ICCA's Fete Gala lit up by Terry Gajraj, youth

A full house was in attendance, and thoroughly enjoyed an evening of entertainment, glitz, and glamour on February 24 when the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association held its Fete Gala fund-raiser.

The sold-out event took place at the Grand Cinnamon Banquet & Convention Centre in Scarborough.

Among the highlights of the evening were live, interactive performances by Guyanese legend, Terry Gajraj.

The family-friendly event also saw a surprise, live performance by young participants of the ICCA's Star Bhai program, with the boys and young men performing the original *No, No, No, Don't Touch Essequibo* under Gajraj's guidance.

The sold-out event was a fund-raiser for ICCA. Proceeds from the evening will go toward the organisation's community projects and programs.

[Click here for more information on the ICCA.](#)



Photos: Rayzuh Photography



Sally Hemings



Phillis Wheatley



Sojourner Truth



Mammy Kate

Celebrating the Black mothers of America who helped shape the nation

By Dhanpaul Narine

We hear a great deal about the Founding Fathers of America. But how about the Black mothers of America and the role they played in shaping the destiny of the nation?

Phillis Wheatley's verses lamented the institution of slavery in America. Wheatley was an accomplished poet who wrote her memoirs and published a number of poems on a variety of subjects. Her history is most interesting.

Wheatley was born in Senegal and was captured and taken to the shores of America when she was seven years old. She was purchased by John Wheatley as a gift to his wife, and they gave her the 'Wheatley' surname.

It was observed that the young lady was talented, and she was encouraged to read and to write. Wheatley received lessons in the classics, and she wrote her first poem at 13.

In 1773, she published her book of poems and created a number of records. She was the first slave in America to publish a book of poems, and only the third woman to do so at the time.

In 1776, Wheatley accepted an invitation to visit George Washington, and she read a poem that she had written for him. Wheatley even traveled to London to publicise her poems.

Who has ever heard of Mammy Kate and Daddy Jack? Are they included in the history curriculum in schools? Mammy Kate was a slave that gave birth to nine children. She went about her chores with her husband Daddy Jack for the Heard family.

Stephen Heard was the Governor of Georgia. He wanted to take part in the Revolutionary War and got his chance in 1779. In February of that year, Governor Heard and 22 other patriots were captured by the Loyalists during the Battle of Kettle Creek.

After a trial, Governor Heard was sentenced to hang. It was at this point that Mammy Kate decided to act. She put together a brilliant plan. She traveled to Augusta some 50 miles away on horseback, and was able to get a job as a cleaner at Fort Cornwallis. This brought her in contact with Governor Heard.

Mammy Kate was able to place the Governor in her basket and smuggle him out of the prison, the day before he was to be executed. Daddy Jack was waiting in the woods and they made good their escape.

Mammy Kate won her freedom and was given some land as well. In 2011, she was honoured as a patriot of the American Revolution.

Elizabeth Freeman is one of the unsung heroes of America. She was born into slavery in 1742, and served the Ashley family in Massachusetts. Elizabeth was married on the plantation, and took pride in raising her daughter, Betsy.

In 1780 an incident occurred that would change her life and that of Massachusetts. Mrs Ashley became incensed and attempted to hit Betsy with a heated shovel. Elizabeth raised her arm to shield Betsy and was cut in the process. But this was not the end of the matter.

Elizabeth heard at a public gathering the words of the Massachusetts Constitution that stated, "All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights..." These words struck a chord with

Elizabeth, and she sought to apply them to her situation. She requested attorney Theodore Sedgwick to help her fight for her freedom. The case was Brom and Bett vs Ashley, and it was heard in August 1781.

The court made a historic ruling. Since "all men are born free and equal", there was no reason why Elizabeth should remain a slave. The judge ruled that Elizabeth should be set free. This meant that in keeping with the Constitution all slaves in Massachusetts had to be freed as well.

Elizabeth took the name 'Freeman' after the verdict, and said, "Any time, any time, if one minute's freedom had been offered to me, and I had been told that I must die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it."

She could not read or write, but Elizabeth struck one of the biggest blows for Black freedom in America.

One of the most contradictory Presidents in the US was Thomas Jefferson. This learned man wrote brilliantly about the inalienable right to liberty while he owned more than 100 slaves. He believed that if slaves were ever freed they should be sent to Africa to prevent a mixing of the races. But Jefferson practiced racial mixing. There are well-known accounts of his relationship with a slave, Sally Hemings.

According to historical records, Sally's mother, Elizabeth, bore 12 children; the father of one of the children was John Wayles, the father-in-law of Thomas Jefferson. Sally Hemings was a slave at Monticello in 1776 and traveled to Paris with Thomas Jefferson when he was a minister there.

In 1802, a journalist, James T. Callender, wrote in a newspaper that Thomas Jefferson had kept for many years "as his concubine, one of his slaves. Her name is Sally". Callender added that Jefferson "had several children by her".

Jefferson neither confirmed nor denied the reports, and they were published in several newspapers at the time. Sally Hemings gave birth to six children, and it is widely believed that Jefferson was the father.

However, his daughter Martha denied the reports. But the evidence at the time suggested that it was more than likely that Jefferson was the father. The children strongly resembled Jefferson, and there are no records to show that Hemings had a relationship with anyone outside of Monticello.

It is also suggested that Jefferson was present at the births of the children, and one of the children, Eston Hemings, added the Jefferson title to his name.

Sally left no records, but the debate has raged on 200 years after her death. Did Jefferson father any of the children?

The *New York Times* on November 1, 1998 reported that, "DNA tests on the descendants of Thomas Jefferson's family and of Jefferson's young slave, Sally Hemings, offer compelling evidence that the nation's president fathered at least one of her children".

This evidence was presented as a result of analysis of Y chromosomes by Dr Eugene Foster. The Y chromosome of a descendant of Eston Hemings was a perfect match to that of Jefferson's, but it was no surprise to some fam-

ily members who knew all along that they were related to Jefferson.

Sally Hemings went to Monticello as a slave when she was 14. In today's society Jefferson would be on the child abuser's list. He used his position to preach the message of equality, while in his private life he abused Hemings. After Jefferson's death, Sally Hemings left Monticello and died in obscurity.

Sojourner Truth was one of the earliest human-rights campaigner, and she did it with style and attitude. In 1844, an angry mob threatened to shut her down, and Sojourner calmly walked in their midst and put them to flight.

Sojourner was born in New York into slavery 1797, and she was known as Isabella Baumfree. She was separated from her family at the age of nine, and was sold several times into slavery before she ended up working for John and Sally Dumont.

Sojourner described incidents in which Sally Dumont was terribly cruel to her, and not knowing better, Sojourner believed that slavery was ordained by God.

In 1827, she threw caution to the winds and walked away from the plantation with her infant daughter. But her son Peter was sold into slavery and Sojourner waged a prolonged legal battle to get him out of slavery.

In 1828, she sued to get Peter out of slavery and won, becoming the first Black woman to take a white man to court and win. She would

win again in 1835 to clear her name in a slander suit.

Sojourner joined a religious revival movement, and became a charismatic speaker advocating for women's rights. In 1850, she set her thoughts on paper, and with the help of a friend she wrote her *Narrative*.

A year later she went on a nationwide tour and delivered her famous "Ain't I a Woman?" speech in which she called for women to be treated as equals with men.

Sojourner met with Abraham Lincoln, and asked that segregation be abolished. She collected thousands of signatures for a petition for newly-freed slaves to be given land, but Congress took no action.

One of the most celebrated women in the struggle for African freedom is Harriet Tubman. She was born around 1820 into slavery, but subsequently escaped. Her mission was to help other slaves escape as well.

Tubman organised what came to be called the Underground Railroad. This involved leading hundreds of slaves to freedom, and Tubman never "lost a passenger".

Tubman guided slaves to the North using a series of safe houses. She was honoured for her work, and she remains one of the most admired women in American history.

These are only a few of the Black mothers that have made an impact in America. Their legacy will live as long as people value freedom and justice.

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Guyanese poet puts her roots down in TT

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Trinidad and Tobago-based Guyanese musician Ruth Osman continues to grow in stature as a writer and poet since her debut collection of poems, *All Made of Longing* (Bamboo Talk Press), was published in October 2023. [It is available on Amazon here.](#)

As a singer, songwriter, and flautist, she is well-known for her jazz music in Trinidad and Tobago, and in the wider Caribbean region. Her debut album *Letting Go*, was released in 2013; her second album, *Elemental*, was produced in 2016.

While acknowledging her work as an artist spans across disciplines, at the same time Osman told *Stabroek News* she sees herself as “a cultural entrepreneur, and as somebody who has ideas and stories, and ways of perceiving a reality that I want to share using a variety of media, including poetry”.

Of course, as she declared, “Poetry has this beautiful way of getting to the root of life of who we are and why we live, through metaphors and symbolisms. Song is interesting because I get to use melody and poetry. I love that interplay.”

Osman added more growth rings in her stature as a poet when she took to writing more poetry, and certainly with heightened intensity, during the forced isolation in the Covid-19 pandemic years, she told *SN* last year.

“I have always been writing poetry as a hobby. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, I couldn't meet with my band. I started to use poetry as an outlet to express myself, where previously I would have let out in song and music. I was writing like a madwoman...”



Ruth Osman

So well-received was her debut collection, written during the trauma, isolation, and loneliness of Covid-19, that one of its poems, *Lost and Found*, received an Honourable Mention in the 52nd New Millennium Writing Awards.

Osman's biographical details reveal the path to knowledge, self-awareness, and self-discovery through art that is sometimes taken by an only child. She is the only surviving child of Yvonne and late journalist Raschid Osman, born when her parents were in their late thirties.

“They told my mom and dad not to try for another baby if I didn't survive, and if my mom wanted to live. My parents raised me with that sense of a third chance and the preciousness of life. I always felt loved in a particular kind of way,” she told *SN*.

Also, “Being an only child, there is also that level of self-awareness because I had the time and space to focus on it. I spent a lot of time surrounded by art. As a child I spent a lot of time reading my father's books, some adult in content.”

By the time Osman was 13, she had read through her father's entire library, listened to music of all genres, watched classic movies, and had seen church life playing a major role in her early development.

“I might have been deprived of things most children experience – like [the] rough and tumble play: climbing trees, running in the road or yard with siblings. That really impacted on who I am,” she said.

Her parents were pillars in the First Assembly of God Church, where her father was a deacon, and where her mother

eventually became a pastor.

So it came to pass that church became a major part of her life, a nurturing ground for her musical and performance skills. Here she sang in the children's choir; the next step up was writing her own songs and music; another step upwards saw her singing solo on stage. And she became part of the worship team.

“Church was where I learned community, the importance of it, and spirituality,” she recalled.

Osman attended St Margaret's Primary and Queen's College in Guyana. The family then left Guyana for Dominica, where she studied at Dominica Grammar School, and later, at the Sixth Form College. At 18 she returned to Guyana to pursue a degree in English Literature and Communications at the University of Guyana.

Following UG it was back to the church, where she became its creative arts director.

“All of that shaped who I was becoming, even the spiritual aspect. I have travelled far from what I was taught in terms of spirituality and the Christian traditions. It is still the foundation of who I am, because it gave me a love of spirituality, a willingness to delve into it, to live it, and to appreciate the important role it plays in our lives,” Osman stated.

She later moved to Trinidad to pursue a post-graduate diploma in arts and cultural enterprise management at The University of the West Indies St Augustine Campus. While studying for her diploma, the plan was to also experience another culture, while healing from a broken relationship.

As she told *SN*, she fell in love with the richness of Trinidad and Tobago's culture.

“I told myself I'm staying. I knew I wanted to be involved in the arts in some way, and Trinidad felt like a good place to do that,” she revealed.

Of course, mom and dad were not exactly pleased with her decision to stay in Trinidad.

“My parents weren't happy. I had to hold my ground with them. My mom, who has a strong personality, came to Trinidad to persuade me to return home.”

As much as she loves Guyana, Osman told *SN* her decision to put down roots in Trinidad was also to escape the shadow of being her parents' one child and daughter, and all of the expectations that went with that.

“I had to find myself and grow. I couldn't do that in Guyana. Because I had also grown up in the church in Guyana, I was not aware of other circles. In Trinidad I found myself in philosophical circles, a very diverse set of people; people who do not think only in a particular way,” she stated.

And as she declared, she also found the community she would not have discovered in Guyana.

“I have friends and relationships I have cultivated over a period of time, who know the inner me, and support and respect that. They give me that sense of closer to belonging,” she said.

Additionally, “I feel more rooted now, not because of the community I have gathered, but because of who I am becoming. I think I have moved past the seed and sapling stage. I am standing tall in my shoes, and there is comfort in that.”

With files from Stabroek News and the Trinidad Guardian

Key word in language of the traveller is kindness

The language of the traveller is a universal one. As I travel from country to country, rural, urban, or the middle of nowhere, one interacts with other travellers along the way. It is amazing the number of things that strangers have in common.

One that stands out is kindness. As we travel with our suitcases, a stranger will help us to load and unload our luggage from fast moving stops. In some cases they are willing to share their food and drink. A refugee from Brazil went to the extent of settling us down with our luggage in our train carriage, and almost got stuck on the train, on a long distance route. He used the language of kindness.

The universality of music is another common denominator. My wife and I dance wherever we hear the beat. We have danced on the beach, on the road, on ships and shores, on the boardwalk, in hotels, in halls, in rooms, on highland and lowlands... The beat goes on.

We became friends with an elderly couple from Italy at a hotel in Portugal recently. We met four times. We could not understand a word of each other's language, yet we rattled away at each other! They are both good dancers, and in our age range. We used sign language to get us by. The wife brought us Italian biscuits each time we met. As we parted and said goodbye, we had from them names we could not pronounce, their email

address and phone number, and last of all, her fan, which the wife presented to my wife!

The language and beat of music prevailed. Goodbye was capped with kisses to both cheeks, as is their tradition. Future contact will be challenging, but we will try our best. Time is not on our side.

Meeting fellow Canadians is somewhat a revelation. No more the “cold” Canadian. One guy told us his whole life story from one bus stop to the other! He even worked in the area we live in many years ago.

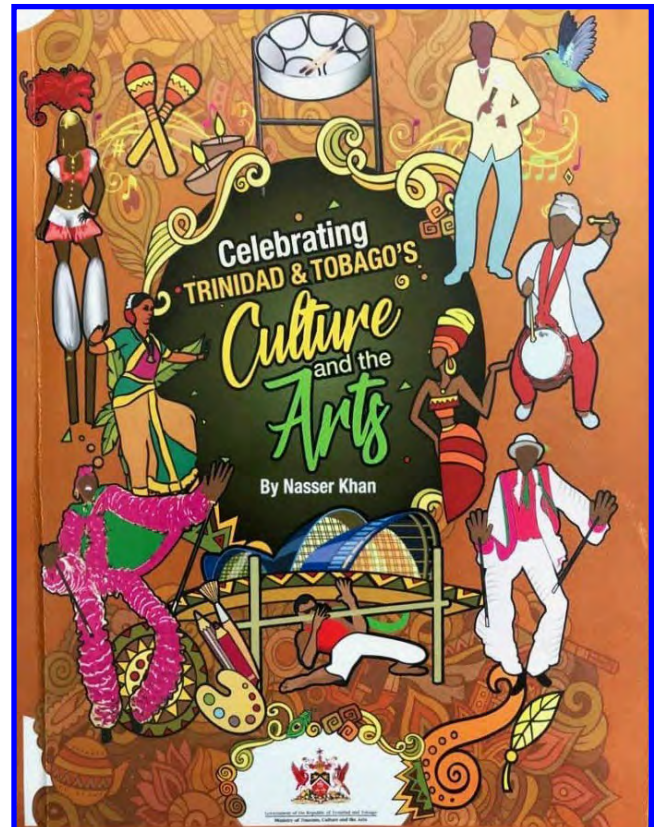
A group of retired Canadians from Ottawa was a treat. As it turned out, I landed in Ottawa in 1965 to study at the University of Ottawa. They watched us dance and soon joined in. A few followed us around like “groupies” afterwards.

Many of the folks we met, we never knew their names. Yet we had something in common: our humanity. Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau made it a mission in his life to see the world before he got a job or a career!

Ernest Hemingway, the American novelist, said that the city of Paris is a moveable feast. I say travelling is a moveable feast. It comes with the “caul” I was born with.

I always wanted to reach Mediterranean waters, which I might do in this trip. Heaven knows, I might even reach the Holy Land. If the creeks don't rise and the sun still shines, I'll be talking to you.

Bernard Heydorn



Free eBook on TT online

Described as a students' companion, Nasser Khan's eBook *Celebrating Trinidad and Tobago's Culture and Arts* is now freely available to a global audience.

The move to make the text available online is the result of an initiative by author Khan, and the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Described as the students' companion of Trinidad and Tobago culture and the arts, over 600 educational institutions received close to 2,000 printed copies of the 336-page book in 2019.

The text covers all of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural and artistic forms of expressions, with illustrations.

Researched and written by Khan, it contains 33 chapters on topics including Carnival, literary arts, religious festivals, culinary arts, and music. Also included is a special chapter entitled *Uniquely Tobago*.

As the media in Trinidad and Tobago reported back in 2019, Khan was motivated to produce the book based on what he described as a lack of an encyclopaedic source of reference for the arts in his homeland.

As he stated, “[In] the schools of Trinidad and Tobago, there is no one reference book specific to the broad spectrum of our culture and the arts. Students and teachers must, therefore, use a variety of resources for assignments...”

He added, “I wanted this book to be a one-stop shop to reduce the amount of time it takes for people to consult multiple sources on the history and culture of Trinidad and Tobago depending on the scope of their research.”

[Click here to download a free copy of Khan's book.](#)

Call for papers for Taan Singing/Baithak Gaana Conference in TT

The National Council of Indian Culture Heritage Centre in collaboration with The University of Trinidad and Tobago have issued a call for papers for its **International Taan Singing/Baithak Gaana Conference**.

It will take place on May 3-May 5 at the NCIC Nagar in Chaguanas, central Trinidad, and at the UTT. Theme of the conference is *Towards a Vision for Taan Singing/Baithak Gaana in the Girmitya Diaspora*.

As the organisers note, the conference is an opportunity to explore various aspects of this unique music tradition, ranging from its historical roots to its contemporary expressions.

The main objective will be to provide a forum for scholars and practitioners of diverse interests and backgrounds to engage in discussions on innovative approaches to the challenges facing the future of Taan Singing/Baithak Gaana in Girmitya countries and other areas.

It will bring together researchers, scholars, practitioners, promoters, and enthusiasts who will examine the concept of Taan Singing/Baithak Gaana, and its future in the diaspora.

The conference is also expected to explore the range of possibilities in charting the way forward for this genre of singing, and affords an open, collaborative atmosphere for scholars, practitioners, leaders, specialists, visionaries, reformers, and innovators to discuss future opportunities and challenges facing this genre of singing in the Girmitya diaspora.

Conference coordinator is Primnath Gooptar (WhatsApp: 1-868-470-0133; pgoopta@hotmail.com). Conference Secretary is Sarika Boodhoo (WhatsApp: 1-868-769-4142).

[Click here for more information on the conference.](#)

Emaciated kangaroo causes concern

Port-of-Spain – Social media got the jump on the Emperor Valley Zoo earlier this week when it was revealed that a Red Kangaroo housed at the zoo was malnourished and underweight.

Photos and videos of the animal showed noticeable emaciation, with its bones prominent beneath loose skin. The kangaroo also appeared to be lethargic and unwell.

The social media posts left many nationals hopping mad, the kangaroo's unhealthy condition soon driving a national narrative of outrage and concern.

Many nationals online questioned the quality of care the animal was receiving at the government's facility.

According to one commentator on social media, "There are people who take better care of animals home than the zoo, but yet the police want to seize them and charge the person. Are they going to look into this because clearly it shows incompetence on the zoo taking care of theirs, and not just this animal, many animals in the zoo look malnourished, and seems like they would be better off elsewhere."

Another commentator used the challenges of contemporary living in Trinidad and Tobago as an entry point to empathy.

"This is just to show how hard Trinidad is. They cannot afford to feed the poor animal... The Forestry Division is not seeing that now, but they are seeing when you have animals home to come and take it," another commentator complained.

Another online comment stated, "Send him back to where he belongs... it is clearly unhealthy, maybe grieving? Kangaroos are social animals that live in [troupe]s in the wild. What is the reason for taking it from Australia to bring it here anyway? For show? These animals belong in the wild, humans love to cage every animal for show and display."



The emaciated kangaroo at Trinidad's Emperor Valley Zoo

Many commentators also called for accountability and a response from the zoo.

Following the online revelation and resultant fury, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land, and Fisheries acknowledged the public's concern, and confirmed that the animal was housed at the zoo.

The ministry said it had immediately investigated the matter and determined that the animal had come under the zoo's care in 2022 following the closure of another facility.

Also, the kangaroo in question was reportedly between 15-20 years old.

It added that a team of zoo administrators were providing care to the animal, including regular health checks, proper nutrition, and enrichment activities tailored to its needs.

A veterinary team was also sent out to assist zoo personnel in assessing the animal's health and well-being.

"Based on their recommendations, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the animal's welfare is properly addressed. The ministry wishes to reassure the public that we are fully committed to upholding the highest standards of animal welfare. We will take swift and decisive action, as necessary, to ensure the welfare of all animals under the State's care," the ministry stated.

Minister of Agriculture, Land, and Fisheries Kazim Hosein later told the media he was concerned about the kangaroo's welfare.

"Any animal placed under the ward of the State deserves the best care possible, and any concerns raised must be taken care of quickly. Therefore, I have instructed an immediate investigation be launched into the animal's condition and overall care conditions at the zoo," Hosein said.

He added, "Rest assured, we are fully committed to ensuring the well-being of all animals under our care, and we will take decisive action to rectify any issues identified."

Call for charges after Tobago oil spill

Port-of-Spain – Tobago Business Chamber chairman Martin George has called on the authorities to thoroughly investigate the circumstances that led to the oil spill off Tobago's south-western coast on February 7.

"As chairman of the Tobago Business Chamber, I am calling upon the authorities to investigate this matter, and if there is merit in it, then we ask that criminal charges be brought against the master of the vessel of that ship which caused the oil leak off the coast of Tobago," he said earlier this week.

George said Section Three of the Oil Pollution of Territorial Waters Act prescribes a penalty on summary conviction of (TT) \$10,000 and 12 months' imprisonment on the master or owner of any vessel from which oil is discharged, or allowed to escape into any waters.

"So if we have information as to who is the master, then we want the master to be criminally charged. If we have information as to who is the owner, then we want the owner to be criminally charged in relation to any vessel from which oil is discharged or allowed to escape in the waters," he declared.

He added, "From our information, the ship was reported as being in approximately 150 metres from the coastline of Tobago, which would place it well within the territorial waters. So, therefore, in those circumstances, we are

asking that criminal charges be laid because this has created an international scandal. It has created headlines around the world. It has been on CNN and several other major news outlets."

George said Tobago must show that it is serious about dealing with environmental disasters.

"We have to show that we are serious about dealing with and punishing the offenders so that these actions will not be repeated, and the fragile ecosystem of our twin-island republic is going to be preserved; or if not, that people will learn that there are consequences for not preserving same," he stated.

The spill continues to pollute areas along Tobago's south-western coast, and has now reached waters in Grenada and Bonaire.

As a result, the Bonaire government has reportedly signalled its intention to take legal action against those responsible for the environmental disaster.

THA Chief Secretary Farley Augustine has also said those who are found culpable must be brought to justice. He added that the THA has been conducting its own investigations, and is pursuing several leads.

Also, last week Lt Colonel Jason Hills, chief of Tobago oil spill ODPM operations, said divers from TT Salvage were trying to determine the quantity of bunker fuel still in the vessel.



Martin George



Lakshmi Girls' Principal Sonia Mahase-Persad (left) participates in the puja at the school to mark the college's 60th anniversary. Officiating is Pundit Dr Rampersad Parasram (right), with Pundit Sunesh Tota-Maharaj (centre), who led the ceremony

Lakshmi Girls' marks its 60th year

Port-of-Spain – Lakshmi Girls' Hindu College celebrated its 60th anniversary in January. The college will be holding a number of celebratory events throughout the year to mark the Diamond Jubilee.

One of the most auspicious of the events took place on February 24, when staff, students and parents gathered to offer prayers and thanks through a puja that was officiated by the Dharmacharya Pundit Dr Rampersad Parasram.

For the event, the school's auditorium was transformed into a divine space that saw Principal Sonia Mahase-Persad, members of staff, president of the Parent Support Organisation, Indra Ramdial, and Head Girl Shivana Ranga and deputy Head Girls Ashleigh Chee Hing and Chelsea Ramdial, offering prayers on behalf of the staff, students and parents.

In attendance were members of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha executive, with Maha Sabha Secretary General Vijay Maharaj conveying congratulations on behalf of the board on the college's 60 years of success and achievements as an educational institution.

In her address, Mahase-Persad spoke about the school's adaptability over the decades, its growth from very humble beginnings when the school was described as a "cowshed" to it today being a premier educational institution.

She also recalled that Lakshmi Girls' won the President's Medal for an unprecedented five consecutive years from 2015-2019, and then again in 2021.

Mahase-Persad also highlighted the school's robust co-curricular programme, its pastoral care, and other activities that target developing the students holistically, which she stated is in keeping with the college's vision and mission.

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Frustrated Deyalsingh calls out fast-food brands

Port-of-Spain – Minister of Health Terrence Deyalsingh last week called out certain fast-food brands, as he once again lamented what he described as the scourge of hypertension and diabetes facing Trinidad and Tobago.

Speaking at the launch of the U-Health and Wellness Expo in Port-of-Spain, Deyalsingh maintained that the mega chains and companies had to take some blame for the health condition of some sectors of society, noting the focus had to be on prevention rather than cure.

“There is not enough work going on there, and even if there is enough work going on there, people are addicted to [Coca-Cola] and Pepsi in the same way they are addicted to cocaine. They are addicted to the fats in KFC and Royal Castle, and I am calling brands for the first time in eight years because we need to face the truth,” Deyalsingh said.

He confessed that it has been an uphill battle for his ministry.

“We have to work so much harder because we can’t outspend Dominoes \$774 million US; we can’t outspend McDonald’s \$638 million US; we can’t outspend Wendy’s \$538 million; and we surely cannot outspend Coca Cola’s \$4 billion US,” he lamented.

Also, “Coca-Cola’s advertising spend last year is our budgetary allocation for the whole country, but we freely consume their products. Know the words I am using: we freely and voluntarily consume that poison, then we turn to the free public health system [saying]: ‘Save me.’”

Deyalsingh was adamant that this was something that needed to be addressed frontally, adding this was why he was speaking out in such a manner. He was also prepared to face any repercussions, he declared.

“I can’t wait for the backlash I am going to get... but I think it needs to be said,” he said.

Notwithstanding any possible fallout over his comments, Deyalsingh said he wanted his message to be about consuming these products in moderation, as he reminded it was also more about personal responsibility.



Terrence Deyalsingh

“Please remember the central message was to eat and drink these things in moderation. A bit of personal responsibility on behalf of us all, especially parents when it comes to their children’s health,” he explained.

In response, head of the Domino’s Pizza franchise Omar Hadeed said they have been working to make their menu options healthier after consultations with the health ministry.

In June 2023, Deyalsingh met with the heads of some of the local fast food chains and restaurants to discuss healthier menus for customers.

Present at the meeting was Stephen de Gannes, former Trinidad and Tobago Chamber CEO, with heads from Restaurant Holdings Limited, Global Brands, Mario’s Pizzeria Limited, Prestige Holdings Limited, Jenny’s on the Boulevard, Pappy’s Fried Chicken, Chuck E Cheeses, Arazzi, and Salt ‘n Pepper Classical Indian Cuisine.

In a media statement following the meeting, the Ministry of Health said the discussions focused on calories per meal in restaurants, sodium and fat content, and strategies for health-seeking behaviours in relation to food consumption.

Additionally, the restaurants agreed that more consumer awareness initiatives were needed to support the health and wellness of the nation. It said after initial discussions, there was agreement by the restaurants to devise strategies to include healthier options on their menus, and to reduce salt and sugar content.

Deyalsingh told the media afterwards, “The ball is now in their court. They pledged last year to roll out healthy options.”

He also explained that his ministry established the Hearts Programme to treat the problem of hypertension, and as of December 2023, 62,207 people were enrolled with 29,632 now being listed as controlled.

However, diabetes remains a much bigger problem, and it all had to do with Caribbean culture.

“The Caribbean has always been colonised in a way that does not serve our best interest. Today, we are colonised by the brands,” he said

‘Historical high’ profits for KFC’s parent company

Port-of-Spain – The parent company of KFC and Starbucks, Prestige Holdings, recorded its highest-ever pre-tax profit of (TT) \$84 million in the last financial year.

According to the parent company, the “historical high” represented a 56 percent increase in the profit that the restaurant management company made for the corresponding period in 2022.

Helping Prestige Holdings achieve this milestone was its revenue for the period crossing the \$1.3 billion mark.

“For the fiscal year 2023, group revenue increased by 20 percent to \$1.3 billion from \$1.1 billion in the previous year, and this resulted in a profit before tax of \$84 million compared to \$54 million in 2022, an increase of 56 percent,” said chairman of Prestige Holdings, Christian Mouttet.

He said the financial year that ended on November 30, 2023 was one of investment and growth for the group.

“There have been significant effort and success towards returning our business operations to pre-pandemic levels, and achieving sustainable growth and profitability,” he noted.

Mouttet said that Prestige Holdings’ Diluted Earnings per Share saw an increase by 58 percent from 56.8 cents to 89.6 cents.

“During the period, our group generated \$182 million in Operating Cash Flow, repaid \$22 million in debt, which reduced our total borrowings to \$49 million, and we ended the year with \$114 million in cash,” he stated.

Mouttet said at the end of the year Prestige Holdings operated 134 restaurants including five new units, namely four Starbucks in Trinidad, and a Starbucks in Guyana.

The group also completed remodelling three KFCs, and relocated one Starbucks during the period, he said.

“All of our brands posted significant operational and financial improvements over our prior year performance. The Group’s overall profitability of \$84 million was a historical high,



Christian Mouttet

and is reflective of the investments in our people and assets,” Mouttet stated.

He added, “We have made significant investments in growing our operations, both in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as our external markets.”

Mouttet said the Starbucks in Guyana exceeded expectations, and as such the organisation is looking to further its investments in that country by opening two more Starbucks there this year. New stores are also planned for Trinidad this year, he said.

“In addition, throughout 2023, we continued to build on the innovation and progress that have been made in our digital, delivery, and drive-through channels, and expect that these platforms will continue to drive growth going forward,” he said.

The Prestige Holdings’ board approved a final dividend of 30 cents per common share, which with shareholders’ approval would take the total dividends payable for the financial year to 45 cents. The final dividend will be paid on May 29.

“I wish to recognise and thank our dedicated and hard-working employees who have enthusiastically taken on the challenge of returning Prestige Holdings to a growth mindset and driven the improvements experienced in 2023,” Mouttet stated.

He added, “The CEO, brand VPs, and management team have been proactive in maximising on the investments made, and successfully launching a new market in Guyana. A very special thank you to our customers for remaining loyal to our brands, and for keeping us ‘in their hearts and minds for every eating experience.’”

Mouttet also extended thanks to “my fellow directors for their wisdom and counsel and for the support provided to management during the year”.

The Prestige Holdings brands also include Subway, Pizza Hut, and TGI Fridays.



Stewart (left) and Augustine at a clean-up site

Positive signs in Tobago

Port-of-Spain – Positive signs are emerging in Tobago’s oil-spill clean-up and recovery efforts, Tobago House of Assembly Chief Secretary Farley Augustine said earlier this week.

Augustine’s statement came in the wake of approximately 15 kilometres of Tobago’s coast being polluted by an overturned barge, the *Gulfstream*, which was discovered lodged on a reef on February 7. It was being towed from Panama to Guyana by a tug, the *Solo Creed*.

Bunker fuel has been leaking from the barge, and it has contaminated Tobago’s south-western coast. One consequence has been the forced closure of schools. Also, the site is now a no-fishing zone, and mangroves have been damaged.

Further fallout has seen the wind and currents carrying the spill to other countries such as Grenada and Bonaire.

At Monday’s THA briefing at the Shaw Park Complex in Scarborough, Augustine said on his way to the conference, he saw a clean-up team power-washing the bridges and roads.

“That to me is a positive sign – a positive sign that we’re getting there. You pass and you look at the sea water between Lambeau and here, it’s much, much clearer than it was – another very, very positive sign,” he stated.

Additionally, “We are moving quickly to that place where you’ll see functional use of some of the roadways... that are blocked at this time. So, we are getting somewhere, and we are very, very happy for that.”

He said that the Institute of Marine Affairs has been doing random testing of fish being sold in Scarborough, Lambeau, and Pigeon Point, and the results have shown that it is safe for human consumption. The tests would continue, he stated.

Director of the Tobago Emergency Management Agency Allan Stewart said divers confirmed that the *Gulfstream* is no longer contaminating the water with hydrocarbons.

“I can report that there is no longer any oil emitting from the vessel. The T&T Salvage team, they have taken control over that process...,” he said.

Also, Stewart said the NOFI ocean buster (a high-speed oil containment and recovery system) has been in operation since late last week.

Meanwhile, damage assessment exercises were continuing with local and international authorities exploring the means to plug the vessel’s oil leak.

Containment efforts have also been ramped up, according to the Ministry of Energy.

According to a media release, contamination salvage dive operations were conducted under the guidelines of the Association of Diving Contractors International.

The ministry stated that surface-supplied diving allowed for longer subsea operations and direct communications between the diver and dive supervisor.



Personnel wash oil off a diver before coming onboard

The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

S.D. Burman: One of India's most influential music composers

By Vidur Dindayal

Sachin Dev Burman, the film music maestro, and member of the Tripura, Bengal royal family was a filmi music maestro. He was a singer and music director. He made as many as 131 records in Bengali. He composed music for nearly 89 Bengali and 100 Hindi movies. He played the tabla, sarod, *sarangi*, and the sitar.

S.D. Burman's compositions were sung by the leading singers of the era, including Shamshad Begum, Hemant Kumar, Geeta Dutt, Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammed Rafi, Mukesh, Talat Mahmood, Manna Dey, Kishore Kumar, and Asha Bhosle. As a playback singer, S.D. Burman sang 13 Bengali and 14 Hindi film songs.

The Indian Postal Service released a commemorative postage stamp on October 1 in 2007 to mark his 101st birth anniversary. The Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar was named after the composer by Sachin's father, who was an ardent fan of S.D. Burman.

S.D. Burman has won many Filmfare and other awards. Thanks to *Wikipedia* and *YouTube* for information in writing this tribute.

Sachin Dev Burman was born on October 1, 1906 at Cumilla, in Bengal, to Rajkumari Nirmala Devi, the royal princess of Manipur, and Nabad Wipchandra Dev Burman of Tripura, son of Ishan Chandra Manikya, the Maharaja of Tripura, an ancient kingdom mentioned in the *Mahabharat*.

Tripura is noted for its culture, art, and music. S.D. was the youngest of nine children. His mother died when he was just two years of age.

S.D. Burman's first school was Kumar Boarding in Agartala City, Tripura. He then went to Yusuf School in Comilla, completing his Matriculation in 1920 at the age of 14.

He was then admitted at Victoria College, Comilla, from where he passed his IA in 1922 and then BA in 1924. Burman then went on to pursue an MA in Calcutta University, which he did not finish as music got the better of him for good.

In 1938, he married Meera Devi Dasgupta, the grand-daughter of Magistrate Raibahadur Kamalnath Dasgupta. According to some, marrying a non-royal created a furor within the royal family, and he subsequently severed ties with his family, forfeiting his inheritance.

The couple's only child, Rahul Dev Burman, was born in 1939. Both Meera Devi and Rahul assisted S.D. Burman with some of his musical compositions.

S.D. Burman started his music education training under musician K.C. Dey, from 1925 to 1930. In 1932 he came under the tutelage of Bhisimadev Chattopadhyay, followed by training from Khalifa Badal Khan, the *sarangi* maestro, and Ustad Allauddin Khan, the *sarodist*. Poet laureate Kazi Nazrul Islam also spent time in their family home in Comilla in the early 1920s.

S.D. Burman started working as a radio singer on Calcutta Radio in the late 1920s, when his work was based on Bengali folk and light Hindustani classical music. His compositions were mainly influenced by his huge repertoire of folk-tunes from Bangladesh, and later, other parts of India and around the world.

His first record, a 78 RPM for Hindustan Records, was also released in 1932 (Hindustan Musical Product). The semi-classical songs, in raag Khamaj were: *E Pathey Aaj Eso Priyo* on one side and the folk *Dakle Kokil Roj Bihane* on the reverse side.

In the following decade, he reached his peak as a singer, cutting as many as 131 records in Bengali, singing for reputed composers, and for his son R.D. Burman. S.D. also did a singing role in the Urdu film, *Selima* (1934)

In 1934, Allahabad University invited him to the All India Music Conference. There he presented his Bengali Thumri to an audience with notables like Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Abdul Karim Khan of Kirana Gharana.

That same year, he was invited to the Bengal Music Conference, inaugurated by Rabindranath Tagore. Again, he sang his Thumri, and was awarded a Gold Medal.

S.D. started his film career with Bengali movies in 1937. He later began composing for Hindi movies and became one of the most influential Indian film music composers. Apart from being a versatile composer, he also sang songs in the light semi-classical and folk style of Bengal. His son, R.D. Burman, also became



R.D. Burman, Dev Anand, and S.D. Burman

Kishore Kumar and S.D. Burman

S.D. Burman

Dilip Kumar, S.D. Burman, and Lata

Young S.D. Burman with his parents

a celebrated music composer for Bollywood films.

As a composer, S.D. started with the Bengali plays *Sati Tirtha* and *Janani*, and gave his first score in the film *Rajgee*. In 1937, his second film *Rajkumari Nirbhashan* (1940) became a hit.

He gave music in Bengali films *Protishodh* (1941), *Abhoye Biye* (1942), and *Chaddobeshi* (1944), and one in 1969-1970. He composed for over 20 Bengali films and 89 Hindi films in all. His first film as a singer was *Sanjher Pidim* (1935).

In 1944, S.D. moved to Bombay. Sashadhar Mukherjee of Filmistan asked him to give score for two Ashok Kumar starers, *Shikari* (1946) and *Aath Din*; however, his first major breakthrough into the film industry came in 1947 with the company's *Do Bhai*. The song *Mera Sundar Sapna Beet Gaya* sung by Geeta Dutt was a hit.

In 1949 came *Shabnam*, his biggest hit yet with Filmistan, and its hit song *Yeh Duniya Roop Ki Chor*, sung by Shamshad Begum, was a rage in those days.

S.D. Burman teamed up with Dev Anand's Navketan Films to create many musical hits. His songs, which were sung by Kishore Kumar and Mohammed Rafi, became popular. He composed the music for their second film *Baazi* (1951), which was a hit.

Baazi's jazzy musical score revealed the talent of singer Geeta Dutt. One song stood out – *Tadbeer Se Bigdi Hui Taqdeer*. The song, *Yeh Raat Yeh Chandni* from the film *Jaal*, sung by Hemant Kumar, is an all-time classic.

Thandi Hawain from *Naujawan* (1951), sung by Lata Mangeshkar, was one of his first major hits. It made Lata very famous.

Other hits were *Taxi Driver* (1954), *Munimji* (1955), *Nau Do Gyarah*, *Paying Guest* (1957), and *Kala Pani* (1958).

The soundtracks of *Devdas* (1955), *House No 44* (1955), *Funtoosh* (1956), and *Solva Saal* (1958) were other S.D. hits.

He created magic again with *Jalte Hai Jiske Liye*, which was sung by Talat Mahmood in the 1959 movie *Sujata*. For his music in *Sujata* he won the Sangeet Natak Academy Award. Then he was the only music director to have won this prestigious award.

He also wrote music for Guru Dutt's films *Pyaasa* (1957), and *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (1959). For these sombre masterpieces he was right on target with *Jinhe Naaz Hai Hind* and *Waqt Ne Kiya Kya Haseen Sitam*. The soundtrack of *Pyaasa* was chosen as one of The Best Music in Film by *Sight & Sound*, the British Film Institute magazine.

In 1957, S.D. adopted Asha Bhosle as his lead female singer. The team of S.D. Burman, Kishore Kumar, Asha Bhosle, and lyricist Majrooh Sultanpuri became popular for their duet songs. Bhosle later became his daughter-in-law after her marriage to R.D. Burman.

S.D. gave music for Kishore Kumar's *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi*.

He often took inspiration from folk music, Hindustani classical music, as well as day-to-day sounds of life. He composed the *Kala Pani* tune for the Majrooh Sultanpuri-Mohammed Rafi-Dev Anand song *Hum Bekhudi Mein Tum* based upon the *Raag Chayyanat*, and relating to the Muslim's call for prayers that one hears daily near a mosque.

Early in his career, S.D. refused to allow his voice to be lip-synced on film by actors. As a result, in Hindi cinema, his thin yet powerful voice was often used to haunting results, as in *O Re Majhi Mere Sajjan Hai Us Paar* from *Bandini* (1963), *Wahan Kaun Hai Tera* from *Guide* (1965), and *Saphal Hogi Teri Aradhana* from *Aradhana* (1969), for which he received the National Film Award for Best Male Playback Singer in 1970.

In *Bandini*, Sampooran Singh (well known as Gulzar), made his debut as a lyricist with the song *Mora Gora Ang Lai Le*.

The Dev Anand-S.D. partnership, under the Navketan banner, continued to churn out musical hits like *Bambai Ka Babu* (1960), *Tere Ghar Ke Samne* (1963), *Guide* (1965) *Jewel Thief* (1967), and *Prem Pujari* (1970).

He composed the music for *Meri Surat Teri Aankhen* (1963), in which Manna Dey sang the song *Poocho Na Kaise Maine*. This song was based on the 'morning' raga *Ahir Bhairav*. That movie also had the song *Nache Man Mora Magan*, sung by Mohammed Rafi. These became landmarks in Hindi film songs. Other hits from this period were *Ziddi* (1964), and *Teen Deviyan* (1965).

Aradhana (1969) is considered another landmark score. The music shaped the careers of singer Kishore Kumar and lyricist Anand Bakshi. Mohammed Rafi was supposed to sing all the songs, but he was on tour, so he suggested to use Kishore Kumar. All the songs became chart busters, which made Kishore Kumar an overnight sensation. For the song *Mere Sapno Ki Raani*, S.D. employed R.D. to play the harmonica.

Tere Mere Sapne (1971), *Ishq Par Zor Nahin* (1970), *Sharmilee* (1971), *Abhimaan* (1973), *Prem Nagar* (1974), *Sagina* (1974), *Chupke Chupke* (1975), and *Mili* (1975) are some of S.D. Burman's classics from this decade.

S.D. used both Kishore and Rafi in an almost equal number of songs. He regarded Kishore as his second son. S.D. used to telephone Kishore in the dead of night. He would sing new tunes that he had composed, and ask Kishore to sing along. He had a unique style of composing film songs. While most of the composers used a harmonium or piano to compose the tune, he composed with rhythm such as clapping his hands.

S.D. Burman went into a coma soon after rehearsing the song *Badi Sooni Sooni Hai* (sung by Kishore Kumar) for the film *Mili*. He remained in coma for some days and died on October 31, 1975 in Mumbai.

The state government of Tripura confers the yearly Sachin Dev Burman Memorial Award in music. Sachin Dev Burman Memorial Government Music College was built in Agartala, Tripura, in his memory. It is affiliated to Tripura University, and recognised by University Grant Commission.

Wikipedia's filmography lists over 100 movies, with S.D.'s music. S.D. Burman is the proud recipient of numerous Awards and recognitions, among them the following:

•••

1934: Gold Medal, Bengal All India Music Conference, Calcutta; 1958: Sangeet Natak Akademi Award; 1959: Asia Film Society Award; 1964: Sant Haridas Award National Film Awards; 1970: National Best Male Playback Singer: *Aradhana: Safal Hogi Teri Aradhana*; 1974: National Best Music Direction: *Zindagi Zindagi*; 1969: *Padma Shri*; in 2007, a Postage Stamp (Face value Rs 15) released in his memory.

•••

Filmfare Awards: For Best Music Director, S.D. Burman won for *Taxi Driver* in 1954, and *Abhimaan* in 1973; nominated for *Guide* in 1965; *Aradhana* 1969; *Talaash* in 1970; and *Prem Nagar* in 1974.

•••

BFJA Awards: S.D. Burman won for Best Music (Hindi) for *Teen Deviyan* in 1965; *Guide* in 1966; *Aradhana* in 1969; *Abhimaan* in 1973; and Best Male Playback Singer (Hindi) for *Guide* in 1966.

India mourns passing of legendary ghazal exponent Pankaj Udhas

Renowned and legendary exponent of the *ghazal* form of musical poetry Pankaj Udhas died in Mumbai on February 26 after a prolonged illness. According to reports in the Indian media, Udhas battled with pancreatic cancer, and died at Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai. He was 72.

News of his passing was disclosed by daughter Nayaab via *Instagram*: "With a very heavy heart, we are saddened to inform you of the sad demise of Padmashri Pankaj Udhas on 26th February 2024 due to a prolonged illness."

Udhas was widely recognised for popularising a distinctive singing style that involved setting Urdu poetry to music. He played a crucial role, alongside fellow musicians Jagjit Singh and Talat Aziz, in introducing this art form throughout India.

He was born on May 17, 1951 at Jetpur, Saurashtra, Gujarat. Coming from a musical family, his father, Manohar Udhas, was a Gujarati folk singer, while elder brother, Manhar Udhas, found success as a Hindi playback singer in Bollywood.

The family later moved to Mumbai, where Udhas attended St Xavier's College. He first gained recognition as a professional singer with *Chitthi Aayee Hai* from the film *Naam* (1986). His career then took off with numerous albums, and global tours as a renowned *ghazal* singer. He also composed music for several films, and was a playback singer.

Udhas debuted with the *ghazal* album *Aahat* in 1980. Several hit albums followed, including *Mukarrar* (1981), *Tarrannum* (1982), *Mehfil* (1983), *Pankaj Udhas Live at Royal Albert Hall* (1984), the album release of his concert at London's Royal Albert Hall; *Nayaab* (1985), and *Aafreen* (1986).

Udhas also gained a vast new fan base with the release of Mahesh Bhatt's hit film *Naam* (1986) where he sang *Chitthi Aayee Hai*, and appeared as himself at a concert set in a Hong Kong auditorium.

Hit songs in several Bollywood films followed, including *Dayavan* (1988), *Gawaahi* (1989), *Ghayal* (1990), *Saajan* (1991), and *Mohra* (1994), among many others.

In addition, Udhas composed songs for the Bollywood films, *Aurat Pair Ki Juti Nahin Hai* (1985), and *Ek Hi Maqsad* (1988).

In 2006, Udhas was awarded the Padmashree by the Indian government, one of India's highest civilian honors, for services to the field of *ghazal* music, and for his charitable work.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed condolences following Udhas' passing, saying, "We mourn the loss of Pankaj Udhas Ji, whose singing conveyed a range of emotions and whose *ghazals* spoke directly to the soul. He was a beacon of Indian music, whose melodies transcended generations."

Modi continued, "I recall my various interactions with him over the years. His departure leaves a void in the music world that can never be filled. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti."

India's President Droupadi Murmu also paid tribute, saying, "Pankaj Udhas Ji, honoured with Padma Shri and other awards,

made an important contribution in popularising music. My condolences to his family and fans."

India's Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur posted: "Deeply saddened the news of passing of Pankaj Udhas Ji. His career, spanning more than four decades, enriched our music industry and gifted us with some of the most memorable and melodious renditions of *ghazals*."

Additionally, "His demise is an irreparable loss to our music world. My sincere condolences to his family, friends, and followers in this difficult time. May his soul rest in peace."

Anup Jalota, Udhas' contemporary, who is also an enormously popular singer, posted: "Shocking... Music legend & my Friend #PankajUdhas passes away. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his Family and loved ones during this difficult time."

Jalota also told the *Indian Express*, "The man who helped so many cancer patients, himself died of cancer. That is life. He had pancreatic cancer. I knew this for the last five to six months, and he stopped talking to me in the last 2-3 months, so I realised that his health was not okay. I feel very sad that this illness took his life."

Jalota also spoke with *India Today* about Udhas' illness following his friend's funeral.

"I got to know about his cancer around six months back through a common doctor friend. He had pancreatic cancer. I was also told how the cancer was taking him away."

He added, "I had met him a few months back and he looked weak, had lost weight but still sang at the festival. He later also called me to thank me for always supporting him. After that, whenever I tried to reach out to him, he never called back. That's when I knew that he was in terrible pain and we were going to lose him."

Recalling their times together, Anup Jalota shared how he, Udhas, and Talat Aziz, while having dinner, once decided to start the Khazana Ghazal Festival, where they would introduce new singers. He related that they also decided how they would donate the funds raised at these events for cancer patients.

Jalota also spoke to Udhas' music, stating that his songs helped *ghazals* reach the common man.

"People who never knew Urdu, had no connection with *ghazals*, were singing his songs. He made it so simple for everyone to understand. Pankaj was a simple and humble man, who spoke very few words. He only desired the upliftment of *ghazal* singers," Jalota stated.

Beyond his musical achievements, Udhas was also known for philanthropic and humanitarian work, actively supporting charitable causes and initiatives aimed at social welfare.

In 1989, he released *Nabeel* which became one of his best-selling albums. The first copy of the album was placed at an auction where it was sold for Rs 1 lakh. The money was then donated to the Cancer Patients Aid Association. He was also actively involved with the Parents Thalassaemia Unit.

Udhas is survived by wife Farida Udhas, and daughters Nayaab and Reva Udhas.



Pankaj Udhas



Udhas' decorated hearse



Udhas was accorded a State funeral



Sunil Gavaskar (left) visits the house of mourning

Chaturvedi: Hard making friends in Bollywood

In the midst of praise for his performance in *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*, Siddhant Chaturvedi recently told *India Today* it was challenging making friends in Bollywood.

At the time, he was speaking about his friendship with co-star Adarsh Gourav, and Arjun Varain Singh, *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan's* director.

According to Chaturvedi, after working with the "biggest people", he has noted how they keep "trying to balance their lives", a practice he has now started to adopt.

Chaturvedi has worked with Deepika Padukone in *Gehraiyaan*, and Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh in *Gully Boy*.

He told *India Today*, "I work with big stars. They also don't have time. They must be so busy. I feel like, 'I have to do this'. I haven't reached a single drop of where they are. They are trying to balance their lives."

He added, "They have so many eyes on them, and so many duties to perform. They don't have the time to entertain you. We meet at events; we hug and ask, 'How are you!' They are good actors, all of them. They get into the process where they shut off from the world. Even I have the same process. So, I don't

complain."

It is believed that Chaturvedi is dating Navya Naveli Nanda, who is the grand-daughter of veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan.

Said Chaturvedi: "It's not about fitting in. I came here from outside and everybody has been so receptive to me. I worked with the biggest people."

Additionally, "They have been very nice to me. I continue to work with the best. Expecting more out of that is my stupidity. I also understand that it is difficult to balance everything out."

Kho Gaye Hum Kahan is a coming-of-age drama directed by Singh in his directorial debut. It co-stars Ananya Panday and Gourav. Streaming on *Netflix*, it was released on December 26.

It is written by Singh, Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti, and produced by Ritesh Sidhwani, Akhtar, Kagti, and Farhan Akhtar under the banners of Excel Entertainment and Tiger Baby Films.

In the movie, Chaturvedi, Panday, and Gourav are three friends who navigate goals and relationships against the pressures of social media. Kalki Koechlin, Anya Singh and Rohan Gurbaxani appear in supporting roles.



Siddhant Chaturvedi

Bumrah rested, ready for Dharamsala spell

India's vice captain Jasprit Bumrah will rejoin the squad ahead of the series-ending fifth Test against England in Dharamsala following being rested during the fourth Test.

Bumrah's rest came as a move to manage his workload, given the upcoming schedule that includes an IPL campaign followed closely by the T20 World Cup in the US and the West Indies.

He was in outstanding form over the first three games of the series, taking 17 wickets at a 13.64. He was replaced by Bengal seamer Akash Deep in India's XI for the Ranchi Test.

India also have Mohammed Siraj and Mukesh Kumar available in their squad to pick for a Test match that is expected to favour fast bowlers.

Meanwhile, senior batter K.L. Rahul has officially been ruled out of the Test after not fully recovering from a quadriceps injury that flared up after the series-opening Test in Hyderabad. As the cricket website *Cricbuzz* reported, Rahul is in London for an expert opinion.

Rahul's issue comes from pain in his right quadriceps, for which he underwent surgery last year. It is understood that there is still stiffness, and given his importance to the side and the dual roles he fulfills for the team, the Board of Control for Cricket in India, selectors, and team management are reluctant to take any risks.



Jasprit Bumrah

India's updated squad for the fifth Test: **Rohit Sharma** (captain), **Jasprit Bumrah** (vice captain), **Yashasvi Jaiswal**, **Shubman Gill**, **Rajat Patidar**, **Sarfaraz Khan**, **Dhruv Jurel** (wicketkeeper), **KS Bharat** (wicketkeeper), **Devdutt Padikkal**, **R. Ashwin**, **Ravindra Jadeja**, **Axar Patel**, **Kuldeep Yadav**, **Mohd. Siraj**, **Mukesh Kumar**, and **Akash Deep**.

Holder still has a grip on his red ball dreams

West Indies all-rounder Jason Holder last month told the cricket website *Cricbuzz* he is determined to get back into red-ball cricket. At this time, Holder is off the central contract and is working the franchise leagues.

As *Cricbuzz* reported, he is staying focused on T20 cricket. Holder indicated his plan was to opt out of the Australia Test series in order to hone his skills in the shortest format by playing different franchise leagues across the globe.

"I didn't take the central contract this year. A lot of thinking was there behind me not taking the central contract, as I prioritised the T20 World Cup in order to give me the best chance to be in the squad," *Cricbuzz* reported.

He added, "This is a conscious decision I made. I really wanted to sign the central contract, but it didn't work out. After not signing the contract, my decision was to capitalise on the first window this year, and try to play as much T20 cricket leading up to the T20 World Cup."

He is currently playing for Khulna Tigers in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League.

Meanwhile, in Holder's absence, West Indies produced a thriller in the second Test against Australia, winning by eight runs and leveling the series 1-1.

The result came with Shamar Joseph taking 7 for 68 in a fiery spell that ripped through Australia's line-up.

It was West Indies' first win on Australian soil in 27 years and 17 Tests. The previous win was in 1997 at the WACA by



Jason Holder

ten wickets.

Holder said he was disappointed over not participating in the historic series.

"I was disappointed not to be there. I felt bad not to be among the boys. I think it was brilliant for me as I miss it even more. It gives me more push to get back on the field again," he added.

At the same time, he maintained he was holding on to his red-ball dreams.

"I'm a passionate and loyal person. I like to stay humble, and I'm also a family man. When I came on the radar, there was no T20 cricket. When it came in, obviously I became a little bit older," he said.

He added, "When I grew up watching cricket, it was Test cricket and One Day cricket. I loved watching West Indies versus Australia because there was no league. There was all about passion at that time, and I always remain loyal to these formats."

Watching the game gave him a passion for the game of cricket, Holder said.

"I loved watching Brian Lara. I loved watching Sir Curtly Ambrose, and Courtney Walsh. These guys have played before me, and I grew up seeing them play cricket. That is where my love affair with Test cricket came."

He added, "And then I got the opportunity to play Test, and I had some hard days on the field. But our every success makes all the bad days out of the window. And that is why I love Test cricket."

Root taps into ICC top 3 batter's Test rankings

Joe Root's first century in England's ongoing tour of India lifted him to No 3, while Yashasvi Jaiswal's consistent scores took him to No 12 on ICC's rankings for Test batters.

Root's unbeaten 122 in the fourth Test, his first major contribution with the bat this series, lifted him two places and into the top three. His figures as an offspinner have also moved him up to No 4 among Test all-rounders.

Jaiswal is now two shy of the top ten in what has been a meteoric rise. He started the Test series at No 69 in the rankings, but in a matter of weeks, his 655 runs at an average of 93.57 in eight innings saw him leap upwards 57 steps to 12th position.

Meanwhile, the batters' rankings are still led by New Zealand's Kane Williamson, with Australia's Steven Smith holding the No 2 position.

In the Test bowling rankings, world No 2 R. Ashwin has closed the distance between himself and World No 1 Jasprit Bumrah to only 21 rating points. After missing parts of the Rajkot Test for personal reasons, Ashwin took a second-innings



Joe Root

five-wicket haul in Ranchi to set up India's victory, while Bumrah was rested.

Behind the pair are Kagiso Rabada at third, with the Australian duo of Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood after.

Hazlewood's spell of 4-1-12-1 in Auckland against New Zealand took him six places up to No 7 on the rankings for T20I bowlers. He is now the only Australian in the top ten of the T20I bowling rankings, with England spinner Adil Rashid leading the way, followed by the Sri Lankan pair of Wanindu Hasaranga and Maheesh Theekshana.

Travis Head and Tim David have also gained positions among T20I batters. Head's scores of 24, 45, and 33 elevated him 18 places up to 19th.

Tim David's 10-ball 31 in Australia's final-ball win in the opening game of the series took him to a career-best 22nd. Suryakumar Yadav, Phil Salt, and Mohammad Rizwan still hold the top three spots.

Meanwhile, Bernard Scholtz's six-wicket haul across two games at the League 2 tri-series in Nepal took him to 11th among ODI bowlers, a record high for Namibia.

Sir Clive to receive top award from Caricom

West Indies and Guyanese cricketer Sir Clive Hubert Lloyd will be conferred with the Order of Community Award, the highest regional order when Caricom meets in July in Grenada.

Current Chairman of Caricom and President of Guyana, Dr Irfaan Ali, made the announcement at the closing of the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government last week.

The award is for distinguished, outstanding, and phenomenal legacy in the economic, political, social, and cultural metamorphoses of Caribbean society. He is the fourth West Indies captain to receive the honour.

Affectionately known as 'The Big Cat', Lloyd is now 80 years old. His Caricom award follows in the footsteps of Sir Garfield Sobers, Sir Vivian Richards, and Brian Lara.

In 2022, Sir Clive received his knighthood after he got his Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in 1993.

Also, the University of Guyana awarded the Honourary Degree of Doctor to the legendary cricketer at its 56th Convocation exercise.

Sir Clive led West Indies to victory over Australia at Lord's in the final of the inaugural Cricket World Cup tournament in 1975. Four years later, he again led the West Indies to the world title when they beat England again.

He scored 7,515 runs at an average of 46.67 in 110 Tests, and 1,977 runs at 39.54 in 87 ODIs.

Lloyd is one of the most successful captains ever. During his captaincy, West Indies was the most successful team in the world, and had a run of 27 Test matches without defeat, including 11 wins in a row.

He was also a former West Indies team manager, selector, and ICC Match Referee. In 2009, he was inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame.

True Test yet to come as Robinson underwhelms

Former England seamer Alex Tudor was rooting for Ollie Robinson earlier this week, stating he should have all the motivation he needs under the leadership of Ben Stokes and Brendon McCullum to get back his confidence and fitness.

Robinson's fitness issues surfaced once more in the Ranchi Test against India with a twinge in his troublesome back tempering his pace. He sent down just 13 wicketless overs in the fourth Test, and was not given the ball in India's chase of 192.

India has already taken the series 3-1 ahead in the five-match series, with the fifth starting tomorrow at Dharamsala.

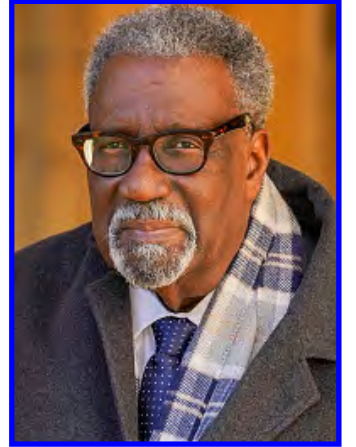
Despite an outstanding record of 76 wickets at an average of 22.92 in 20 outings, the gaze is yet again on whether Robinson's body can withstand the rigours of Test cricket.

His previous competitive appearance was seven months ago, when a back spasm shortened his game. It appears he may now be at a crossroads in his career.

Tudor was a keen observer of Robinson's underwhelming return, and is hoping he can recover. As he has noted, there is no greater incentive for Robinson than to play under the relaxed environment cultivated by captain Stokes and head coach McCullum.

"His place is definitely up for debate, which you wouldn't have said a year or so ago," Tudor said last week.

He added, "He's a quality performer but he's having a few issues with lasting a Test match. I'm sure he'll want to sort this out because playing in and around this team, it's what any cricketer would want. England are full of positivity under Ben Stokes, who backs his team to the hilt, the same with Brendon McCullum. The atmosphere that they're creating, any sportsman would want to be a part of that."



Sir Clive Lloyd



Ollie Robinson



TTCB Secretary Altaf Baksh, left, and TTWCA president Marjorie Thomas, right, present Mohammed with a commemorative plaque at a function to mark her retirement from the game

TTCB send-off as Anisa Mohammed retires

Port-of-Spain – Described as “one of the most distinguished citizens among us”, now-retired Trinidad and Tobago and West Indies women’s team off-spinner Anisa Mohammed was celebrated during a retirement event held in her honour at the National Cricket Centre in central Trinidad.

The retirement event was hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board, and the Trinidad and Tobago Women’s Cricket Association.

It saw members of the cricketing fraternity thanking the recently retired Mohammed for her contribution to the development of the women’s game locally, in the region, and abroad.

Now 35 years old, Mohammed announced her retirement from the game earlier this year after a career that spanned almost 20 years. She started her international career at the age of 15, and has taken 180 ODI wickets and 125 T20I wickets. She was also the first player, male or female, to reach 100 T20I wickets.

TTCB first vice-president Arjoon Ramlal praised Mohammed for her accomplishments on the field, declaring that she had “a very distinguished and long career”.

Said Ramlal: “We are extremely proud of the performances of all our cricketers, and when we have cricketers that excel like Anisa did, we must show our appreciation for that.”

He added, “She is one of the greatest cricketers to play on the international stage. Many records were broken [during her 20-year career]; but I want to point out that Anisa was the first cricketer, male or female, to take 100 T20I wickets. There will be others after her, but she was the first.”

Noting the end of her playing career with retirement, Ramlal stated that the TTCB wished her all the best on the path she has now taken.

He also commented, “I must say the TTCB was encouraged by the comments she made during her retirement announcement that she would still be available to serve cricket in other

capacities.”

He also thanked Mohammed “for lifting the image of Trinidad and Tobago’s cricket”, and for uplifting women’s cricket in the West Indies.

And he declared, “Trinidad and Tobago and Sangre Grande have one of the most distinguished citizens among us”.

Current Trinidad and Tobago women’s team captain Britney Cooper and TTWCA president Marjorie Thomas also praised Mohammed for her contribution to the game.

Said Thomas: “Your heart is with cricket. We know you will continue to serve in the capacity of uplifting women’s cricket.”

While thanking her for “what you have done for women’s cricket in Trinidad and Tobago and the region”, at the same time Cooper noted that Mohammed was “not going to stop”.

In response, Mohammed told the gathering to keep believing in themselves. Among the guests was the team that will be competing in the Women’s Super50 and T20 Blaze this month.

Said Mohammed: “I truly appreciate being recognised for my service for this country and the region. The last 20 years have seen a lot of ups and downs. Plenty ups, but I am also grateful for the downs. The down times have taught me to stay focused, work harder, and most importantly, to remain humble.”

She added, “As an athlete, we have a lot of days when we are not successful, or we don’t hit the goals that we set. We don’t call that failure. It simply means we have gained more experience for the next time.”

Her advice to the gathering was to not “drop your shoulders” on those days that do not bring success.

Instead, she advised, “Lift your head, work harder, and believe in yourself. Self-belief is very important in becoming successful. Self-belief is the one thing only you can do for yourself. Keep believing and never give up.”

She was presented with a commemorative plaque at the event.

Mair, Halliday get NZ selector’s nod for T20Is, ODIs

New Zealand selectors last week gave the nod to seamer Rosemary Mair and batter Brooke Halliday, adding both players to the squad for five T20Is and three ODIs against England at home. Offspinner Leigh Kasperrek was also included for the last two T20Is.

The tour starts with two warm-up T20s on March 10 and March 12 in Queenstown. The first T20I will be played on March 19 in Dunedin.

Three standby players for the first T20I will be named closer to the series. These players will cover for Amelia Kerr (Mumbai Indians), Sophie Devine (Royal Challengers Bangalore), and Lea Tahuu (Gujarat Giants) should any of them be unavailable due to commitments in the WPL, which ends on March 17.

Mair and Kasperrek have both been rewarded for their performances in the Super Smash, New Zealand’s domestic T20 tournament.

Kasperrek played a key role in Wellington’s winning campaign by picking up 17 wickets, the second-most in the competition, at an economy of 5.38.

Mair’s last international appearance was in August 2022. The

Super Smash saw her emerging as the fourth-highest wicket-taker with 14 wickets.

Her haul included 4 for 5 in the final even though her side, Central Districts, lost the rain-hit game by one run.

Halliday was out with a foot injury, which saw her miss the T20I and ODI series against Pakistan in December. She returned midway through the Super Smash, and scored 108 in a List A game against Canterbury last week.

“Rosemary has been an integral part of the Central Hinds side this summer, and has stepped up with her leadership and extra pace, which has been pleasing,” said New Zealand head coach Ben Sawyer.

He added, “We identified key areas of her game to work on post the tour of Sri Lanka, and we’ve been impressed with the way she has gone away and worked hard on implementing these into her game. The results speak for themselves, and Rosemary’s performance in the Super Smash Grand Final showed us that she is ready for another opportunity.”

In the combined 15-member roster for both series, Georgia Plimmer has been picked only for ODIs.

Cricket Schedule

(Matches ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Wednesday March 6, 2024

- Malaysia Open T20I Championship, 2024
- Kuwait vs Tanzania, 3rd Match Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, 10:00 AM
- Malaysia vs Vanuatu, 4th Match, Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, 2:00 PM
- Sri Lanka tour of Bangladesh, 2024
- Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka, 2nd T20I, Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Sylhet, 6:00 PM
- Papua New Guinea tour of Oman 2024
- Oman vs Papua New Guinea, 1st T20I, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 11:00 AM

Thursday March 7, 2024

- Papua New Guinea tour of Oman 2024
- Oman vs Papua New Guinea, 2nd T20I, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
- Afghanistan vs Ireland in UAE, 2024
- Afghanistan vs Ireland, 1st ODI, Sharjah Cricket Stadium, Sharjah, 4:30 PM
- Malaysia Open T20I Championship, 2024
- Malaysia vs Bahrain, 5th Match, Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, 10:00 AM
- Kuwait vs Vanuatu, 6th Match, Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, 2:00 PM

ICC Cricket World Cup League Two 2023-2027

- Canada vs Scotland, 11th Match, Dubai Int. Cricket Stadium, Dubai, 10:00 AM
- England tour of India, 2024
- India vs England, 5th Test, Day 1, Himachal Pradesh Cricket Stad., Dharamsala, 9:30 AM

Friday March 8, 2024

- Australia tour of New Zealand, 2024
- New Zealand vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 1, Hagley Oval, Christchurch, 11:00 AM
- England tour of India, 2024
- India vs England, 5th Test, Day 2, Himachal Pradesh Cricket Stad., Dharamsala, 9:30 AM
- Papua New Guinea tour of Oman 2024
- Oman vs Papua New Guinea, 3rd T20I, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 11:00 AM

Saturday March 9, 2024

- Afghanistan v Ireland in UAE, 2024
- Afghanistan vs Ireland, 2nd ODI, Sharjah Cricket Stadium, Sharjah, 4:30 PM
- Malaysia Open T20I Championship, 2024
- Malaysia vs Kuwait, 7th Match, Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, 10:00 AM
- Bahrain vs Tanzania, 8th Match, Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, 2:00 PM

ICC Cricket World Cup League Two 2023-2027

- United Arab Emirates vs Scotland, 12th Match, Dubai Int. Cricket Stadium, 10:00 AM
- Australia tour of New Zealand, 2024
- New Zealand vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 2, Hagley Oval, Christchurch, 11:00 AM
- Sri Lanka tour of Bangladesh, 2024
- Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka, 3rd T20I, Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Sylhet, 3:00 PM
- England tour of India, 2024
- India vs England, 5th Test, Day 3, Himachal Pradesh Cricket Stad., Dharamsala, 9:30 AM

Sunday March 10, 2024

- Malaysia Open T20I Championship, 2024
- Bahrain vs Vanuatu, 9th Match, Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, 10:00 AM
- Malaysia vs Tanzania, 10th Match, Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, 2:00 PM

- Australia tour of New Zealand, 2024
- New Zealand vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 3, Hagley Oval, Christchurch, 11:00 AM
- England tour of India, 2024

- India vs England, 5th Test, Day 4, Himachal Pradesh Cricket Stad., Dharamsala, 9:30 AM

Monday March 11, 2024

- Scotland tour of United Arab Emirates 2024
- United Arab Emirates vs Scotland, 1st T20I, Dubai Int. Cricket Stadium, Dubai, 8:00 PM
- Australia tour of New Zealand, 2024
- New Zealand vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 4, Hagley Oval, Christchurch, 11:00 AM

Tuesday March 12, 2024

- Australia tour of New Zealand, 2024
- New Zealand vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 5, Hagley Oval, Christchurch, 11:00 AM
- Afghanistan vs Ireland in UAE, 2024
- Afghanistan vs Ireland, 3rd ODI, Sharjah Cricket Stadium, Sharjah, 4:30 PM.



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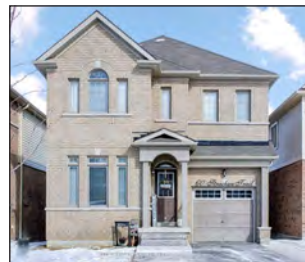
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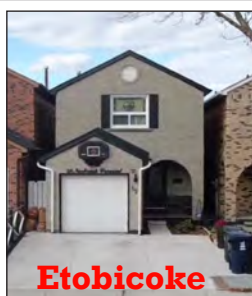
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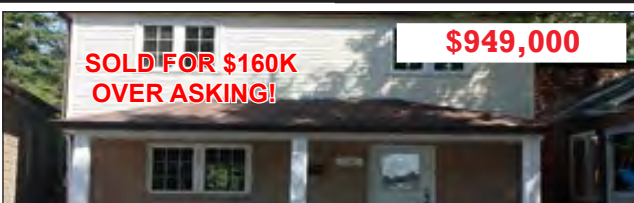
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