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INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

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Celebration of the Hindu festival of colour, Holi or Phagwah, began early last week with the sacred Holika ceremony, which is conducted by devotees gathered around a holy bonfire. The festival is a global one, where Hindu devotees mark the beginning of spring as an occasion for festivity & celebration. Phagwah is well-known for the singing of uplifting songs, or chowtals; & for its riot of bright & primary colours, which are tossed at participants on the day of the event. In photo (left) devotees at Vishnu Mandir in Toronto gather around the Holika fire last week at the start of Holi celebrations. Our special Phagwah coverage is inside on Pages 14 & 15.



M.M. Keeravaani (right) & Chandrabose with their Oscars, the duo taking the prize on March 12 for best original song, *Naatu Naatu*. It was an historic Oscar win for India, with Keeravani recognised for writing the music, & Chandrabose for penning the lyrics. *Naatu Naatu* is the first song from an Indian film, *RRR*, to win an Oscar in the best original song category. See story on Page 21

WHO issues stunning report on global salt intake

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – The World Health Organisation last week released a stunning report declaring that seven million people could die globally from diseases linked to excessive salt consumption before the end of the decade.

At the same time, WHO called on governments to quickly pass tighter restrictions on salt, for notifications on salt content to be more clearly indicated on food packaging, and for increased communication to heighten public awareness about the dangers to personal health from excessive salt consumption.

“Unhealthy diets are a leading cause of death and disease globally, and excessive sodium intake is one of the main culprits,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared in the report.

As the report also noted, the world is off-track to achieve its global target of reducing sodium intake by 30 percent by 2025.

“This report shows that most countries are yet to adopt any mandatory sodium reduction policies, leaving their people at risk of heart attack, stroke, and other health problems,” Ghebreyesus warned.

Also speaking to the report’s sobering message, Francesco Branca, Director of WHO’s Department of Nutrition for Health and Development, noted that excessive sodium intake remains the top risk factor in an unhealthy diet.

Consuming too much salt is one of the causes of cardiovascular disease, which kills an estimated 17.9 million people each year, according to WHO. It can also lead to strokes, which kill five million people each year globally, as well as it can trigger serious and fatal non-communicable disease conditions.

As Branca told the *Washington Post* last week, government intervention could save many lives with the introduction of mandatory limits on the quantity of salt added to processed foods. As he stated, processed foods notably account for the majority of sodium consumed in America, and elsewhere,

rather than what is sprinkled on food during home preparation.

“This is really something that doesn’t cost money to anybody. It’s a simple intervention, but it’s incredibly effective,” Branca told the *Washington Post*.

In its report, WHO revealed that the majority of the world’s population consumes about 10.8 grams of salt a day, a quantity more than double what is recommended by both WHO, and in the US by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The recommended quantity for daily consumption is around a teaspoon of salt a day.

As Harvard’s School of Public Health website notes, “The human body requires a small amount of sodium to conduct nerve impulses, contract and relax muscles, and maintain the proper balance of water and minerals.”

While the estimated requirement is about 500 mg of sodium daily for these vital functions, at the same time “too much sodium in the diet can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke”, the website states. It adds that excessive salt can also cause loss of calcium.

As Harvard notes, “In most people, the kidneys have trouble keeping up with excess sodium in the blood. As sodium accumulates, the body holds onto water to dilute the sodium. This increases both the amount of fluid surrounding cells, and the volume of blood in the bloodstream. Increased blood volume means more work for the heart, and more

pressure on blood vessels.”

Additionally, “Over time, the extra work and pressure can stiffen blood vessels, leading to high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke. It can also lead to heart failure. There is some evidence that too much salt can damage the heart, aorta, and kidneys without increasing blood pressure, and that it may be bad for bones, too.”

Here in Canada, it is estimated that about six out of ten Canadians consume too much sodium, Health Canada has said.

This statistic is notable in the light of a commitment by Canada in 2013, See Page 16: WHO report



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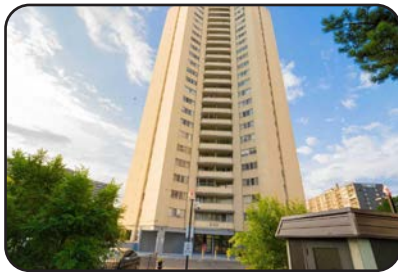
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Sections from photographic art by Jenny Baboolal: left, Bird Princess; & at right, Pierrot Grenades

Art of Mas exhibition at Rosedale United Church

A photographic exhibition celebrating Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival is now taking place in Toronto at the Rosedale United Church.

Titled *Art of Mas*, it features the inherent creativity of the Carnival artform, and is the work of photographer Jenny Baboolal.

As Baboolal notes of her photographic art, "Every Carnival involves a conglomerate of artists of various disciplines whose work come together in the different aspects of the celebrations. The photos capture the Children's Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago, which is similar to the adults' carnival in scope and types of costumes involved."

She adds, "The children wear their costumes with pride, and dance to the music in the company of family and friends. The result is an explosion of colour and creativity, resulting in ambrosia for the senses and magic for the soul."

Baboolal also states that the pace of the Carnival parade makes it difficult for viewers to closely examine the intricacies of the well-crafted costumes.

Consequently, she declares, "The exhibit allows the viewer

to get a close-up look at the masqueraders, and the intricacies and splendour of their costumes, so that contemplation of these elements can occur."



Carnival players, left to right, back row – Chris Wilson, Leida Englar, Alice Norton, Roger Gibbs, Brad Harley, & Tommy Graham; front, left to right – Christian Kwamie, Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, & Jenny Baboolal

Kiddies' Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. This is something she has done over years and years of successive visits for Carnival, and I don't think there is a dedicated collection quite like this anywhere else, even in Trinidad and Tobago itself."

Art of Mas is on at Rosedale United Church, 159 Roxborough Drive in Toronto until March 31. Call Cynthia McDonald at 416-924-0725, or email churchoffice@rosedaleunited.org.

Guest of honour at the launch was Trinidad and Tobago's Acting Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette.

Celebrating the artist as a "lovely and charming daughter of the soil", Ramsubagh-Mannette declared it was Baboolal's "trademark ...to give of herself, and use her talents to inspire and bring joy with her artistry, whether it's photography, film, or anything else she gets up to."

She added, "In this exhibit, [Baboolal] does just that by capturing the expressions of joy and exuberance of our littlest ones participating in

FFPC appoints Amitirigala as executive director

An organisation providing humanitarian aid and support for sustainable development in the Caribbean and Latin America, **Food For The Poor Canada**, recently announced the appointment of Arlene Amitirigala as its Executive Director.

Amitirigala's tenure with FFPC started on March 1. The announcement was made by the FFPC's Board.

"[We are] excited to welcome Arlene to our organisation," said Andre Bastian, Board Co-chair.

Bastian added, "[Amitirigala] ...has a passion for mission work, the experience to lead the organisation, and the drive to make impactful change for those living with food and housing insecurity in the Caribbean and Central America."

Guyana and Jamaica are among the Caribbean countries with an FFPC presence. As its website notes, the FFPC works in the remote, Indigenous village of Baramita to build homes and provide income-generating opportunities, a thrust that allows families to receive the tools needed to become self-sustainable.

To date, the FFPC has built a community centre powered by solar panels. The centre is used for learning and training purposes by students and community members, and is a distribution/shipping point for food. The FFPC has also built a library.

Currently in Jamaica, the FFPC is working to provide scholarships to students that open up the path for greater access

to education. It is also working to provide food to schools, churches, and local community groups.

A release from the FFPC noted that Amitirigala has held several senior roles in marketing and communication in both the private and public sectors across various industries. Among these industries are tourism, investment banking, and manufacturing.

Her career experience includes directing corporate communications for Diageo's West Latin America and Caribbean operations from Miami, Florida, and consulting with clients such as UNESCO, the Consulate of Jamaica at Toronto, and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Noting the "tremendous work" done by outgoing FFPC Founder and Executive Director, Samantha Mahfood, Board Co-chair Cherie Payne stated the organisation was "extremely excited to build on [Mahfood's] leadership" with Amitirigala at the helm. She added the FFPC was looking forward to "expanding our reach in Canada as well as in the Caribbean and Central America."

Said Amitirigala: "I am grateful for this opportunity to lead FFPC into a new era, and bring a strategic focus that will help extend our ability to create prosperous communities where children and their families can flourish."

Additionally, "I look forward to working with our many partners, donors and volunteers to build on our incredible legacy and anticipate welcoming many more to join with us."




Arlene Amitirigala

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Reducing salt intake could save seven million lives by 2030, WHO said last week

Salt intake puts world in a pinch

The world is off-track to achieve its global target of reducing sodium intake by 30 percent by 2025, a **World Health Organisation Global report** indicated last week.

While sodium is an essential nutrient, too much of it increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, and premature death.

The main source of sodium is table salt (sodium chloride), but it is also contained in other condiments such as sodium glutamate. The WHO report revealed that only five percent of WHO Member States are protected by mandatory and comprehensive sodium reduction policies, and 73 percent of WHO Member States lack full range of implementation of such policies.

Implementing highly cost-effective sodium reduction policies could save an estimated seven million lives globally by 2030. It is an important component of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target of reducing deaths from noncommunicable diseases.

At this time only nine countries – Brazil, Chile, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Uruguay, have a comprehensive package of recommended policies to reduce sodium intake.

“Unhealthy diets are a leading cause of death and disease globally, and excessive sodium intake is one of the main culprits,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

He added, “This report shows that most countries are yet to adopt any mandatory sodium reduction policies, leaving their people at risk of heart attack, stroke, and other health problems. WHO calls on all countries to implement the ‘Best Buys’ for sodium reduction, and on manufacturers to implement the WHO benchmarks for sodium content in food.”

A comprehensive approach to sodium reduction includes adopting mandatory policies and WHO’s four “best buy” interventions related with sodium, which greatly contribute to preventing noncommunicable diseases.

These interventions are, first, reformulating foods to contain less salt, and setting targets for the amount of sodium in foods and meals; second, establishing public food procurement policies to limit salt or sodium rich foods in public institutions such as hospitals, schools,

workplaces and nursing homes.

Third, front-of-package labelling that helps consumers select products lower in sodium; and, fourth, behaviour change communication and mass media campaigns to reduce salt/sodium consumption.

WHO is encouraging countries to establish sodium content targets for processed foods, in line with the WHO Global Sodium Benchmarks, and to enforce them though these policies.

Mandatory sodium reduction policies are more effective, as they achieve broader coverage and safeguard against commercial interests, while providing a level playing field for food manufacturers.

As part of the report, WHO developed a Sodium country score card for Member States based on the type and number of sodium reduction policies they have

in place.

“This important report demonstrates that countries must work urgently to implement ambitious, mandatory, government-led sodium reduction policies to meet the global target of reducing salt consumption by 2025,” said Dr Tom Frieden, President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives, a not-for-profit organisation working with countries to prevent 100 million deaths from cardiovascular disease over 30 years.

“There are proven measures that governments can implement and important innovations, such as low sodium salts. The world needs action, and now, or many more people will

experience disabling or deadly – but preventable – heart attacks and strokes.”

The global average salt intake is estimated to be 10.8 grams per day, more than double the WHO recommendation of less than five grams of salt per day (one teaspoon). Eating too much salt makes it the top risk factor for diet and nutrition-related deaths.

More evidence is emerging documenting links between high sodium intake and increased risk of other health conditions such as gastric cancer, obesity, osteoporosis, and kidney disease.

WHO issued the call on Member States to implement sodium intake reduction policies without delay, and to mitigate the harmful effects of excessive salt consumption. It also called on food manufacturers to set ambitious sodium reduction targets in their products.



Tedros Ghebreyesus



Tom Frieden

Paths open in trades for students

Toronto – As Ontario continues to face historic labour shortages, the government has started preparing young people for in-demand and well-paying careers by allowing students in Grade 11 to transition to a full-time, skilled trades apprenticeship program. Upon receiving their Certificate of Apprenticeship, they can then apply for their Ontario Secondary School Diploma as mature students, a move that opens the door to more students entering the trades faster.

“These changes provide students with exciting pathways to good-paying jobs and rewarding careers, and support our government’s ongoing work to attract more young people into the skilled trades,” said Premier Doug Ford.

He added, “Whether it’s enhancing trades education in our schools, breaking down barriers for newcomers or up-skilling workers, we’re leaving no stone unturned to train the skilled workforce that will build Ontario.”

In the construction sector alone, 72,000 new workers are needed by 2027 to fill open positions because of retirements and expected job growth. To help deliver the province’s infrastructure plans, including building 1.5 million homes by 2031, more people are needed in the skilled trades.

Said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development: “For far too long, parents and students have been told the only path to succeed in life is by going to university, which is simply not true. When you have a career in the skilled trades, you have a career for life. Our

government will continue to provide students with the tools they need to land well-paying and life-long careers.”

Additionally, the government will begin consultations in fall 2023 with employers, unions, education stakeholders, trainers, parents, and others about ways to make it even easier for young people to enter a career in the trades. This includes the potential of lowering entry requirements for some of the 106 skilled trades that currently require a grade 12-level education.

Commenting on the government’s move, Mark Lewis, Chief of Staff, Carpenters’ Regional Council, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, said: “The Carpenters applaud Premier Ford’s and Minister McNaughton’s leadership in working tirelessly to bring more young

Ontarians into good paying skilled trades jobs in the construction sector.”

According to an Ontario government release, there are nearly 285,000 jobs in Ontario going unfilled, with about one in five job openings in Ontario projected to be in the skilled trades by 2026. There are over 140 skilled trades in Ontario, with 1.2 million workers now employed. However, many of them are set to retire over the coming years.

Also, the Ministry of Education is working to recognise up to 30 credits required to earn the Ontario Secondary School Diploma for individuals with a Certificate of Apprenticeship or equivalent. It takes between two to five years to complete an apprenticeship.



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Extensive property damage in The Bahamas following the 2019 passage of Hurricane Dorian

Dire warning for The Bahamas with rising global temperatures

Nassau - The Bahamas faces the threat of intensified tropical cyclones, sea level rise, and declining freshwater resources if global temperatures exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius, the *Tribune* reported last week.

According to the publication out of The Bahamas, the warning came via a new climate change report, *Adapting to climate change challenging for The Bahamas if 1.5 (degrees) C limit crossed*.

It was released by the European Union's Horizon 2020 funded Provide project, and contains dire predictions for The Bahamas within the growing threat of climate change.

As the report noted, a key threat to The Bahamas if the global threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius is crossed is intensified tropical cyclones.

It also noted that wind speed and rainfall are projected to increase.

According to the report, "Projections of increased intensity of

tropical cyclones due to climate change are a major hazard for the country. Climate modelling of projected changes in tropical storms suggest that rainfall associated with tropical cyclones could increase by 20-30 percent, and that maximum wind speeds could increase by 2-11 percent."

Another hazard noted in the report is sea-level rise, which was notable since more than 80 percent of The Bahamas' land surface area is less than one metre above sea level.

The report described the sea level rise as an "existential threat" for coastal communities.

"Sea level rise projections for the Caribbean by 2100 relative to the 1980-1999 mean span a large range, from an increase of 0.13 metres to 1.45 metres," the report noted.

Changes in precipitation were also noted, with projections for The Bahamas indicating longer dry seasons and shorter wet seasons. The change in rainfall could also have a serious impact on the water sector, it stated.

T&T holds KHAW event

Port-of-Spain - The Trinidad and Tobago National Trust will host the *Keeping History Above Water Conference and Workshop* online and in person in Port-of-Spain from March 20-23.

It is free of charge, and will include activities that are part of the research into climate change and sea-level rise.

In a release last week, the Trust stated the conference is part of continuing activities funded by the US Embassy Port-of-Spain under the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation grant project, Resilient Heritage TT.

"Climate change and sea-level rise present an existential threat to the economic, social, and cultural resilience of island states. The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago is facilitating important research that will give administrators better data to understand the risks and devise effective mitigation strategies to face these threats," the release stated.

It added that the conference and workshop would be the first KHAW event to be hosted outside of the US.

"It will build on the successful series begun by the Newport Restoration Foundation in 2016. It is being jointly organised by the National Trust, alongside its project partners: the University of Florida Historic Preservation Program (UFHPP), and the Craig Group," the statement noted.

Additionally, "The conference will feature presentations by international cultural heritage specialists, government officials, adaptation professionals, planners and international climate change experts, who will examine the impacts and share best practices regarding climate change and sea-level rise in the Caribbean and beyond."

The National Trust said Resilient Heritage TT is a two-phase initiative aimed at advancing the resilience and long-term preservation of Trinidad and Tobago's historic sites and cultural resources as they are impacted by climate change.

The project includes digital documentation of two highly visible and visited heritage areas in downtown Port-of-Spain, and the Nelson Island Heritage Site. It also includes a vulnerability assessment involving engagement with stakeholders for outreach, data sharing, and knowledge transfer.

It hopes to serve as a model for documenting, assessing, and addressing the threats of climate change to other heritage sites across Trinidad and Tobago and in the wider Caribbean region.

For more information on the project, or the KHAW Conference, [click here to visit its website](#).

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Editorial

Our salt intake

It is important that we save the date, or more accurately, save the upcoming week of May 15-May 21, when World Salt Awareness Week will be observed. As its organisers note, this lifestyle awareness event targets the ongoing effort to get salt reduction onto the global agenda.

It is critically important that we save this week, and that we become part of the growing efforts to get salt reduction onto the global agenda, and more importantly, directly into our own lives.

As the World Salt Awareness Week organisers note, “Heart attacks and strokes are the biggest causes of death and disability globally, responsible for 17.9 million deaths annually. The strain this is having – not only on the individual and their families – but on healthcare systems, cannot be ignored.”

It adds, “Most cases are entirely preventable, and so it is vital we all take measures to improve our health and prevent these events from happening in the first place. It is a little-known fact that eating less salt is one of the quickest and most effective ways of improving our health.”

That World Salt Awareness Week should be on our agenda is also important in the light of the report issued last week by the World Health Organisation.

In what was a stunning revelation, WHO reported that the world is off-track to achieve its global target of reducing sodium intake by 30 percent by 2025. Also, that if policies to reduce sodium intake were to be implemented worldwide, then this could save an estimated seven million lives globally by 2030.

Or, stated another way, if sodium reduction policies are not put in place by national governments, then the global, and tragic outcome would mean an estimated seven million lives being lost by the end of this decade.

Said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO’s Director-General: “Unhealthy diets are a leading cause of death and disease globally, and excessive sodium intake is one of the main culprits. This report shows that most countries are yet to adopt any mandatory sodium reduction policies, leaving their people at risk of heart attack, stroke, and other health problems.”

In its report, WHO revealed that the majority of the world’s population consumes about 10.8 grams of salt each day, more than double the recommended quantity for daily consumption, which is around a teaspoon a day.

It is a similar picture for our homelands in the Caribbean, where according to the available data, consumption has been determined to average around 9-12 grams per day, which is also about twice above WHO’s recommended total quantity of a teaspoonful from all food sources.

And while WHO noted that sodium is an essential nutrient, it also added that too much of it increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, and premature death.

We are only too familiar with our main and traditional source of sodium, also known as table salt (sodium chloride), which is a fixture in kitchens and a permanent resident in shakers on our dinner tables.

However, like charity, salt reduction begins in the home; with the starting point being education.

As the science goes, we require small quantities of sodium for nerve impulses, for the contraction and relaxation of muscles, and to maintain a proper balance of water and minerals.

However, too-generous use of the salt shaker, or an immoderate consumption of salty processed foods, leads to excess sodium and water retention. Consequently, an increased fluid volume means the heart working harder, and pressure building up in the blood vessels. The result is high blood pressure, heart disease, and strokes.

Here in Canada, it is estimated that about six out of ten Canadians are consuming too much sodium, Health Canada has indicated.

It is also notable that our Caribbean homelands are dealing with the social, health, and economic fallout from Non-Communicable Diseases, among them diabetes, an illness which in most cases is exacerbated by over-consumption of sugar, fats, and too much salt.

This is why we should save the week come May 15-21.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
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Mental health crises need a renewed approach

“When you arrive at the airport, they welcome you to Canada. When you fall into depression or mental health crises, they call the police to take your life...”

Those were the words from Debbie Indal, a grieving mother, who lost her son two weeks before his 33rd birthday. Her words continue to resonate, and reveal an ongoing crisis we absolutely must address.

Indal’s son, Tareh Bobby Ramroop, arrived in Canada in 1993 at the age of three. He loved children, the elderly, and his community of Jane and Finch. He wanted to become a graphic designer.



Ryan Singh

In October 2022, Ramroop died after an interaction with Toronto Police. He fell from the 16th-floor unit of his apartment in the northwest part of Toronto.

Indal ended her silence on this incident, when in February 2023, the Special Investigations Unit released a statement that their director, Joseph Martino, found “no reasonable grounds” that a Toronto police officer committed a criminal offence in connection with Ramroop’s death.

This statement was delivered days after Toronto City Council adopted the budget, then proposed by former Mayor John Tory, which included a controversial increase to the police budget.

Still grieving for their loss, Ramroop’s loved ones renewed their call to abolish the police, and for reallocation of its resources to create new responses that de-escalate and communicate with people in crisis.

Ramroop’s family has insisted that he was unarmed. While suffering from depression, he had no intention of ending his life. Further, they shared they were not permitted to contact Ramroop during his altercation with the police.

Could different decisions have been made that day that would have prevented Ramroop’s death? Likely. Should Ramroop’s 911 call have seen a different response? Yes. Are newcomers severely under-served when receiving proper health care? Absolutely.

Toronto Police receive about 33,000 mental health calls a year, and with more than a billion dollar budget, they do not seem to have adequate resources to respond to mental health calls. Had there been the appropriate mental health professionals available and responsible for the response to Ramroop’s call, it is likely the situation would have been de-escalated appropriately. Ramroop would still be alive today.

A recent report indicated the Toronto Community Crisis Service received 549 calls from March 31 to June 18 last year. Most of the calls, about 461, came from 911 and 211. Mobile teams were dispatched 438 times; however, mental health centres say that they have the capacity to assist more often.

A renewed approach is needed to address calls from a person in a mental health crisis. Experiencing a mental health crisis should not be responded to as criminal activity, but someone in need of medical support. But this is only a start.

Indal’s words clearly capture the essence of the issue: there is a lack of appropriate, affordable mental health services for newcomers here. A sprinkling of programs and initiatives exists, but not enough.

Many newcomers have to adjust to the demands of a new home while working in precarious jobs, and have difficulty navigating the system. The burdens of moving here can bring a toll. When there is little information, or a lack of culturally appropriate support, the situation is only aggravated. These circumstances, and individual factors, undeniably impact on mental health.

Discussions on mental health are new for many immigrant households. The subject is taboo for many families. This presents another challenge in the effort to break the cycle.

We must consider a new approach to ensure everyone, not only newcomers, can easily access appropriate mental health services. This starts with establishing, and adequately funding, culturally appropriate services that are not daunting or intimidating; and which are easily accessible, and readily available.

All levels of government now place emphasis on mental health. The Ontario and federal governments have established standalone ministers responsible for mental health. An important component of their work must be to foster more direct mental health services for newcomers and ethnocultural communities, and these programs must be funded appropriately.

You can make the case that the government has a duty to ensure the absolute well-being of all citizens, including mental health. A rigorous process must be enforced so no one is left behind. To truly value the life of everyone, we must ensure that we address mental health with concrete, direct, and meaningful action.

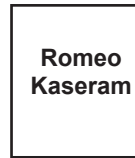
As a start, mental health support and response programs must appreciate the complexities of what it means to be a newcomer; also, it must understand the cultural dynamics within different communities, and it must do so in multiple languages.

Preventative measures are always a vital starting point for remedying a prolonged issue. Only when the right action is taken can true and meaningful change occur. The hope is we will see an end to tragic outcomes of lives being lost, and instead, see takeaways that enable reform on the path forward. However, as a start to providing adequate help to those in need, we must immediately reform how we respond to those facing mental health crises.

When a silent vendor of cakes & goodies came calling

The monotony of our days and lives during my early years back home was at times disrupted by vendors pushing handcarts, travelers with weather-beaten suitcases, or occasional cyclists clumsily pedaling cargo bicycles imbalanced with lopsided boxes and pots and pans knocking together from their hanging perch on the handle bars.

Then there was this older lady who especially attracted my curiosity for her silence. She arrived in our village on fortnight Friday afternoons, a few hours after the villagers had received their meagre wages from the sugar company.



Romeo Kaseram

On her head was balanced a wide, wooden tray cushioned underneath with a piece of cloth tightly rolled into a circle.

The top of the tray was covered with an immaculate, neatly-ironed, re-purposed white tablecloth, which in its lifetime had never sat on a table. Underneath this cloth was a smorgasbord of bulging, homemade breads with thick plaits far neater than my grandmother could make from her long, iron-grey tresses.

Also in the tray were shouldering triangles of pineapple tarts; and there was the perennial favourite currants’ rolls that were a crispy brown on the outside, and which caught the light, as much as the eye, with its translucent, layered interior, the rolls spilling out the goodness of sugar like miniature cornucopias.

And to distribute the weight of the tray evenly on its corners, depending on the “bearing season” at the time, were preserves sealed in small glass jars: either candied guavas and cherries; or mangoes picked, pickled, and peppery.

I recall our vendor of baked goods and pastries well for her reticence, which seemed to be almost a vow of silence.

At first I took this to mean she was conserving energy due to her great age, which was noticeable in the wrinkles that had lapped, and then overlapped each other, in the last leg of her race to the old-age finish line.

I also wondered whether her longevity was such that it was now running alongside her fortnight Friday afternoon visiting routine of so many decades. That perhaps age and routine had merged into the collective memory of our village, so that her decades of familiarity and that iconic wooden tray were now the sum total of who and what defined her fortnightly appearance.

After I discovered she was nameless, curiosity drove me to

the font that was my grandmother’s great depth of knowledge. “What is this lady’s name?”

My grandmother’s response was bewilderment, and then a splutter. In what was becoming characteristic of her deeper inward searches as her memory began failing, she did so with a hiatus and eyes rolled back and looking upwards.

Her first response was, “Child, don’t bother me at this time of day. How do you expect me to know this lady’s name?”

“Well, how do you call her back if she has passed the house, and you decide to buy a currants’ roll for me?”

Perhaps what was also driving my curiosity was self-interest. My grandmother replied, “We call her ‘Cake Lady’; or ‘Bread Lady’; or ‘Pie Lady’.”

Looking back now, it occurs that the relationship between ‘Cake Lady’ and her customers was a functional one. That the name she was called was itself an indicator of what was needed by the buyer from the assortment of goodies in her tray.

It was such that we had a fluid naming convention, one that fashioned a new name whenever a household requirement emerged. Thus, my mother, standing at the top of our front stairs wiping sudsy hands on the side of her skirt, and calling out “Bread Lady! Bread Lady!” to catch her attention, also simultaneously conveyed to the street our household’s dinner plans.

For us children running around her ankle-length skirt, ‘Pie Lady’ could only look at us by rolling both eyes downwards on its gyroscopes, since maintaining the stability and level orientation of the wooden tray on her head required a straight back and an erect head. And apparently, a stiff upper lip.

We called out to her playfully, sing-song as we circled her skirt like so many hopeful little vultures, chanting, “Currants’ Roll Lady! Pine Tart Lady! Give us a pie, please!”

She did not speak even when under threat from our multitude, but shooed us away from around her legs with flailing, dismissive, and particularly articulate arms, her annoyance at our harassment quite evident and unwholesomely translatable.

“Go away and stop harassing me, you little brats! You want to trip me and make me drop my precious tray? Look, pelt your little tails away from here!”

Records evidence CM's proselytising intent in Guyana

Dear Editor,

I write regarding Dr Devanand Bhagwan's letter, headlined 'The Canadian Mission established schools to lift lives stuck in the dark and miry clay', which was published in *Stabroek News* on March 6, a response to my letter to *Stabroek News* that appeared on February 22, headlined 'Three outstanding Afro-Guyanese of Eastern Mahaicony'.

My intention, as my letter's headline reflects, was to highlight and recognise the contributions of three outstanding Afro-Guyanese whose stories should be recorded. Certainly the letter was not intended to undervalue or denigrate the contribution of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, through its Canadian Mission arm, to the education of Indian children in Guyana during the colonial period.

Dr Bhagwan is a former student of mine from the mid-1960s, when I taught Biology at the Annandale Government Secondary School. I understand his commitment to the Christian religion, and his zeal in defending and spreading it.

Regrettably, he has misconstrued my reference to India when he writes "Mr Hergash (my respected former high school teacher) explained that his father was educated by the Presbyterian Canadian Mission School and surmised that, 'The CM focused on the education of East Indian children, mainly Hindus and to a lesser degree Muslims, with the aim of gaining converts to Christianity'". He then continues, "I beg to disagree with Harry on this point – especially regarding his reference to the situation in India".

I thank Dr Bhagwan for considering me his "respected former high school teacher". Since his letter is now in the public domain, much to my dislike, I am compelled to set the record straight. Readers of my letter will note that I made no reference to "the situation" in India. My focus was on the CM in Guyana. In my letter of 1,475 words to recognise three outstanding individuals, Dr Bhagwan finds fault with one sentence of 26 words: "The CM focused on the education of East Indian children, mainly Hindus and to a lesser degree Muslims, with the aim of gaining converts to Christianity", and this sentence was taken out of context to provide him a segue to write about India. We need to be mindful, though, that Guyana is not India.

I have no interest at this time to discuss what has happened, or is happening in India. Regarding Guyana, I fully acknowledge and appreciate the role of the CM, especially in relation to their contribution to Indian education. Indeed Indo-Guyanese must be grateful to the CM for the education they or their parents received in the CM schools.

However, we must also be honest and open-minded in recognising the truth. We should rely on facts, and not allow religion, or any other factor, to cloud our judgement in making our assessment of history.

Some may wonder, 'Why bother to write on this matter?' I believe that knowledge of the historical evolution of a people's culture (of which religion is a significant component) is important to promote understanding and harmony in the multicultural, multiracial environment of Guyana.

In the case of Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, the historical records, as noted by eminent historians, support my position. It is not a case of me surmising.

In 1880 Reverend John Morton, who was heading the CM body in Trinidad, came to Guyana at the invitation of the Scottish Presbyterian Church to review and offer advice on how the Church could bring the Indentured Indians into their fold, since for nearing 50 years of Indian Indentureship they were unable to gain more than a handful of converts.

He then recommended to the Canadian Presbyterian Church that they establish a CM body in Guyana, which they agreed to do, and then commenced implementation. In an Internet article of December 2020, 'Nova Scotia missionaries left a lasting legacy on the island of Trinidad', Vernon Ramesar of *CBC News* writes, "From the outset, Morton saw education as essential to his mission, according to Brinsley Samaroo, professor emeritus of history at the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine".

And as Samaroo noted, "...Morton was more concerned about evangelisation, he used education as a tool towards that".

One of the foremost authorities on the role of the CM in Guyana is the Canadian Reverend, Dr Charles Alexander Dunn. He completed both his master's degree and PhD theses



John & Sarah Morton. Photo The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives

CM touched lives on the periphery

Dear Editor,

I appreciated Harry Hergash's sharing the episodes of long-ago life in Eastern Mahaicony and his highlights of some extraordinary African lives in his native village that was published in *Stabroek News* on February 22. I echo the sentiments of several bloggers who felt that such narratives should be preserved for posterity.

Hergash (my respected former high school teacher), explained that his father was educated by the Presbyterian Canadian Mission School, and surmised that, "The CM focused on the education of East Indian children, mainly Hindus and to a lesser degree Muslims, with the aim of gaining converts to Christianity".

I beg to disagree on this point – especially regarding his reference to the situation in India. The CM and other Christian outfits in and out of India did not establish schools to "gain converts"; instead, they aimed to educate folks on the periphery, and those who were marginalised because of their educational, economic, or social status. They wanted to touch lives and lift the feet of those that were stuck in the dark and miry clay.

Why did Christians establish schools and hospitals in India? Why did the British fight against traditions such as 'Sati' (the act or custom of a Hindu widow burning herself to death, or being burned to death on her husband's funeral pyre)? Who spearheaded work in the leprosy mission and dared to touch and clean the lepers? And what about the Blind Schools in India? Were all these institutions

established "to gain converts"?

No! The objective was motivated by holistic love to meet people's needs – as much as possible. I have met several persons in Guyana (Christians and Hindus) who narrated stories of how the CM played an essential part in their lives to educate them and respect and appreciate their ancestral language (Hindi), music, and culture.

The CM apprised Hergash Senior, but he never changed his faith, and was never pressured to become a Christian (as far as I know). Ditto for thousands of other East Indians in the country.



Cropper Primary School, Albion

(I attended the New Market Anglican School in No. 63 Village in the Corentyne. There was no pressure from anyone for me, or other Hindu students to change our faith).

I visited the Cropper Primary School in Albion in Guyana a few years ago. I was dismayed that none of the residents or children I encountered in that neighbourhood had any notion of who 'Cropper' was. I feel that there ought to be a statue of Reverend James Cropper at that school, whereby students and others could be educated about the critical role that men, and others like him, had played in uplifting the lives of Indians in British Guiana.

The Indian people of Guyana ought to be grateful for the CM's enormous contributions to their dignity, upliftment, and progress – especially in the areas of education, language, music, and culture.

Dr Devanand Bhagwan, via email.

for Queen's University, Ontario, Canada, on the CM in Guyana.

Incidentally, his father was a CM Minister in Berbice during the 1930s and 1940s. According to Dunn, who I had the pleasure of speaking with for copies of his theses, in Morton's recommendation to the Canadian Presbyterian Church for a mission in Guyana, he states, "The Canadian church should push on to do something for the 60,000 to 70,000 Heathens there".

Dunn also writes that through education, the missionaries and the Bible workers were able to evangelise the Hindu children, who had the potential of influencing their parents.

In fact, that was the primary aim of Reverend James Cropper, who headed the CM in Guyana from 1896 to 1940, with intermittent work from time to time on behalf of the government. Dunn writes that at times Cropper disagreed with some of his Canadian Missionaries, who were more committed to education than conversion.

Dr Bhagwan states that there was no pressure on children to convert. Well, the reason for no overt attempt is understandable. Coercion would have caused parents to cease sending their

children to school, thereby defeating any chance to convert the children much less their parents.

However, the Hindi primer authored by Reverend Morton for the teaching of Hindi in the CM schools in Trinidad shows evidence of covert action. I read the primer many years ago at the Presbyterian archive in Toronto, and I can recall sentences written in the Devanagari script that admonishes against certain Hindu religious practices. This book was likely used in Guyana as well.

However, what is more definitive is that up to 1960 in Guyana, a Hindu or Muslim had to convert to Christianity in order to get a teaching position in all Christian-managed schools, including the CM schools.

In relation to CM involvement with hospitals in Guyana, the following extract from an article headlined, 'Christianising of East Indians of Guyana' by Clifmond Shameerudeen, *Journal of Mission Studies*, Vol 16, 2020 is informative.

It states, "In the 1900s, more missionaries were sent to work among the East Indians. Ross, a new missionary who arrived in 1900, recognised his dilemma when he stated, 'Hinduism in the books is one thing; Hinduism in life is quite another'". (*The Presbyterian Witness*, August 25, 1900).

The sentiment of Ross seems to categorically summarise the challenges faced by foreign missionaries.

Ross continued where his predecessor left off. He recognised that the hospital was the best place to witness to East Indians.

He wrote, "There the seed of the word very often finds good ground and bears an abundant harvest for eternity" (*The Presbyterian Witness*, August 25, 1900).

In 2013 during my visit to Albion estate, where I was on the staff in 1970 and lived in the Senior staff compound, I visited the Cropper Government School nearby, and had a similar experience to Dr Bhagwan's – no one knew who Cropper was.

I agree he should be recognised for all his years of yeoman service in positions from Head of the CM, to Superintendent of the Settlements at Helena and Whim, to Head of the Department of Education, and again as Head of the CM, service spanning more than 40 years.

Incidentally, Reverend Cropper was a friend of my dad's maternal grandfather, and often stopped by at Huntley to chat whenever he visited Novar CM school. He did try, but was unsuccessful to convert not only my dad, but decades earlier, my dad's mom, whom he gave the 'call name' Lucy, as she was very fair in complexion.

Dr Bhagwan is no longer my student, so I cannot assign him homework. However, he and others who are interested may find the under-mentioned sources very informative: Charles Alexander Dunn, master's thesis of 1971, *The Canadian Mission in Guyana*; Rudolph Grant, master's thesis of 1967, *The Contribution of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the Education of East Indians in Guyana*; and, Clifmond Shameerudeen, *Christianising of East Indians of Guyana*, *Journal of Mission Studies*, Vol 16, 2020.

Harry Hergash, via email, Toronto

T&T nationals in crime fight together with newly-elected CoP

Dear Editor,

Newly-elected Commissioner of Police Erla Harewood-Christopher should be commended for her bold assertion that under her watch the murder rate will achieve a reduction beginning in June and will continue its downward trajectory over the long haul.

However, her stated strategies of policing and prosecution have been tried unsuccessfully before. Therefore, police force is not the answer, as former CoP Gary Griffith's "one shot, one kill" policy proved.

Yes, we are on a war footing, with murders, home invasions, violence, and robberies taking centre stage. But this war on crime that we were promised has been tried before in other jurisdictions with limited, short-term successes.

Many believe it all stems from the war on drugs, which has been ongoing for decades. Nevertheless, despite the billions spent, the drug trade and its accompanying crimes, such as human trafficking and prostitution, continue to flourish. And as fast as drug lords are arrested or killed off, others take their place.



Erla Harewood-Christopher

Instead of police and military squads going into homes and neighbourhoods fully-armed, guns blazing, bringing down fire and brimstone on hot spots, and killing innocent civilians in the crossfire (these lives lost cannot

simply be brushed off as casualties of war and written off as collateral damage), we need to adopt a different approach.

The *Washington Post* states, "Parents, not police, are the key to the drug crisis. Yet today drug and crime policies focus on the wrong institution of social control (the government), treat an inappropriate age category (adults), falsely assume specialisation of offenders, falsely assume a causal connection between drug use and criminal acts, and mis-perceive the motives of offenders. As long as this continues, no amount of taxpayer's money will win the war on crime."

So how do we fix this existential crime problem, where people are so frustrated with their lives that they resort to illegal means of earning a living? We can start by admitting that it is not just an inner-city issue, but a nationwide crisis. Everyone must take responsibility for what is happening; we cannot just continue to blame the police.

Utilising our significant resources from oil and gas revenues, we must provide meaningful

and fulfilling employment to all people, where they can take pride in who they are and what they do.

It all begins with providing training for our young people, starting at the school level, for jobs in the real world, so they can go directly from school to a job that will allow them to enjoy life and the fruits of honest labour.

Since not everyone is cut out to be scholastically inclined, even those who did not graduate from school can be taught trades where they will enjoy the thrill of bringing home a good pay check that will provide the essentials for an enjoyable existence, which they can be proud of – for that is what keeps families together and crime at a minimum.

We can begin by assigning a national social security number and ID Card at birth, which will be entered into a database, and teach them civic responsibility, which will instil in them pride in their nationality, and the right to vote once they come of age.

Moreover, all births automatically give babies born here inalienable rights.

No, this is not just Erla's war; this is our war, yours and mine, for we are all vulnerable to the overarching effects of crime. Yes, whoever you are – average citizen, lawyer, doctor, taxi driver, farmer, journalist, bricklayer, *et al* – if you have done nothing to alleviate the crime paradigm, then you are part of the problem.

Every citizen's civic responsibility is to stop this madness that has engulfed this nation. We each must do our part by being good citizens and good neighbours.

However, it all begins with the politicians. In this land of undeniable wealth and resources, no one should ever go hungry or lack necessities and a place to call home.

Rex Chookolingo, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

'Celestial' PoS can only be enhanced by the PNM govt

Dear Editor,

As much as I don't subscribe to the People's National Movement, its plans for the revitalisation of Port-of-Spain are outstanding and long overdue.

Port-of-Spain is celestially beautiful. It has the potential to really be a First World capital city. I am not saying it should have skyscrapers and train lines like New York City or Tokyo, but being a city where it truly shows the best of Trinidad and Tobago, from the Christopher Columbus statue in the East to the emancipation monument outside the Treasury building in the West.

We have a long way to go though; there are not many countries in the world where there is a dump just outside the capital city. Then there is the ghetto-areas like Beetham, Sea Lots, and East Port of Spain, where PNM voter banks reside.

If the residents are not paying their arrears, they have got to go. That goes for those who

vote PNM as well. The commercial space they occupy has so much value that the accommodation can be improved to be decent, aesthetically pleasing structures, even for the people who live there now.

In fact, give those residents work to earn money and pay their mortgages and rents. How about work in the same capital?

UNC supporters want nothing from this, and the UNC cannot go there and try throwing anybody out.

A security presence such as during the recent Carnival event, and like the unit that went to oversee the recent evictions in Port-of-Spain, would do wonders for the crime situation. Not a dog will bark, inclusive of people squealing, "Allyuh too wicked".

Let us not ignore flood and drainage relief. Port-of-Spain needs a box drain framework to lift itself from the lagoon and sewer city status. The PNM could ask Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar for help.

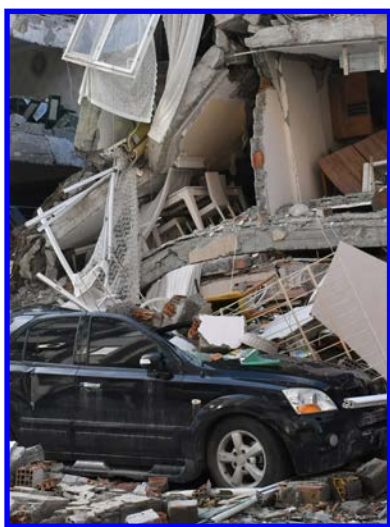
T&T must prepare for earthquakes

Dear Editor,

As much as we are bombarded by the negative news (which seems to be a key driver for media consumption), we should be just as balanced in our sharing of the positive.

In this instance, while my heart goes out to the people of Turkey who have recently experienced a catastrophe that will have a lasting effect on the lives of thousands, I find fear-mongering by the local media to be nothing short of reprehensible, and even more so, lacking in merit.

Earthquakes are not a man-made occurrence. They are not events that can be predicted, and are unavoidable. What we can do, though, is try our best to prepare ourselves for one, to avoid becoming victims.



Earthquake damage in Turkey

an earthquake.

Though we all might join in chorus to ask where are they during floods (I understand now they are not first responders), we would do well to remember that the ODPM is not limited to one type of disaster.

With that in mind, I was heartened to see the measures that Trinidad and Tobago has in place to deal with the effects of earthquakes, and I am at ease knowing that there is some national foresight on managing such a potentially devastating event.

It is encouraging to learn about what has been going on "behind the scenes".

Now, even though the government is working on their plans, we must do the same. There is much information available to help us prepare for disasters. As the saying goes, "knowledge is power".

Let us properly inform ourselves, so we can do our part to prepare. Let us get involved in community response teams and volunteer groups.

While we sympathise with the misfortune of others and are sending aid, let us not forget to learn from those events so we can cope were this to happen to us.

Stephan Grant, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

There is a golden goose in the form of the Beetham wastewater treatment plant. This is not the refinery, and can have an engineering resurrection – jobs for the people and a clean city too.

I do not know what Port-of-Spain's Mayor Joel Martinez is doing except for laying new pavements on Ariapita Avenue. The capital should have the best roads, best street lights, ecocentric taxi stands, and vending, and vagrant-free public spaces.

Only PNM can do that.
Kendall Karan, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

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Minister Vickram Bharrat addressing the diaspora in Toronto last week

Wanted: Diaspora's input in Guyana

Toronto – The Guyanese diaspora in Canada was once again urged by a visiting official from the Guyana government to return and serve the homeland. And as the visiting Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat further declared, Guyana is now primed for investment, even as he articulated the need for “all hands [to be] on deck to develop our country”.

Vickram, along with Minister of Home Affairs Robeson Benn, were in Toronto last week. Both ministers were here to attend the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada's annual three-day convention, which was held at the Metro Convention Centre in Toronto.

Later, both ministers were guests at a meet-and-greet event, which was hosted by the Guyana Consulate in Toronto on March 8. Also among the guests at the Consulate were Canada's High Commissioner to Guyana Mark Berman, and Guyana's High Commissioner to Canada Keith George.

During his address, Bharrat informed the audience that Guyana's gas-to-energy project had started, which after completion, would significantly reduce the cost of power generation and supply reliability.

Said Bharrat: “Right now, we are generating at nearly the highest rate in the hemisphere, at 30 cents (US) per kilowatt, when countries are generating at less than 10 cents (US), so it makes us a destination that is not attractive in terms of cheap power.”

He added, “This is not a dream. This is a plan we have, and this is a project that has already started. We have already awarded the contract to a US company that will build the power station at Wales, and we have already awarded the contract to a company from India to overlook the project on our behalf.”

Bharrat revealed that this project will reduce electricity cost in Guyana by as much as 50 percent by early 2025.

“It will also ensure we have reliable electricity, and it will have cleaner energy, and cut emissions even further,” he said.

Bharrat also spoke to Guyana's contemporary economic position in the starting blocks. “We came from nothing to 2022 as the fastest growing economy in the world, when the entire world is battling from the effects of the war in Ukraine, and the economic impact of Covid-19, in terms of shortage and shipping issues,” he said.

According to Bharrat, Guyana recorded a 62.5 percent growth rate last year, a result of the hard work by the government, technical officers, and “every single Guyanese in and out of Guyana who participated”.

He added, “What we are particularly pleased about is that we had the second highest growth rate for non-oil producing countries, which was 11.5 percent, so it is not only about oil and

gas, but for non-oil economies.

However, Bharrat revealed that the government was moving forward with caution.

“What we have to do now, as a responsible government, and what our policies and programmes are geared toward, is ensuring that this growth rate is translated to working towards development throughout the entire country,” he stated.

And it was a growth that was not confined to only Georgetown or Region Four, but throughout the length and breadth of Guyana, he declared.

Said Bharrat: “We have to ensure that we decentralise and spread economic activities throughout the entire country. You can go through every region, and point to development and progress that would benefit our people throughout the entire country.”

And in his message targeting the diaspora, Bharrat said: “We need all hands on deck to develop our country, hence the reason for meeting with you. The avenue to get back to Guyana is through investment, and the time is right for that. Those of you who haven't been in Guyana for a while will be astonished at the development that is taking place.”

Meanwhile, Benn sought to allay the diaspora's concern and fears over crime in Guyana.

According to Benn, statistics over the last two years indicate serious crimes have been reduced by 20 percent. Also, road deaths have also decreased, but issues remain with domestic violence, and drinking and driving.

Benn added, “Our young people are reckless in many instances, and need to find better ways in using up their energies to work with our Police Force.”

Speaking to Guyana's police, Benn revealed that it was in the process of launching, ‘Increasing the Peace in Guyana’, a campaign that involves “changing the way” engagement occurs with the public.

Said Benn: “We have to change the mindset and the culture, and that is why we had engagement with the Chief of Police of Toronto, talking about cooperation, exchanges, and looking at the new Police Academy.”

Benn added there was also need for diversification, while highlighting plans for the prisons to be moved from Georgetown and New Amsterdam to a central location at Lusignan.

At the same time, he spoke to the construction of schools for prisoners for vocational training in areas as agriculture and carpentry. Experts in psychology and psychiatry will also be employed, he revealed.

And there are plans in the works for Guyana Fire, which he said will be rebranded Fire and Rescue Service. New training techniques will be developed, and several old fire hydrants will be replaced, he revealed.



Members of the Guyanese diaspora at the Toronto Consulate last week



A member of the audience speaks to the visiting ministers; looking on at left is the Consulate's Nutana Singh, Executive Assistant to the Consul General



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No Covid-19 surge expected, hospitalisations & deaths stable

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Ottawa – Canada marked the third anniversary last week since WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared Covid-19 to be a pandemic.

Now after the third year of the coronavirus' global march, and despite the persistent presence of the highly contagious Omicron variant in Canada, federal health officials have said that Covid-19 is not expected to surge in the coming months, and have noted that hospitalisations and deaths are stable at this time.

According to a government release from Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr Theresa Tam, following the 2020 announcement of the pandemic by Ghebreyesus, as of last week Canada had reached a point where coronavirus activity was at a "relatively steady state".

As Tam noted, "Reflecting back on these years, we are reminded of the challenges and sacrifices we've endured, including grieving so many lives lost due to and during Covid-19 under difficult circumstances. With a view forward, we are now taking stock of where we are today, including assessing the patterns and ongoing impact of Covid-19 on our population and health systems."

She added, "The many actions we took together had an important impact in slowing spread and reducing severe outcomes of Covid-19. Modelling data have indicated that Canada's experience with Covid-19 could have been much worse."

However, as Tam stated, Covid-19 still had an enormous impact from 2020-2023.

"Since January 2020, when the first cases were reported in Canada, we have experienced multiple waves of Covid-19 – resulting in millions of cases leading to over 51,000 deaths to date," Tam stated.



Theresa Tam

She also noted that the scale and duration of "this unprecedented health event" catalysed a whole-of-society response, which tested Canada's resilience and fortitude.

Said Tam: "We are now at the point in Canada where Covid-19 activity has reached a relatively steady state."

Additionally, Tam noted that there have been no distinct variant-driven waves in recent months, such as the well-defined Alpha, Delta, and initial Omicron waves that were seen previously.

Likewise, she also noted that over the past six to eight months, "Covid-19 hospitalisations have been relatively stable despite the ongoing spread of Omicron subvariants. ICU admissions and deaths have also stabilised."

Tam also revealed that population immunity, which were estimated using regular antibody studies, is "currently high and relatively stable".

She added, "This level of immunity is also approaching a steady state, due to the combined effect of our overall high vac-



Tedros Ghebreyesus

cine uptake and infection-acquired immunity. However, as population immunity levels fluctuate, disease activity may also vary."

And as Tam noted, while uncertainty remains over the seasonal patterns for Covid-19, the current trend suggests Canada "may not see any major waves in the coming months as we prepare for a potential fall and winter surge".

Said Tam: "Together with international partners we will also continue to monitor the situation closely – and specifically watch for the emergence of significantly immune-evasive strains."

Speaking to her statement, "a steady state", Tam said it did not mean that Covid-19 would not have serious immediate and lingering impacts.

"Covid-19 hospitalisations remain at relatively steady levels, but continue to have a significant impact on our health care systems. Likewise, there is a continued disproportionate impact on older and immuno-compromised populations," she said.

In addition, "We also know that Covid-19 infection can affect chronic disease rates, and that Post-Covid-19 condition – or PCC, also known as long Covid – is also a significant public health challenge..."

In order to address these challenges, Tam stated it will be important to remain vigilant and employ prudent, risk-based use of prevention measures "as we continue to learn about longer-term impacts, and optimal vaccine strategies and treatments".

Moving forward, Tam said the expectation was ongoing circulation of the Covid-19 virus.

However, "with the availability of effective preventive measures and treatments, we will be able to manage Covid-19 in a more sustainable manner," she said.

Tech requirement prepares Ontario students for job market

Mississauga – A new high school graduation requirement to help better prepare students for future employment has been implemented by the government of Ontario.

Starting September 2024, students entering Grade 9 will be required to earn a Grade 9 or 10 Technological Education credit as part of their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. The requirement is to better equip them for the jobs of tomorrow, the provincial government said in a release last week.

"I am proud to announce another step forward to ensure all students learn the critical skills necessary to succeed and get a good paying job," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education.

As he noted, "By requiring students to take at least one Technological Education credit in high school, we are opening up doors and creating new pathways to good jobs in STEM and the skilled trades.

All students will benefit from a greater emphasis on hands-on learning experiences and technical skills in the classroom so they can graduate with a competitive advantage in this country."

This new learning graduation requirement will expose Ontario's students to at least one Technological Education course that could guide them to a future career in the highly skilled workforce, including the skilled trades.

With more than 100,000 unfilled skilled trades jobs right now, it is critical Ontario attracts more young people to pursue a fulfilling, good-paying career in the trades.

"The General Contractors' Association of Toronto strongly supports revitalising the graduation requirement for each student to complete a tech-ed high school credit. The skilled trades offer in-demand, lucrative and rewarding careers, and we believe the mandatory credit will expose students to opportunities they would not have known of otherwise," said Jim Vlahos, Executive Director, General Contractors' Association of Toronto.

Vlahos added, "GCAT applauds the work this government continues to do to address our labour shortage while promoting careers in construction, including the skilled trades, and to provide a healthy perception of the construction industry to help make an informed career decision."

The Technological Education curriculum covers a broad



Harsehaj Dhani

range of sectors, including construction, transportation, manufacturing, computer technology, hospitality and communication.

In Ontario, men make up more than 70 percent of workers in trades-related occupations. The exposure to these career pathways as a mandatory graduation curriculum requirement will ensure more young women make the choice to pursue a career in the trades.

While almost 39 percent of Ontario secondary school students were enrolled in a Technological Education course in 2020-2021, nearly 63 percent were male students.

With this graduation requirement, more young women will have an opportunity to explore the trades. This new requirement means a student may be introduced to programming learning in Grade 9, explore the apprenticeship pathway further, and may ultimately decide to become an Aerospace Manufacturing Technician.

Said the founder of Codespire, Harsehaj Dhani: "There aren't enough skilled workers in Ontario, but attracting more women to these jobs will go a long way. With the growing demand for jobs in STEM and Skilled Trades, I applaud the government of Ontario for requiring high school students to take at least one technological education credit before graduation."

Dhani added, "The exposure to these courses will give



Monte McNaughton

she said.

Additionally, "This mandatory graduation requirement means a brighter future – not just for Women and Girls – but for our entire province."

This new graduation requirement builds upon other actions taken by the government to bolster its Skilled Trades Strategy, including developing an accelerated Grade 11 to apprenticeship pathway for students to get into the skilled trades faster.

"Ontario is facing the largest labour shortage in a generation, which means when you have a career in the skilled trades, you have a career for life," said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

He added, "That's why our government is taking an all-hands-on deck approach to attract and train our next generation of skilled trades workers for better jobs and bigger paycheques for themselves and their families."

This action supports the next steps in Ontario's Plan to Catch Up, and ensures students have exposure and access to learning opportunities to consider STEM fields, including in the skilled trades, as a future career.

Since 2020, Ontario has invested nearly \$1 billion to make it easier to learn a trade, breaking the stigma, attracting youth, simplifying the system, and encouraging employer participation.

women a greater opportunity to explore these career paths. Tech is the future, and it is high time we ensure that all of Ontario's youth – regardless of race, gender or social class – are given the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the jobs of tomorrow. That is exactly what I aspire to do with Codespire: inspire and educate under-represented young people by unlocking the advantages of digital literacy."

Charmaine Williams, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, also noted that for Ontario to succeed, more women and girls are needed to pursue fulfilling careers in the skilled trades.

"I am proud our government is taking action to ensure students across our province have the tools and skills they need to build a new generation of prosperity in Ontario,"

Vaishnavi Panwar continues the Kathak tradition & takes it up a notch

A culturally significant concert *Parampara – Traditions Continued* took place on March 5 at the Assembly Hall in Toronto under the youth leadership of Vaishnavi Panwar. It was a wonderful traditional Kathak recital involving youth dancers, Samarpita Biswas, Ameeya Bandoo, Shalvi Thakkar, and Priyanjana Roy Choudhry, along with youth musicians, Vedant Panwar, Neil Budnarain, Vishnu Kandanchatha, and Salisha Purushuttam.

Vaishnavi is the daughter and student of Guru Shri Hemant Panwar and Smt Vaishali Panwar, and has been learning from her parents/Gurus for over 17 years. She is also the 11th generation of Kathak dancers of Jaipur Gharana in her family.

The reason behind the presentation of this show was to display the importance of live accompaniment for Kathak dancers.

Parampara is such a vital concept in Indian Classical artforms, as the action of “passing on” is what has kept these historic art forms alive to this day.

Jaipur Gharana is the oldest style of Kathak, and being able to present the traditional compositions is an honour in itself, and many of the compositions presented in the show are those passed down generation to generation. *Traditions Continued* is the act of passing down the historic compositions, as well as integrating newer creations to adapt to the creativity of each generation of Gurus/Teachers, as well as emerging Kathak practitioners.

Parampara was a clear depiction of what it meant to be connected to your culture, as it featured youth artists from our Indian and Caribbean community. Through this project, funded and supported by ArtReach and the Toronto Arts Council, Vaishnavi has tried to provide the opportunity of understanding and performing with live musicians to the youths of our com-

munity.

This tradition of performing live is an extremely important part of any Kathak dancer’s professional development. Jaipur Gharana has been an integral part of the preservation of Indian culture as it hosts a variety of pieces that encompasses the past and those who came before.

This show was a presentation of primarily Kathak technique, which shows the intricacies and complexities of the art form, equipped with complicated footwork, fast spins, and a variety of historic compositions.

The start of this project occurred in September of 2022, as it takes time to properly understand how to perform with live music, since it requires a lot of focus.

Some famous dance pieces that highlighted the flavours of the desert land of Rajasthan, performed at the show were, Rangeela Shambhu, a 400-year-old composition, which is an extremely popular and renowned invocational dance of this gharana (style) of Kathak, a beautiful expressional piece describing the devotion of Meera Bai from Rajasthan, and the iconic Kesariya Baalam, describing Rajasthani folklore of a woman awaiting the arrival of her beloved.

Vaishnavi aspires to continue to conceptualise and execute such projects, and thanks her Gurus for being the reason behind her passion, motivation, and purpose.

Parampara, a show that encapsulated the essence of Kathak of Jaipur Gharana, presented the traditional compositions of the Gurus of the style. The audience was filled with people of all ages from our community in attendance to show their support for this wonderful community-focused initiative. This show was conducted, choreographed, conceptualised, and executed by Vaishnavi Panwar.



Vaishnavi Panwar



Vedant Panwar on harmonium, Salisha Purushuttam on sitar; Vaishnavi Panwar back row



Vaishnavi Panwar (front); back row, left to right, Samarpita Biswas, Priyanjana Roy Choudhry, Ameeya Bandoo, & Shalvi Thakkar

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Protesters in Haiti flee tear gas fired by security forces

Caricom working to help with Haitian crisis

Georgetown – Caricom governments have reiterated their resolve to continue efforts to encourage dialogue among Haitian stakeholders, and to support efforts at finding solutions to the multi-dimensional crisis facing the French-speaking Caricom country, the *Caribbean Media Corporation* reported last week.

In a statement issued by the Guyana-based Caricom Secretariat, it was reported that regional leaders with responsibility for Haiti met earlier this month to receive the report from Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness.

The leaders monitoring Haiti is under the chairmanship of Bahamas Prime Minister Philip Davis, who is also the Caricom chairman. Holness led a Caricom Special Mission to Haiti on February 27.

According to Holness' report, the mission met with a broad range of Haitian stakeholders to hear their views on the way forward to a Haitian-led solution, and to demonstrate Caricom solidarity with Haiti.

"The Leaders agreed that there must be a follow-up meeting with the stakeholders to chart a path to consensus building in order to bring peace and stability to the country," the report stated.

It also noted that the regional leaders have agreed "to support the Haitian National Police

in their efforts to address the security situation".

It added, "The focus of the Community will be the provision of training for the HNP, and the provision of humanitarian assistance to HNP and the wider Haitian society, taking into account the challenging humanitarian and security situation in Haiti."

Also, "In acknowledgement of the common historical experiences and the strong African-Caribbean relationship, Heads of Government also agreed to seek support from African countries for Haiti. They also agreed to work with the Governments of Canada and the US, as well as the UNDP on the ongoing issues, and at the upcoming Spring Meetings of the [IMF] and the World Bank, to approach both International Financial Institutions to ascertain what further assistance they could provide to Haiti."

The statement also commended Holness and the Caricom delegation "for their efforts in Haiti, and welcomed the comprehensive report which was provided on the mission".

Following the February summit in the Bahamas, Caricom leaders had issued a statement on Haiti reiterating that the 15-member regional integration grouping "must play a leadership role in addressing the deteriorating situation in Haiti".



Philip Davis

Maternal mortality reduction campaign launched

Washington DC – A campaign to encourage countries in Latin American and the Caribbean to reduce maternal mortality was launched last week, the Pan American Health Organisation and World Health Organisation have reported.

The campaign was launched on International Women's Day, and also includes other United Nations agencies and partners.

According to the PAHO and WHO website, maternal mortality increased by 15 percent between 2016 and 2020.

Around 8,400 women die each year in the region from complications in pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum. High blood pressure, severe bleeding, and complications from unsafe abortion are the most common causes.

However, nine out of ten of these deaths are preventable through quality care, access to contraception, and by reducing inequities in access to care.

"Too many women, particularly Indigenous, Afro-descendant, migrant, low-income, and less educated women, continue to die during pregnancy and childbirth. It is time to urgently invest in maternal health and change this unacceptable reality," Dr Jarbas Barbosa, PAHO Director, said at the launch.

Zero Maternal Deaths: Prevent the Preventable seeks to accelerate progress towards the regional goal of less than 30 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births outlined in PAHO's Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas.

Last year, the maternal mortality ratio (that is, the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) in Latin America and the Caribbean was 68 per 100,000 live births.

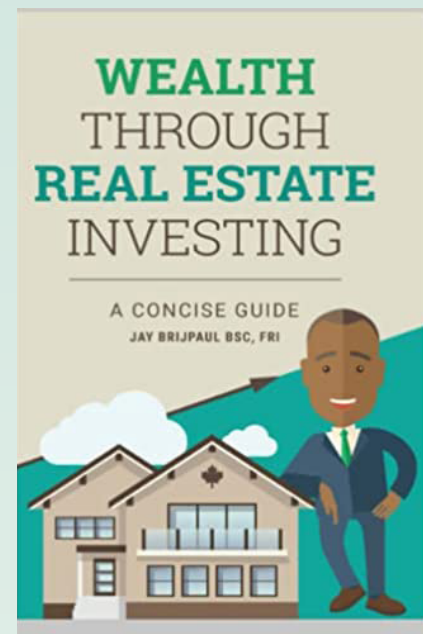
The COVID-19 pandemic caused a 20-year setback in maternal health in the region, with a 15 percent increase in maternal mortality between 2016 and 2020, following a 16.4 percent reduction between 1990 and 2015.



Jarbas Barbosa

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T&T Parliamentarian Dinesh Rambally with students & parents during Phagwah celebrations at the Munroe Road Hindu School. Facebook photos



MP Arya (sixth from left) with families & children during Holi celebrations

Ottawa in first-ever celebration of Holi

Ottawa – Splashes of vibrant colours were evident in Ottawa last week when over 500 persons attended the first-ever celebration of Holi in an event that was held at the parliament complex.

The Holi celebration was the initiative of Chandra Arya, MP for Nepean, with support from the High Commission of India. It was held on March 5 at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building on Wellington Street in Ottawa.

Guests at the event were adorned with bright colours, and arrived to a venue that was resplendently decorated with Indian motifs and other celebratory Holi visuals.

Among the guests was MP Mélanie Joly, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Following an opening prayer, a message of greeting was read from Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

In his message, Trudeau noted that, "[Holi was]... an opportunity to renew friendships and celebrate peace, but it is also a time to reflect on traditional notions of good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of light over

darkness."

A few days later, in his national March 8 Holi greeting, Trudeau reiterated his message of good conquering evil, noting that it was also a time when families and friends "spend quality time together, share seasonal delicacies, and look forward to new beginnings with optimism and hope".

Trudeau added, "This happy occasion is an opportunity for everyone in Canada to celebrate the diversity that makes us strong, and to recognise the many contributions that Hindu communities from coast to coast have made, and continue to make to our country."

Similar to Trudeau's message, guest speakers also noted the friendship, love, and harmony that are evident during Holi. It was also noted that Holi is celebrated in India by 1.3 billion Indians regardless of age, gender, caste and religion.

A main highlight was a dance-drama based on the origin of Holi, which was performed by Ottawa's Darpan Performing Arts group.



In photo, left to right, are the spouse of His Excellency Shah Faisal Kakar (second from left), Minister/Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan; Sangeetha Arya; MP Chandra Arya; Najnin Akhter, spouse of Bangladesh High Commissioner, His Excellency Dr Khalilur Rahman (second from right); & Acting High Commissioner of India to Canada, His Excellency, Chinmoy Naik



Cast from Darpan Performing Arts re-enact the Holi narrative



MP Arya addresses the audience at Holi celebrations last week



Phagwah ceremonies were held last week at the Hindu Heritage Centre & Ram Mandir; in photos, above, Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie at the HHC; third photo down from top, devotees at Ram Mandir, & above, the mandir's Pandit Roopnauth Sharma officiating. Photos by Russell Latchman



Celebrations of Phagwah in Guyana last week saw nationals enjoying its many colours along with tasty Guyanese cuisine. *Guyana News Room photos*



Board of Executives & Directors of the OHCA at the Holi Sammelen with President Shaw Jaundoo (centre in red Kurta)

OHCA celebrates Holi Sammelen

By Jay Jaggessur

After being on hold for three years, the Holi Sammelen organised by the Ontario Hindu Cultural Association was back on the scene this year.

On March 4, the OHCA marked the 15th edition of the Holi Chowtaal event by bringing together singers and performers from mandirs and associations all over the GTA to showcase their talents.

This year, seven groups took to the stage with *dholaks*, *jhaals*, and a fanfare of folkloric *dhamaals*, *ullaaras*, and *chowtaals*. The event brought back past memories of our forefathers and their passion for Phagwah.

The Prakash Ramayan Goal, the Shri Radhe Gopal Mandir Chowtaal Group, the Shri Radha Krishna Chowtaal Group, the Kabir Association of Toronto, the Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala, the Debe-Penal Chowtaal Group, and the Devi Mandir Chowtaal Group all captivated the appreciative audience with their various singing styles.

The event was held at the Devi Mandir at Brock Road, Pickering. The programme's start was initially delayed by an hour due to the winter storm that day, which left behind over 25 centimetres of snow.

However, the inclement weather did not deter participants and attendees from making their way to the venue, despite the challenging road conditions and stormy weather.

The fervour and excitement were quite palpable in the audience, which was heightened with the walls of the hall echoing to the drums and *jhaals*.

Holi is more than just *chowtaal* singing. The

programme also included several dance items and Holi songs, all of which engaged the audience from start to finish.

Host of the ceremonies was Rob Ramnaraine, whose delivery blended very well with the ambiance, and boosted the confidence of participants so they gave their best while on stage.

Adding to the celebratory atmosphere was an accompaniment of traditional Caribbean cuisine, with a menu that included doubles and *pholouri*.

Mixing folk singing with tasty Caribbean foods added to the flavourful recipe that made the wintry afternoon a resounding success, notably for our diaspora that is intent on preserving the legacy of our ancestors.

And topping off the successful event was a *tassa* drumming performance by the TNT Boyz, which brought everyone to their feet, dancing and swinging to the rhythm of the drums and *jhaals*.

All the groups were recognised for their effort, and received plaques thanking them for their participation.

The OHCA is celebrating its fifth anniversary this year, and was very proud to host the Holi Sammelen after a forced break due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

President of the Association, Shaw Jaundoo, promised that more cultural events will be organised to celebrate our ancestral heritage. He expressed heartfelt thanks to all the Board members who continue to support him in executing the mandate of the OHCA.

The OHCA also looks forward to the continued support of the public so that it can showcase more of these events.



A festival of colours was evident at Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir & Cultural Centre during Holi celebrations that saw devotees sharing love, happiness, laughter, togetherness, & hope in the true spirit of the festival; the mandir echoed with voices raised in Holi songs, *taan* singing, *Chowtals*, while its floor resonated with dancing feet, even as it warmed up with fashionable Indian wear, & of course, the ubiquitous coloured powder. *Photos by Hinano Beekhoo*



Young members from the Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala Group

Celebrating Sir Harry – one of Guyana's great & brilliant sons

By Dhanpaul Narine

It was the Eighth Supplement to the London Gazette of June 2, 1967. Her Majesty the Queen was graciously pleased to confer a Knighthood “on Harry Annamunthodo, MB, FRCS, Professor of Surgery, University of the West Indies”.

On that list also were Alfred Yhap, who was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE), and Enid Abrahams, who became a Member of the British Empire (MBE).

Miss Abrahams was my Headmistress when I taught at Meten-Meer-Zorg Government School in Guyana. She would remind us of the feat of the legendary Sir Harry and his contribution to medicine.

How did a young man from Dartmouth village on the Essequibo coast in Guyana rise to become one of the world's top surgeons?

Harry was born in April, 1920. His forebears arrived in British Guiana from South India in 1848 as Indentured servants. They settled in the Essequibo area.

Harry knew from an early age that he wanted to be a doctor. He was brilliant in school, and had an inquisitive mind. He would dissect dead animals and insects to find out the cause of their demise.

In 1935, Harry won a place at Queens College, one of the top schools in the country. He was Head Boy at Queens College, while his sister Beryl was the Head Girl at Bishop's High School. Four years later, he won a Guiana scholarship to study medicine in England.

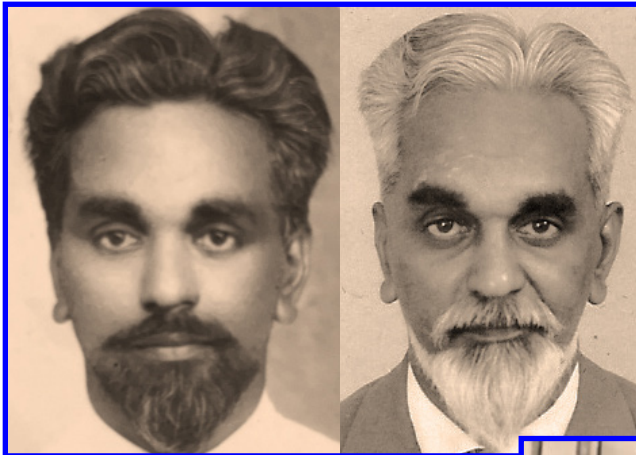
Harry made his mark in college. He enrolled at London Hospital Medical College. He excelled in his studies, winning prizes in anatomy, surgery, medicine, and pathology.

In 1946, he earned the Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, and later became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons.

Harry acquired valuable experience in England. He worked at the King George V Hospital in Essex, where he became a senior registrar. Harry could have made a comfortable life in England, but his heart was set on returning to the Caribbean.

In 1953, he became the senior surgical registrar at Mona Campus in Jamaica, University of the West Indies. The University of the West Indies was the only institution of higher learning at that time, and it was located at Mona.

It did not take him long to move up from a temporary lecturer in medicine to the Head of Department in Surgery. It was



Before & after, a youthful Sir Harry pursuing medical studies in England, & much later; at right, knighthood

the fastest promotion in the Faculty's history. Harry became the first West Indian Professor of Surgery.

According to one publication, “Harry was named Hunterian Professor to the Royal College of Surgeons of England and elected to the fellowship in the American College of Surgeons. He also previously held appointments to Yale University as the Rockefeller Research Fellow for training in cardiac surgery.”

The accolades kept pouring for this son of Guyana, and in 1967 he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his wonderful contribution to Medicine and Medical Education in the Caribbean.

Sir Harry was 47 years old when he was knighted, and was the first person in the Caribbean to be knighted for his services to medicine.

Christopher is the son of Sir Harry. He was a member of the Jamaican Defence Force. He remembers his father as a caring person who was soft-spoken and quiet. He was married to Margaret Pullman, an Englishwoman from Devon who was dedicated to the family.

The marriage produced four children: Christopher David, Karen Margaret, Frances Indira, and Lesley Seeta.

Sir Harry was known to take a power nap before his lectures. He loved gardening, and on weekends he would tend to the plants in his greenhouse. He was also a stamp collector. But his great love was medicine.

As a boy in primary school in Essequibo, he took care of his books, and this habit continued throughout his life. His medical notes are neat and carefully stored.

Sir Harry's legacy is lasting in the fields of surgery and medical education. He worked hard to make the Caribbean a centre of excellence in medicine, and his peers have paid glowing tributes to him.

Sir George Alleyne, former Chancellor of UWI, describes Sir Harry as “an expert surgeon and excellent teacher”; while others called him a “first rate surgeon”.



In 1979, Sir Harry became Professor of Surgery at the University of Kebangsaan in Malaysia. He is fondly remembered there as a wonderful teacher, and one of the pioneers who helped to set up the university's post-graduate medical program.

Sir Harry would set aside time for his family, according to nephew

Lokendra Annamunthodo, who resides in Trinidad.

There are various medical prizes and honours that are awarded in Sir Harry's name in the Caribbean, but none in his native Guyana.

Surely, Guyana's Medical School, or some part of it, should bear his name, and there should be prizes in his honour.

He was in Guyana for the University of Guyana first Convocation ceremonies, but he was known more abroad than in his own country.

There can be no denying the impact of Sir Harry Annamunthodo in the field of medicine and medical education. He rose from humble beginnings on the Essequibo coast in Guyana, to be later knighted by the Queen of England.

His hands were made for surgery, and he used them to help heal the world. He is undoubtedly one of Guyana's greatest sons.

Let us treasure his memory and contribution.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

WHO report tells the world time to give salt intake a shake

From Page 1

and around 200 other countries, to reduce population sodium intake by 30 percent by 2025.

In last week's report, WHO indicated it had investigated progress on this goal that is being made by these countries, and consequently upped its call to global leaders for implementation of clearer sodium intake reduction policies.

So far, as WHO noted, just five percent of its member states have mandatory and comprehensive policies for sodium reduction.

And as *CTV News* reported last week, this meant that only around 26 percent of the global population is residing in countries with mandatory sodium reduction measures.

WHO also reported on its Sodium Country Score Card, a methodology it is using to rate countries on their progress towards lowering sodium intake. And as *CTV News* noted, Canada did not receive a passing grade.

Canada was one of 65 countries that received a two out of four on the score card for having “voluntary measures to reduce sodium”, *CTV News* reported.

And according to the *CTV News* website, a report by Health Canada in 2020 noted that a 2018 evaluation on Canada's sodium intake reduction found that voluntary sodium reductions were modest, and did not meet targets.

Additionally, the 2018 data noted that voluntary efforts in the food processing sector to reduce sodium only resulted in a decrease of eight percent in the average sodium intake since 2010.

Meanwhile, the WHO report also has significant resonances for Latin American and Caribbean countries, which continue to deal with the health and economic impacts of NCDs.

As the website of the Borgen Project has noted, “NCDs are now causing more damage than communicable diseases, globally killing approximately 40 million persons annually, three-

quarters of which occur in low and middle-income countries.”

As the website further notes, the leading causes of worldwide deaths due to NCDs are cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and mental disorders.

It is a similar reality for the Caribbean, the Borgen Project stated, citing *Pan American Journal of Public Health* data indicating that each year 16,000 persons prematurely succumb to [NCDs] in the region.

“In fact, over 70 percent of all deaths in the region can be traced back to an NCD,” the Borgen Project noted.

Additionally, “Such a record has lasting effects, significantly stunting economic growth and productivity, and has been brought to the alarming attention of health authorities. While the exact reasons for such high mortality rates still remain an ongoing point of research and discussion, risk factors, including tobacco smoking, harmful use of alcohol, poor diet, and physical instability, have been found to significantly contribute to the mortality of NCDs in the Caribbean region.”

This year organisers behind World Salt Awareness Week made the decision to mark the lifestyle awareness event from May 15 to May 21 moving forward. As the organisers stated, “This new and consistent date allows supporters in the UK, and internationally, to plan their own activities to mark the awareness week ahead of time. We look forward to working with you to get salt reduction onto the global agenda.”

Meanwhile, salt reduction remains on the agenda of governments in the Caribbean.

In its observance of World Salt Awareness Week last year, a release from the Caribbean Public Health Agency noted that the Caribbean is well-known for its high dietary consumption of fats, sugars, and salt, which are predominantly obtained from processed and ultra-processed foods.

According to the available data, sodium consumption in the Caribbean has been determined to average 9-12 grams per day,

twice above WHO's recommended quantity of one teaspoon per adult per day from all sources.

Like Canada, CARPHA member states have committed to WHO's voluntary target to reduce sodium consumption by 30 percent by 2025. And in a move to support the Caribbean nations' initiatives to reduce sodium consumption in their populations, CARPHA developed a Regional Framework for Sodium Reduction in Populations.

Targeting policy-makers, manufacturers, health professionals, and relevant multi-sectoral stakeholders from public, private and civil society, the framework envisions a healthy and vital Caribbean people whose average sodium intake falls below the current global target of five grams per day for adults.

Last year, CARPHA joined forces with the regional and international communities to observe World Salt Awareness Week, with its slogan proclaiming: “Shake the Salt Habit”.

Said CARPHA's Dr Tamu Davidson, Head of the Chronic Disease, and Injury Department, “Let us try to shop smart and cook smart. We encourage you to add more flavour, use less or no salt when cooking. Try using fresh herbs and seasonings. Limit the consumption of salty snacks.”

Additionally, Davidson advised, “Take the time to carefully read the nutrition labels on food products. They can help you with choosing healthy food options, and keep a check on foods you are eating that are high in salt.”

Meanwhile, the Jamaican government has been taking steps to educate its population on consuming more locally grown foods while reducing salt intake.

Last year Regional Dietician at the Western Regional Health Authority, Dr Rosalee Brown, said Jamaicans must return as much as possible “to consuming more of our locally grown foods, natural food [such as] our breadfruit, our yam, our ground provisions, our vegetables, our fruits, and so on. In their natural form [they] are not high in sodium”.

Brown added that the challenge ahead for Jamaica was to educate the “population to reduce the intake of anything which is processed... bread, crackers, canned foods, and processed meats; and [to encourage consumption] of more unprocessed foods”.



Poet's Corner

NOISE! NOISE! NOISE!

It violates the silence of the sacred space,
as damning as invading the temple or any other sacrilege.
It offends the trees, but they cannot leave for Mainstay Lake.
The wind beseeches them to protest; they are constrained to stay.
The puppies, kittens, sheep, and chickens bewail their fate
that they dwell among those who need to amplify
every whisper, every secret, and every dream to be told.
It's noise, noise, and noise everywhere.
Senseless that delight when others need to forbear,
and wish they were impervious to every box that blares
in trunk of van or car, on cart along the thoroughfare, or
on the stair.
You need to unwind to wipe that frown from the face.
And when the light bounces off the ceiling and the DJ
incites the party,
you need to gyrate on floor like a multi-colored spinning
top,
and shake those buttocks and hips like reeds in the wind.
But think of the injury to the ears when the music blares
so loud
that you cannot hear your girlfriend even when she shouts.
I feel for the old and the sick, and workers in the field who
need rest,
when the music raised to the decibel of a screaming jet.
And what respite when the music turned off — the staccato
of motorbikes, wailing sirens, and jackhammers pounding
before the windows early in the morning.
It's more than enough to enrage a sage.
Where's that place with a semblance of silence?
Will they march with machines into the unspoiled hinter-
land?
Will the Victoria Regia Lily hear screeching brum-brum
of chainsaws,
and tigers and jaguars bemoan the invasion of their sacred
ground?
Will noise, noise and noise blanket the land end to end?
It's already entrenched when every talking is a shouting.

Haimnauth Cecil Ramkirath



Visual artist Indra Persad Milowe; at left, her 2020 acrylic painting, *Doubles Vendor*

T&T-born artist hosts exhibition in Massachusetts

A solo exhibit is now being held by Trinidad and Tobago-born visual artist and Salem resident **Indra Persad Milowe** at the Winthrop Public Library and Museum in Massachusetts.

The exhibit, *Beautiful Ubud, Bali*, features 20 paintings, and runs until April 29.

In a media release, Persad Milowe said she recently returned from Ubud in Bali, where she was an artist in residence.

"I was invited to a traditional Balinese wedding, a three-month-old baby ceremony, and a five-day Odalan festival," she said.

She visited temples, museums, and galleries while in Indonesia. Also, she attended many dance performances, all of which inspired the work that is now on exhibit at the Winthrop Public Library.

Born in Trinidad and Tobago, Persad Milowe left the country at 18 years old after winning a scholarship to London University, where she studied General, Ophthalmic, and Psychiatric Nursing.

In the career that then followed, she joined British Nurses Overseas, which led to global travel, and worked in countries as

England, Malta, Trinidad and Tobago, and the US.

Following her retirement in 2019 after 45 years, she returned to art, working primarily with acrylic paints on canvas.

As she noted, her art focuses on personal experiences, reliving her childhood memories of growing up in Trinidad during the 1950s and 1960s.

As she told *Jaipur Journal*, "I am interested in traditional art forms and symbols, which can launch my own creativity. For example, I have been researching rangolis for my next art exhibition. Rangolis are found in Hindu households on floors and tabletops, and consist of various colorful patterns and symmetries, and made with mostly natural materials. I made them with my grandmother while singing bhajans like the ones I listen to during the online satsangs."

Consequently, her paintings reflect the many cultural traditions of Trinidad and Tobago, including traditional Hindu ceremonies, African folklore, and the natural beauty of the islands.

As she told the *Jaipur Journal*, "I wanted to focus my artwork on childhood memories and growing up on a unique multicultural island. There is a personal story behind every one of my paintings."

"Grandpa, tell us the story of the giant moon man again." Boysie and his cousins sat around a kerosene lantern on the floor of their grandparents' rural home after supper. The best part of Boysie's year was spending the summer holidays with his grandma and grandpa. His paternal grandparents spoiled him and his cousins with complete freedom. Whenever the youngsters were not out exploring the neighbourhood and surrounding fields, or swimming in the canal at the end of the street, they would climb trees to suckle on juicy tropical fruits, or crawl through the skylight windows to eat snacks on the roof. With no electricity in the village, playing outdoors took care of the daylight hours, and storytelling between games of card-playing entertained the cousins before bed.

"Sure." Grandpa cleared his throat. "The Moon Gazer

stands with his head above the clouds." He stretched his arms upward. "With no village streetlights, the shadows of moving clouds give him life on full moon nights."

"He stands with his hands clasped behind his back and his two legs planted at each side of the road," Grandma added some details.

"His head is tilted up to stare at the moon." Grandpa lifted his chin and stared at the ceiling to demonstrate.

"They say that he uses the moon as a mirror to see what passes between his legs." Grandma continued.

"He is pale, like grayish-green ash. No one has ever seen his face and lived to tell, but some claim that there are holes instead of eyes and nose." Grandpa's index finger circled his face. "His rounded face resembles the moon with all its craters and his tight lips reveal his nastiness toward mankind."

After setting up the details with grandma's help grandpa cleared his throat again and prepared to tell the story of Annabella and her encounter with the Moon Gazer.

At the end of her evening shift, Annabella peeled off her overalls and threw them into the laundry hamper. Sweat and smoke from the wood burning steam-powered turbines



The Supernatural

The Moon Gazer

and the smell of molasses forced the sugar-factory worker to shower and change before taking the long, lonely walk home on a road that ran for miles between cane fields. Her fellow workers and neighbours, who usually kept her entertained whenever they accompanied her to her house, had both fallen ill with the flu and had taken the evening off work. For the first time since she took the evening shift to earn extra income, Annabella had to walk home without the two men

to protect her. With no distractions to keep her mind off the scary rustling leaves of the cane stalks that sounded like someone hunting her, she took deep breaths to slow her racing heart and calm her nerves. Her heightened senses only made her jumpier. She increased the pace and length of her strides.

Halfway to her house, Annabella gasped and stopped in mid-stride. The Moon Gazer loomed large a couple of miles ahead of her. She turned and started sprinting in the opposite direction. If he caught up with her, the monster would slam his legs together and crush her to death. She had to get back to the safety of the factory, two miles away.

After a mile of her mad dash to safety, Annabella's dry throat hurt, and her legs wobbled. She stopped for a moment and leaned forward with her hands on her knees, panting furiously for breath. A glance behind eased the pressure on her heart and allowed her to take stock of her situation for a few precious seconds. The Moon Gazer had disappeared momentarily under a patch of cloudless skies under the full moon. A glance in the distance tightened her throat. Her worries multiplied when an ominous dark cloud lumbered

toward her. If it caught up with her, she would be drenched in its torrential rainfall, and run the risk of getting struck by its lightning streaks and thunderbolts. The cloud's shadow would breathe new life into the Moon Gazer, who would use the darkness to sneak up on her and squish her to death. With the elements working against her by providing a lifeline to her nemesis, she had a sick feeling that her doomsday had arrived.

Annabella was a fighter who had overcome many hurdles throughout her life. As the only female in the molasses-making chamber, she worked twice as hard at the factory to show that she could keep up with her male counterparts. She needed the job to support herself and her two aged and ailing parents.

She was forced to give up the love of her life when her mother's stroke was added to her dad's return from the war in a wheelchair, with his lower half blown away by an enemy landmine.

The daunting picture of her parents suffering from death by starvation pumped adrenalin through her veins and put wings on her feet. By the time the droplets of rain started stinging her back, she reached the factory and dived through the door to wait out the storm.

"She returned to her parents the next day and told them of her harrowing experience." Grandpa smiled at the happy ending to his story. "But there is more." He knew that the kids were waiting for a happier ending, which they knew, but never grew tired of hearing it.

"My faithful fiancé waited for me for all those years, too much in love with me to ever get married to anyone else." She smiled and took grandpa's hand. "And I have lived happily ever after with the man I never stopped loving."

"Your grandma handed the Moon Gazer his first defeat by a human because of the great heart in this tiny body." He opened his arms for a family hug. "Grandma's survival that night brought us good fortune with great children and even greater grandchildren." He chuckled.

"Now, don't you tell your parents that grandpa said that." Grandma's words brought laughter to everyone.



Kamil Ali

Armour calls Gaspard on 'under-performance' in office of the DPP

Port-of-Spain – The call by Director of Public Prosecutions Roger Gaspard for more staff “is an unsatisfactory explanation for under-performance of the DPP”, Trinidad and Tobago’s Attorney General Reginald Armour said last week.

Armour is the line minister for the Office of the DPP. He raised the issue of the DPP’s under-performance for the first time publicly via a WhatsApp response to a media query regarding the empty building on Park Street in Port-of-Spain.

Rented by the government for the Office of the DPP, it has remained unoccupied for almost three years due to security concerns that were raised by the police Special Branch.

Armour said he will issue a full statement later this week.

“The issue of a lack of resources impacts all of our institutions, and is not limited to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The DPP is not being deliberately starved of resources, as indeed the reality of the unoccupied Park Street Office shows. I can see no political benefit in the government deliberately under-resourcing the DPP,” Armour said.

He added, “That is an unsatisfactory explanation for under-performance of the DPP. Other critical arms of the criminal justice system are also operating below capacity, yet far more effectively. We need to critically examine what are the systemic issues that are hampering the performance of the DPP’s office.”

On March 8 Gaspard said his office was hamstrung by “an acute and chronic” staff shortage that affected its ability to prosecute cases in every court in the country.

During a radio interview, Gaspard stated that his office has 58 attorneys, including some with little or no court experience.



Reginald Armour

He added that a 2013 Cabinet note of 2013 proposed the DPP should have 137 attorneys.

And in an apparent response, at a political meeting the next day, Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley said: “None of us in this country have all that we need. But you got to make the most with what you have.”

He added that the government had sourced the building on Park Street for the DPP’s Office, but it remained unoccupied because of various requests to make it more secure.

Then on March 10, Gaspard said he was not going to comment on the issue until after receiving legal advice.

According to a media report, the police Special Branch has identified several security risks at the site, and has recommended bullet-proofing the eastern side of the building, along with other security measures.

Meanwhile, head of the Criminal Bar Association Israel Khan called on Gaspard to clear the air on the reasons why his office has not been able to occupy the building.

Said Khan: “The DPP must explain to the nation why he decided not to use the building after the government spent millions of dollars to retrofit [it]. He needs to give a good explanation.”

Commenting on the lack of attorneys at the DPP’s office, Khan said the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, headed by Chief Justice Ivor Archie, should explain the shortage.

“How can you have judges increasing, but no competent attorneys to prosecute matters? What is happening sends a signal to the criminal elements that if they get caught they can’t be prosecuted.”

At a media conference late last week, Opposition Senator Wade Mark accused Rowley of attacking the DPP, supposedly for failing to prosecute his political opponents.

Said Mark: “Is he trying to frustrate Gaspard into leaving the Office of the DPP? What is the objective of the Prime Minister?”

Sacred flags uprooted in vandal attack at Siparia Shiva Mandir

Port-of-Spain – Another Hindu mandir in Trinidad and Tobago has been desecrated, with the latest episode taking place in the southern town of Siparia.

According to police reports, vandals broke into the mandir via a gate at the Siparia Shiva SDMS Mandir on High Street, Siparia, and uprooted several *jhandis*, or sacred religious flags while in the compound.

The desecration was discovered early last week by President of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha Pandits Parishad, Pundit Capildeo Maharaj, after he noted that the mandir’s front gate had been forced open.

Said Pundit Maharaj: “Someone called me and said the gate looked ‘funny’, and when we came here we saw they had pulled out all the *jhandis*, and everything was strewn on the ground.”

The *jhandis* were planted following a *pooja*, and whoever committed the act will face the consequences of karma, he said.

He added he had no forgiveness for those responsible, while adding the offenders will suffer a dire, karmic faith.

“This is a cruel act. Whosoever did it, there is a price that one has to pay for such actions. The culprits will suffer major problems and difficulties,” he stated.

Additionally, “Since our history in Siparia, it is the first occasion that we had such a situation take place. Our neighbourhood is friendly. Opposite we have the Anglican church. We make our car park available for each other whenever we have a function.”

Anglican priest Father Aaron Charles of the St Christopher Anglican Church, which is located across from the mandir, also condemned the act, saying, “It tells us of the sad state of our society. You are desecrating the place of worship, our society is degrading holy places like these,” Father Charles said. Many nationals visit the mandir for help and salvation, he added.

General Secretary of the SDMS Vijay Maharaj said he did not think the vandalism was an indication of religious discrimination. The intruders did not get into the mandir, but interfered with the flags outside, he said.

Siparia police and its officers are continuing investigations.

Last May, the Carapo Shiv Mandir in Arima was desecrated with corned beef. Four months later in September, the Carli Bay mandir was desecrated when a Biblical scripture from the *Book of Exodus* was painted on the walls.



Pandit Maharaj with the uprooted *jhandis*



Colm Imbert

Imbert knocked on forex

Port-of-Spain – Finance Minister Colm Imbert was last week accused of “trying to play word semantics with the population when he claims that we don’t have a [foreign exchange] crisis, but a shortage”. The accusation was made by Oropouche West MP Dave Tancoo.

“Businesses and individuals still experience difficulty in securing forex, as the economy continues to struggle, [Small and Micro Enterprises] fight for survival, while the poverty line extends to include more citizens daily,” Tancoo said

He was commenting on Minister Imbert’s reassurance to Jamaican businessmen that Trinidad and Tobago has eight and a half months of import cover, without counting the US reserves in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

Tancoo added, “However, [Imbert] ignores the fact that our foreign exchange inflows have slowed drastically with the closure of the Petrotrin refinery, and the resultant multiple plant closures at Point Lisas.”

According to MP Tancoo: “While the Minister seeks the interest of the large business sector, the SMEs – which are 91 percent of all registered businesses in our country – and small traders and entrepreneurs suffer. The ordinary citizen who requires forex for travel or university tuition fees abroad for their children have to stand in bank lines daily for a maximum of (US) \$200 at a time!”

He added: “Pretending that we do not have a problem is not a credible fiscal strategy, and it is not one that that would instil confidence in his competence to ably steer our economy through the present and imminent challenges.”

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LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE

Gaspard concerned over 'deep problems' in T&T's judicial system

Port-of-Spain – It appears Trinidad and Tobago has “deep problems” in bringing people accused of white-collar crimes to justice, Director of Public Prosecutions Roger Gaspard said last week. It is a situation that leaves him concerned and worried, he said.

Gaspard made the comment last week following public criticism over his earlier decision on to end corruption charges against former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, his wife Oma, former UNC government minister Carlos John, and one-time party financier Ishwar Galbaransingh.

In a radio interview, Gaspard admitted that in several white-collar crime investigations and prosecutions, “several high-profile complex fraud cases have fallen away”.

However, he refused to apportion blame to anyone, instead suggesting that “maybe everyone – all interested stakeholders – would have contributed in some way to the eventual outcome”.

On March 6 Gaspard made the bombshell announcement that he was discontinuing the State's prosecution against Panday, *et al*, in the Piarco 3 matter. The four accused were facing corruption charges.

But stopping the case did not mean the criminal justice system had failed, Gaspard insisted.

“It could also mean the system works,” he said, even as he indicated that his office was not “primarily concerned with convicting people”.

As Gaspard indicated, in his assessment on whether to continue with the case, he had to consider if there was a fair prospect of conviction, along with the availability of witnesses.

He explained there was a two-stage “litmus test,” not peculiar



Roger Gaspard

to Trinidad and Tobago, which he had to consider in arriving at a decision.

The first hurdle had to be crossed before attempting the second, he stated.

Gaspard also addressed public concerns that the collapse of cases involving people in high office had tarnished the image of the Judiciary, and even his own office, which left the impression that justice had gone bad.

Instead, he asked, “Should we continue with a matter where there are not strong grounds [to continue]?”

Gaspard also recalled the number of gang-related charges arising from the limited State of Emergency in 2011, which he discontinued when the cases reached the courts. Under section 90(3)(c) of the Constitution, the DPP has the power to institute or discontinue any charges.

He said while public concern is legitimate, “The DPP's office isn't primarily concerned with convicting people. It is concerned with bringing prosecutions, where there is sufficient and compelling evidence. It is not, ‘Win at all costs.’”

Additionally, “Sometimes when you discontinue a matter, if it is premised on strong and sensible grounds, the DPP's office would have done the right thing.”

He said in the Piarco cases, with charges dating back to 1999, to now be proceeding in 2023, “I would have to say, that does not speak to an efficiently-working system.”

Last year, Gaspard also made the shocking decision to discontinue the case against former attorney general Anand Ramlogan, and ex-UNC senator Gerald Ramdeen, which largely depended on the testimony of convicted King's Counsel Vincent Nelson.

According to the reports, Nelson “categorically” said he was not willing to give evidence until the conclusion of his (TT) \$96-million civil claim against the Attorney General.

Both Pandays walk free after dismissal of 2nd corruption charge

Port-of-Spain – Former Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Basdeo Panday was last week cleared of two corruption charges that were pending, the first which was dismissed in 2012, with the second case discontinued on March 6.

Panday was before the courts with the charge of failing to declare the assets of a London Bank account to the Integrity Commission.

He was freed of one of the charges in 2012 after then-magistrate Marcia Murray cleared him of any wrongdoing.

Panday was accused of failing to disclose an account at National Westminster Bank Plc in Wimbledon, London, to the Integrity Commission for the years 1997, 1998, and 1999.

In March 2006, he was found guilty and sentenced by then-chief magistrate Sherman McNicolls to two years in prison.

However, a retrial was ordered after Panday succeeded in having his conviction and sentence quashed.

That retrial took place before magistrate Murray, who held that the charge had to be dismissed as the Integrity Commission had misconducted itself by not allowing Panday to be heard before a tribunal.

That Panday was not heard before a tribunal deprived him of due process of law, the magistrate found.

“The misconduct of the Integrity Commission was so serious



Oma Panday

that it would undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system and bring it into disrepute. The court is, therefore, compelled to stop these proceedings to protect the integrity of the criminal justice system,” Justice Murray had stated.

Represented by attorney David Aaronberg, it was submitted that Panday was “singled out” and used as a political football. Also, that the investigator failed to complete pertinent checks, which was unfair to his client.

Special State prosecutor Timothy Cassel had dismissed arguments that Panday had not been treated fairly, and said it was



Basdeo Panday

the court's duty to try him, and the court's sense of propriety and justice would be offended if the State had not done so.

However, in her ruling, Murray said the Integrity Commission had failed to comply with the provisions of the Integrity in Public Life Act, under which it was constituted, when it did not advise the then-president to appoint a tribunal to enquire into Panday's declarations.

“Mr Panday was not given an opportunity, to which he was entitled, to be heard by a properly constituted tribunal,” Justice Murray had said.

Additionally, “The misconduct by the Integrity Commission was very serious. The substance of these charges was the ‘fruit of the poison tree’, which was the product of the Integrity Commission's misconduct.

Furthermore, without the product of the misconduct, these proceedings would not have arisen.”

Then last week, Director of Public Prosecutions Roger Gaspard discontinued the second charge against Panday and his wife, Oma.

Also, the charge was discontinued against former minister Carlos John, and businessman Ishwar Galbaransingh.

Both Panday and wife were accused of receiving £25,000 from John and Galbaransingh as an inducement or reward in relation to the construction of the new Piarco International Airport.

Legal experts call for improvements in the criminal justice system

Port-of-Spain – Calls for the improvement of Trinidad and Tobago's criminal justice system were made by senior attorneys last week following the March 6 collapse of the case against former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and his wife, Oma Panday, as well as against former minister Carlos John, and businessman Ishwar Galbaransingh.

Last week Senior Counsel Israel Khan, along with attorneys Martin George and Prakash Ramadhar, spoke to the fallout from the collapse of the cases against the four accused.

Khan said the Director of Public Prosecutions, Roger Gaspard, had the constitutional right to discontinue the matter if he was of the opinion there was no prospect of obtaining a conviction.

As Khan stated, Gaspard would have received witness statements in relation to the charge, and it would have been up to the jury to decide whether or not these witnesses were speaking the truth.

“This matter just remained hanging over the accused heads for all these years. It is a serious indictment against the criminal



Israel Khan

justice system; not the DPP; not the accused; but the system itself,” Khan said.

George described the collapse of the case as a slap in the face for Trinidad and Tobago nationals.

“It exposes once again the very weak and soft underbelly of our criminal justice system, whereby it seems that there is one law for the rich and powerful, and another for the poor and indigent. This does not engender any sort of confidence, trust, or faith from the ordinary citizen in the system of justice in Trinidad and Tobago.”



Martin George



Prakash Ramadhar

George said it will appear to the ordinary man that if a person is in a certain level of power, prestige, or privilege, then the law does not apply to that individual. As opposed to those on the lower end of the socio-economic scale, where they are made to feel the full brunt of the law on a daily basis.

“They are arrested, charged, they are convicted, and jailed. So, therefore, clearly you will have serious inequities in a society such as that, and persons are going to feel disenfranchised, disillusioned, and they will feel that they are not being treated the same way as others who are able to afford the trappings of the high life,” George declared.

Ramadhar said he was disappointed that the legal system allows for cases to drag on for so long a period, adding there was a need to “make our systems far more efficient” so when charges are brought, these are dealt with “in a speedy manner”.

He added that accused persons should not have “to suffer for this long period of time, because nothing can give them back their time, and their peace of mind that would have been lost”.

The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

Weave of weepy woes overdone in *Beti*

Movie Review: *Beti*
By Madhulika Liddle

There are some things I have very little patience with while I'm watching a film. Weepiness, for instance. Precocious children for another. Endless bhajans (unless the bhajan in question happens to be of the calibre of *Allah tero naam* or *Man tadpat hari darshan*). Mindless self-sacrificing which can't possibly benefit anyone.

And much more. *Beti*, unfortunately, has all of these in ample doses. I saw it primarily because I like the lead pair. Nanda is an old favourite, and when a film lists Rajendranath, Shyama, and Asit Sen in its cast, one can hope for lots of entertainment.

Mr Verma (Kishore Sahu) is a widower with two children: toddler Munna (Master Rippy) and Munna's elder sister Sudha (Baby Sarika). Sudha is pint-sized herself, but seems to think herself in *loco parentis* for Munna. She looks after him, sings lullabies to Munna *à la* their mother, and even looks after her father. She sits up for Mr Verma to come home, then serves him dinner, and tells him to eat; she'll eat later. Ugh.

In fact, idiot child that she is, she decides to cook for her father, and this results in a serious accident in which Sudha's foot is badly burnt. The local *vaid* (Asit Sen) who treats Sudha, encourages Mr Verma to remarry so that the children may have a mother.

Mr Verma ends up marrying Kamla (Shyama), who turns out to be the archetypal stepmother. She makes Sudha do all the housework, thrashes her when the kid messes up, and is generally a nasty character.

There's more misery on the way. Munna, who is old enough to talk coherently, but apparently hasn't been told he shouldn't climb into the well, drowns. Sudha is inconsolable; Mr Verma tries his best to comfort her.

Kamla, on the other hand, tells Sudha she has to pull her weight and do the housework even as she studies. And so, in between scrubbing floors, washing clothes and cooking, Sudha grows up. She (now Nanda) is a secretary in an office, and one day meets a young man called Rajesh (Sanjay Khan) who nearly runs her over.

Although they exchange some snide remarks, Sudha and Rajesh secretly think rather highly of each other.

When Sudha gets home, Kamla gives her the news that the offspring of the man who brought up Kamla are visiting, and will now be staying with them. These are Baanke (no idea who this actor is) and his sister Jyoti (Shabnam). The *vaid's* son Deepak (Rajendranath), who is passing by, comes in to say hello, and falls for Jyoti. This becomes the basis for an unfunny but thankfully brief comic side plot.

Mr Verma also has news for Sudha: he is on the verge of arranging a marriage for her. He does not tell her the name of the prospective groom, but says they – Sudha and Mr Verma – will go the next morning to his home. The groom won't be home, but his parents will look her over.

The next day, in her future in-laws' home, Sudha takes advantage of a moment of solitude and sneaks a peek at what she thinks is the photo of her groom-to-be. It's Rajesh! Yippee!

What this simple-minded soul doesn't realise is that Rajesh is the best friend of Sudhir, the man Sudha is being lined up to marry.

Sudhir's father asks Mr Verma for a dowry of Rs 40,000; and Mr Verma, for the sake of his daughter's happiness, agrees even though he can't afford it. The marriage is fixed and Sudha is formally engaged – all without having met her groom.

In the meantime, Rajesh has been pining for the lovely girl he nearly ran over, and when one of Sudha's colleagues sells him a ticket to a charity show organised by Sudha, he goes along in the hope of meeting Sudha – and does.

Sudha, thinking Rajesh is her fiancé, is happy to see him, and agrees to come on a date. They are soon deeply in love.

One day, Rajesh's mother (Sulochana Latkar) tells him she has found a bride for him, and that he is now engaged – also without having seen the girl in question. Rajesh is rattled by this revelation, and tries to argue with his mother, but to no avail. When he tells Sudha, she giggles and lets him know that she is the girl mommy found for him.

So, blissfully unaware of the gathering storm clouds, this happy pair goes on with their lives, singing and scampering in the gardens.

Meanwhile, Mr Verma tells Kamla that he has sold off their house to obtain the money for Sudha's wedding. Kamla is (justifiably, I think) outraged, but he refuses to budge: it is his daughter's happiness at stake. How the daughter will be happy with her father reduced to living on the pavement is beyond me.

Then, just a couple of days before the wedding, Sudha sees the name of her groom on the wedding card and gets a shock. (Yes, well. I can't believe that nobody so far has even accidentally mentioned Sudhir's name in her hearing, or anything).

Sudha's father asks her what is wrong. Sudha tells him, after (as is so common in Hindi cinema) making a friend out to be the protagonist in the story. Should the friend go with love, or with her family's honour? Family, asserts Mr Verma. Love is ephemeral; the family's honour is everything.

Rajesh – as a result of a chance conversation with his mother – has discovered that Sudha isn't his fiancée. When he next meets her, she tells him of her decision to marry Sudhir. Devastated, Rajesh leaves town.

At Sudha's wedding, just before the *pheras* are to start, Sudhir's father demands the Rs 40,000 Mr Verma had pledged.

Mr Verma goes to get the money, and finds it gone. When he assures Sudhir's father that he will give the money after the wedding, the greedy old curmudgeon refuses.

Sudha shows a burst of spirit and tells her father to stop pleading. She orders Sudhir's father out, and the entire *baraat* takes itself off. Sudha tells Sudhir's father off.

Mr Verma suffers a stroke and is paralysed. Kamla isn't really bothered, and soon enough, Sudha realises she is the only one who cares for Mr Verma.

What is more, Sudha discovers that Kamla had stolen the Rs 40,000. Now that Mr Verma is paralysed, Baanke too starts showing his true colours, and tries to molest Sudha.

Sudha decides it will be best for her father if she takes him away, never mind if she has barely any money. She manages to find them a grubby little room to stay in and spends her last few rupees buying food for her father.

In the interim, Rajesh learns that Sudhir's wedding got called off. Realising this means Sudha is still unmarried (this guy obviously hasn't seen films like *Ghunghat* or *Preet Na Jaane Reet*, both of which had heroes leaping in to marry the jilted bride), he heads home to find Sudha.

She is gone, of course, and even at his own home, his parents make it clear they don't like the idea of him marrying someone who was left at the altar, so to say. Rajesh has a tiff with his father (Raj Mehra) and storms out of the house.

Life has become torturous for Sudha and Mr Verma. She spends her day searching for a job; he spends it wondering whether Sudha will be reduced to begging.

Finally, certain he is a burden on his daughter, Mr Verma goes off in his wheelchair all by himself one night. When Sudha wakes, he is gone, and she – having found his shawl by the roadside – is convinced he is dead.

Alone, jobless and hungry, Sudha is at the end of her tether. She climbs up to a temple to pray, begging God to let her die.

What happens to Sudha next? Do the baddies get their just desserts? Do Rajesh and Sudha ever meet again? Is Mr Verma still alive?

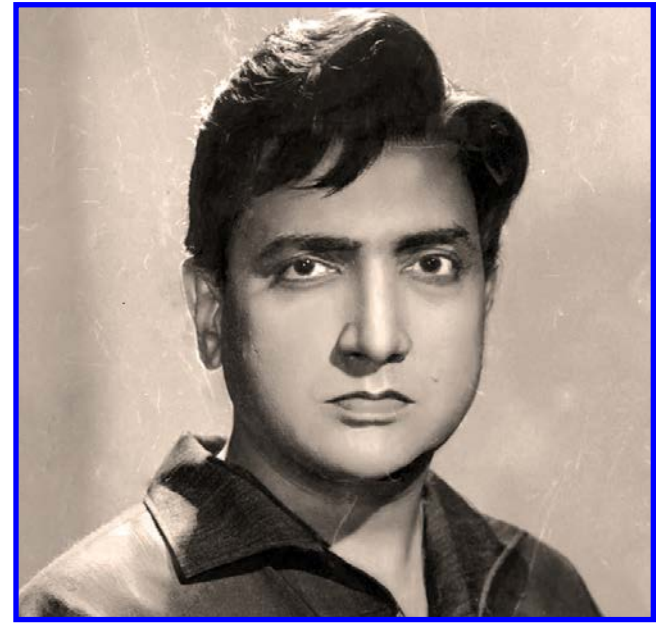
This is standard Bollywood fare, so it's pretty predictable. If you have seen enough Hindi cinema, you'll probably be able to guess at least some of what happens.

What I liked about this film:

I can't really recall anything I liked, except perhaps Baby Sarika. She was cute as a kid, and her acting wasn't bad – in fact, she is one of the most likeable child actors I've seen in the 1960s. And yes, Nanda and Sanjay Khan do look very nice together when they're smiling.

What I didn't like:

The music, for one. The songs in *Beti* are utterly forgettable. The story. There is just too much self-sacrificing going on here. I was brought up to think that you loved your family, but that worked both ways: if you loved your folks, they loved you back, and wouldn't want you to kill yourself, or harm yourself for their happiness. *Beti* seems to suggest, what with Sudha sacrificing love for honour, then Mr Verma giving it up for Sudha, that you should give up all for your family, without actually finding out from them what they would want.



Bharat Bhushan

Star takes a tragic fall

Bharat Bhushan (1920–1992) was one of the top stars of Bollywood cinema in the era of the 1950s. He shot to instant fame after playing the titular role in the iconic musical *Baiju Bawra* released in 1952. He was also a producer who produced and played lead roles in *Basant Bahar* and *Barsaat Ki Raat*. He played mythological and historic roles on screen with ease, and was equally successful with other popular lead roles. He was the recipient of the second Filmfare Best Actor Award for his titular role in *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu*, and was also nominated for his titular role in *Mirza Galib*. Though he remained one of the top stars of his time, his last days were spent in extreme poverty with no money for treatment – one of the worst and pathetic riches-to-rags tales in Bollywood ever.

Bharat Bhushan was a native of Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. His father was a reputed lawyer who wanted his son to follow his legacy. Against his father's wishes he pursued a career in the field of acting. He lost his mother at the age of two, and he, along with his siblings, grew up at the home of their maternal grandfather, where they completed their studies. He completed his graduation and moved to Kolkata in search of acting opportunities. Then he moved to Mumbai, where he established himself as an actor.

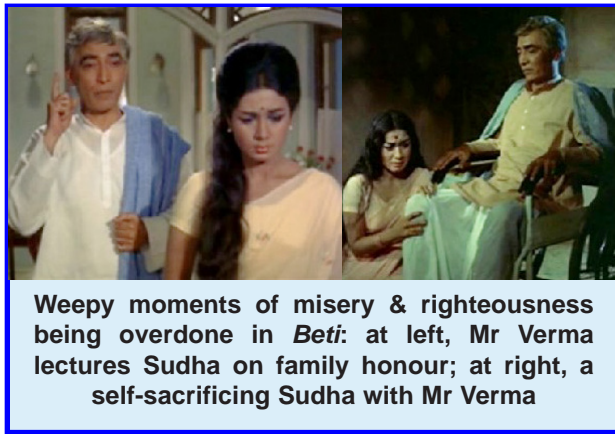
Bharat Bhushan was given the first break to films by Kidar Sharma through his hit film *Chitralekha*. He played a character role in the film. For nearly one decade he struggled in the industry with character roles. As a lead actor, his first hit was *Suhaag Raat* (1948) opposite Geeta Bali. Kidar Sharma signed him for the movie.

Baiju Bawra (1952) gave him stardom, alongside Meena Kumari, Naushad, and Mohammed Rafi, all of whom benefitted from film's super success. From there on he only played lead roles on screen until the early 1960s. He scripted and produced hit films – *Basant Bahar* and *Barsaat Ki Raat*, in which he also played lead roles. The success of the films made him very rich. *Anand Math*, *Mirza Galib*, *Jahan Ara*, *Phagun*, and so on, are some of his memorable works in lead roles.

When his brother Ramesh asked Bhushan to launch his son through one of his production ventures, he agreed. However the movie flopped miserably. He went on to produce movies one after another to cover his financial losses. But every time he went wrong, and he lost everything he earned from Bollywood, even friends! He owned many luxurious and imported cars and two bungalows – one in Mumbai and another in Pune, which he had to sell to make a living. After 1964 his life faced turmoil with unexpected twists and turns, and he was in great shock for the next five years.

By the mid-1960s, with the emergence of new romantic heroes, he started accepting supporting roles. A few of them got noticed, but the majority couldn't propel his career. To make ends meet, the star of the glorious era even accepted minor artist roles. As a supporting actor, his role as Shashi Kapoor's father in the 1969 film *Pyar Ka Mausam* got noticed. This powerful role was offered to him by the director Nasir Hussain during his bad times when he was fully heartbroken. Kishore Kumar's version of the song *Tum Bin Jaon Kahan* was filmed on him, while Rafi sang for Shashi Kapoor. It was the first time that the same song was recorded separately in the voices of Rafi and Kishore.

Bharat Bhushan continued doing small roles until the early 1990. He was active in the film industry for five decades until his death. He was seen in *Yaarana*, *Umrao Jaan*, *Nastik*, *Khooon Pasina*, *Chandni*, *Toofan*, *Pyar Ka Devata*, *Ghar Sansaar*, and so on, in the 1980s and early 1990s. He did several less significant roles towards the end of his career for financial assistance. It is also said that he had gambling addiction. He spent his last years in a [chawl](#).



Weepy moments of misery & righteousness being overdone in *Beti*: at left, Mr Verma lectures Sudha on family honour; at right, a self-sacrificing Sudha with Mr Verma

India dances for joy over double Oscar win for RRR & The Elephant Whisperer

Superstar Rajinikanth, Bollywood star Ajay Devgn, Telugu cinema star Mahesh Babu, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among those celebrating India's double win at the Oscars.

Naatu Naatu by composer M. M. Keeravaani and lyricist Chandrabose from S.S. Rajamouli's *RRR* won best original song, beating competition from pop heavyweights Rihanna and Lady Gaga, while director Kartiki Gonsalves and producer Guneet Monga's *The Elephant Whisperers* won best documentary short subject.

"My hearty congratulations to Shri Keeravani, Shri Rajamouli, and Shri Kartiki Gonsalves for getting the prestigious Oscar Award. I salute to the proud Indians," Rajinikanth tweeted.

"Exceptional! The popularity of *Naatu Naatu* is global. It will be a song that will be remembered for years to come. Congratulations to @mmkeeravaani, @boselyricist, and the entire team for this prestigious honour. India is elated and proud," Modi tweeted about the *RRR* win.

"Congratulations to @EarthSpectrum, @guneetm and the entire team of *The Elephant Whisperers* for this honour. Their work wonderfully highlights the importance of sustainable development and living in harmony with nature," Modi tweeted about *The Elephant Whisperers* win.

"As it is often said, cinema speaks a universal language. Congratulations to the teams of #RRR and #TheElephantWhisperers for their #Oscar wins. It's a proud moment" Ajay Devgn tweeted.

"And there you go... NAATU NAATU!! Crossing all boundaries!! Congratulations to @mmkeeravaani garu, @boselyricist and the entire team of #RRR on their phenomenal win at the Oscars!! A jubilant moment for Indian cinema," tweeted Mahesh Babu on *RRR*, adding, "Congratulations to the entire team of #TheElephantWhisperers on winning the Best Documentary Short... a fantastic film and another phenomenal win" on "*The Elephant Whisperers*."

Before a performance of the song earlier in the night, Indian actress Deepika Padukone said: "An irresistibly catchy chorus,



Energised moment in *Naatu Naatu* from the movie *RRR*. YouTube screen grab

electrifying beats and killer dance moves to match have made this next song a global sensation. It plays during a pivotal scene in *RRR*, a movie about the friendship between real life India revolutionaries Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem."

Also, "In addition to being sung in Telugu and illustrating the film's anti-colonialist themes, it is also a total banger. It has had millions of views on YouTube and TikTok, has audiences dancing in movie theatres all around the world, and is also the first song ever from an Indian production to be nominated for an Oscar. Do you know *Naatu*? Because if you don't, you are about to."

Ever since the award ceremony, many fans and celebrities from India have been unitedly celebrating this win.

It has already seen great success during the 2023 awards season, having scooped best song accolades at both the Golden Globes and Critics Choice Awards.

Actor Prachika Tehlan wrote: "It feels immensely proud to be a part of the South Indian film industry. Congratulations team @RRRMovie @ssrajamouli you made India proud with yet another feather on the hat."

Indian cricketer Virender Sehwag wrote: "*Naatu Naatu* all the way. Congratulations to the entire team of #RRR on bringing Indian Cinema glory"

Actor Hrithik Roshan added: "Such a historic, proud

& happy moment for Indian Cinema at #Oscars95! Many congratulations to the team of Best Documentary Short Film #TheElephantWhisperers and Team RRR for Best Original Song #NaatuNaatu!! More power to you all."

Music director Pritam wrote: "A big congratulations to @mmkeeravaani sir, @boselyricist and team #RRR for winning the #Oscars for #NaatuNaatu. The acceptance speech has indeed put all of us on top of the WORLD."

Politician Rahul Gandhi wrote: "The song India danced to has truly gone global!"

Indian National Congress's president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote: "We join millions of Indians in rejoicing at the great news of #NaatuNaatu from *RRR* winning the #Oscar

for Best Original Song. Thank you bringing so much joy and happiness to India. Many Congratulations to the entire team of @RRRMovie!"

"Congratulations to the entire Team of @RRRMovie! Feeling incredibly proud, thank you for representing India so gracefully," Dr Urmila Gajapathi Raju Pusapati wrote on Twitter.

Actor Eesha Rebba added: "Proud moment for Indian cinema."

Producer Naga Vamsi wrote: "Congratulations to the pride of our Telugu Cinema. #RRR has created history for every one of us. Really proud of you @mmkeeravaani garu for taking Telugu music global. Congrats to @tarak9999 garu, @AlwaysRamCharan garu, @ssrajamouli garu and the entire team of @RRRMovie."

The music video was shot in front of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's official residence in Kyiv in 2021, months before Russia invaded Ukraine.

The crew took 15 days to shoot the scene, which featured about 50 dancers and 400 extras.

In an interview with *Variety* in January, director S.S. Rajamouli said he wanted to explore the movie's anti-colonial themes through an action sequence that saw the film's two main Indian actors out-dance the British.



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Jasprit Bumrah

Surgery for Bumrah on road to comeback

Jasprit Bumrah underwent back surgery last week in New Zealand, the cricket website *ESPNcricinfo* has reported. The surgery is in preparation for Bumrah's fitness for the ODI World Cup, which will be played in India from October to November this year.

ESPNcricinfo also reported that Bumrah was expected to convalesce in New Zealand until the end of March.

According to the road map for his return to the game, which was prepared by the Board of Control for Cricket in India's medical staff, the surgery is the first milestone on his road to recovery before his return to training and bowling by August.

As the BCCI document noted, Bumrah's workload will increase gradually afterwards, with the plan being to get him completely fit for the World Cup later this year.

Bumrah has not featured in any cricket since late September last year, when he pulled out of the home white-ball series against South Africa. The reason for his exit was reportedly a stress reaction in his lower back.

However, in January he attempted a comeback for the home series against Sri Lanka, which did not take place because of continuing discomfort in his back.

As it now stands, Bumrah will not appear in the 2023 edition of the IPL, and the World Test Championship final at The Oval from June 7 should India qualify.

However, it was also understood that the BCCI medical staff at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru had been treating Bumrah's case on an urgent basis, and suggested the surgery as an option to get him back on the field.

The decision to get the surgery done was taken by the BCCI

in coordination with the NCA and Bumrah.

As *ESPNcricinfo* also reported, it has been a frustrating wait for Bumrah. He has attempted to make a comeback more than once since the injury last August, which had taken him out of the Asia Cup.

Initially, the injury had not seemed too serious, with Bumrah named in India's T20 World Cup squad on September 12. To mark his fitness, Bumrah even played in the last two T20Is of the Australia series on September 23 and on September 25.

However, he did not show up for the first T20I against South Africa in Thiruvananthapuram on September 28.

It was later learnt that he had been taken for scans, which revealed a stress-related injury. The next day, he was taken to the NCA, where further scans confirmed that the injury was serious, and he was subsequently ruled out of the T20 World Cup.

Bumrah resumed his rehab in November and started to bowl by mid-December. His progress seemed positive when the selectors belatedly added him for the white-ball series against Sri Lanka, more than a week after the Indian squad was originally named.

While he had performed the match-simulation exercises at NCA, he felt discomfort while performing higher workloads during a fitness drill in Mumbai in early January.

Scans later revealed a fresh problem, which eventually ruled him out of the Australia Tests.

The Indian team management, as well as the NCA are seeking to have Bumrah return only when he is absolutely fit to perform at his peak. Team captain Rohit Sharma has also warned India against rushing the pacer back into action.

Motie among contenders for top ICC recognition

Rookie West Indies left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie has been nominated among the three players for the International Cricket Council men's Player-of-the-Month for February, the *Caribbean Media Corporation* has reported. Motie was born in Guyana, and is 27 years old.

He was named alongside England batter Harry Brook, and veteran India all rounder Ravindra Jadeja, in nominations that were announced last week by cricket's world governing body.

In only his third Test last month, Motie established a record 13 for 99 to spin West Indies to an innings and four-run victory over Zimbabwe in the second and final Test in Bulawayo.

The performance earned the visitors a 1-0 series win following a draw in the opening Test. His figures were the best by a West Indies spinner in Tests – surpassing the legendary Sonny Ramadhin, Alf Valentine, and Lance Gibbs.

Motie finished the two-Test series with 19 wickets to earn the

Player-of-the-Series award, and his first ever ICC Player-of-the-Month nomination.

He made his Test debut last June against Bangladesh, and has since picked up 19 wickets in his career at an outstanding average of 15.89. He has taken 136 wickets from 37 first class matches at 20.41 apiece.

Meanwhile, Brook scored heavily in England's recent Test series in New Zealand, gathering 329 runs at an average of 82, including a career-best 186 and two half-centuries. At 24 years old, he has played only six Tests.

Jadeja shone in the three-match series against Australia, picking up 21 wickets at 13.9 runs apiece as the hosts claimed a 2-1 series win. He is 34 years old, and a left-arm spinner. So far, he has taken 263 wickets from 63 Tests.

Australian women's player Ashleigh Gardner, England's Nat Sciver-Brunt, and South African Laura Wolvaardt were the three players nominated for the women's Player-of-the-Month award.



Gudakesh Motie

Badree gets CWI pick for assistant coach role

Samuel Badree has been named as an Assistant Coach of the West Indies senior Men's team for the upcoming six-match white ball series against South Africa. The announcement was made by Cricket West Indies last week.

Badree is a former West Indies leg-spinner, and will join the squad for the three ODI and three T20Is, which start tomorrow, and continue until March 28.

Said Badree: "I'm absolutely thrilled to be asked by CWI to join the team and work with this great group of players in South Africa for the white ball leg of the tour."

He has previously assisted CWI as a spin bowling consultant, and worked in the IPL. The latest offer is a "a continuation and an extension of that" relationship, he noted.

"I look forward to catching up with the players, some who I played with and most I already know, as we seek to acquit ourselves well on what is expected to be a challenging tour of South Africa. I also look forward to sharing my knowledge and experiences with the players as we look to bring some positive results to our loyal fans," he said.

Jimmy Adams, CWI's Director of Cricket said: "I'm happy that Samuel is going to be spending time with our white ball teams in South Africa. He brings plenty of international experience and a strong desire to assist our slow bowlers in becoming world class."

He added, "We believe this combination makes him ideally placed to add tremendous value to our support staff in South Africa, and specifically for our slow bowlers."

Badree is a two-time T20 World Cup winner. He played a vital role in both T20 World Cup winning campaigns in Sri Lanka in 2012, and in India in 2016. He played 52 T20Is and picked up 56 wickets between 2012 and 2018 – during which time he was the world's Number 1 ranked bowler in the T20 format.

West Indies are presently in South Africa. The white ball matches start tomorrow, with the first ODI at Buffalo Park in East London. The T20Is start on March 25 at SuperSports Park.

West Indies white ball match schedule:

March 16: 1st ODI at Buffalo Park, East London (day/night)

March 18: 2nd ODI at Buffalo Park, East London (day/night)

March 21: 3rd ODI at JB Marks Oval, Potchefstroom

March 25: 1st T20Is at SuperSport Park, Centurion

March 26: 2nd T20I at SuperSport

Roach praises Garner

Former West Indies pacer Joel Garner was praised last week after his total number of wickets was surpassed by Kemar Roach.

As the *Caribbean Media Corporation* reported, Roach passed Garner after claiming five for 47 in the second innings of the opening Test against South Africa at SuperSport Park in Centurion. The feat place him in fifth place on the West Indies charts with 260 wickets from 76 Tests. Garner moved down a spot to sixth place with 259 wickets from 58 Tests.

"When I first came into the West Indies team, he was the team manager and I spent a lot of time in his room, communicating with him and stuff [like that], and learning the tricks of the trade," Roach said.

"And he's always took me under his wing. He checks in on me once in a while, and we had a good friendship, so to pass him is a great honour ... and it's just who's next on the list [to surpass]. For me, it's to stay fit, stay positive, stick around the young guys, get some youth from them, and play as long as I can for the West Indies," Roach said.

He was outstanding in the first session on the third day at SuperSport Park, dismantling South Africa for 116 after they resumed the morning on 49 for four.

The five-wicket haul was Roach's 11th in the longest format, further installing him as one of the greats of the modern game, and as West Indies' best seamer over the last decade.



Samuel Badree



Kemar Roach



Beth Mooney

Mooney on the wane after WPL knee injury

Australian opener Beth Mooney suffered an injury during her Gujarat Giants team's calamitous 143-run defeat in the opening match of India's new Women's Premier League last week.

It was Mooney's first major captaincy role, the *Guardian* reported. Also, her debut captaincy was the first challenge in what was the launch of the lucrative new, and potentially game-changing WPL league.

However, fortune did not smile on Mooney, with it all going wrong in the opening game. Mooney put the Mumbai Indians in to bat, only to watch them amass a huge total of 5-207.

Taking the lead in chasing the massive target, Mooney faced only four balls before she had to retire hurt without scoring. She appeared to have injured her left knee after taking a sharp turn while stealing a run.

Last week *ESPNcricinfo* reported that Laura Wolvaardt had been signed up by the Giants as a replacement for the injured Mooney for the remainder of the WPL.

At the time, Wolvaardt was in Pakistan participating in the PCB's Women's League exhibition matches. She was released by her team, Super Women, and was replaced by compatriot Sune Luus for the tournament.

Mooney was picked up at the WPL auction in February for INR two crore (approximately \$244,000 USD), in a side with Australians Ashleigh Gardner, Georgia Wareham, and Annabel Sutherland.

She entered the WPL after scoring 74 not out in 53 balls in Australia's win over South Africa in the T20 World Cup final. She was expected to take point in the Giants' batting, a role that appears to have now been handed to Wolvaardt.

Wolvaardt was in good form in her only appearance in the Women's League, scoring 53 not out in 36 balls when Super

Women beat Amazons by eight wickets in the first game of the tournament.

"I want to thank the [Pakistan Control Board] for this opportunity to play in the Women's League exhibition matches. It has been an incredible short journey, but I have loved the experience. The team has been amazing, and I have felt so welcoming," Wolvaardt said in a statement released by the PCB last week.

The statement added, "I wish both sides the best of luck with the rest of the series. I am sure both sides will strive hard, and they will do well and learn a lot from the experience they will get from the matches. I cannot wait to return to Pakistan in September with the South Africa's national women's team and learning more about this amazing country."

Luus recently led South Africa to the final of the T20 World Cup with being appointed captain after Dane van Niekerk, the regular captain, failed a fitness test and was omitted from the squad.

The Giants have invested heavily in Australian power, taking on Rachael Haynes as the coach. Mooney was quickly bought as captain and star batter. All rounder Gardner was secured as the joint-most expensive overseas recruit. Wareham and Sutherland finish off the Giants' powerful Aussie quartet.

However, during the game against the Mumbai Indians, the three bowlers all got carted around the field, conceding 100 runs off ten overs among them, with Gardner taking 1-38 off four, Wareham 1-30 off three, and Sutherland 0-32 off three. Also in the team for her big hitting, Gardner also failed with the bat after being caught at slip for a golden duck.

Meanwhile, it was home hero, Mumbai captain Harmanpreet Kaur, who did most to get the tournament off to a rip-roaring start in front of an enthusiastic crowd, cracking a spirited 65 off 30 balls.

Additionally, "The prospect of playing in front of a full Lord's or Edgbaston is pretty cool, it's what you grow up watching. We want to play in front of the biggest crowds we can and hopefully put on a show for them."

2023 Women's Ashes breaks ticket sales record

The 2023 Women's Ashes broke the ticket sales record for England women's fixtures, with 55,000 tickets already sold by last week, the British Broadcasting Corporation reported.

It added that with 100 days left, the series has already sold more tickets than for all of England's games in 2022. All games in the women's multi-format series are to be played at Test match grounds for the first time.

The series starts with a five-day Test match at Trent Bridge, Nottingham on June 22. England will be attempting to regain the Ashes after Australia won the last series in 2021-22.

Australia also won the last series, which was played in England in 2019, when the total attendance was 32,281.

But 2023 marks the first year that the men's and women's Ashes are being played alongside one another on a joint platform and without any fixture clashes.

"It's really exciting, and a big crowd makes such a difference," said England all rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt.



Nat Sciver-Brunt

- 1st T20: July 1, Edgbaston, Birmingham
- 2nd T20: July 5, The Kia Oval
- 3rd T20: July 8, Lord's
- 1st ODI: July 12, Bristol
- 2nd ODI: July 6, The Ageas Bowl, Southampton
- 3rd ODI: July 18, Taunton

The series consists of one Test match followed by three ODIs and three T20s, which are to be played at Edgbaston, the Kia Oval, and at Lord's.

As of late last week, the T20 at Edgbaston had already sold 14,000 tickets, and looks set to break the previous attendance record of 15,000 for a single fixture, when England played India at Lord's in 2022.

Women's Ashes schedule 2023
Test match: June 22-26, Trent Bridge, Nottingham

Cricket Schedule

(ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Wednesday March 15, 2023

Ireland tour of Bangladesh, 2023
TBC vs Ireland, Practice Match, Location To Be Confirmed, 02:00 PM

ICC Cricket World Cup League Two 2019-2023
Papua New Guinea vs UAE, 5th Match, Tribhuvan University International Cricket Ground, Kirtipur, 09:00 AM

Thursday March 16, 2023

West Indies tour of South Africa, 2023
South Africa vs West Indies, 1st ODI, Buffalo Park, East London, 01:00 PM

ICC Cricket World Cup League Two 2019-2023
Nepal vs United Arab Emirates, 6th Match, Tribhuvan University International Cricket Ground, Kirtipur, 09:00 AM

Friday March 17, 2023

Sri Lanka tour New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs Sri Lanka, 2nd Test, Day 1, Basin Reserve, Wellington, 11:00 AM
Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 1st ODI, Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, 01:30 PM

Saturday March 18, 2023

West Indies tour of South Africa, 2023
South Africa vs West Indies, 2nd ODI, Buffalo Park, East London, 01:00 PM

Sri Lanka tour New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs Sri Lanka, 2nd Test, Day 2, Basin Reserve, Wellington, 11:00 AM
Ireland tour of Bangladesh, 2023
Bangladesh vs Ireland, 1st ODI, Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Sylhet, 02:30 PM

Sunday March 19, 2023

Sri Lanka tour New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs Sri Lanka, 2nd Test, Day 3, Basin Reserve, Wellington, 11:00 AM
Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 2nd ODI, Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium, Visakhapatnam, 1:30 PM

Monday March 20, 2023

Sri Lanka tour New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs Sri Lanka, 2nd Test, Day 4, Basin Reserve, Wellington, 11:00 AM
Ireland tour of Bangladesh, 2023
Bangladesh vs Ireland, 2nd ODI, Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Sylhet, 2:30 PM

Tuesday March 21, 2023

Netherlands tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs Netherlands, 1st ODI, Harare Sports Club, Harare, 09:15 AM
West Indies tour of South Africa, 2023
South Africa vs West Indies, 3rd ODI, Senwes Park, Potchefstroom, 10:00 AM
Sri Lanka tour New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs Sri Lanka, 2nd Test, Day 5, Basin Reserve, Wellington, 11:00 AM

Wednesday March 22, 2023

Australia tour of India, 2023
India vs Australia, 3rd ODI, MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai, 01:30 PM

Thursday March 23, 2023

Netherlands tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs Netherlands, 2nd ODI, Harare Sports Club, Harare, 09:15 AM
Ireland tour of Bangladesh, 2023
Bangladesh vs Ireland, 3rd ODI, Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Sylhet, 02:30 PM

Saturday March 25, 2023

Netherlands tour of Zimbabwe, 2023
Zimbabwe vs Netherlands, 3rd ODI, Harare Sports Club, Harare, 09:15 AM
West Indies tour of South Africa, 2023
South Africa vs West Indies, 1st T20I, SuperSport Park, Centurion, 02:00 PM
Sri Lanka tour New Zealand, 2023
New Zealand vs Sri Lanka, 1st ODI, Eden Park, Auckland, 02:00 PM

Afghanistan vs Pakistan in UAE, 2023
Afghanistan vs Pakistan, 1st T20I, Sharjah Cricket Stadium, Sharjah, 06:00 PM

Sunday March 26, 2023

West Indies tour of South Africa, 2023
South Africa vs West Indies, 2nd T20I, SuperSport Park, Centurion, 02:00 PM.



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Mississauga For Sale \$1,588,000

Location!
Location! Pride of ownership move-in ready detached 4+1 spacious bdrms, 4 washrooms on quiet street. Freshly painted, 6 parking spaces, hardwood floors, LED lighting, W/O to an entertaining deck & beautiful landscaped backyard w/exquisite seasonal floral gardening. Sep entrance to newly reno open concept bsmt w/custom kitchen, quartz countertop, potlights, porcelain tiles, vinyl floor & much more. Close to major hwy's & all amenities. Walking distance to Square One.



Oshawa For Sale \$824,900

Location! Location! Location!
Fully reno. 3+1 bdrms, 2 full bthrm (+1 half bthrm) in family friendly neighbourhood in the lakeview area of Oshawa. Main flr has: hardwood floors thru-out, open concept w/upgraded ktchn w/ large eat-in island, granite countertops & all new S/S appls (2022). Open concept lvngrm flows seamlessly to private backyard w/ deck. Bsmt has engineered laminated flooring thru-out, large open concept lvng/rec. area, bdrms w/ private ensuite (2022), sep. laundry area w/brand new washer & dryer (2022). Upper flr has 3 large-sized bdrms w/full bath (2022), close to all amenities; walking distance to schools, parks, trails & shopping. Short drive to the beach. Don't miss opportunity to own one of the few detached homes in this neighbourhood.



FOR SALE HALIBURTON \$584,999

Welcome to one of highlands east, fully renovated (2010) three bedrooms all-season cottage with one full washroom, open concept dining/kitchen, & living area with wood fireplace & potlights. Relax on two huge decks and enjoy nature's beauty at your doorsteps. This spacious lot offers lots of parking spaces, 1 fully insulated natural pine bunkie, lots of storage spaces (5 sheds), and beautiful landscaping with a firepit. Steps to Tamarack lake for swimming, fishing, and canoeing. Minutes to the town of Gooderham.



Oshawa For Sale \$719,990

Location! Location! Location! Beautiful raised semi in a highly sought after neighbourhood in Oshawa. The main floor features a large living combined w/ dining, 2 large bedrooms & 1 fully upgraded washroom. The kitchen features a large island with quartz countertops throughout. The lower floor features; the laundry room, a large recreation room, 1 full fully upgraded washroom & primary bedroom with lots of light! The washrooms features quartz countertops & upgraded fixtures! Huge driveway able to fit up to 3 cars. Close to all amenities, 401/412/407, shopping, places of worship, walking trails, parks & much more...



Belmont Newcastle Starting @ \$800,000s

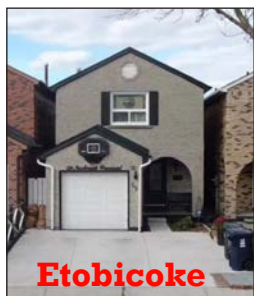
Belmont is a new townhouse & single family home development by Treasure Hill Homes currently in preconstruction at Given Road, Newcastle. Belmont has a total of 288 units. Belmont in Newcastle combines the best of luxury living & country charm. An expertly designed & spacious collection of town & single homes will be coming soon to a fantastic rural location just moments from the city. Newcastle is in the municipality of Clarington in Durham Region. Acclaimed as one of the most attractive small towns in the area, the community continues to develop while preserving its long-rooted history. This master-planned community is comprised of traditional & transitional designs. Experience a quaint village setting with homes constructed with lavish accents & fine details. With Treasure Hill's reputation for building quality homes, there is no other place to be besides right here. Contact us for More Info!!!



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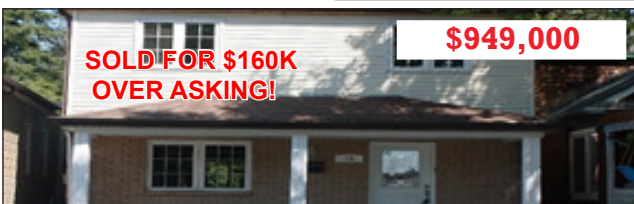
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