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Our Community Is Thriving!



Observance of the Holy Month of Ramadan at the IMO in Rexdale has seen visits to its *Iftaar* events by provincial and municipal luminaries, among them Premier Doug Ford and Toronto's Mayor Olivia Chow. In left photo, IMO's President Omar Farouk with Mayor Chow; at right, the camaraderie is quite evident in the greeting between Premier Ford and Brother Omar. Story and photos on Page 11. *Photos by Sharon Chandar*

Shiva Mandir's devotees in a haze of green powder during Holi observances last week. More on Page 14. *Photo by Hinano Beekhoo*

TT's new PM Young appointed, calls elections

— Trinidad and Tobago's newly-appointed Prime Minister Stuart Young has issued an appeal for national unity, urging Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar to join forces in writing a "new chapter" for the nation. Amid this nation's ongoing multitude of challenges, Young vowed integrity and accountability, even as he called General Elections for April 28.

manner," Young stated.

He then added, "I ask the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition to join with me to build a better Trinidad and Tobago. That is as much as I can do. And I ask that with clean hands and a clean heart."

Acknowledging that he could not dictate the response of Persad-Bissessar and her UNC, Young remained hopeful yet pragmatic, affirming, "I am not going to be hindered in any way by anyone who does not want what is best for Trinidad and Tobago. There may be legal parameters... but so be it. Let us wait and see how it unfolds."

Young's ascendancy via succession as the nation's leader comes amid a backdrop of political contention, with the Opposition threatening legal action challenging the legitimacy of this appointment.

With the UNC publicly contesting the constitutionality of Young's appointment, Persad-Bissessar was notably absent from the swearing-in ceremony on Monday.

However, despite this simmering tension, Young centred his inaugural address on the utopian theme of unity and collaboration, urging nationals to "put aside differences, leverage

See Page 19: PM Young pledges

Port-of-Spain – In his first official address on March 17 following appointment as Trinidad and Tobago's eighth Prime Minister, Stuart Young extended an invitation to Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar and her UNC party to collaborate in building a unified nation.

Young's ascension to the prime minister's portfolio was followed on March 18 with a call for General Elections, which will take place on April 28.

However, speaking from President's House in Port-of-Spain following his swearing-in on Monday, Young emphasised unity as central to his governance vision, stressing the necessity for collective action in navigating Trinidad and Tobago's future.

"This is a plea to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago because we... have to decide if we are going to move this country forward in a positive manner, and in a constructive



PM Young receives his letter of appointment from President Christine Kangaloo on March 17

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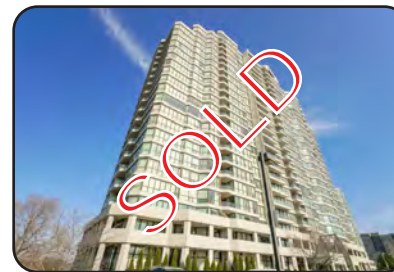
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The IMO in Rexdale hosted a Special Ramadan *Iftar* on March 9 that saw Ontario’s Premier Doug Ford (centre in photo) in attendance as the evening’s Guest of Honour. Also among the eminent officials at the well-attended event were Honorary Consul Mani Singh (left) at the Consulate of Guyana for Toronto, and Toronto Police Chief Myron Demkiw. See story and photos on Page 11.

Osman Khan receives King Charles Coronation medal

— Imdadul’s Osman Khan has been honoured with the King Charles III’s Coronation Medal in recognition of his decades-long commitment to providing a safe, communal space for Muslims in Canada. Khan’s award is a celebration of his unwavering advocacy for interfaith harmony and cultural inclusion in our diverse immigrant and Caribbean community.

A pillar and stalwart at Imdadul Islamic Center, Osman Khan was awarded King Charles III’s Coronation Medal by Canada’s Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Ya’ara Saks on March 12. The award is recognition for his steadfast devotion and unwavering commitment to nurturing religious freedom and cultural diversity within Toronto’s multicultural fabric.

Khan is widely revered in Toronto’s vibrant Muslim community. He received the prestigious medal for his decades-long dedication to community service, notably through his stewardship at the mosque. Located in North York, the dynamic mosque serves as a religious and cultural hub for thousands of Muslims from numerous countries who now make Canada their home.

The presentation ceremony with Minister Saks underscored Khan’s vital contribution to Canadian society, reflecting on the significance of his decades-long advocacy for religious freedoms, and his commitment to interfaith dialogue and cultural harmony.

Following the presentation, Khan’s daughter, Fatima, warmly shared insights into her father’s character, noting his devotion and commitment, the inner faith that drives him, and its outward overlap for the betterment of our community.

She noted this dedication transcends our immediate community, with Khan consistently advocating for an inclusive space where religious and cultural diversity is respected.

Khan’s advocacy ensures that Muslims, and Canadians of all backgrounds, feel secure in practicing their faith openly.

In receiving the King Charles III Coronation Medal, Khan joins a distinguished group in Canada that is being recognised for substantial contributions to Canadian society. All across Canada, the medal, which is administered by the Chancellery of Honours at Rideau Hall, is being presented to individuals whose



Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Ya’ara Saks presents the King Charles III’s Coronation Medal to Imdadul Islamic Center’s Osman Khan

service significantly benefits the nation, or specific regions and communities. It commemorates the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III as King of Canada.

Reflecting on her father’s achievement, Fatima Khan noted, “Osman Khan is a loving father and devoted husband... The hard work he consistently displays not only speaks to the strength in the content of his character but the passion of conviction within his heart that is loved and admired by all.”

Additionally, “He is a loving father and devoted husband... Congratulations, Dad!”

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Health Minister Khera with staff at William Osler

Health Minister Khera returns to career roots

Brampton – In a return to her professional roots, newly-appointed Minister of Health Kamal Khera visited the William Osler Health System last week, expressing profound gratitude to the staff and reaffirming her commitment to Canada’s healthcare community.

“Following my appointment as Canada’s Health Minister, it feels only fitting to return and express my gratitude to the staff where it all began for me,” Khera remarked.

She added, “To every healthcare worker across the country, thank you for everything you do. You don’t get enough recognition for your sacrifices.”

Khera described the visit as “deeply humbling” as she remembered her early, formative time at the Brampton facility before becoming a registered nurse.

As she recalled, “From a young nurse working with patients to now being Minister of Health, this journey has come full circle,” she noted, adding, “This is where my nursing career began, and it’s where I learned firsthand

about dedication, compassion, and resilience.”

First elected to Parliament in 2015, Khera represents Brampton West, and was Canada’s youngest woman to be appointed to office.

Her latest appointment as Minister of Health follows tenures as Minister of Seniors, as well as Parliamentary Secretary roles in health, national revenue, and international development.

Before her political career, Khera was a registered nurse specialising in oncology and palliative care, starting off at St Joseph’s Health Centre in Toronto after earning her Bachelor of Nursing degree from York University.

Reflecting on her new role in a post on X, formerly *Twitter*, Khera emphasised action and collaboration, stating, “As a nurse, my top priority is to always be there to support my patients and that’s the same mentality I’ll bring every day to the role of Minister of Health. Extremely grateful for the confidence of [Prime Minister Mark Carney]. Now, it’s time to roll up our sleeves and get to work.”



Health Minister Khera (right) with staff at William Osler’s gift shop



Health Minister Khera marked Holi last week with families in Brampton



MP Paul Chiang (sitting, third from right) joined the Ismaili Centre for Iftar Dinner and to contribute to its annual Ramadan Food Drive in a gesture of unity, inclusivity, and the commitment to service to others. Also attending the event was Markham’s Mayor Frank Scarpitti (sitting, second from left).



Scarbrough North MPP Raymond Cho (fourth from left) last week attended and made donations to the Muslim Welfare Canada’s *Ramadan Giving: Give Zakat, Give Hope* food drive. He also shared his printed Ramadan calendar for the Holy Month with the local community.

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Editorial

Holi and Ramadan

Holi is greater than the sum of its parts; when taken together, its religious *chowtaal* singing, and the vibrant bursts of its many colours, weave into a tapestry that unites our divided world.

Last week our community celebrated Holi, along with millions of Hindus around the world. Beneath the splashes of colour and *chowtaals* was a profound symbolism.

More than a celebration of Spring, it was also a statement of inclusivity, renewal, and harmony in a world today fractured by division. Celebrated as a marker of the triumph of good over evil, it was about the blurring of distinctions, a quiet affirmation of the strength of diversity.

Also, part of Holi's power lies in its invitation for renewal. As vibrant colours were streaked across smiling faces, they signalled more than aesthetic delight. It was a visual call for reconciliation and healing, and a compelling metaphor for renewal that urged us to abandon grudges, forgive past transgressions, and embrace a future defined by compassion and understanding.

As our community resonates with these vibrant messages from our recent Holi celebrations, we are simultaneously assimilating the solemn reflections that are emerging from observance of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

For Muslims around the world, this holy time is a period of intense spiritual introspection, discipline, and devotion. Ramadan's sacred call to fast from dawn until dusk serves as an exercise in self-control and reflection that cultivates patience, gratitude, compassion, and humility.

This sacred month invites believers into deep reflection and renewal. Ramadan's daily rhythm that begins with the pre-dawn meal of *Suhoor* and culminates with the sunset meal of *Iftar*, demands a disciplined commitment that extends beyond mere physical fasting. It embodies spiritual mindfulness and restraint, encouraging individuals to confront and refine their innermost selves.

This deliberate act of fasting is intended not only as abstinence from food and drink but also as an exercise in self-control, tempering desires, and prioritising spiritual nourishment over bodily cravings.

Ramadan further strengthens communal bonds, as families and communities gather at dusk, sharing meals and prayers in a powerful demonstration of solidarity and mutual care. In these moments, the barriers of isolation and individualism dissolve to become a collective and shared experience.

The virtues encouraged during Ramadan in empathy, generosity, and spiritual discipline, mirror the broader societal ideals celebrated during Holi. Both observances, through their respective practices, guide us toward cultivating an inclusive society, emphasising unity over division, compassion over conflict, and spirituality over material excess.

Yet the greatest potential of both Holi and Ramadan lies in their shared message to our community, namely, that inclusivity and compassion must not be occasional acts, but guiding principles for everyday living.

Indeed, both events remind us that our strength lies in our ability to embrace differences and locate unity in diversity, whether through joyous exchanges of colour, or in profound moments of reflection, discipline, and prayer.

In our present global landscape marred by polarisation, conflict, and division, both events provide us with a blueprint for a kinder and more empathetic world. They offer complementary visions for how we might transform our collective future: Holi by dissolving superficial differences in the sharing and mixing of colours on a global palette; Ramadan through cultivating discipline, compassion, and spiritual connectedness that transcend earthly divides.

As these sacred observances continue to resonate, let us renew our commitment to their core values in embracing diversity, cultivating empathy, and fostering unity within our community. The colours of Holi should linger in our hearts, prompting us toward lasting tolerance and respect.

Similarly, the lessons of Ramadan should not end with the culmination of *Eid-ul-Fitr*; rather, they should become part of our everyday lives, guiding us to consistent compassion, humility, generosity, and community building.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
Letters to be published will be edited where necessary.
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Time for a conversation about archiving our legacy

For the last 20 years, I have been researching the legacies of Indentureship, seeking out stories that challenge the primary identity of Indentured peoples and their descendants as “coolies” in a plantation setting.

This is my ongoing fight with the labels inscribed and imposed not only in the colonial archives, but encounters in my life – I cannot forget the course offered at University of Leeds, titled *Coolies, Convicts, and Concubines*, by a professor fond of alliteration.

In this quest to challenge misguided representations, I have been immensely aided by documents and photos found in personal archives. My entry begins with my mother, who would cut out columns from this very newspaper, *Indo-Caribbean World*, and send it to me when I was studying for my PhD in England.

Although she worked in retail during the day, she was truly an archivist at heart, labeling the Indo-Caribbean voices in each newspaper column, with a date and page number, and brief summary, allowing me to carry fragments of home in cold “Inglan”.

I have also had the privilege of meeting with members of our scattered diaspora, and learning their own archival practices. The late Pandit Rampersaud Tiwari (originally from Buxton, but who resided in Scarborough) had a treasure trove of documents from Guyana that travelled with him as he migrated, including political cartoons – that spoke to the (mis)representations of government, memos on education in post-Independence era (such as developing heritage language classes in Swahili and Bhojपुरi), and a list of Guyanese Creole idioms, to name a few.

I am not sure what happened to his precious archives, collected over the years, after he passed away in 2022. I hope someone is caring for them.

The late Randall Butisingh (Teacher Butisingh), also from Buxton but who moved to Florida, would generously share photocopies of newspaper clippings with me, mailing it to my address in Toronto, with notes on context. This was part of his personal archive that he had saved and brought with him out of Guyana to the US, and made his mission to share widely through his blog. He passed away in 2012, but his blog is still available.

Hamet Mootoo, the son of J.A. Mootoo, who founded Mootoo Photo Studio in Rosehall, Guyana, holds his father's glass plates from the photo studio. They are now in the UK. The glass plates (used by a Yashica large-format camera, ordered from the UK, and picked up at Fogarty's) contain an important



Nalini Mohabir

record of village life in Berbice from the 1950s, included hand-coloured images of everything from marriage ceremonies to passport photos.

Most recently, I have been in conversation with Vince Ramcharran (of Albion, now living in British Columbia) who had the foresight to take photographs of the turbulent 1950s and 1960s Guyana. Now those rare images are located far from Guyana, in the Pacific Northwest, but we are trying to find a good home for them.

The personal archive that continues to haunt me the most is in Port Maurant. I visited Cheddi Jagan's home nearly 20 years ago and vinyl records of *bhajans* from the 1940s, imported from Trinidad were outside on the verandah, slowly warping in the sun. I am not sure the state they are in today.

However, I like to think that something is shifting, especially with the advent of social media sites like *Cutlass Magazine* and *Brown History*. Not only do we have people in the community with the foresight to preserve our history, we also have a younger generation who are taking things digital.

I am still a fan of seeing objects in person, or of even being able to hold them. A *lorha* and *sil*, a *tawa*, or a *dhantal*, are signifiers of a rich legacy. A *belna* can tell a story! And so can our photographs, postcards, stamps, coins, jewelry, newspaper clippings, and other valuable objects we carried in our suitcases.

Our histories are still difficult to find in books and marginalised in educational institutions. And our communal and personal memories and archives are fast-disappearing – I cannot bear to think of the disintegrating archives turning to dust, in the film *Coolies: How Britain Re-invented Slavery*.

Yet we have the raw materials of history, in basements and bottom houses that can offer a different story, framing, and analysis of the past. Importantly, they give us an interpretation that differs from the voices of colonial authority preserved in London.

Our personal archives are also a testament to our history, identity, and community. Each of us have our own ways of tending to tender memories, which are collectively part of our community's survival. I feel blessed to locate myself in community through all the individuals who are preserving our stories (including this publication).

It is very difficult to grapple with the finite time each of us have on earth. This column is a plea for a conversation about how to preserve our history. It is about time we are represented in an archival or museum's collection.

Tale of cricket bats, wombats, and a screaming butterfly

I took in the grainy video with a sense of *déjà vu* and an uneasy irony: headlights casting a dull, jaundiced glow on the roadside, a squealing baby wombat in a predator's grasp. The social media influencer's voice was triumphant, luxuriating in the trophy-taking moment, totally oblivious to the baby wombat's terror, and the frenzy and helplessness in the chase by its solicitous mother.

By now we are familiar with the unwholesome narrative that unfolded in Australia earlier this month – a social media influencer opportunistically appropriating a baby wombat from its mother on a roadside as a momentary trophy, holding up the megafauna infant to a global gaze.

The fallout was immediate. How fitting it was that Australia's politicians swiftly condemned the incident, with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese dryly advising the influencer to try the same stunt with a baby crocodile.

Yet, beneath the satire of Albanese's biting wit lurked a darker soundbite, that the social media influencer was simply feeding a collective, complicit hunger. That with every click on the ‘Like’ button, the influencer's followers were reinforcing her unconscious entitlement to appropriate, monetise, and then discard.

The helplessness of the baby wombat and its traumatised mother loomed in my head all week. I found myself returning to my childhood in the homeland. Here was a time untouched by tarmacs and technology. Then our cricket bats were roughly hewn out of fallen coconut branches; a cricket ball was a young coconut, which not making the pick, had fallen out from the nest of its rapidly maturing peers.

We were playing cricket on the dusty roadway, our focus competitive despite the clumsy roll of the misshapen ‘ball’. At the sides of our adobe huts, mothers and daughters were vigorously fanning reluctant, smoky wood fires with impatience, and in my grandmother's case, with noticeable annoyance.

The roadway outside our huts were dirt tracks, deeply rutted from heavily-laden sugar cane carts. Then we paused mid-laughter, looking down the track at a remarkable sight.

An English automobile was approaching with a ponderous gait, carefully navigating the pot-holed depths of the rutted trail, its trajectory certain to disrupt our game. Stopping in the middle of our makeshift pitch, the vehicle's occupants began to

Romeo Kaseram



cautiously roll down the windows.

We were then scrutinised. What the probing, detached eyes saw were young boys, sunburnt and without shirts; shoeless, with hairstyles roughly cut to the depth and circumference of small bowls. In the middle distance, the adults had come to a tentative halt. Through the choking wood smoke, I could see Ma gazing at me with warning in her eyes, her back frozen in an arc as she held the pot spoon over steaming rice.

We endured the gaze; it was a leisurely, touristic observation to the patient accompaniment of the idling engine, the visitors drinking us in from the top of our homespun haircuts to our shoeless indigence, then looking across to the soot-blackened cooking pots, its temperamental fires, and dented water barrels with sides patched with blobs of pitch sitting under our thatched roofs.

We were silent spectacles in a theatre of poverty and helplessness. Then a back door quickly swung open on noiseless hinges, and polished leather shoes stepped out at a rapid run. Even as the interloper ran a net was being uncurled from its lengthy handle; we gasped in horror at the runner's target.

A butterfly was sitting placidly on the lengthy stalk of a wildflower, shimmering in the sunlight as if the wings had been dusted with crushed gemstones moments after it was formed. It rocked gently on its throne of petals, the bulbs of its eyes serene, indifferent to the rapidly approaching danger.

The visitor lunged, swift and practiced, scooping the startled butterfly into the vastness of the net. Quickly, before it could flutter, the net was folded. In less than second, the vastness of the sky had been reduced to the pressing constraint of a net. Its captor uprooted the flower next, the mighty effort taking roots with clinging soil into the waiting vehicle.

I recall the silence that descended as the rising dust obscured the departing vehicle. It was a silence weighted down by the callousness of it all – that reflexive response to enter our world, appropriate its beauty, and then exit, without conscience or acknowledgement, totally apathetic to the fingerprints left behind by hands that stain pristine panes of glass.

The influencer appropriating the baby wombat brought it back: the intruding captor, a screaming butterfly, and the casualness of entitlement with no regard for the trauma left behind.

Guyana must be attentive to Maduro's military and hybrid tactics

Dear Editor,

Back in 1991, when Bill Clinton was running against George H.W. Bush, his political strategist came up with a slogan to exploit the recession that just kicked in: "It's the economy, stupid!"

It meant that apprehending the problem should be a no-brainer.

Over the last few years I have been pointing out there is a method to Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro's sabre-rattling madness over Essequibo: "It's a hybrid war being fought in a grey zone, stupid".

If we accept this proposition, then our response should be focused on dealing with Maduro's various tactics to occupy Essequibo.

We have been focusing on his military threat to invade Essequibo, and his episodic massing of troops at our border has emphasised that particular threat. The March 1 intrusion of his Naval Patrol Boat into our EEZ to threaten the Exxon FPSO was simply his latest variant of that tactic.

Our diplomatic appeal to our allies and the international community elicited salutary responses ranging from an explicit warning by the US: "Venezuelan naval vessels threatening ExxonMobil's floating production, storage and offloading (FPSO) unit is unacceptable and a clear violation of Guyana's internationally-recognised maritime territory. Further provocation will result in consequences for the Maduro regime. The United States reaffirms its support for Guyana's territorial integrity and the 1899 arbitral award" to cancellation of Chevron's oil license; a combined naval exercise by the US, Netherlands and France; G-7 condemnation and a reiteration of US support by Ambassador Nicole Theriot.

However, as we have reiterated, while we cannot discount Maduro pressing the military button, he would have calculated that the costs of a military invasion might be too high.

Raising the Venezuelan-created "border controversy", which is part of their strategic culture, Venezuelans react in a jingoistic



Nichole Theriot

and nationalist fashion whenever they are made to feel that the territorial integrity of their county is threatened. Deploying the hybrid warfare option while operating in a grey zone allows him to have his cake and eat it too.

As such, we must continue with the rejigging of our forces under training by the US Security Force Assistance Brigades.

The SFABs are a US Army innovation to deal with the reality of hybrid wars in the grey zone that used to be handled by their Special Operations Forces. They organise, train, equip, and advise foreign security forces like ours to face threats by wannabe regional hegemonies like Venezuela.

Last year, I suggested one option in rethinking our military doctrine and force structure: creating a professional irregular force to augment our present conventional forces with one that is specifically selected, organised, educated, trained, equipped, and supported for asymmetrical operations against Venezuela in our jungle terrain. This force should be ethnically representative of our populace.

We should also continue strengthening our alliance with the US, creating a military base in Essequibo to which our



Nicholás Maduro

We cannot claim to be misinformed of Maduro's intentions. After satellite images showed Venezuelans building a bridge to our half of Ankoko Island, which they have occupied since 1966, the Venezuelan Strategic Operational Commander of its National Armed Forces, Major General Domingo Hernández Larez revealed that the move was the start of operations to implement the annexation of Essequibo.

As was stated, "Engineers of the territorial defensive system complied crossing the Cuyuni River through the campaign bridge to bring harmony and progress to our territory of the Guyana Essequibo State. Machinery will pass, we will build schools, universities, health centres, supply centres, interconnection tracks, commerce and many other productive projects in favour of our fellow Essequibians".

Our new policy of screening Venezuelan "immigrants and refugees" must be tightened since we do not want to wake up one morning and find that a majority has voted in Essequibo to be part of Guayana Essequiba. Let us learn from the Baltic States' halting Russian infiltration.

Ravi Dev, Guyana, via email.

allies can have access, and so on. But we must counter Maduro's non-ballistic hybrid tactics.

The US 2020 Defence Strategic Update describes the grey zone as "activities designed to coerce countries in ways that seek to avoid military conflict... [using] ... paramilitary forces, militarisation of disputed features, exploiting influence, interference operations and the coercive use of trade and economic levers".

This could have been written specifically to describe Maduro's post-2015 actions against us. We compliment the government for taking seriously Maduro's follow up on his legislative action a year ago to convert Essequibo into "Guayana Essequiba" and to now elect a Governor on May 25. We should not miss the twist of his knife that this falls one day before our May 26 Independence anniversary.



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Legitimacy should be determined via elections, not internal selection

Dear Editor,

Trinidad and Tobago operates under a first-past-the-post electoral system, where the political party winning the majority of parliamentary seats forms the government.

How, then, can a new government be formed without holding a general election? Is this a breach of our Constitution? Why have we not seen any challenges by our constitutional lawyers?

Historically, every government has been formed after elections. The leader of the victorious party is appointed Prime Minister, and he then selects the Attorney General.

After 62 years of Independence, a PNM leader has moved away from that system, and is changing the government without an election.

This raises a serious question. Is our democracy being manipulated for political convenience?

Former Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, rather than allowing the electorate to determine the country's leadership through a general election, instead facilitated an internal process where his party's MPs elected his suc-

cessor, who has now appointed a new Attorney General.

This manoeuvre, which bypasses the voice of the people, is deeply troubling. It challenges not only fairness but potentially the legality of such a transition.

The fundamental principle of democracy is that governments derive their legitimacy from the will of the electorate. How, then, can a new government be formed without holding a general election?

Surprisingly, no constitutional lawyer or legal expert has come forward to challenge this move. But silence does not equate to legality or fairness.

The implications are significant:

- Does the Constitution allow for a Prime Minister to unilaterally facilitate a transfer of power through internal party mechanisms?
- Should the people not have a say in their governance?
- Is this setting a dangerous precedent for future leaders to sidestep democratic elections?

These moves seem unchallenged, so I wonder what other violations of our democracy



Keith Rowley

have taken place under Rowley's leadership.

Rowley's departure should have been an opportunity for reflection and renewal through the ballot box. Instead, it sends a disturbing

message to the people of Trinidad and Tobago: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely".

If the former Prime Minister can facilitate a process where his party selects his successor without the people's approval, what does that say about our democracy?

Are we to accept that leaders can manipulate the system to suit their own agenda, rather than respecting the will of the electorate?

The democratic process exists for a reason—to ensure that power remains with the people, not political elites. The legitimacy of a government should be determined through elections, not internal party selections.

The people of Trinidad and Tobago deserve transparency, fairness, and above all, a government that upholds the spirit and letter of our Constitution.

Rowley, thank you for your service, but this is not how democracy should function. The people and not a party's internal process, should decide the next leader of our nation.

Dennise Demming, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

TT's Constitution clear on selection of PM based on majority support by MPs

Dear Editor,

As of March 17, Stuart Young has become the *de jure* and *de facto* Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

And all the 'ole talk' as to whether President Christine Kangaloo would be perceived to be biased and partisan in appointing Young because she comes from the bowels of the PNM is making a mountain out of a molehill; it is simply political rubbish.

The Constitution of our Trinidad and Tobago, the supreme law of the land, clearly and unambiguously provides for such an appointment if the majority of the MPs in the House of Representatives signified to the President in clear and unambiguous terms that Young has their support; that he in fact is their leader in that House, and that they constitute the majority of MPs of the PNM.

The Constitution contemplates that the

Prime Minister of the country is not necessarily the leader of the party which has the majority of MPs in the House, thus Young could legally sit in Parliament as Prime Minister of the country while Keith Rowley (or any other person whether elected or not to Parliament) occupies the position of leader of the PNM. End of story.

The country must now prepare itself for voting for a Prime Minister and political party capable and willing to govern the multiethnic, racial, religious and political interests of all our citizens, and not in the interest of some at the expense and disadvantage of others.

And I say, without fear of contradiction, that the great majority of the people of Trinidad and Tobago was disadvantaged by all the past governments of this country.

Israel B. Rajah-Khan SC, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Stuart Young is sworn-in as TT's PM by President Christine Kangaloo

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IMF review notes Guyana's rapid advancement, expansion in scope

Guyana's economic transformation is advancing rapidly and expanding in scope, according to a positive review by the International Monetary Fund.

In its March 7 release following a two-week visit from February 24 to March 7, the IMF highlighted Guyana's highly favourable medium-term economic outlook, noting balanced risks. The review commended the government's commitment to macroeconomic stability, fiscal sustainability, and inclusive growth.

The IMF attributed Guyana's exceptional economic performance to its rapidly expanding oil production, robust non-oil sector, and large-scale public infrastructure investments. From 2022 to 2024, the country achieved the highest real GDP growth rate globally, averaging 47 percent.

Beyond oil, the non-oil economy demonstrated broad-based resilience, particularly in construction and services. The government's push to diversify the economy includes a focus on agriculture to reduce dependence on oil. The mining and quarrying industry, including sand, stone, diamonds, and manganese, grew by nearly 25 percent in 2024, driven by increased construction activity, which itself expanded by 27 percent, supported by policies such as the housing drive expansion and lower interest rates.

The agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector experienced mixed results. Rice production saw double-digit growth, benefiting from investments in drainage, irrigation, farm-to-market roads, and land expansion. However, the sugar industry continued to struggle despite revitalisation efforts.

The IMF projected real GDP growth of approximately 10.25 percent and real non-oil GDP growth of 13 percent in 2025. Inflation is expected to rise to four percent by the end of 2025, up from three percent in 2024, largely due to higher food prices.

Government social transfer policies have increased disposable income and reduced poverty. The IMF recommended integrating additional targeted transfers into a medium-term fiscal framework to further support inclusive growth and accelerate progress toward Guyana's Sustainable Development Goal of eliminating poverty.

To improve living standards, the government introduced several initiatives in 2024, including a one-time cash grant of (GY) \$100,000 for citizens aged 18 and over. The minimum monthly wage for public sector workers is set to increase from (GY) \$75,000 to (GY) \$100,000 by the end of 2025. Families also benefited from a (US) \$50 per child income tax allowance to ease financial burdens. Additionally, all students receive an annual 'Because We Care' grant of (GY) \$50,000.

A significant (GY) \$10 billion injection into the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) was announced, alongside new healthcare and education policies. Beginning in 2025, a universal healthcare voucher of (GY) \$10,000 per child will cover essential medical tests to aid early detection and prevention of non-communicable diseases.

The government also abolished tuition fees at the University of Guyana starting in January 2025, benefiting over 11,000 students and eliminating outstanding graduate loans.

In November, the government signed a two-year agreement with the Guyana Public Service Union, providing a retroactive ten percent salary increase for 2024, and an eight percent increase for 2025. The cumulative salary increase over four years now stands at 35 percent.

At a macro level, the IMF noted that following a strong fiscal impulse in 2024, the budget deficit is projected to decrease from 7.3 percent of GDP to below five percent in 2025, as rising oil revenues offset increased expenditures. The

large current account surplus of 24.5 percent of GDP in 2024 is expected to moderate to nine percent in 2025, reflecting imports for the fourth oil Floating Production Storage and Offloading vessel.

While the economy shows no clear signs of overheating, the IMF emphasised the importance of closely monitoring macroeconomic trends and proactively implementing tighter policies as needed to maintain a balanced expansion.

The IMF cited balanced risks to Guyana's outlook. Upside potential includes further oil discoveries and productivity-enhancing investments, such as strengthening energy resilience. However, risks include potential overheating, which could lead to higher inflation and real exchange rate appreciation beyond sustainable levels. Additional risks stem from global commodity price volatility and climate-related shocks.

Fiscal policy remains appropriate given Guyana's development and investment needs. The 2024 increase in the Natural Resource Fund withdrawal ceiling enabled substantial capital expenditure, reaching over 12.5 percent of GDP. The IMF recommends a gradual fiscal deficit reduction by 2031, ensuring intergenerational equity and macroeconomic sustainability. Strengthening fiscal discipline through a comprehensive medium-term fiscal framework, improved public financial management, and regular expenditure reviews will further enhance transparency and efficiency.

Monetary policy remains tight, effectively containing inflation. Key measures include aligning broad money growth with non-oil GDP growth, managing banking sector liquidity, and adjusting monetary policy as needed to prevent imbalances.

Expanding the monetary policy toolkit – such as enhancing interest rate mechanisms, reducing excess liquidity, and deepening financial markets – will improve monetary policy transmission. The IMF noted that Guyana's current stabilised exchange rate regime remains suitable, but suggested reassessing the framework as the economy evolves.

Guyana continues to strengthen governance in the NRF and modernise public sector operations. The 2023 NRF and Public Accountability and Oversight Committee Annual Reports were presented to the National Assembly, while petroleum revenue notifications are published as mandated.

The Bank of Guyana also provides regular financial performance reports on the NRF. Revenue administration capacity is improving, procurement processes are being modernised, and efforts are underway to introduce e-procurement as part of broader digitalisation initiatives.

The IMF supports Guyana's anti-corruption and anti-money laundering reforms. The 2024 Caribbean Financial Action Task Force Mutual Evaluation Report highlighted Guyana's progress in risk assessments, including a 2023 sectoral risk assessment on extractive industries.

Additionally, the 2024 Organisation of American States Sixth Round Review of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption acknowledged the country's advancements. Strengthening the Integrity Commission and enhancing compliance with financial disclosure requirements remain priorities.

Further fiscal transparency reforms are necessary, especially in extractive industries. Internal audit capabilities are expanding, but timely publication of audit reports for some public entities remains an area for improvement. Following the 2024 Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative report, authorities are working on implementing beneficial ownership transparency standards. Strengthening regulatory compliance in non-oil mining, par-



Dwarka Lakhan



Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali with beneficiaries of the Health Voucher

ticularly for large-scale operators, is also a focus. Hiring additional magistrates and judges is part of broader rule-of-law reforms.

Guyana remains a global leader in climate policies, leveraging forest conservation efforts and enhancing its energy matrix to bolster macroeconomic resilience. With vulnerabilities such as sea level rise and flooding, the government is prioritising actions outlined in its Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030. The Gas-to-Energy project aims to secure reliable electricity nationwide as a step toward a cleaner energy mix.

The IMF lauded Guyana's initiatives to foster inclusive growth, economic diversification, and labour force development. Addressing labour shortages through vocational education and training will support economic expansion and increase women's participation in the workforce. Investments in trade connectivity, productivity, and export diversification – particularly in high-value agriculture and manufacturing – are critical.

The IMF welcomed Guyana's efforts to modernise official statistics and pledged support for further capacity development. Improving national accounts and price statistics to reflect the evolving economy remains a priority. The upcoming household budget survey, set for completion by 2027, and regular labour force surveys will help refine government policies for sustained growth.

Based on the IMF review, Guyana is well positioned to continue to grow at a healthy pace, while its people will continue to the benefit from government policies aimed at uplifting their standard of living.

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

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Chowtaals, colour at ICGAA's Holi event

Toronto – The Indo Caribbean Golden Age Association celebrated Holi on March 16 at Agincourt Recreational Centre in Scarborough. Over 100 seniors and members, together with their families, joined in the lively celebration with enthusiasm, positivity, and lot of colours.

Highlight of the event was the vibrant *Chowtaal* singing, a form of folk songs passed down from our Indo-Caribbean ancestors. The singing was performed by seniors and musicians, and created an ambiance of nostalgia while providing younger guests with opportunities to participate in the celebration and in

the traditional art of *Chowtaal* singing.

Also, for the first time, ICGAA had its very first solo dance, a super-amazing performance that was rendered by six-year-old Tiya from Footsteps Dance School.

The event also saw a traditional and homemade vegetarian luncheon, which was sponsored by the family of Leonard & Lalita Sanicharan of Air Touch Travels Inc.

For those interested in sponsoring future events, or who are willing to contribute, kindly contact Lalita Sanicharan, ICGAA's President at 905-827-0368.



ICGAA's Chowtaal singers



Dancer Tiya was well-appreciated



ICGAA's members



ICGAA's Treasurer Barb Nandalall



Music director Anjie Pitamber (second, right) with guests



Leonard and Lalita Sanicharan

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Khalid Baksh (l-r), Mayor Chow, and Omar Farouk

IMO hosts Ramadan Iftaar

Toronto – The International Muslim Organisation in Rexdale hosted special Ramadan *Iftaar* events on March 9 and March 16 that brought together members of the Guyanese-Canadian Muslim community and distinguished guests to mark the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Guest of honour on March 9 was Premier Doug Ford. Among the other eminent guests were Toronto Police Chief Myron Demkiw, Police Superintendent Maninder Mann, other high-ranking members of the Toronto Police Service, Guyana’s Honorary Consul General Mani Singh, and newly-elected MPP for York South-Weston, Mohamed Firin. In attendance at the March 16 event was Toronto’s Mayor Olivia Chow, and Councillor for Ward 1, Vincent Crisanti.

The events were organised by the IMO, led by its President Omar Farouk, and saw over 600 attendees that included IMO faithful, One Guyana Forum members, and Guyanese diaspora.

The events were chaired by Brother Omar, who along with other executive members, ensured that IMO’s warmth and hospitality were extended to all its guests.

Both Iftaar events were marked with the inclusiveness and religiosity that make the Holy Month of Ramadan a special occasion. The communal breaking of the fast evidenced the Holy Month’s solid values of compassion, generosity, and community, making both events memorable for all in attendance.

Photos by Sharon Chandar



IMO’s Omar Farouk and Premier Doug Ford





Caribbean Airlines' CEO and Senior Management met with members of the Jamaican diaspora in Fort Lauderdale. CEO Garvin Medera (second from right) is with Jamaica Consul General for Miami, Oliver Mair (second from left), Jamaica Tourist Board Deputy Director of Tourism for the Americas, Philip Rose (at centre), Executive Manager Marketing & Loyalty, Alicia Cabrera (far left), and Executive Manager Corporate Communications, Dionne Ligoure (at far right).

CAL resumes Jamaica-Florida flights

Port of Spain – Caribbean Airlines has resumed its non-stop service between Montego Bay and Fort Lauderdale, a move aimed at strengthening connectivity for Jamaica's diaspora. The airline reinstated daily flights on March 11, providing 1,323 seats per week in each direction, reaffirming its commitment to customer-driven expansion.

The decision to relaunch the Montego Bay-Fort Lauderdale route comes in response to passenger demand, underscoring Caribbean Airlines' dedication to serving its customers. With over 300,000 Jamaicans residing in Fort Lauderdale and surrounding areas, the service provides a seamless travel option for those eager to reunite with loved ones or immerse themselves in Jamaica's vibrant culture.

"At Caribbean Airlines, home is where the heart is," said CEO Garvin Medera.

He added, "We understand the deep connections between Jamaica and its diaspora, and this daily service between Montego Bay and Fort Lauderdale is another way we are making it easier for our customers to get home. We are delighted to reinstate this route, driven by the needs of our passengers, and we remain committed to providing convenient, reliable, and heartfelt service to our Jamaican family."

The inaugural flight was met with enthusiasm from key industry partners, including the Jamaica Tourist Board, the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association, and members of the business community.

Their presence underscored the route's importance not only for leisure travelers but also for business and tourism interests, ensuring continued economic and cultural exchange between Jamaica and its diaspora.

Beyond air travel, Caribbean Airlines has long been an advocate for Jamaican culture. The airline has been the presenting sponsor of Reggae Sumfest for six years, supporting the country's internationally renowned music scene. It is also a sponsor of ISSA Champs, an event celebrating Jamaica's athletic talent and youth development.

As part of the route launch, Caribbean Airlines' senior leadership met with members of the Jamaican diaspora in Fort Lauderdale, reinforcing its long-term investment in the market. These engagements highlight the airline's broader mission of fostering regional connectivity and cultural solidarity.

The Montego Bay-Fort Lauderdale route is a key component of Caribbean Airlines' strategic growth plan, aligning with its broader vision to enhance travel options across the region. Looking ahead to 2025, the airline remains focused on expanding its footprint while ensuring sustainable service improvements.

"Caribbean Airlines is part of the Caribbean story," Medera noted, adding, "We are here for the long haul, committed to the people of the Caribbean, Jamaica, and the diaspora, and dedicated to making travel more accessible and enjoyable for everyone we serve."

our different perspectives... while looking for common ground."

He stressed that multilateralism, security, governance rooted in the rule of law, and respect for human rights must coexist.

"These exist in unison; they are not separate from each other. Without one, the other cannot be fully attained," he said.

Ramdin expressed his commitment to fostering a "strong active relationship" with OAS member states, urging collaboration and dialogue even in the face of differing viewpoints.

"As I stand here today, my commitment is absolutely to serve all member states of this organisation. Our collective strength lies in our ability to work together... unity requires collaboration, more specifically dialogue, consultation, and collective resolve around the table," he affirmed.

Beyond organisational efficiency, Ramdin identified Haiti's ongoing crisis as a critical concern. He highlighted the need for the OAS to enhance its support for the nation, which continues to grapple with violence from armed gangs and limited international aid.



Albert Ramdin

Suriname's Ramdin new OAS Secretary General

Suriname's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Albert Ramdin, has been elected by acclamation as the new Secretary General of the Organisation of American States following the withdrawal of Paraguay's Foreign Minister, Rubén Ramírez. Ramdin will serve a five-year term, succeeding Luis Almagro, who held the position since 2015.

His election is a milestone for the Caribbean, as he becomes the first national from the region to lead the hemispheric body. In his address to the 56th special session of the OAS General Assembly, Ramdin emphasised the importance of democracy as the foundation of freedom, justice, and human dignity.

"In a world that is quickly evolving, the foundation of a strong democracy continues to be the cornerstone of freedom, justice, and human dignity," Ramdin stated. He underscored the need for dialogue and cooperation in addressing contemporary challenges.

"We realise we exist in challenging times, constantly and rapidly changing roads, and as we face these challenges of the present and look towards the future, I believe it is imperative that we listen to each other, understand



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
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WHEN HOMEOWNERSHIP TURNS INTO A FINANCIAL NIGHTMARE A CAUTIONARY TALE OF OVERPAYING, RISING RATES, AND HARD LESSONS LEARNED

In 2022, a family bought their first home in a hot seller's market. With low interest rates, they jumped in, paying \$950,000 among multiple bidders to secure a condo townhome listed at \$750,000. They put down \$50,000 and took a fixed three-year mortgage.

Fast-forward to renewal: Their monthly payments more than doubled, and they faced a \$750 maintenance fee plus utilities. Then, life threw another curveball: one homeowner fell ill, making it even harder to keep up financially.

Selling seemed like the only option, but the market had shifted. Similar homes were now selling for \$800,000, but their mortgage balance was \$940,000 across two loans. Factoring in closing costs, selling would leave them with a \$200,000 shortfall. To make matters worse, they had two co-signers who would be on the hook if they defaulted.

This is the story of a hardworking family that saved to buy a home – only to find themselves drowning in debt. Let's examine what went wrong and how others can avoid the same fate.

As a first-time buyer, your realtor plays a significant role in guiding you – but not all realtors are the same. That's why it's essential to do your homework.

Ask family and friends for advice, but remember, their experiences may differ from yours. Get recommendations, then interview multiple realtors and take notes.

Before you start house hunting, fully understand the buying process. If you don't, keep researching and meeting with realtors until you do. Being prepared is the best way to avoid costly mistakes!

When buying real estate, it's wise to go against the trend. If there's a bidding war, step back. Emotions run high, and the fear of losing can lead to overpaying.

In this case, the buyer paid \$200,000 over asking. But when the lender appraised the home for less, they had to cover the difference – money they didn't have.

Before submitting an offer, do your homework! Check what similar homes are selling for in the area to avoid overpaying.

If you're buying a condo, make your offer conditional on reviewing the status certificate – it's like the building's DNA. Your lawyer will analyse its financial health and let you know if the condo is well-managed. A substantial reserve fund means stable maintenance fees, while a weak one could lead to steep increases.

Whenever possible, also include conditions for a home inspection and financing approval. A little caution now can prevent big regrets later!

One of the family's biggest mistakes was taking on more debt than they could handle. When buying a home, lenders don't just look at your credit score and income – they also check two key numbers to make sure you can afford it:

1. **Gross Debt Service (GDS) Ratio:** This is the percentage of your income that goes toward housing costs, including mortgage payments (principal + interest), property taxes, heating, and half of condo fees (if applicable). Most lenders want this ratio to be under **35 percent**.
2. **Total Debt Service (TDS) Ratio** – This ratio includes everything from your GDS calculation plus other debts, such as car loans, credit cards, alimony, and personal loans. Ideally, it should be **42 percent** or lower.

If your debt ratios are too high, a slight increase in interest rates can turn homeownership into a financial nightmare. That's precisely what happened to this family – they couldn't qualify independently and needed two co-signers just to get approved.

Had they stayed within the recommended debt ratios, their mortgage payments would have been much lower and manageable. Instead, they stretched beyond their limits and are struggling to keep up.

The lesson? Just because a lender approves you for a certain amount doesn't mean you can afford it. Stick to a budget that gives you breathing room.

The family is fighting to stay afloat, doing everything possible to avoid losing their home through a power of sale. But the stakes are even higher – if the lender takes over and sells at a loss, the two guarantors will be responsible for the shortfall.

This makes an already painful situation even worse. It's a harsh reminder of why cosigning a mortgage is a considerable risk. If the primary borrower can't pay, the lender will come after the cosigner.

Before putting your name on the line for someone else's mortgage, ask yourself: can you afford to take on their debt if things go south? If not, think twice – because lenders won't think twice about coming after you.

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



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Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala Chowtaal Group



OHCA's Shaw Jaundoo (standing left, second row) and executive members

Ontario Hindu Cultural Association preserving traditional Chowtaal singing

The eighth edition of the *Annual Holi Chowtaal Melaa* enthralled *Phagwaa* enthusiasts, bringing them together in a unique ambiance of the folkloric traditions of yesteryears at the Devi Mandir in Pickering on March 8.

The initiative to keep this tradition alive comes from the Ontario Hindu Cultural Association, led by President Shaw Jaundoo, and its executive members, who remain com-

mitted to promoting the cultural heritage of the Hindu community.

Host Rob Ramnarine got the programme underway with an opening prayer, accompanied by Jay Jagessur and Soorajnie Jaundoo.

This year, six groups participated in *Chowtaal* singing, and all of them mesmerised the audience with their renditions.

Sumiran and the first *Chowtaal* were sung by the Prakash Ramayan Goal, one of the

oldest groups in the GTA. The voices of the singers resonated with the audience, bringing back childhood memories for many and even nostalgia of village singing.

The Debe-Penal Chowtaal Group followed with a medley of traditional Holi songs. This group has consistently participated in the *Annual Holi Chowtaal Melaa* for the past eight years.

The Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala was by far the largest group with 28 young singers. It

was indeed amazing to see so many young talents on stage, with the youngest singer aged six.

There is no doubt that the tradition of Holi will continue for many generations to come with the commitment that this group has taken.

The audience was captivated by the harmony in this group, and by their efforts to preserve the same singing style that was passed on by the pioneers of the *Chowtaal* tradition.

With files from Jay Jagessur



Shiva Mandir in Scarborough, under the leadership of Pandit Laikram, held their Holi celebrations last weekend. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo



Lakshmi Narayan Mandir marked Holi last weekend; among its honorable guests were MPP Raymond Cho, and Scarborough's Deputy Mayor Jennifer McKelvie. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo





Toronto Arya Samaj's President Adit Kumar (centre) with performers at the Holi concert; in other photos, performers kept the audience fully engaged

Toronto Arya Samaj holds Holi concert

Markham – Toronto Arya Samaj held its annual Holi Concert on March 8 with a grand event combining a dinner and concert. An almost capacity crowd cheered as the singers rendered popular tunes that touched the older generation, as well as the younger group.

The band was led by the ever-popular singer, Bash Nandalall, who is famously regarded as the local Jagjit Singh, and captivated the audience with a wonderful repertoire of songs and music. Other singers were Seema Maraj, Ganga Persaud, and Devica Yassen, who all excelled in their presentations of Bollywood filmi and Holi songs.

Among the musicians was veteran guitarist, Bhim Singh. Meanwhile, Alex Mohan excelled on the drums and tablas, with Randy Mahadeo on the keyboards, and Periya Naidu ably holding down the percussion section.

The music was so uplifting that an attendee commented, “This sounds almost like the original soundtrack”, paying an amazing compliment to the performers.


Host for the evening was Suresh Persaud, who thoroughly engaged the audience as the program unfolded.

President of Toronto Arya Samaj, Adit Kumar, gave the welcome address, and later delivered the vote of thanks. During his presentation, he noted that proceeds from the event will go towards the maintenance of the mandir.

Kumar also expressed gratitude to the team that made the event a success, and praised the audience and the mandir’s hard-working volunteers.

At end of the musical presentation the audience was treated to a sumptuous multi-course dinner. Prepared by the mandir’s volunteers, Kumar declared with gratitude that the mandir was blessed with a wonderful team that never hesitates to come out whenever the need arises.





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Unbought & unbossed: Chisholm runs for US Presidency

— Throughout American history, five pioneering women have boldly contested the presidency, each leaving an indelible mark on politics and society. From Victoria Woodhull’s ground-breaking 1872 campaign advocating civil rights, to Shirley Chisholm’s trailblazing 1972 run amid formidable prejudice, their collective journeys underscore resilience, activism, and the relentless pursuit of equality. Their legacies resonate today, inspiring generations to redefine what is possible.

By Dhanpaul Narine

Before Hillary there was Shirley, and before her, there was Victoria. There were five women who ran for President of the US, each making an impact in a unique way. The first was Victoria Woodhull who ran in 1872. She fought for civil rights and social welfare. She announced in 1870 that she was running because of the prejudice that existed against women. She picked Frederick Douglass as her running mate. Woodhull was arrested on obscenity charges and that was the end of her campaign. However, she was the first person to print Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto in the US.

In 1940, Gracie Allen from the ‘Surprise Party’ ran for President. She received some ‘write-in’ votes but her candidacy petered out.

Linda Jenness ran on a socialist platform in 1972 and received 83,000 votes, while Jill Stein picked up over 400,000 votes in 2012 campaigning on a ‘green’ platform.

However, one candidate in the quintet that continues to excite the imagination is Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress, and Black candidate for President. Shirley was definitely ahead of her time by taking on the establishment in her fight for “equal rights and economic justice”.

As voters in the US followed the fortunes of Hillary Clinton, attention is being focused on the contributions of Shirley Chisholm. In 1972, she braved the politics of the day and ran for President in a male-dominated world.

One of the greatest attributes of Shirley was the fact that she had the best of upbringings. Her mother was Barbadian and her dad was Guyanese. Shirley was born in Brooklyn, New York and spent some time in Barbados where she experienced the discipline of the Caribbean family. She moved to New York when she was ten years old. Her father was a factory worker, while her mother was a seamstress. Shirley developed the knack for attention at an early age. There were stories that at the age of three

she would ask the older kids to listen to her.

Shirley did well in school and graduated from Brooklyn’s Girls School in 1942. She chose Brooklyn College and impressed her teachers by winning prizes for debates. It was during this time that her political education took place. Brooklyn College at the time had only 60 black students out of a total 10,000 students. This opened her eyes to the plight of minorities.

According to historian Barbara Winslow, “Chisholm chafed at the thought that because of her skin colour she was expected to be subservient to whites. She was deeply aware and resentful of the fact that whites looked upon Blacks as inferior and in need of help.” Shirley would go on to earn a Master’s degree in education from Columbia University and to be a teacher.

She became active in the Democratic Club in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and this sensitised her to the problems of the community. In 1964, Shirley decided to run for the State Assembly. The odds were against her, but she did her homework and was able to win and to represent the 17th Assembly District.

This was an historic event and Shirley worked hard to make improvements to her District. She introduced bills to extend unemployment benefits to domestic workers and helped to get funding for the SEEK program that gave poor Blacks and Latino students scholarships to attend college.

Shirley was attracting the attention of the mainstream media and legislators in Albany. She gave notice that she intended to run for Congress. Shirley ran an inclusive campaign. She realised that the Hispanic vote was crucial to her chances, and she spent a lot of her time among Hispanics.

The fact that she could speak Spanish also helped. It was no easy task but with her ‘Unbought and Unbossed’ spirit Shirley won the Congressional seat to represent the Twelfth District. Her victory was by a wide margin – she won with 67 percent of the vote, and was the only woman to enter Congress in 1969, and the first Black to do so as well.

Shirley said that she intended to use Congress as a place to

address the problems of the nation. She was critical of the war in Vietnam, and vowed not to vote for money to fund the war. She served on the Education and Labor Committee, and from 1977 to 1981, she was Secretary of the Democratic Caucus. She had impressed her party enough to be described as “an explorer and a trailblazer rather than a legislative artisan”. It was during this period of activism that Shirley decided to run for President.

This decision was ground-breaking. Shirley was already the first Black woman to run for Congress, and now in her second term she announced that she was running for President of the US. Naturally, it caught the attention of the public. Shirley’s campaign was known as the ‘Chisholm Trail’ and she won the support of students, women, and those from minority groups.

Shirley campaigned across the US, and managed to get her name on 12 ballots. She received 125 delegate votes at the Democratic National Convention, which was a credible showing. George McGovern went on to win the nomination. But Shirley had won the admiration of many.

A Gallup poll that was done in 1974 listed her among the top ten admired woman in the US, ahead of Jacqueline Onassis, and Coretta Scott King. This was no mean achievement for the daughter of working class immigrants.

Shirley knew that she would not win the Presidency, but her objective was to shake up politics in America. It was to strike a blow for women and peoples of colour. Historians agree that she was able to achieve these goals, and Shirley is today respected as a pioneer that paved the way for others. How did she see her contribution?

Shirley said in 1980, “I did the best I could for my country. More women are now entering politics and Congress and that is wonderful.” Will America ever get a woman President? Shirley laughed and said, “A woman will become President. But she will have to be a Vice-President first.”

Many thought that Kamala Harris would have done it, but America is still waiting.



Shirley Chisholm



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Understanding modern-day grab for resources through literary lens

— Empires never vanish, but adapt. From Britain’s colonial justifications to today’s resource-driven expansions, literature reveals the blueprint of power. In this learning series for our Caribbean diaspora, we trace imperialist philosophies, their modern echoes in US expansionism, and how postcolonial voices reclaim agency. Reading and exploring these texts is resistance.

By Romeo Kaseram
An Ongoing Diaspora Series
A Local Journalism Initiative

The spectre of Empire never truly vanishes. It mutates, dons a change of attire, and re-emerges in new sheep’s clothing. Sometimes it reincarnates as an economic partnership, other times as security pacts, and more recently, as an insatiable geopolitical appetite for territorial acquisition.

As the present administration in the US shifts its gaze to new frontiers abroad, intensifying its rhetoric over acquisition of rare minerals, oil, fresh water, and shipping infrastructure in the Ukraine, Greenland, Panama, and our own Canada, the echoes of past imperial conquests are resounding once again, pressing upon the collective memory of our ancestors having lived through Empire’s many reincarnations.

For our Caribbean diaspora in Toronto aware about how our ancestors bore the weight of British colonialism, this is not a new narrative. Fact is, our present uncertainty takes its pages from a well-worn script, but this time with new protagonists.

So, how do we recognise the grasping hand of an Empire when it arrives not dragging a guillotine, carrying muskets, and dangling manacles, but instead comes waving documentation bristling with threats of tariffs, or thumbing emotive, patronising, and offensive social media posts?

Our answer can be found in our libraries throughout the GTA – in the written and archived word that is our colonial and post-colonial literature.

For starters, let us take a quick look at James Anthony Froude’s *The English in the West Indies* (1888). This insulting text remains one of the most infamous colonial justifications for British dominance in the Caribbean. It helped justify British rule in our Caribbean by arguing that our ancestors were incapable of self-governance. Though his words were contested by figures like John Jacob Thomas in *Froudacity* (1889), the philosophy it championed, where stronger nations dictate the fate of weaker ones, still continues in modern geopolitics.

As we are seeing today, Froude’s jaundiced logic has been stripped of its racial paternalism and repackaged as economic inevitability. That gaze from the south, noticeable for its interest in the Ukraine, Greenland, Panama, and Canada, is not to uplift humanity in these regions. Instead, it is to exploit its rare earth

minerals, for example, which are crucial for global, technological supremacy.

To turn our attention to another revealing text, let us examine Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which is mostly read as a critique of colonial brutality; however, its portrayal of imperial expansion also speaks volumes about the extractive nature of Empire.

In this turn of the century novella, Conrad painted a bleak picture of European colonial exploitation, where land, labour, and natural wealth were devoured in service of Empire. While this narrative of resource extraction was centred on Africa, the same economic hunger drives neo-colonial developed world praxis today.

Greenland holds some of the world’s largest reserves of rare earth elements – minerals essential for manufacturing advanced electronics and military technology. Canada is rich in oil sands, timber, freshwater, and many other natural resources. Panama, long considered a gateway between continents, remains a geopolitical site of shipping leverage.

The appropriating gaze now focused on these nations is calculated, and the inevitable consequence of an economic system where power flows to powerful nations that control these critical resources. Thus, looking back at our literature of colonialism, we see an iteration where the plundering that occurred in the past has now evolved into the modern-day manoeuvring of the present.

This now brings us to explore our visionary post-colonial writers. We have Edward Said’s seminal *Orientalism* (1978), which deconstructed the myths used to justify colonial domination, showing how the West continues to construct “lesser” nations as incapable of sovereignty, thus rationalising intervention and resource control.

Said demonstrated how the West constructed the narrative of the “Other” as being inferior, and in doing so, continues to justify intervention, dominance, and expansion.

There is also our own Frantz Fanon, in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which among many other things, tells us that even after formal Independence, nations could remain economically enslaved through strategic dependencies.

And thus many of us in the Caribbean diaspora are familiar with Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place* (1988). Among other

things in this text, Kincaid exposed the way tourism and foreign investment strategically disguised economic dependency, leaving native populations as bystanders in their own land.

Now let us foreground these readings by our post-colonial writers against the American author and Pulitzer winner Thomas Friedman’s *The World Is Flat* (2005). In this text, Friedman suggested that globalisation would create a level economic playing field; however, in reality, it has reinforced neo-colonial structures.

So, what we have ended up with are wealthy nations continuing to strategically dominate resource-rich ones, ensuring that capital flows in one direction, while nationals from the sites of wealth extraction bear the environmental fallout, and the economic burden of persistent poverty.

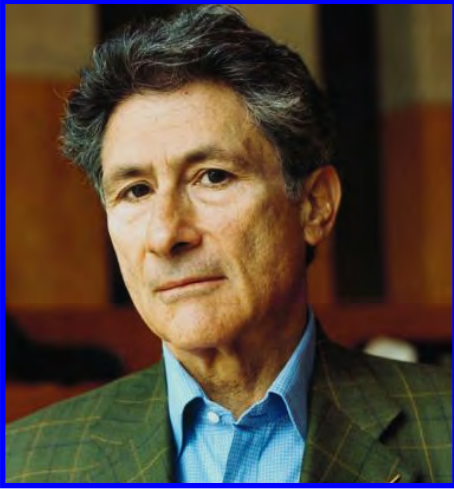
For our Caribbean diaspora here in the GTA, these iterations are painfully recognisable. Our ancestral homelands were once sites of sugar plantations, oil refineries, and bauxite mines that enriched foreign Empires while leaving our local economies dependent, impoverished, and today, among other things, vulnerable to the depreciations of climate change.

But literature has always been a weapon against imperial amnesia. Our call to action to the diaspora is to read the works of Froude and Conrad without averting our eyes; we then read Fanon, Said, and Kincaid closely to fully appreciate the long arc of resource-driven empire-building.

Our modern-day unfolding of a superpower’s grasp for minerals, oil and fresh water, a strategic shipping waterway, and even contested and embattled lands for touristic Rivas, is the latest chapter in the centuries-old story of economic conquest and superpower greed that we know only too well.

For our community seeking to understand and resist these forces, our first step is clear: read, question, and recognise Empire’s growing, insatiable appetite. If our history is revealing anything today, it is that Empire never truly dies – it simply changes into new sheep’s clothing.

Check out the following books online, or at your local library: James Anthony Froude: *The English in the West Indies*; Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*; Frantz Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth*; Edward Said: *Orientalism*; Jamaica Kincaid: *A Small Place*; and Thomas Friedman: *The World is Flat*.



Edward Said

While taking a ride along a country lane, a glint at the side of his eye caught Adam’s attention. He stopped to investigate. As he strode closer to the shiny object, Adam discovered a dusty ancient-looking mirror leaning against an oak tree.

Drawn to the imperfect, antique-looking mirror, he ended his ride and returned with the mirror to his ground-floor studio apartment, where the scooter’s front wheel bumped against the curb, creating two diagonal cracks in the shape of an ‘X’ running from the four corners of the mirror. He rolled right up to the front door to minimise the distance of traverse into the apartment. He gently lifted the mirror into the house and leaned it against the wall where he intended to hang it.

After a rush to the bathroom, Adam felt a blow to his stomach when he emerged. The mirror had broken itself into four triangular-shaped pieces and leaned edge to edge against the wall.

Adam quelled the urge to get out of the apartment by convincing himself that he must have rearranged the pieces during a memory lapse, which also troubled him. He took a wide berth around the mirror and lay on his bed against the headboard. He alternated gazes at the four pieces of mirror on the ground with suspicion. When his heart settled, he stared at the wall where his creative mind envisioned placing the pieces two inches apart. He planned to pick up the wall-hanging kits the following day at the hardware store. With a smile of contentment, Adam stretched and yawned before falling asleep.

In a nightmare, Adam dreamed that he was hiding behind some garbage containers in a dark alleyway from a midnight stalker. He yelped when he glanced up and stared into the evil grin and blood-red eyes of his female assailant. Terror snatched him out of the nightmare. He sat bolt upright in a cold sweat, gasping



The Supernatural Cutting Edge Proportions

for air. A glance at the clock on the night table told him that it was two minutes after four o’clock in the morning.

Adam gasped and pressed himself against the headboard when his eyes grew accustomed to the dark. The mirror had placed itself on the wall.

Adam clutched his throat. The woman who hunted him in his terrifying dream now stared at him from the mirror. An angry frown replaced her evil grin.

Paralysed by fear, Adam flinched when the four fragments gradually moved apart and came to rest as he had envisioned, two inches apart. He tried to convince himself that he was still trapped in his nightmare which deceived him into thinking that he was awake. The assault on his senses by the hair-raising scene short-circuited his brain. He blacked out.

Intense pain in his back and blinding sunshine streaming through the windows tugged Adam out of sleep. His head pounded. He shaded his eyes and glanced around, disoriented and scared about how he ended up lying on the ground, pressed against the sharp edges of the four mirror fragments. He scampered away from the wall and noticed a red stain on one of the triangular pieces. Adam winced when he reached behind and touched a skin laceration through a cut in his blood-dampened nightshirt.

He stood up and stumbled to the bathroom to examine his back in the vanity mirror. He grabbed the sink when his head swirled from the sudden flickering of the light and the transformation of the bathroom mirror from shiny and reflective, to dull

and gray.

Adam grabbed his cell phone to take a picture of his back but the device was dead. Someone or something had unplugged it from the wall outlet. A cold chill ran down his spine when he realised that the clock on the night table was still working even though it was also disconnected from the wall plug. A movement at the corner of his eyes cut his breath.

The four pieces of mirror made a slow climb up the wall and across the ceiling. It stopped above the bed. Adam felt an unseen force pushing him onto the bed. It held him down in the shape of an ‘X’. He swallowed hard at the magnetic pull on his eyes by the mirror.

Adam yelped when the mirror with the image of his stalker cut into four body parts, fell toward him from the ceiling. The last thing he saw was the backward reflection of the night table clock showing two minutes after four in the afternoon.

Johnny Stewart staggered out of the bar at midnight for the short walk to his apartment a few blocks away. When he turned onto the sidewalk that led to his apartment, a reflection of the full moon from an irregular-shaped mirror on top of a pile of trash caught his attention.

“Wow...,” The furniture maker thought. “That would be a nice patterned mirror-top for the centre table I am creating.” After picking up the mirror, he stumbled and dropped it to keep his balance. The mirror shattered into a dozen pieces. In his drunken state, he cut his fingers while gathering the shards to take them into his apartment.

Johnny crashed on his bed, fully clothed, after throwing the broken pieces of mirror into an old pillow sack and shoving it under his bed.

The last image in Johnny’s head, before he plunged into a bad dream, was the late news on the TV in the bar. According to the news, authorities were investigating the mysterious death of a man in a neighbouring city who was found surgically sliced into four pieces on his bed.



Kamil Ali

UK govt implements visas for TT nationals

Port-of-Spain – The government of the UK last week announced all nationals of Trinidad and Tobago will now require a visa to enter the country. The decision came on March 12 in the wake of what the UK government described as a “significant increase” in Trinidad and Tobago nationals arriving as visitors and then claiming asylum.

According to an official release from the UK government, the new visa requirement is intended to address the misuse of the Electronic Travel Authorisation system and to protect the integrity of the UK’s immigration process.

“The UK’s relationship with Trinidad and Tobago remains a strong and friendly one,” the statement said, but added the decision “has not been taken lightly.”

A requirement for transit visas was also introduced from March 13 last week, with a six-week transition period put in place. Travellers who booked their travel and obtained an ETA before the changes are being allowed to enter the UK without a visa until April 23. Nationals already in the UK will not be affected during the remainder of their stay, but will need a visa for future visits, the UK government indicated.

British High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago Jon Dean said the change aligns Trinidad and Tobago with many other visa-required countries with which the UK maintains close ties.

“The changes announced today align Trinidad and Tobago with many other visa national countries with which the UK shares close and friendly ties,” Dean said.

He added, “We understand that travel is important for families, businesses, and cultural connections. The introduction of visitor visas is designed to support safe and secure travel while ensuring the UK’s borders remain protected.”

Dean said the British High Commission in Port-of-Spain has worked closely with the UK government to allow nationals to apply for their UK visas in Trinidad and Tobago.

“We remain committed to welcoming visitors, and look forward to continuing the strong ties between our people. As a valued Commonwealth partner, Trinidad and Tobago remains an important part of the UK’s global community,” he said.

Nationals must now apply for a visa online through the UK government’s website and attend an in-person appointment in Port-of-Spain. The UK government said it aims to process

applications within 15 working days.

Nationals will now have to pay anywhere between (TT) \$1,077.55 (£115) to \$9,023.32 (£963) for a visa, depending on how long one wants to stay in the UK.

The standard visitor visa allowing for a maximum stay of six months will cost \$11,077.55 and the long-term standard visitor visa (with six months per visit) is \$9,023.32. This is added to the average cost of a \$5,000 plane ticket to the UK.

Also, the Visa Application Centre in Port-of-Spain will now open five days a week to accommodate visa applications. Nationals visiting the application centre will pay an additional \$722.14 (£76.50).

Responding to the decision to impose visas, Trinidad and Tobago’s Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs Dr Amery Browne said the Trinidad and Tobago government had expressed its disappointment, and would continue engaging with UK officials.

Said Browne: “This move is within their rights as a sovereign nation, but we do not see it as a proportionate response to what UK authorities conveyed to us, which was their observation that a relatively small number of Trinidad and Tobago nationals were misusing the UK immigration system by being processed for an ETA in the normal existing process and then suddenly applying for asylum after arrival.”

He added, “We are not of the view that regular travellers to the UK should be negatively affected by a relatively small number of persons who have been trying to abuse the British immigration system.”

According to *The Times* in London, asylum claims from Trinidad and Tobago nationals rose from an annual average of 49 between 2015 and 2019 to 439 in the past year. A UK government spokesperson told the newspaper the new requirement addresses the growing trend of people arriving as tourists and then claiming asylum.

The spokesperson added that the UK “will continue to warmly welcome visitors” and that the visa requirement “will be kept under review.”

On January 8, the UK government introduced the ETA forms for Trinidad and Tobago nationals as a requirement to enter the country for short stays up to six months. The ETA allowed travel to the UK for multiple short trips over a two-year period and cost £10.

Hinds: Criminals seeking asylum led to visas

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago nationals now face stricter entry requirements to the UK following a significant increase in asylum claims, many by criminals seeking refuge abroad, National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds has said.

The move, announced last week by the British government, means nationals must now obtain a visa before traveling to the UK, removing previous entry conveniences.

“In circumstances where our criminals, their supporters and their supported, as well as certain categories of persons have targeted the UK to flee our country, in some cases, the UK has become their destination,” Hinds told the media.

His statement underscored that local criminals, evading justice in Trinidad and Tobago, are significantly contributing to the rising number of asylum applications, thereby influencing Britain’s tightened immigration stance.

Hinds described the visa stipulation as unfortunate, but noted that international collaboration remains robust.

“The work of the law enforcement platform in Trinidad and Tobago is well underway, and it is expected to continue because we do face a crime problem in the country,” he said.

Hinds emphasised that international cooperation would remain a cornerstone of addressing crime, despite new challenges posed by the UK’s visa requirement.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Richard Smith,

responsible for Crime and Special Operations, reinforced this position, noting that criminals abroad remain within the reach of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

“Even though they fled Trinidad and Tobago and have continued their criminal enterprises from abroad, they are still within our reach,” Smith stated.

He indicated that criminals abroad are not beyond the TTPS’ jurisdiction, and can be returned to Trinidad to face legal proceedings.

Smith further explained, “Even though they flee, once they come into custody across there, they might find them in a road exercise; by some means, they would come into the custody of the British authorities. Once they communicate with us, we can get them back here and deal with them according to law.”

While ACP Smith refrained from confirming if the British authorities were directly collaborating with local police in all cases, he noted clear lines of communication remained open to facilitate the capture and extradition of criminals who had fled, but continued to

orchestrate crime remotely.

Meanwhile, Hinds expressed hope that continued collaboration with UK authorities would help reduce the number of asylum claims by Trinidad and Tobago nationals, addressing the issue at its source through robust crime prevention and law enforcement efforts.



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

Persad-Bissessar hits TT govt on UK visas

Port-of-Spain – Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar last week condemned former Prime Minister Keith Rowley and his government after the UK abruptly imposed visa requirements on traveling Trinidad and Tobago nationals. She attributed the crisis to what she described as a “decade of failure” by the Trinidad and Tobago government.

On March 12 the British High Commission in Port-of-Spain issued an announcement that the UK government would immediately require visas from nationals traveling to Britain, citing concerns related primarily to national security.

The UK explicitly referenced misuse of the visa-free arrangement by individuals threatening Britain’s security, including organised crime and questionable travel patterns connected to Trinidad and Tobago.

Persad-Bissessar swiftly placed blame at the government’s door, and Rowley, who resigned as Prime Minister on March 16. She accused him of undermining the nation’s credibility through reckless public statements, including claims of terrorism threats in Trinidad made during a recent Caricom event.

“Once again the PNM’s failure to deal with the violent, bloody crime crisis in Trinidad and Tobago has led to negative international implications for law-abiding citizens. In a desperate attempt at public relations gimmickry, Rowley broadcast to the world at a recent Caricom event that there are terrorists in Trinidad and Tobago committing crimes,” she said.

She also declared that several “foolish” business chambers and some political parties supported Rowley’s assertion, despite the UNC warning of the possible international implications such statements could have on Trinidad and Tobago.

“Well, the international community has listened. I am not surprised. It must be put on record that the government of the UK cannot be faulted for such measures. Most importantly, we in the Opposition find no joy in this announcement. We are concerned about the thousands of citizens and businesses who will be impacted,” she lamented.

Persad-Bissessar claimed that Rowley and his government betrayed, belittled and broke all of Trinidad and Tobago’s citizens with their “decade of failure” which has led to these measures being implemented by the UK government.

“For years we warned Rowley about his associations with drug-trafficking governments and his failure to deal with our national security,” she said, alluding to the government’s close ties with Venezuela.

She warned of Trinidad and Tobago becoming a pariah in the international community.

“Today we put Trinidad and Tobago on guard. This may just be the beginning of our possible international isolation if the PNM and the Young regime are re-elected,” she declared.

Persad-Bissessar underscored that the repercussions from the UK policy shift would resonate deeply.

“We are concerned about the thousands of citizens and businesses who will be impacted,” she emphasised, acknowledging the broader socio-economic disruption the visa requirement would bring.

Also, “Concerning the number of asylum seekers, some of them are gang members and criminals who are running their criminal operations in Trinidad and Tobago from the UK. That is the madness that this PNM government has allowed to happen, and that is why the UK has acted,” Persad-Bissessar said.

She added, “They are trafficking drugs and issuing hits on people in Trinidad from the UK. That is what has happened under this incompetent government, and we are now all made to suffer for it.”

Trinidad and Tobago joins 66 other countries, including Jamaica, Venezuela, Colombia, and Afghanistan, whose citizens now require visas to enter the UK, underscoring the seriousness of the nation’s current diplomatic predicament.



Jon Dean



Fitzgerald Hinds

Young as PM a ‘bloodless coup’ - Persad-Bissessar

— Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar has condemned the appointment of Stuart Young to lead Trinidad and Tobago as prime minister, declaring the move to be a “bloodless coup”, while claiming democracy itself has been undermined by the ruling PNM government.

...
Port-of-Spain – In a critical response delivered at a UNC meeting in La Horquetta/Talparo on Monday, Opposition leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar focused the spotlight on the appointment of Stuart Young as Prime Minister, characterising the move as an undemocratic “bloodless coup d’état” that was orchestrated by former prime minister Dr Keith Rowley.

Persad-Bissessar also accused Rowley of betraying Trinidad and Tobago’s nationals by anointing Young without a general election, effectively depriving them of their democratic rights.

“You lost your democracy – your right to choose your Prime Minister,” she asserted. Additionally, “Rowley betrayed PNM supporters – took away their right to select their leader, and took away the rights of all citizens to select and elect their prime minister. This is called a bloodless coup – without a drop of blood shed – that is what happened under Rowley anointing his ‘Garry Sobers.’”

Intensifying her critique, Persad-Bissessar argued that Trinidad and Tobago had suffered substantial losses under the PNM, including the recent removal of visa-free travel to the UK. She accused Rowley of “selling” the country to Young’s “family financiers”, aided by “20 cowardly PNM MPs”.

Highlighting Young’s ministerial record, Persad-Bissessar cited an updated Cabinet Secretariat letter from March 14, 2025, revealing Young had recused himself from Cabinet meetings 137 times by the end of 2024 due to conflicts of interest. She also noted that former Attorney General Faris Al-Rawi recused himself 83 times.

“Young’s record shows he cannot even sit in a Cabinet meeting without having to excuse himself... almost three years of meetings,” she stated.

Raising concerns about potential governance conflicts, she questioned, “In our constitutional system of government, we have no deputy PM – and a Cabinet is PM and AG – so who will chair the Cabinet when recommendations to award millions or billions to Young’s family and friends are open on the Cabinet table?”

She continued, wondering whether Young’s frequent recusals would compromise Cabinet integrity.

“You think Young will leave the table? And if he leaves, will

the Cabinet be properly constituted without Young, who is the unelected Prime Minister? And which Minister will dare vote against Young’s family and friends’ interest?”

Characterising Young’s appointment as “illegal” and a sign of desperation, Persad-Bissessar argued it represented “a blatant disregard for the Constitution”, accusing the PNM of trying to deceive voters with superficial changes.

“It is a clear attempt to manufacture the illusion of change in the hope citizens will forget the last ten years of pain that Young was a major part of,” she emphasised, adding, “The PNM is merely reshuffling the same deck of failures – and they have no trump – hoping to convince voters to give them a chance to continue their terror and destruction of Trinidad and Tobago.”

She further targeted other key PNM figures, querying the new Attorney General Camille Robinson-Regis’ parliamentary contributions, noting she spoke on just 54 out of 319 bills presented during 23 years of service.

Persad-Bissessar also criticised Colm Imbert’s reassignment from Finance to Public Utilities, warning: “If he could not protect your money, he would lose your water too.”

Addressing PNM supporters directly, Persad-Bissessar appealed to them to abandon the ruling party and join the UNC’s Coalition of Interests.

“You have stood by a PNM that has taken your loyalty for granted for years

and fed you empty promises while they and their financiers prosper. What about you and your children? You don’t have to be ‘PNM till yuh dead,’ she implored, adding, “Too many of your children have already died and are suffering under the PNM.”

Echoing Rowley’s earlier call on March 16 at a PNM candidate event in Port-of-Spain for UNC members to join the PNM, Persad-Bissessar issued a reciprocal invitation, saying: “Now is the time to say to PNM supporters – wake up, rise up, and leave PNM, which has betrayed you. They didn’t even give you a choice to select your own leader in PNM. Rowley has abandoned you. Young, the 137-times recuser, is now being forced upon you,” Persad-Bissessar asserted.

She then positioned herself as an inclusive leader, promising a brighter future beyond the current political turmoil.

Extending the invitation to nationals, she stated, “Come to where you and your family have a future for prosperity and a future of peace. The doors are wide open. Brighter days are coming under the rising sun. Come into the light and free yourself of the blight of Rowley and Young. I am the leader who loves every one of you.”

When asked how his leadership might differ from his predecessor, Young praised the former prime minister as a mentor and patriotic leader, indicating that his own tenure would build on the “strong foundation” established by Rowley’s government.

“There are many things... Dr Rowley is a great leader, he is a great individual, a great patriot,” Young declared, adding, “I have no problem with the work that was done with Rowley, who was a mentor. Trinidad and Tobago, stand by. You are seeing the change. You are going to see the change unfold.”

He also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve as Prime Minister, describing his appointment as both an honour and a great responsibility. He vowed to prioritise national security, youth empowerment, cultural development, and economic innovation as immediate areas of focus.

“It is a great honour to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago,” Young affirmed.

He added, “This is an honour only seven persons have had before me and I am taking that very seriously... I’m really looking forward to delivering for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in this new role and portfolio.”

Addressing potential legal challenges from the Opposition, Young remained steadfast yet open, reiterating his desire for collaborative governance.

“Let’s wait and see how it unfolds... But I will do all I can on your behalf,” he promised, adding, “I will continue to fight for Trinidad and Tobago, especially with our young people, especially with our culture, especially with areas that need to be lifted now off the strong foundation that we have built.”



President Christine Kangaloo

PM’s appointment legitimate

— President Christine Kangaloo has affirmed the constitutional validity of Stuart Young’s appointment as Prime Minister amid controversy and the Opposition’s escalating threat of legal action.

...
Port-of-Spain – President Christine Kangaloo has assured that the appointment of Stuart Young as Prime Minister was done in accordance with the Constitution. She was responding to ongoing questions and concerns about the constitutionality of the move.

In a statement to the media on Monday following the swearing-in ceremony at President’s House of Young and new Attorney General Camille Robinson-Regis, she acknowledged that while the appointment was under “unique circumstances”, it was conducted in accordance with the law.

“This statement is made in light of the present unique circumstances surrounding the transition from one Prime Minister to another. It is made in the interest of transparency and so as to assist the public in understanding why I have acted as I have,” Kangaloo said.

Shortly after former Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley announced his resignation and the decision to make Young his successor, Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar, claimed the process was in contravention of Section 76 (1) of the Constitution.

She argued that the word “Leader” was capitalised during the Constitution’s amendment, which meant that the only person qualified to be prime minister was the political head of a party in the House of Representatives.

However, Kangaloo referenced letters detailing Rowley’s resignation as prime minister and letters from 21 People’s National Movement members who sit in the House of Representatives endorsing Young as prime minister, as well as a letter from Young stating his willingness to accept the post which had been vacated.

“In my own deliberate judgement, including having regard to the letters to me from 21 members of the House of Representatives dated March 12, 2025 as aforesaid, and to the letter to me dated March 12, 2025 from the Honourable Mr Stuart Young, SC, MP, dated March 12, 2025 as aforesaid, the Leader in that House of the party which commands the majority of members of that House, is the Honourable Mr Stuart Young, SC, MP and the Honourable Mr Stuart Young, SC, MP, is willing to accept the office of Prime Minister.”

She added, “I trust that it will therefore be understood that my task has been to appoint a Prime Minister, as is required by the Constitution, in the unique circumstances that presented themselves, and to do so in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and that this is what I have done.”

Persad-Bissessar did not attend the swearing-in ceremony of Young as prime minister on Monday. However, right after the ceremony she doubled down on her position and labelled the development as an attack on democracy.

“We have witnessed nothing short of a blatant disregard for the Constitution as the PNM desperately scrambles to hold onto power through deception and manipulation. The appointment of Stuart Young as Prime Minister, without the mandate of the people through a General Election, is an unlawful act of desperation,” she declared.

She further stated, “It is a clear attempt to manufacture the illusion of change in the hope that citizens will forget the last ten years of pain, suffering, abuse, and nothingness under this failed administration.”

Meanwhile, newly-installed Attorney General Camille Robinson-Regis was confident in the government’s efforts to fend off the legal threats surrounding the constitutionality of Young’s appointment.

“We have looked at the Constitution ourselves, we have looked at the clauses that relate to the appointment of a prime minister, in addition to the letters sent to the President, every possible bugbear in that appointment and we believe we are on a strong footing,” Robinson-Regis said.



Persad-Bissessar is greeted by Dr Selwyn Cudjoe on her arrival for the UNC’s meeting in east Trinidad on March 17; at left is the UNC’s deputy leader Jearlean John.

PM Young pledges to lead with integrity, inclusion

From Page 1

our collective experiences and expertise, and champion the necessary reforms to transform and strengthen our nation”.

Reaffirming his commitment to good governance, Young pledged to lead with “integrity, inclusion, and accountability”, underscoring these values as foundational to his leadership approach.

At the same time, he emphasised the need for cooperation across political divides, suggesting that unity was not merely ideal, but essential for national progress.

“Trinidad and Tobago’s greatness rests not only in the hands of any one leader or government but lies in the hands, hearts, and minds of each and every citizen,” Young remarked.

He highlighted the Trinidad and Tobago’s diverse cultural and religious heritage, referencing ongoing observances of Lent, Ramadan, and Holi as symbols of the country’s inherent harmony.

Reflecting on his personal journey, Young credited his parents, Richard and Priscilla Young, for instilling values of service, diligence, and social justice. He cited these principles as influential in his career choices, including his decision to study law and advocate for workers, unions, and underserved communities.

Young’s previous roles in the government included leading negotiations crucial to protecting the Trinidad and Tobago’s energy revenues, and advocating for communities lacking basic amenities. He highlighted these experiences as evidence of his enduring commitment to serving the public interest.

Struggles by Bollywood's women comedians nothing to laugh about

— *Bollywood's early comedic history is a tale of two parallel worlds, one where men shaped humour on their own terms, and another where women had to fight for even a fraction of that space. Women comedians Tun Tun, Madhubala, and Sridevi paved the way for future generations, even as their struggles highlighted deep-rooted gendered biases that still persist today.*

...

Bollywood's early comedic history is a tale of two sites, parallel worlds in a structure of power where men shaped humour on their own terms, and another where women fought for traction in what was a challenging, uphill climb to recognition as originators of comedy.

Bollywood's earliest male comedians, Mehmood, the Ghory-Dixit duo, Noor Mohammed Charlie, and others, were celebrated as architects of Indian humour, headlining films and receiving critical acclaim.

Meanwhile, their female counterparts, Tun Tun, Madhubala, and Sridevi, were not as privileged. They had to fight for space, legitimacy, and even the right to be funny.

Comedy, for men, was a profession. For women, it was an accident of circumstance, a survival strategy in an industry that did not write lead comedic roles for them. It was an industry that only opened tiny windows for women comedians; so they built a room for themselves.

Despite having a few cards, names like Tun Tun, Madhubala, and Sridevi stand out today, these women having made a way in the world for future generations. Meanwhile, their struggles continue to highlight the deep interstices that persist in the industry today.

While Mehmood, Noor Mohammed Charlie, and the duo Ghory-Dixit enjoyed industry backing, full creative control, and lead roles in films that celebrated their comedic genius, women comedians were marginalised, boxed into caricatures, and denied similar recognition. The industry's humour resided in the domain of men. Women were made to occupy a small corner, either as the subjects of the joke, or scripted so their humour was more palatable, and never too wild, disruptive, or too central to the narrative.

Despite this constraints, Tun Tun, Madhubala, and Sridevi forced their way onto the stage, and never occupying the centre, they still crafted legacies that defied Bollywood's exclusionary and gendered praxis. Not only did they not just make people laugh, but they also went on to prove that women's humour was just as potent, infectious, and entertaining as their male counterparts.

Yet, their journeys were fraught with barriers their male colleagues never had to face.

Long before Bollywood reduced Tun Tun to a running gag about her weight, she was a talented and successful singer who followed her debut as a solo playback in *Wamiq Azra* with hit after hit, and who made her way in the world to occupy a place among music stalwarts like Noor Jehan, Rajkumari, Khursheed Bano, and Zohrabai Ambalewali.

Tun Tun made it up the charts with songs as *Afsana Likh Rahi Hoon Dil-e-Beqarar Ka*, *Yeh Kaun Chala Meri Aankhon Mein Sama Kar*, and *Aaj Machi Hai Dhoom Jhoom Khushi Se Jhoom*, which she sang in A.R. Kardar's *Dard* (1947).

Dard led her to Mehboob Khan's *Anokhi Ada* (1948), and two hits, *Kahe Jiya Dole* and *Dil Ko Lagake Humne Kuch Bhi Na Paya*. It put her in league with the highly-rated playback singers at the time.

Tun Tun hit her peak with S.S. Vasan's *Chandralekha* in 1948, with seven songs, which include the hit *Saanjh Ki Bela*.

But new voices were emerging, and in the following years, owing to her older style of singing and limited vocal range, she found it difficult to compete with these rising stars, among them the versatile Lata Mangeshkar.

Born Uma Devi Khatri in 1923 in Uttar Pradesh, Tun Tun endured a childhood marked by trauma, family loss, and indigence. Tragically orphaned at a young age, she was taken in by relatives who saw her as an extra mouth to feed rather than a child to nurture. Yet, despite this bleak start in her early life, she dreamed of becoming a top singer.

That ambition and determination took her to Mumbai (then Bombay) in 1946, where she arrived at composer Naushad Ali's doorstep, demanding an audition. When he initially refused, she stood her ground, adamantly refusing to leave until he had heard her sing. He relented, and when she performed, he recognised her talent instantly.

Tun Tun made her playback debut in *Wamiq Azra Dil-e-Beqarar Ka* (1946), and her songs in *Dard* (1947), notably the haunting *Afsana Likh Rahi Hoon*, were nationwide hits. Her expressive voice found its resonance in films like *Anokhi Ada* (1948) and *Andaz* (1949).

But new singers were arriving in Bollywood. Desperate to remain in the movie business, she reinvented herself as a comedian, taking on the screen name Tun Tun.

But unlike Mehmood, who built a comedic empire, or Noor Mohammed Charlie, who was celebrated for his slapstick prowess,



Tun Tun



Sridevi



Madhubala

ess, Tun Tun's comedy was dictated by men.

Her humour was built around her body rather than her talent and wit. In films like *Aar Paar* (1954) and *Mr & Mrs '55* (1955), she was boxed into roles where her weight was the punchline. While her male counterparts crafted their own comedic personas, she was made into a spectacle, a woman with so much talent and brilliance sidelined to performing lazy, repetitive gags.

Unlike male comedians, who aged into directorial roles, character parts, and continued adoration, Tun Tun's career was shoved aside as Bollywood's humour evolved and her male counterparts were celebrated. She never won a single major award for her contributions, despite being Bollywood's first female comedian, and her name continues to be erased from the industry's history of laughter.

She died in November, 2003. Today, instead of celebration, respect, and glory being her legacy, Tun Tun's name is invoked in India as a deprecatory synonym for an obese woman.

Similarly marginalised, Madhubala's legacy was built on her otherworldly beauty, but behind that flawless face was a natural comedian whose humour never got its due credit.

Born in 1933 as Mumtaz Jehan Begum Dehlavi, she entered

films at a young age out of financial necessity. Her father, jobless and strict, saw her acting career as a means of survival rather than artistic fulfillment. She became Bollywood's ultimate romantic heroine, but her talent extended far beyond romance.

She had perfect comic timing, a gift for deadpan delivery, and a charm that could turn any scene into gold. In *Mr & Mrs '55* (1955), directed by Guru Dutt, she delivered one of the most natural comedic performances of her era. Playing a spoiled heiress tricked into marriage, she outmatched Dutt's deadpan humour with impeccable timing. Her performance was effortlessly funny, but the industry still saw her as a beauty first, and a comedian second.

In *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* (1958), she held her own against Kishore Kumar's slapstick brilliance, proving that she could be just as funny as her male co-stars. But she was never recognised as a comedian – only as a beautiful woman who could occasionally be amusing.

Unlike male comedians, who had free rein to be absurd, Madhubala was required to be glamorous first, humourous second. While Noor Mohammed Charlie and Mehmood built careers in comedy, Madhubala's comedic performances were treated as exceptions rather than her defining skill.

And unlike Mehmood, who was given lead comic roles, Madhubala's humour was always contained within the limits of her romantic identity.

Despite delivering some of Bollywood's finest comedic performances, she was never considered a comedian, never received an award for her humour, and was never acknowledged for her mastery of comedy. She died in February, 1969.

However, Sridevi changed the rules, refusing to let Bollywood define the limits of female humour.

Born in 1963, she started her career as a child actress before transitioning to Bollywood as a leading lady with a difference. While the industry expected heroines to be graceful and poised, Sridevi rejected these constraints, embracing comedy in ways that only men had been allowed to perform before.

In *ChaalBaaz* (1989), she played dual roles, one that was timid, the other rebellious, switching seamlessly between slapstick and sharp dialogue delivery in a way that stunned audiences. In *Mr India* (1987), her *Hawa Hawai* sequence was an explosion of self-mockery, outrageous humour, and unfiltered comic energy, the kind of comedy that only male comedians had been permitted to perform. Here she transformed herself, briefly occupying centre stage in ways that Mehmood and Kishore Kumar had been permitted to do for decades.

Unlike Madhubala, who had to contain her humour, Sridevi pushed the envelope. She embraced physical comedy, exaggerated mannerisms, and absurdist humour, traits that had previously been reserved for men.

Casting her role further than Tun Tun, who was reduced to her physical appearance, and Madhubala, who was cast for her beauty, Sridevi fought for a comedic identity that was independent of her romantic roles.

But even she could not fully escape the gendered limitations of Bollywood comedy. Unlike male comedians who aged into their careers, Sridevi had to transition back to dramatic roles as she grew older, showing that even the most powerful female comedian of her time had to compromise with the industry's expectations. The industry still saw women's humour as something fleeting, something tied to youth and energy, rather than ability and craft. Sridevi died in February, 2018.

While Bollywood's male comedians won film awards, headlined movies, and cemented their names in history, female comedians were ignored when it came to handing out accolades.

Mehmood was nominated for 25 film awards, including Filmfare's Best Comedian category. Noor Mohammed Charlie was regarded as one of Bollywood's finest comedians, even inspiring future generations.

Meanwhile, Tun Tun never won a major comedy award, and Madhubala was never recognised for her comedic roles. Despite redefining comedy for women, Sridevi won awards for her dramatic roles, but received no recognition for comedy.

Today, the Bollywood comedy landscape has changed, but the gendered biases remain. While actresses like Bhumi Pednekar, Vidya Balan, and Kangana Ranaut have taken on comedic roles, there are still fewer female-led comedy films compared to male-dominated ones.

It seems the industry has yet to fully embrace women in leading comedic roles without conditions. Even now, women in comedy often have to balance glamour with humour, whereas male comedians continue to enjoy an open stage, positioned at its centre, to fully explore their comedic identity.

So it is that Tun Tun, Madhubala, and Sridevi did not just perform comedy; they fought to do so, and were eventually able to prise open doors, enter the field, and make a room for themselves. Their challenges live on in today's Bollywood, where female comedians still struggle for lead roles.

But make no joke about it – the industry still remains quite male-driven, and not only in its humour.

Veteran actor Deb Mukherjee dead at 83

Mumbai – Veteran actor Deb Mukherjee, a prominent member of the illustrious Mukherjee-Samarth film family and father of filmmaker Ayan Mukerji, died at the age of 83 on March 14. He had been battling age-related health issues, a family spokesperson said.

Mukerji's funeral was held at Pawan Hans Crematorium in Juhu, Mumbai on the same evening, with family, friends, and members of the film fraternity gathering to pay their last respects.

Born in Kanpur in 1941, Deb Mukherjee hailed from one of Bollywood's most influential families. His father, Sashadhar Mukherjee, was the founder of Filmalaya Studios, and his mother, Satidevi Mukherjee, was the sister of celebrated actors Ashok Kumar, Anup Kumar, and legendary singer Kishore Kumar.

His brothers included the popular actor Joy Mukherjee and filmmaker Shomu Mukherjee, the latter who married Bollywood star Tanuja, making Deb an uncle to actresses Kajol and Tanishaa Mukerji.

Mukherjee began his acting career in 1965, appearing in films such as *Adhikar*, *Ek Bar Mooskura Do*, *Do Aankhen*, *Main Tulsi Tere Aangan Ki*, *Baaton Baaton Mein*, and the cult classic *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikander*.

While he carved a niche for himself in the industry, he did not achieve the same level of commercial success as his brother Joy Mukherjee. Later in his career, he transitioned into supporting roles, with one of his final on-screen appearances being a cameo in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Kaminey* (2009).

Mukherjee's funeral was attended by an array of Bollywood personalities, reflecting his deep-rooted connections in the industry. Among those present were his nieces, actresses Kajol and Rani Mukerji, along with his son-in-law, filmmaker Ashutosh Gowariker.



Deb Mukherjee (left) with son Ayan Mukherji

His son, Ayan was supported by close friend Ranbir Kapoor, who returned from Alibaug alongside Alia Bhatt upon hearing the news of Mukherjee's death.

Kapoor, known for his deep bond with Ayan, was later seen carrying Mukherjee's bier as a pallbearer during the funeral procession.

Other notable attendees included actors Anil Kapoor, Hrithik Roshan, Sidharth Malhotra, Deepika Padukone, and Ranveer Singh. Jaya Bachchan, who arrived to pay her condolences. She was seen embracing Kajol at the entrance of the residence, offering solace during the difficult time.

Following the funeral, several members of the film fraternity visited the Mukherjee residence to offer their condolences. Among them were Ajay Devgn, Tanuja, Tanisha Mukerji, and Aditya Chopra, along with a host of industry stalwarts. The gathering underscored the widespread respect Mukherjee commanded in Bollywood, not only as an actor but as a figure deeply interwoven with its history.

Kapoor and Mukerji's longstanding friendship was also highlighted during the proceedings. Having collaborated on *Wake Up Sid*, *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani*, and *Brahmāstra: Part One - Shiva*, their bond appeared to extend beyond professional ties.

Kapoor, who has publicly acknowledged his deep connection with Ayan, recently spoke about *Brahmāstra: Part Two* being in development, while Ayan is currently working on *War 2*.

Mukherjee is survived by his children, filmmaker Ayan Mukerji and daughter Sunita Gowariker, from his two marriages. His contributions to Bollywood spanned decades, with his legacy living on through his family's continued impact on Indian cinema.



Vyjayanthimala (left) receives the Padma Vibhushan Award from President Droupadi Murmu last year

Vyjayanthimala's family quells ill-health rumours

Chennai – Family and friends of iconic actress-dancer Vyjayanthimala Bali have strongly refuted social media rumours regarding her health, confirming that the former parliamentarian and celebrated performer is "doing fine".

The clarification follows recent false reports that had circulated widely, prompting close associates to address the issue publicly.

Girijashankar Sundaresan, a prominent Chennai-based Carnatic musician closely associated with Vyjayanthimala's family, addressed the misinformation directly via an Instagram story on March 14, stating unequivocally, "Dr Vyjayanthimala Bali is in good health, and any news that says otherwise is false. Before sharing, please validate the news source. Please stop spreading baseless rumours. We are better than this."

His statement was echoed by Nandini Bali, Vyjayanthimala's daughter-in-law, who shared Sundaresan's post, reinforcing the family's unified stance against unfounded rumours.

Vyjayanthimala, renowned for her contributions to Indian cinema and classical dance, marked her film debut in 1949 with the Tamil film *Vaazhkai*. Her career flourished across Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi cinema, culminating in her critically acclaimed performance in the classic 1955 film *Devdas*.

Her portrayal of Chandramukhi, a compassionate courtesan, remains iconic. Despite winning the Filmfare Award for Best Supporting Actress for the role, Vyjayanthimala famously refused the honour, asserting her role was equivalent in prominence to her co-star Suchitra Sen's lead performance.

Following her success in *Devdas*, Vyjayanthimala rose to unparalleled fame, working alongside leading Bollywood heroes and becoming one of the most celebrated actresses of her era. However, at the peak of her stardom, she retired from acting upon marrying Dr Chamanlal Bali, the personal physician to actor Raj Kapoor's family.

Born into a Tamil Iyengar Brahmin family in Chennai, Vyjayanthimala was raised by her grandmother, Yadugiri Devi. Her mother, Vasundhara Devi, was herself a significant figure in 1940s Tamil cinema, starring in hits like *Mangama Sabatham*, the first Tamil film declared a colossal success.

Vyjayanthimala's artistic journey began early; at age seven, she notably performed classical Indian dance before Pope Pius XII at the Vatican in 1940. Her formal training included Bharatanatyam under Guru Vazhuvoor Ramiah Pillai and Carnatic music by Manakkal Sivaraja Iyer.

Throughout her illustrious career, Vyjayanthimala frequently became the subject of media scrutiny, particularly regarding her relationships with co-stars, including a widely publicised alleged romance with actor Dilip Kumar in the late 1950s.

Beyond entertainment, she ventured into politics, initially joining the Indian National Congress in 1984 before resigning in 1999 and subsequently joining the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Vyjayanthimala's contributions to the arts and public life have been widely acknowledged. She was honoured with the Padma Shri in 1968, and most recently received the prestigious Padma Vibhushan in 2024.

In January, Sundaresan shared a video of Vyjayanthimala performing the Carnatic piece *Daasiganunta* in raga Abheri, highlighting her continued passion and vitality in the arts. The performance, held at Kala Pradarshini in Chennai, was warmly received, further emphasising her active involvement and good health.

Bollywood's celebrities observe Holi 2025



Shweta Bachchan shared this photo of her parents Jaya and Amitabh Bachchan standing by the sacred bonfire, Holi Ka Dahan, on the day before Holi



Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif with brothers and parents during their Holi celebrations in Mumbai



Priyanka Chopra-Jonas (centre) with family



Tousled Kartik Aaryan from his upcoming Shreeleela



Swara Bhasker, spouse Fahad Ahmed, and Rabiya

Playing cricket beyond the boundary to conquer cancer

Toronto – The rhythmic run-up of the bowler pounding on a Mississauga street in the approach to the moment of delivery, mixing with enthusiastic cheers from the crowd, will soon be rising and falling like waves breaking on a Caribbean shore.

For many of us in our thriving Caribbean community, the sound of the ocean is just as exciting as the murmuring of an appreciative crowd at a game of cricket. For us, the game is not merely a sport: it is our heritage, legacy, unity, and life itself.

However, come the month of May, our precious game will transcend tradition to become a tremendous act of solidarity in the fight against cancer.

On May 31, Celebration Square in Mississauga will host Cricket to Conquer Cancer, Canada's first-ever street cricket fund-raiser organised by The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation.

Here, every run scored will resonate with hope, and each wicket that falls will symbolise another step toward eradicating the fear of cancer. As the event approaches, teams are gathering, strategies are being inked on drawing boards, and anticipation building, all fueled by the knowledge that their participation could change countless lives.

Cricket to Conquer Cancer is not just another fund-raiser game; more than a ground-breaker, it is a game-changer.

With over 100 teams being registered to compete in the thrilling T5 format, the organisers are targeting to put one million dollars on the fund-raising scoreboard. Each dollar will fund pioneering research at PMCF, recognised globally for its innovative contributions to cancer care.

At the event's official launch on February 4, international cricket star Carlos Brathwaite took his guard, lined up his bat, and settled down for the innings ahead come May 31.

Urging our community to step forward to bat to help cure cancer, he affirmed, "Cricket has the power to unite and inspire, and now, more than ever, we must harness that power for something truly meaningful."

Also at the February 4 launch, Miyo Yamashita, President and CEO of PMCF, underlined the crucial role community-

driven initiatives play in combating cancer.

As she passionately explained, "Our communities are at the heart of transformative cancer research. Every participant, every supporter is integral to breakthroughs that shape lives here in Canada and worldwide."

The choice for cricket as a fund-raiser is a strategic and resonant one. Now blossoming rapidly across Canada, our game is being today played in diverse urban centres here in the GTA, home to North America's largest South Asian communities.

Brendan Ennis, Senior Director of Corporate & Community Partnerships at PMCF, highlighted this unifying potential.

"Cancer doesn't need awareness – it needs impact. Cricket uniquely provides that platform, engaging diverse communities passionately committed to making a tangible difference," he remarked.

It means that the choice to hold this inaugural event as street cricket adds further depth, tapping into the grassroots ethos that defines cricket globally.

As Steve Merker, Vice President of Corporate & Community Partnerships at PMCF affirmed, "This first-of-its-kind North American event aims not

only to raise substantial funds but also inspire new supporters to envision a world free from cancer's shadow."

Cricket to Conquer Cancer's structure is dynamic, mirroring the urgency and agility demanded by its cause. Teams will face off in intense five-over-per-side matches, the short, sharp battles testing reflexes, strategy, and chemistry while under pressure.

Meanwhile, beyond the field, participants face another critical challenge in unity and teamwork: fund-raising. Each squad is targeting to raise \$6,000, with leading teams gaining an extraordinary chance to recruit cricket celebrities, transforming local matches into thrilling, legendary moments.

Yet, behind the competitive thrill lies a sobering reality in a statistic that is both chilling and personal. In Canada, two in five individuals will confront a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. Cancer remains one of humanity's greatest adversaries,

anticipated to surge by 77 percent globally by 2050.

Moreover, the disease is increasingly striking younger demographics, underscoring the need for swift, effective action.

The PMCF, with ground-breaking treatments in stem cells and immunotherapy, remains a beacon of hope, drastically improving survival rates and patient outcomes.

Dr Amit Oza, Head of the Division of Medical Oncology & Hematology at Princess Margaret, shared his profound connection to the cause.

"Funds raised here will ripple globally, enabling revolutionary breakthroughs," said Oza, adding, "As a lifelong cricket enthusiast, this initiative fills me with pride. We are blending passion with purpose, and the result will be transformative."

Indeed, the transformative potential of Cricket to Conquer Cancer extends far beyond its immediate objective. It embodies PMCF's *Carry The Fire* initiative, symbolising unwavering determination and hope, rallying people around a common purpose: a future without the fear of cancer.

For our Caribbean diaspora, cricket is embedded deeply into our cultural identity. It has been encoded in us in games played in the back alleys of Kingston, Georgetown, Port-of-Spain, and in the grand stands of Kensington Oval, Providence, and Sabina.

The values inherent in cricket in resilience, teamwork, precision, which were instilled in us at these sites of play back in the homelands reflect the qualities that are required for us to face cancer head-on.

And the event's compelling appeal has resonated strongly, evidenced by ongoing registrations, which is more than half-way there. Corporate sponsors are stepping forward enthusiastically, embracing the call to action, understanding that each dollar pledged represents another powerful step toward victory in the battle against cancer.

Come May, we have an opportunity to push beyond the boundary, to reshape our A-game. It would not merely be about runs or wickets, but about saving lives, restoring hope, and uniting our community against a common adversary.

Here is the opportunity to wield our well-seasoned bats to make a big hit; to make an impact by putting runs on the fund-raising scoreboard, and in so doing, becoming game-changers in the battle to conquer cancer.



RAISE YOUR BAT. RAISE HOPE.

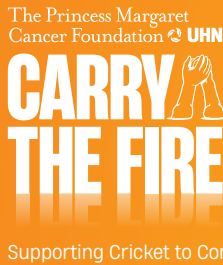
2 in 5 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. It's a scary statistic, but it's not just a number. It could be someone you love. But there is hope for a brighter tomorrow. You can help create a world free from the fear of cancer.



Step up and join our inaugural street cricket fundraiser on May 31, 2025.

Your participation will fuel life-saving research at The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, one of the world's leading cancer research and treatment centres.

Come, let's win this game together.



Scan to find out more

Human rights group writes to ICC on Afghanistan cricket inequality

— The ICC faces growing calls to take decisive action against Afghanistan amid ongoing restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women's participation in sport. Human Rights Watch, a global non-governmental organisation advocating for human rights, has urged the ICC to suspend Afghanistan's cricket board and take steps to implement a formal human rights policy.

In a letter addressed to International Cricket Council chair Jay Shah on February 3, which was made public on March 7, HRW called for Afghanistan's suspension from international cricket until Afghan women and girls are granted access to education and sport. The appeal references the ICC's anti-discrimination policy, which mandates equal opportunities for all players, irrespective of gender.

News of the HRW move was reported earlier this month by the international sports media, among them the online cricket websites ESPNcricinfo and Cricbuzz.

"We are writing at this time to urge [the ICC] to suspend Taliban-run Afghanistan from ICC membership, and from participating in international cricket, until women and girls can once again participate in education and sport in the country," HRW stated in its letter.

HRW also urged the ICC to align with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The letter emphasised that the ICC had previously pledged to increase investment in women's cricket, but Afghanistan



Afghanistan women's cricket team

remains an exception due to Taliban-imposed restrictions.

HRW further pointed out that cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics reinforces the urgency of the issue. The organisation's Director of Global Initiatives, Minky Worden, reminded the ICC that the Taliban's ban on women's cricket contradicts the Olympic Charter, which states that "the practice of sport is a human right".

"This disparate treatment in which the Afghan Men's National Cricket Team receives financial and logistical support while the Women's National Team does not – appears to violate both the Olympic Charter and the ICC's own anti-discrimination rules," HRW stated.

The precedent of international sporting bodies taking action against the Taliban was also highlighted. In October 1999, the International Olympic Committee suspended

Afghanistan's National Olympic Committee due to the Taliban barring women from competing in sports. HRW suggested that the ICC should follow suit.

Up to late last week the ICC had not responded formally to HRW's appeal. However, Shah has previously stated the ICC's commitment to Afghanistan's cricket development while acknowledging challenges facing Afghan women's cricket, particularly for players in exile.

"Our focus is on constructive dialogue and viable solutions that safeguard the best interests of all Afghan cricketers," Shah told the British Broadcasting Corporation recently.

Meanwhile, the England and Wales Cricket Board has called for ICC action, with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer also urging the governing body to uphold its own rules.

England and Australia have refrained from playing bilateral series against Afghanistan,

but continue to compete against them in ICC events. ECB chief executive Richard Gould has advocated for a "coordinated, ICC-led response" rather than unilateral action by individual countries.

The issue remains complex, with some former Afghan women's cricketers, many of whom are now living in Australia expressing mixed views on the potential banning of the men's team.

Some argue that their male counterparts provide hope for Afghan cricket's future, while others insist that male players should take a stronger stand in advocating for women's rights in sport.

In July 2023, former members of the Afghanistan women's national team, no longer recognised by the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan Cricket Board, wrote to the ICC requesting recognition as a refugee team.

In January, an Afghanistan Women's XI played an exhibition match against a Cricket Without Borders XI in Melbourne, underscoring their continued passion for the sport despite the Taliban's prohibitions.

Meanwhile, HRW has posed several direct questions to the ICC, seeking clarity on what steps the governing body is taking to develop a human rights policy, whether it would suspend Afghanistan's membership, and whether it would consider recognising an Afghan women's team in exile. The ICC now faces mounting pressure to provide a concrete response.

Rohit Sharma responds to rumours – No plans to retire from ODI cricket

— Rohit Sharma has said he will not retire from ODIs. Meanwhile, he has ensured his legacy is secure, both as a captain and a player, with India's historic unbeaten run in two ICC tournaments underscoring his impact. As the team revels in its Champions Trophy success, the focus will gradually shift to the future, with key player decisions awaiting the Indian cricketing hierarchy.

Rohit Sharma has put an end to swirling retirement speculations, confirming he will continue playing ODIs after leading India to an historic ICC Champions Trophy 2025 victory on March 9. His announcement came at the very end of the press conference, ensuring there were no lingering doubts about his future in the format.

"One more thing. I am not going to retire from this format. Just to make sure there are no rumours spread moving forward. Thank you so much," he declared, delivering a definitive statement before exiting the press room.

Sharma's clarification comes after weeks of speculation regarding his international career. Rumours first surfaced during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy when he dropped himself from the playing XI ahead of the Sydney Test.

Reports later suggested he was contemplating retirement as early as the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne.

However, three months later, the 38-year-old has made his intentions clear: he is not stepping away just yet.

His statement followed India's impressive four-wicket victory over New Zealand in the Champions' final, where Sharma played a pivotal role, scoring a crucial 76 off 83 balls, ensuring India's chase of 252 remained on track.

The latest win cemented his legacy as a captain, making him the only Indian skipper apart from M.S. Dhoni to win multiple ICC trophies.

Sharma's leadership over the past year has seen remarkable achievements. Under his captaincy, India clinched the 2024 T20 World Cup in June, and now the Champions Trophy, both without a single loss.

Had it not been for Australia's victory in the ODI World Cup final on November 19, he could have secured an unprecedented treble of ICC trophies in just under two years.

However, while Sharma remains committed



Rohit Sharma

to ODIs, his long-term participation remains uncertain. With the next ODI World Cup scheduled for 2027 in South Africa, the prospect of leading India at the age of 40 appears unlikely.

It means India may soon undergo a transition, with current vice-captain Shubman Gill potentially taking over the leadership role.

During the press conference, Sharma was asked about his future plans, to which he initially responded with restraint. However, minutes later, he provided insight into India's journey and his own mindset.

"Let's see. Winning two ICC trophies is a big achievement. Going undefeated is icing on the cake. I have seen very few teams who have won two tournaments undefeated. It was important for us to come here and prepare well. We utilised the conditions well. There are no future plans. What is going on currently will continue to go on ahead," he said.

At the post-match presentation, he reserved high praise for K.L. Rahul, whose unbeaten 34 off 33 balls helped India cross the finish line in challenging conditions.

As Sharma said of Rahul, "Again, a very solid mind. He never gets overawed by pressure around him. That's one of the reasons why we wanted to have him in the middle phase, to try and finish off games for us. With his experience and class, there's a bit of calmness when

he bats."

India's depth and adaptability were key factors in their success. Sharma himself set the tone for the chase with an aggressive 49 off 40 balls during the powerplay, forming a crucial 105-run opening stand with Gill. His approach was made possible by India's strong batting depth.

"It makes it a lot easier; it gives you freedom as well," he explained.

"Which is why I said earlier as well, that we wanted to have batting depth as deep as possible. [Ravindra] Jadeja coming at No. 8 gives you the confidence to go slightly hard up front with the new ball. If it comes off, it comes off. If it doesn't, then so be it. As long as I'm clear in my mind, it's the most important thing."

Bowling was another crucial element of India's triumph. Their four-pronged spin attack, featuring Varun Chakravarthy, played a vital role throughout the tournament.

Chakravarthy, who was not originally in the preliminary squad, finished as the second-highest wicket-taker with nine wickets in three games with an impressive economy rate of 4.53.

"Not just this game but right from the beginning, our spinners in particular, there are too many expectations when you are playing on a pitch like that, but they never disappointed," Sharma said.

He added, "We do understand their strengths. Playing on pitches like these helped, and we used it to our advantage. Throughout the tournament, in terms of bowling, we were very consistent."

While Sharma's retirement from ODIs is off the table for now, India's leadership structure will likely evolve in the coming years. His contribution as a batter remains invaluable, but whether he leads the team into the next World Cup remains to be seen.





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