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A thoroughly enjoyable Bhakti Sangeet evening saw Sringeri Banquet Hall in Etobicoke resonating with music & melodies on April 22. The event was put on by the Radha Krishna Mandir in Cambridge as a fund-raiser for its new mandir. In photo, left to right, are RKMCC's president, Dwarka Persaud; performers Pt Narad Gosine, Pt Neil Dev Persad, & Pt Hardat Ashwar; & Pt Bhoj Sharma. More on Page 8



Imdadul Islamic Centre's General Secretary Osman Khan (right in photo) was recently recognised with an award for 35 years of volunteer service & community leadership with the Police Chief Muslim Consultative Committee. The award was presented by Police Chief Myron Demkiw (left in photo). Imdadul's community consultation engages with Toronto police to exchange information, identify issues, & to develop strategies for maintaining & enhancing community safety. More on page 3.

Dialysis run gets infusion from T&T, Guyana Consulates

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – The VOV Global Care Outreach TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon fundraiser run for dialysis care last month received an infusion of support from both the Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago Consulate offices in Toronto, the latest development inspiring and uplifting its many volunteers and participants.

Last week Acting Consul General at the Trinidad and Tobago Consulate General in Toronto, Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, told *Indo-Caribbean World* her office was "pleased to partner with Vishnu Mandir's Global Care Outreach Program in 2023".

Said Ramsubagh-Mannette: "I will be participating in the [TWM] in October on behalf of our office, and we will be asking the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora and friends to join us!"

As Ramsubagh-Mannette said, following a recommendation, she then explored the "excellent work" that was being done by Global Care. As she noted, the group was "very warm and accommodating in exploratory discussions with our Consulate".

She added, "It has been doing excellent work to strengthen local health systems in Guyana, particularly in the areas of dialysis and eye care, so that



Grace Joseph



Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette

those affected in under-resourced communities are able to access high quality and ongoing care locally."

And as she further indicated, "We would like to adopt this model and work towards obtaining funding support for Trinidad and Tobago for a similar venture."

Ramsubagh-Mannette also spoke to Global Care utilising the TWM as a fundraising platform, saying doing so was "a stroke of genius".

As she declared, "... [Even while] promoting your cause and raising funds, you are also creating lasting change by promoting physical activity and healthy living, thereby reducing the economic costs of chronic diseases, and the burden on healthcare systems. It's really attacking chronic health chal-

lenges in our countries on multiple fronts!"

Also last month, Acting Consul General at the Guyana Consulate General in Toronto, Grace Joseph, attended the official launch of Global Care's 2023 marathon effort, which took place at Vishnu Mandir in Richmond Hill.

During her address, Joseph indicated that the Guyana Consulate was "thrilled and eager to once again collaborate with [Global Care] to participate in the [TWM] run for Guyana dialysis".

And on behalf of the Consulate, the government, and the people of Guyana, Joseph also extended gratitude to VOV's leader, Dr Budhendraauth Doobay, and supporters and devotees for "...continued selfless support to our Guyanese brothers and sisters who are able to receive dialysis treatment".

Joseph also indicated that last year's TWM event saw the first-time participation by the Guyana Consulate's staff.

"... Vice Consul [Osafo] Scott did the in-person 5k run while Nutana [Singh]... did the virtual full marathon, where she did about 5-10k per day until she completed the run," she said.

Additionally, Joseph noted that Consulate staff

See Page 16: Humanitarian causes

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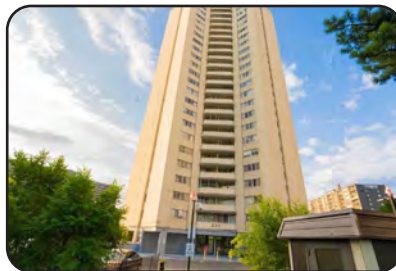
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Standing with one of the two donated stretchers & a wheelchair in the foreground are (left to right) Techlem's Plant Manager Mukesh Persad; Techlem's President Anurag Sinha; President and CEO of Health & Beauty Distributor Inc Vikas Mahajan; Osafo Scott, Vice-Consul at the Guyana Consulate in Toronto; Grace Joseph, Acting Consul General at the Guyana Consulate; Nutuna Singh, Executive Assistant at the Consulate; & realtor Mani Singh with Dindyal Ramnarine & Roy Doobay from the One Guyana Forum Canada.

GTA companies donate stretchers, wheelchairs to Guyana

The government and people of Guyana received two stretchers and three wheelchairs last month, the donations coming from two companies here in the GTA. Working with the diaspora group, One Guyana Forum Canada, Techlem Stretchers' owner Anurag Sinha made the handover via Zoom to Guyana's Health Minister Dr Frank Anthony.

The handover took place at Techlem's Mississauga office on April 26. Also making a donation to Guyana was President and CEO of Health and Beauty Distributor Inc Vikas Mahajan, who presented Dr Anthony with five wheelchairs.

Dr Anthony extended the Guyana government's gratitude

and appreciation for the donations to both Sinha and Mahajan. Total value of the donations is around \$25,000.

During the presentation, Sinha noted his connection with Guyana. As he told the gathering, he spent some time in Guyana during construction of the stadium in East Bank Demerara. At the time, Sinha said he was with the government of India.

Attending the event were members of the Consulate General of Guyana in Toronto, members of the One Guyana Forum Canada, and realtor Mani Singh.

Techlem's Plant Manager Mukesh Persad facilitated the donations.



Imdadul Islamic Centre's General Secretary Osman Khan was recently recognised with an award for 35 years of volunteer service with the Police Chief Muslim Consultative Committee. The award was presented by Police Chief Myron Demkiw. In photo above from left to right are Police Chief Myron Demkiw; Shazeda Khan; Osman Khan; & Mandeep Mann.

VCC to host program to mark Indian arrival in Guyana

The Vedic Cultural Centre will host a special program to observe the 185th Anniversary of the Arrival of Indians in Guyana and the Caribbean on May 27 at 4345-14th Ave, Markham. The program will feature an exhibition of artifacts and pertinent information on Indian Indentureship, a cash ethnic food booth starting at 3:30 p.m., a stage program starting 6:30 p.m., and launch of a Souvenir Magazine of around 100

glossy pages with articles by prominent authors in the diaspora. The stage program will include entertainment, a keynote address by Cliff Rajkumar, and a dance drama by Panwar Music and Dance and STCC Dance Academy capturing the positive outcomes of Indian immigration to the Caribbean.

Free admission. Contact Adit Kumar, 647-866-1926; Norma Jainarine, 416-901-3404; or Sharada Bhajan, 416-450-1743.

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Focus now on T&T as nation warming faster than global average

Port-of-Spain – Data released last month have revealed that Trinidad and Tobago is warming 2.5 times faster than the global average. With similar trends now occurring across the Caribbean, the faster rate of warming is a growing crisis that poses a severe threat to sustainable development in the region, the *Trinidad Guardian* reported late last month.

Also, without an urgent course correction on climate change, and adaptation to its effects, the Caribbean will face worsening loss, and infrastructural and environmental degradation.

Such was the stark message issued during the Climate Analytics Caribbean event, 'Islands All In for GST 2023', which commemorated Earth Day last month. It also raised awareness of the United Nations climate change process, the Global Stocktake (GST).

The event took place in Port-of-Spain, and featured a special selection of Caribbean short films in partnership with the Green Screen Environmental Film Festival.

According to a statement issued by Climate Analytics Caribbean, the UN's GST process can enhance regional resiliency to extreme events. It will inform countries' enhanced climate commitments on issues related to mitigation, adaptation, and finance, as well as cross-cutting equity issues.

It also will assess how the world is working towards staying within a 1.5 degrees Celsius warming limit, which is at the core of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's landmark Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement compels every country to do its fair share to demonstrate climate action ambition, and to contribute to the climate change solution. Each country must account for their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and whether they are achieving them. This will feed into the GST.

According to the Climate Analytics Caribbean release, the Caribbean is particularly vulnerable to a warming limit above 1.5 degrees. There is real danger that many of its existing natural wonders and essential ecosystems – such as coral reefs – may soon be a thing



Kalain Hosein



Rueanna Haynes



Kishan Kumarsingh

of the past, with catastrophic consequences.

“With the Caribbean on the front lines of the climate crisis, the GST presents a critical opportunity for countries to implement initiatives to reduce emissions, and for our region and other small island developing states to receive much-needed financial and technological support to adjust and adapt to climate impacts,” the release stated.

Multimedia journalist Kalain Hosein painted a grim picture for Trinidad and Tobago if current warming trends continued.

“In Trinidad and Tobago, every single year since 1986 has been warmer than the 1961-1991 climatological average,” he said.

He added, “Trinidad and Tobago has warmed at a rate of 0.24 degrees Celsius per decade since 1946. The last two decades have been the hottest on record. The trend is clear. We are getting hotter, faster, with decreased rainfall, causing alarming knock-on effects to public health, agriculture, energy consumption, and more. This is not good news for our country.”

The event saw Hosein being announced as an ambassador for the 'Islands All in for GST 2023' drive, which will advance regional participation in the GST. He is joined as an ambassador by fellow multimedia journalist and climate champion Seignie Mohammed.

Head of Multilateral Environmental

Agreements at Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Planning and Development Kishan Kumarsingh reported on Trinidad and Tobago's progress in its attempts to reduce emissions via the Nationally Determined Contributions initiative.

“Trinidad and Tobago's NDCs address emissions in the Power Generation and Transportation sectors, and is perhaps the most ambitious NDC in the region,” Kumarsingh noted.

He added, “It also contains an unconditional commitment to reduce emissions in the public transportation sector. The approach is to develop the requisite policy, legislative, institutional and administrative enabling environment to facilitate ambitious climate action as a holistic approach.”

As Kumarsingh noted, Trinidad and Tobago is “walking the talk” with several important alternative energy initiatives, among them being development of a utility-scale solar plant to generate approximately 112 MW of power, with ambition to increase capacity to 30 percent by 2030; and the procurement of 240 electric buses to further reduce emissions from

the CNG initiative.

Also, development of a green hydrogen roadmap, with assessment on the feasibility of wind power both onshore and offshore to power the green hydrogen economy; and development of a net zero plan consistent with the Paris Agreement to identify additional emissions reductions opportunities and actions to raise mitigation ambition.

Kumarsingh also noted there was development of a carbon pricing and carbon trading policy.

Meanwhile, Director of Climate Analytics Caribbean, Rueanna Haynes, maintained hope remained for the Caribbean region.

“We still have time to turn the ship around – the [GST] can help get us there,” she declared.

Additionally, “Technological solutions and know-how already exist to put us on the pathway that will avoid the worst and most dangerous climate impacts. This global moment is designed to help us understand in more precise terms the gaps that exist. Showcase the solutions that are already being deployed. Secure real political commitment for cooperation to go further, faster. All based on equity and the best available science.”

Haynes also stated, “In order for the promise of this process to be made real, whole of society buy-in will be required. As a people, as a region we have the opportunity to contribute. And in fact, have already done so with a submission into the global process that presents the outcome of regional discussions on a Caribbean approach to climate justice.”

She added, “We can continue to contribute through engagement with governments on the upcoming political phase of the process. But critically, we should be preparing to help to implement the outcome of the [GST] in the context of greater climate action on the ground.”

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McMaster's Professor Jamal Deen receives prestigious Julian C Smith Medal

By Adit Kumar

Indo-Guyanese scholar and distinguished university professor at McMaster University, Dr Jamal Deen last month received the EIC's Julian C. Smith Medal for his "remarkable achievements in the development of Canada".

Deen is Director of the Micro- and Nano Systems Laboratory at McMaster. He received the award on April 22.

As the longer citation for the award notes, Deen's "award-winning, world-class research in nano-/opto-electronics and data analytics in partnership with over 20 Canadian R&D companies has paved the way for high-performance devices and systems in information and communication technologies, and healthcare and environmental sciences".

It adds, "This research and development are crucial for Canada's future as a world leader in technologies for information and communication systems, and low-cost, user-friendly systems for health and environmental monitoring. His research leadership has raised McMaster's national and international visibility reputation and recognition to an unprecedented level."

Also, "At the national level, his impact is highlighted through peer recognitions including his induction as Fellow of the Engineering Institute of Canada, the Canadian Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society of Canada, and the receipt of numerous awards and honours such as the Eadie Medal (Royal Society of Canada), the IEEE McNaughton Gold Medal, IEEE Fessenden Silver Medal, IEEE Gotlieb Computer Award and Doctor of Engineering - Honoris Causa from University of Waterloo, alongside many international awards."

Deen has also been elected as Fellow of the Canadian Society of Senior Engineers (Fellow CSSE-SCIS). CSSE-SCIS is a Constituent Member of the Engineering Institute of Canada.

As the short citation reads, "The distinction of Fellow has been conferred on M. Jamal Deen in recognition of excellence in engineering and for services rendered to the profession and to Canada."

Giving further details, the longer citation reads, "After his studies at various Universities around the world he set out to pursue his roles as a researcher and educator of science and engineering students... [He] has been widely acclaimed for his outstanding research and as a global leader in the fields of electrical engineering and applied physics. Throughout his career he has received numerous awards, including his 2018 Order of



Dr Jamal Deen (right) receiving the CSSE fellow award from Donna Jean Kilpatrick, President of EIC Canada Award.

It adds, "Dr Deen has held numerous academic and professional leadership positions in electrical engineering institutions, notably as President of the Academy of Science of the Royal Society of Canada. Dr Deen is well-known for his inspired teaching as well as his outreach and contributions to industrial laboratories for the benefit of Canadian society."

As a Fellow of the CSSE-SCIS, Deen joins Members who comprise an impressive cadre of engineering leaders in academia and industry, including current and former University Presidents, CEOs, and Senior Engineers from all disciplines.

The objectives of CSSE-SCIS include assisting in the broad field of engineering education for youth preparing to enter university, including those already in an undergraduate engineering program, and encouraging and facilitating communications between members of the engineering and science fraternity.

Also, it maintains an active role in expressing learned opinions, either alone or in concert with other Canadian engineering organisations on issues of national or regional interest relating to Canadian engineering or technology; and contributes to awareness of the history of Engineering in Canada.

Also, in April Deen was awarded the McMaster University Faculty Association Award for Outstanding Service.

The MUFA Award is "to provide annual recognition for faculty who have made an outstanding contribution to the mission of the University through the provision of exceptional service to faculty, staff and/or students".

In selecting Deen for the award, the committee noted, "[He] has made impressively deep, broad and sustained service contributions throughout McMaster and beyond... His service contributions include serving on grant selection committees for NSERC... and directing the Micro/Nano-Systems Lab."

Also, "In addition to being a stellar researcher and role model, Dr Deen has devoted much of his time supporting the careers of colleagues and students. ...He co-authored the proposal leading to McMaster's successful Black Academic Excellence Cohort Hiring Initiative. His mentoring of graduate students was recognised by the 2022 MSU Macademics' Lifetime Achievement Award and by the 2021 President's Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision."

And, "Collectively, his contributions demonstrate that [Deen] has enriched the McMaster community far beyond his own research discipline and department. He exemplifies the contributions the MUFA Outstanding Service Award is intended to recognise."

In accepting the award, Deen stated, "Let me begin by thanking the MUFA Selection Committee for selecting me to receive the MUFA Award for Outstanding Service. I am truly humbled, extremely honoured, and sincerely grateful for this prestigious recognition of our outstanding contributions to the mission of the University through the provision of exceptional service to faculty and students."

Deen added, "However, this recognition is not only for me; it is also for the many exceptional students, colleagues, and collaborators I am so fortunate to serve and help. They have made our work to enhance the reputation of McMaster through our innovations in research and professional service; our work with colleagues to create and maintain effective and harmonious working relationships within an equity-diversity-inclusion framework; and our continuous efforts to support our students for thriving careers, rewarding, and enjoyable."

He concluded, "It has been a truly remarkable and wonderful journey for me."

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Editorial

T&T, Guyana care

Yet again we renew with emphasis that our diaspora from Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and the rest of the Caribbean region remain informed, vigilant, and focused on personal safety during visits to our many homelands.

As we noted recently in this space, criminality was on the rise, and is now escalating even more in Trinidad and Tobago. And so it is with this inexorable escalation, especially in armed robberies and homicides, that it is incumbent on each of us to take all precautions when we travel south, either as visitors, or to conduct business.

As is now happening in Trinidad and Tobago, it appears there is no holding back by the criminals, who continue to sow discord and fear, and are committing violent attacks, home invasions, and brutal homicides.

In a disquieting occurrence last week, as the Trinidad and Tobago media reported, what was an ordinary school day quickly turned into pure terror when thousands of pupils nationwide were evacuated following multiple e-mailed bomb threats sent to the schools.

The alarming episode saw over 55 schools placed on high alert, with teachers, administrative staff, and thousands of students evacuated following an email message that sowed mayhem, and threatened to cause grievous harm with the detonation of explosives.

Hours after the attack on the entire school system, Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister and chairman of the National Security Council, Dr Keith Rowley, declared that the event had "terrorised" both children and parents, even as it had disrupted the education system.

Rowley condemned the actions, saying it had originated from "misguided terrorist miscreants".

Thankfully, no physical harm came to students, teachers, and frantic parents rushing to take their children to safety. Also, no explosives and detonation devices were discovered following intervention by Trinidad and Tobago's security forces.

If the trauma of a bomb threat was not enough for students last week, then a homicide taking place in an empty lot contiguous to a primary school while it was in session yet again sent shock waves of trauma among students and teaching staff, and throughout the country.

And as occurred less than a week before, students had to be evacuated, but not before shaken pupils were exposed to the disquieting sight of the homicide victim lying nearby.

Yet again it is imperative, and of ascendant importance for us to stress that to visit Trinidad and Tobago today is to also enter into sites of trauma, danger, and unwholesome and escalating precarity.

And to our Guyanese diaspora, it is now incumbent on us to also extend a warning about the alarming precarity that is now rife on this nation's roadways, and for us to emphasise there is a clear and present danger to safety while commuting on its roads.

As was reported by the Guyana Police Force, 50 nationals have now perished on Guyana's roads in the period from January to April. According to the report, out of the 50 total road fatalities, 19 were caused by fatal traffic episodes, with the remaining 31 due to accidents. Guyana police also reported a 100 percent increase in road fatalities so far compared to the same period last year.

The carnage continues despite amendments by the government to the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act, and the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Bill, which provide for harsher penalties for traffic and DUI offences.

So adverse is the situation on Guyana's roadways that it drew the attention of President Irfaan Ali, who has called for the implementation of strategies to curb escalating road fatalities, and for a more caring, defensive driving culture.

Said Ali: "It is also pure recklessness and stupidity from those who risk their lives and families. More importantly, putting other families' lives as risk with their reckless behaviour. This must stop!"

While we are optimistic things will eventually improve in the Caribbean, it is imperative when we visit our homelands that we take no risks, remain cautious, and exercise extreme vigilance during our stay.

Our multiple histories of arrival came in ships

Arrival Day is upon us, and continuing my reflections on a watery archive, I am prompted to think about what it meant to travel across the dark waters of the ocean from India to the Caribbean. I want to offer three reflections.

Firstly, although this is not a profound insight, I think it is important that we begin with imagining how terrifying crossing that vast distance across multiple oceans must have been.

Aside from the shaky encounters with the "pagla samundar" or "mad seas", there were also spiritual implications that we can imagine, such as not being able to reincarnate into the next life because you are too far away from the holy Ganges.

And then to quote my editor, Romeo Kaseram, there was the "obscurity across the *kala pani*; erasures of lives lived at the margins, buried at sea". We know and must acknowledge the fears or sacrifices embedded in this first outward movement of our ancestors.

Secondly, where were they heading? To a deeply layered place with complicated histories. They were heading to the so-called "new world", a place conceived as rich in bounty for the taking – at least, in the imagination of European arrivants.

So rich in bounty, in fact, that the arrivants' lust for gold and wealth had genocidal consequences on Indigenous populations, as well as the memories that had pre-existed prior to Columbian arrival.

Furthermore, as the capitalist catalytic machine acquired its growing thirst for greater and greater profits, we witness the emergence of a colonising enterprise, the plantation, driven by the abusive and inhumane system of enslaving persons from predominantly the west coast of Africa, and its interiors. As all this brutality is set in motion in the Caribbean, colonialism is a virus spreading globally. Thus, there are multiple histories of colonisation occurring, unravelling, and becoming within the space of the Caribbean.

The arrival of Indentured labourers unfold additional histories in the region that compound the pre-existing layers of violence. These histories, our histories, are born of the economic, political, and moral collapse of slavery, which did not end the desire for cheap labour and abundant profit.

The subsequent oppressive system of labour, Indentureship, found its new sources of labour primarily in India, although Indians were not the only ones indentured, and the Caribbean is not the only place of indenture. It was a global system. The



Nalini Mohabir

shipment of labour from one part of the world to another, at the very least suggests the lengths planters would go to in order to hold onto their plantation properties in the Caribbean, post-Emancipation.

Thirdly, how do remember this history? What are our objects of memory? We recall ourselves through ships, such as the iconic S.S. *Whitby* memorial in the Indian Monument Gardens in Georgetown. Ship names – the *Whitby*, the *Hesperus*, the *Fatel Razack*, the *Lalla Rookh*, and so on, are important. They live on as signifiers of the journey in popular culture.

Mahadai Das' poem, *They Came in Ships*, for example, gives us a powerful image of the ship ("wooden missions of imperialist design"). But before the poet even mentions the *Whitby*, the *Hesperus*, or the *Fatel Razack*, there is a haunting of an African past ("transporting her chains") that comes to the speaker of the poem who narrates the journey of Indentured labourers "[coming] in droves/Like cattle./Brown like cattle./Eyes limpid, like cattle".

However, because the Indentured labourers are coming to inhabit the plantation, there is also an African inheritance of resistance "Cuffy shouting – remember 1763."

In Das' poem, and in our histories, the ship is an organising trope – the ship is our space of particular history, as well as a feeling coming together across multiple histories.

Of course, Das is not the only one to remember the ship. The under-recognised (by the State) but highly appreciated (by the people) chutney artist, Terry Gajraj, sings in *Indo-Caribbean Man* of ships, the *Hesperus* and the *Whitby*. He sings us through the facts of Indentured labourers shipped to the Caribbean, the timeline of Indian arrivals (beginning in 1838), crossing the *kala pani* by ships, and the culture we have inherited.

Given the trickery, the unsanitary conditions, the abuse, and the exploitations our ancestors endured on the plantation, how incredible it is that our ancestral line not only survived, we are here and able to sing of these layers of history.

You might wonder why I have chosen these three reflections. I think they are indicative of what emerges from this history. It is worth remembering on Arrival Day, that every movement of a non-Indigenous population to the Caribbean was brought in from elsewhere. Whether European, African, or Asian, we came in ships. The ship is our pain; but it is also our vessel of connection.

Shop doors open a window into our ancestral past

Saying mischievously to the village shopkeeper when I was growing up back home, "Don't ever trust gravity", was sure to get a linear, one-tracked eye short-sightedly and suspiciously peering into the bright sunshine outside. The shopkeeper's body would go tense, as if in anticipation of yet another "bad-trust" customer.

Now back in my youth there were quite a few "bad-trust" customers – those who entered the wide-opened shop doors brandishing a toothy and disarming smile, only to walk out and into a cowboy-movie sunset carrying an armful of groceries, never to be seen again.

"Who is this Gravity? You expect me to give him trust? He will only let me down," said our milquetoast village shopkeeper.

Some days I wonder when would I ever zero out on my accumulation of payment-now-due karmic bills that still arrive each month, a few stamped overdue, for these boyhood misadventures; and as an aside, I would advise anyone willing to listen to not let any of their karma bills go to the collection agency.

And for the one or two among us who may have forgotten its regional, colloquial usage, back home when I was a young boy, "to get trust" meant that the shopkeeper was willing to extend credit for goods to proven, trustworthy clients, until "Payday reach; please Mr Shopkeeper, Sir". Come "fortnight" and the bill would be settled, most of the times partially, after said customers received their meagre wages from the sugar factory.

Of course, this was a time of cyclical, iterative, and persistent poverty, the wages earned by my grandmother from her back-breaking tenure in the sugar cane fields, for example, barely sufficient to settle the accumulating "taken on trust" bill for the foodstuff previously bought on credit.

Now I must speak about the doors that fronted our village shop, each at a formidable and impregnable height, and which looked down sternly at all approaching customers.

Looking down the decades, I recall all four doors were quite weighty, solid, and impenetrable as those fronting a feudal castle, each swinging laboriously on crochety and rusted iron hinges, and which were kept open with large rocks that weathered the drilling rain and piercing sunlight as makeshift doorstops.

Each door was assembled with a row of thick planks bolted side-by-side with horizontal cross-bars of a similarly petrified wood. Right-angle iron bars were bolted onto the inside to serve

as convenient handles, but more practically, were there to hold a horizontal six-by-six beam, which was placed across the iron arms as additional security after the rocks were rolled away, and the world-weary doors heaved shut for the night.

And how aged were these planks of solid wood. Play, "Knock, knock, who is there?", and the gravel in the voice that replied was from a place of great stone-age.

In my close reading of the archaeology in the weather-beaten layers of peeling paint, to peer underneath its many coats was akin to reading the growth rings on a freshly-chopped down tree.

Back then and newly-wet with my early dips into the oncoming tides of school-book knowledge, I recall misapplying my learning not only on the shopkeeper, but to also water my complementary and flourishing imagination, thinking that perhaps the first coat of paint on the lumber that constituted the doors came from a prehistoric mix of plant and animal pigmentation.

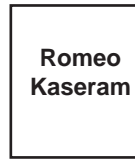
That this pigment was likely used in another life to render on a cave wall hordes of stick men waving spears thinner than matchsticks, their war-whoops soundless as they charged at herds of animals placidly grazing in the world's newly-cut, young fabric of wilderness, with its grasslands yet to be littered with plastic water bottles, empty juice boxes, and other detritus of our consume-and-discard, modern-day bad habits.

Perhaps it was also my imagination raising up its mischievous head telling me the wood in the shop's doors were older than the feet that later disembarked off the gangplanks of ships, which across the centuries brought hands from different continents to labour in the Caribbean's fields of slavery and Indentureship.

And who knows, perhaps the wood on these doors were from the ships that came with the people who were bought, and brought, to the Caribbean's shores.

And taking it even further back, could it possibly be that the planks in these doors were flotsam, perhaps, that had come to shore yet again, after time with its unrelenting axe strokes, had shredded those first wooden ships, the *Santa Maria*, the *Niña*, and the *Pinta*?

For these were the uberships that preceded the vessels of erasure that my colleague, Nalini Mohabir, speaks to from her residence in the room above on this page. As children of disembarked feet and labouring hands, we are descended from arrivals that followed these three ships into hardship and survival.



Romeo Kaseram

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

Wider narratives support May 5 for Guyana's Indian Arrival Day

Dear Editor,

The pluralism that shaped our cultural landscape is accentuated when all groups can freely express their values and claim ownership of the distinct cultural traits that define our existence.

Being Guyanese means that while we share commonality and equality as citizens occupying the same territorial space, we are, simultaneously, components of a community representing cultural groups, with varying identities, origins, and backgrounds.

Diversity implies that we have emerged into a complex society of people capable of celebrating, commemorating, and appreciating historical turning points that define our various heritages.

May 5 is one such turning point. On the first Saturday of May 1838, about 400 Girmityas (Indentured Indians) survived the *kala pani* odyssey of more than 10,000 nautical miles across two oceans to reach Berbice and "Damra Tapu" (Demerara).

Guyana bears the unique distinction of being the first Caribbean country to receive Indian labourers premised upon an arrangement brokered by John Gladstone, the wealthy Scottish absentee plantation owner.

Gladstone's family had previously received some £85,606 as post-emancipation compensation for the loss of approximately 2,183 slaves in British Guiana and Jamaica.

Additionally, as far as I am aware, British Guiana was the only colony in which two ships transporting Girmityas, the *SS Whitby* and *SS Hesperus*, arrived on the same day in 1838.

For Indentured Indians, their journey began with a pioneering, voluntary, as well as involuntary initiative, which today is nationally and officially commemorated in post-colonial diasporic societies where Indians represent a majority or a significant segment of the population: Jamaica (May 10 – Indian Heritage Day); Trinidad & Tobago (June 1 – Indian Arrival Day); Suriname (June 5 – Pravas Din); Fiji (May 4 – Girmitya Remembrance Day); St Vincent (June 1); St Lucia (May 6); Grenada (May 1); Mauritius (November 2); and South Africa (November 16).

As it stands, the only obstacle to recognising Indian Arrival Day in Guyana is the PPP government.

Historically in Guyana, the premier Indian organisation, the British Guiana East Indian Association, established in 1916, with its origin in Berbice, gave recognition to the importance of Indian arrival.

The British Guiana Dramatic Society, starting in 1937, held its yearly theatrical performances in May. The BGDS selected May month for their activities so as to mark Indian arrival to British Guiana, and to pay tribute to their patron-dramatist, Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet and writer from Kolkata, who was the first non-European to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1913, and who was born on May 7.

In recognition of this historic event, in the preamble to his

Support for Indian Arrival Day

Dear Editor,

I join the chorus of persons including Ravi Dev and Baytoram Ramharack who have made repeated calls with justifications as to why May 5 must be renamed from Arrival Day to Indian Arrival Day or Indian Immigration Day.

We have a situation where the other two main ethnic groups have a whole month quite fittingly dedicated to activities recognising their heritage, while East Indians do not have a single day correctly designated to commemorate the arrival of our illustrious ancestors.

I believe the Opposition leader has already publicly supported this request, and I am positive that no group or organisation of any significance has or could properly oppose this request by our East Indian brothers and sisters. So, it is beyond my comprehension why our current government has not yet responded decisively and positively to this request.

In addition to the renaming of the holiday, there is no doubt, given the ubiquitous presence in the building of this country by East Indians across all spheres of endeavour, that the Month of May should be designated as East Indian Heritage month. Along with this, there should be suitable activities planned by various government agencies and NGOs to enlighten the general populace on the incalculable contributions made by East Indians to the development of our beloved country.

So, President Irfaan Ali and Cabinet, please do what is required, and let this travesty be corrected forthwith.

Christopher Persaud, Guyana, via email.



Irfaan Ali



Cheddi Jagan



Ravi Dev

Message on May 5, 2021, President Mohamed Irfaan Ali, said, "I greet all Guyanese on the occasion of Arrival Day 2021. This special day is commemorated as a public holiday on May 5 each year. It celebrates the contributions to the national development of our African, Indian, Chinese, Portuguese and European ancestors and their descendants."

In contrast, former President David Granger's Message delivered during the previous year read: "Indian Arrival Day is celebrated each year on May 5. The East Indians who arrived came largely from the Uttar Pradesh and Southern Indian regions of India."

The presidential narratives are distinctly noteworthy. Emancipation Day is dedicated to our African brothers and sisters, Amerindian Month is dedicated to our First People, and the Chinese first arrived in January 1853.

The two groups that arrived in May were the Portuguese (May 3) and Indians (May 5).

I surmise that the Portuguese will not take kindly to having their day of arrival subsumed under the same day as Indians. In effect, President Granger, as early as 2017, had established a precedent for the designation of Indian Arrival Day when he issued public notices proclaiming, "Chinese Arrival Day," "Portuguese Arrival Day," and "Indian Arrival Day."

That May 5 was officially intended as Indian Arrival Day dates back to a process started on April 14, 2003, when a Special Select Parliamentary Committee was established to review "The Public Holidays Act, Chapter 19:07."

As former ROAR parliamentarian Ravi Dev explained, when the said day was approved by the Parliamentary Committee in 2004, it was called Indian Arrival Day.

declared that it should review as a possible public holiday, "Arrival Day, that is to say, the 5th May, or, if that day is a Sunday, the following day."

In its conclusion, the Committee noted: "While the aforesaid recommendation (on the holiday be named 'Arrival Day') is in keeping with our mandate, the Committee wishes to note that all the submissions favouring 5th May as a Public Holiday recommended that it be designated 'Indian Arrival Day' as is the case in Trinidad and Tobago."

The resolution was sent to the National Assembly on April 29, 2004, and "Arrival Day" was officially observed on May 5 of that year.

It was the PPP parliamentarians who subsequently dropped the "Indian" from Arrival Day.

The PPP, in this particular case, seems to be bending over backward in order to avoid acknowledging Indian Guyanese's claim to national recognition. It was Presbyterian Rev. J.B. Cropper, whose sole purpose was to harvest Christian converts, who declared that "without the labour of the East Indian, the Colony would today have been little more than a mangrove swamp fringed with courida bush". Cropper was being overly generous with his assessment of Indian contributions to Guyana's development at the 1938 centenary celebrations.

However, the fact remains that Dr Cheddi Jagan was committed to recognising May 5 as a holiday. The PNC is on board. It now remains to be seen whether the government will continue to remain impervious to the sentiments of its large Indian constituency, who through thick and thin, have provided multi-generational support for the PPP.

Baytoram Ramharack, New York, via email.

Unity, focus needed to win T&T's war on crime

Dear Editor,

The hot topic being discussed currently is the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago. There is no doubt that citizens are justified in being concerned by the wave of criminality and lack of empathy by individuals who believe a life of crime is the best option to pursue.

What I would have expected was that all law-abiding citizens would come together in unity to fight the one true enemy – the criminals. Unfortunately, people have chosen these challenges as an opportunity to score political points and to create divisiveness within our beautiful nation.

I was shocked and appalled that leaders of a religious organisation would ever think that crime is being done as a weapon against a particular race. These leaders strategically used their influence on a public platform to incite a great amount of hate within society.

Social media has blown up with comments of hate against races, and some of the comments I observed were alarming. While one of these particular Hindu leaders does speak and write eloquently at times on current affairs, he has to be careful to not use every opportunity as an attempt to gain attention. These leaders are of the Hindu faith, and I must remind them that there are all races within the Hindu religion.

According to Lexipol, the question is why does it matter that in some individuals their brains privately, instantaneously, and unconsciously think negative thoughts about those who are different than they are?

Several lines of research have discovered a clear connection between their snap judgments and their actions. For example, their brains will tend to link an unfamiliar Black person to crim-

inal behaviour absent from available data; they link 'blackness' with crime quickly and automatically, regardless of whether there is a rational basis for that link. This needs to change in order to overcome the evil of crime.

The Police Service has come out publicly with statistics to prove that members of no particular race commit, or are victims of crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2017, Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley pleaded, "I want to appeal to all those young persons who might be influenced by or attracted to violent criminal activity to consider the frequency with which such activities end in grief, not only for their families but for the wider national community, to reflect on alternatives which would provide more acceptable outcomes to their valuable lives."

These words resonated then and are more than valid at this time.

In July 2022 Attorney General Reginald Armour, during his contribution on the Bail Amendment Bill, begged for unity against crime. The response by the Opposition was to stage a walkout.

For us to overcome this pandemic of crime in society, we need to come together as one. We need to support all arms and institutions that defend us on a daily basis. Let us stop the blame game.

While I totally agree the government, the protective services and others have a great role to play in the crime fight, we as citizens have an even greater role in providing the support, the encouragement and the will to take back our country and make it as great as we would like it to be.

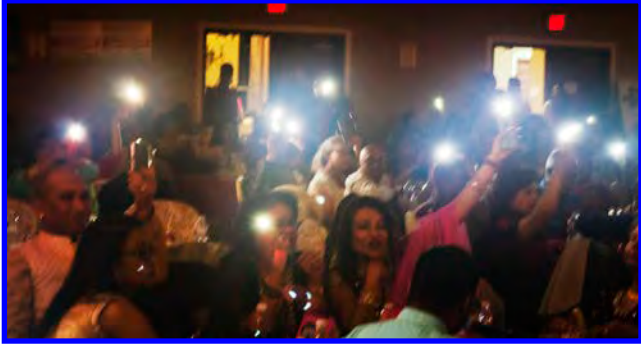
We have the power to get it done.

Nigel Seenathsingh, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Keith Rowley

Bhakti Sangeet: An evening of song & celebration



Appreciative fans hold up cell phone lights



Section of the Bhakti Sangeet audience



RKMCC President Dwarka Persaud

Etobicoke – A sold-out audience was thoroughly entertained on the evening of April 22 when the Radha Krishna Mandir and Cultural Centre held its Bhakti Sangeet megaconcert at the Sringeri Banquet Hall in Etobicoke. The event was a fundraiser to aid in the completion of the RKMCC's new mandir in Cambridge.

The evening featured the many synergies, dynamics, and uplifting energies of Pt Neil Dev Persad, Pt Narad Gosine, and Pt Hardat Ashwar. It was the first time this dynamic group came together. Their inspirational solo performances, and later for the finale as a trio, had the audience clapping hands, singing, swaying with devotion, and dancing at the front of the stage.

As was noted during the event, all proceeds from the Bhakti Sangeet concert are going towards the construction of the new Radha Krishna Mandir in Cambridge now underway.

The mandir will serve the South Western Ontario community, and offer several amenities, among them Bal Vihar and senior programs, full time Pandits, music and yoga rooms, a greenhouse, and many more.

As RKMCC's President Dwarka Persaud told the gathering that evening, construction is going according to plans. He also thanked the evening's many sponsors, and the hundreds of in attendance for the vital and ongoing support that is inspiring devotees, and sustaining construction of the mandir.

RKMCC continues to accept donations online for its building fund. Donations can be e-transferred to the following address: donate@radhkrishnamandir.ca; or [click here to donate online](#). Income tax receipts are issued for donations over \$20. Persaud can be reached at 519-240-0870.



The music was too good to not perform a few dance steps



Performer getting ready for the event



Tassa player filling Sringeri Hall with bass drumming



This group of performers had the audience applauding with appreciation



Pandit Neil Dev Persad



Pandit Hardat Ashwar



Pandit Narad Gosine

Opposition resistance undermining One Guyana initiative

As Guyana pushes forward with its One Guyana initiative there appears to be broad acceptance of the concept among a wide cross-section of the population.

To put One Guyana into perspective, President Dr Irfaan Ali says, "One Guyana is not a phrase or a slogan, One Guyana requires action and commitment. It requires a fulfillment of every single one of us joining collectively to push one thing forward, Guyana."

However, while the objective of the One Guyana drive is to promote greater inclusion of the people at the legislative, political and social levels, the government continues to face challenges from selected opposition forces which have been making spurious allegations about discrimination against the Black segment of the population.

Although these allegations are apparently baseless, certain opposition elements have managed to gain the attention of the diaspora and selected foreign countries, particularly the US, about the supposed plight of Blacks in Guyana.

For instance, a mass protest in New York, organised last year by Guyanese Organisations Against Racism, made a strenuous attempt to highlight cases of racism against Blacks in Guyana.

A year earlier, a similar protest was also held in New York. Then earlier this year, an opposition activist took racial strife to a new level by openly contemplating a violent overthrow of the Indian-dominated government.

Incidentally, in as much as the PPP/Civic government has been advocating One Guyana, US Ambassador to Guyana, Sarah-Ann Lynch, recently told the government that the US "believes that meaningful discussions and continued inclusivity can foster solid relationships and craft solutions to shared challenges".

She added: "We encourage the government to keep striving toward transparency, accountability, and fairness to improve the quality of life of all Guyanese."

Lynch was then addressing a reception held in Georgetown last month in honour of a high-level US congressional delegation to Guyana.

The truth is allegations of racism stem from the loss of power by the APNU+AFC Coalition at the 2020 elections. It so happens that the PPP/Civic emerged victorious at a time when the country was on the verge of economic prosperity, largely due to its new-found oil wealth. The coalition was relishing the thought of remaining in power during the era of prosperity, but its term in office was limited to only five years, following the loss of the 2020 elections.

The fact that the APNU+AFC coalition lost power at a crucial time in the country's history, combined with its failure to rig yet another election, hurt its supporters who believe that APNU+AFC has a right to be in power.

This belief stems from the fact that PNC (now APNU+AFC) illegitimately remained in power for almost a quarter of century through rigged elections during the 1968-1992 period, while the world turned a blind eye to its actions. It is also widely believed that the 2015 elections were rigged to enable the APNU+AFC coalition to return to power after 23 years in the wilderness.

However, in 2020, the world was watching more intently, and was not prepared to enable another illegitimate government in Guyana.

Especially at a time when foreign investors were flooding into the country.

Once PNC supporters recognised that the party had lost its imagined "inalienable right" to power, allegations of racism commenced with a fury, supported by mass protests and use of the media to draw attention to its manufactured plight.

To counter opposition allegations, it must be noted that the One Guyana initiative is aimed at meeting the expectations of all the peoples of Guyana, and to give the government credibility that it is working towards a policy of inclusivity.

According to President Ali, "One Guyana is... a social contract of inclusion". In an address to religious leaders in New York earlier this year, he said: "No government has all the answers. It is my wish to be able to benefit from the viewpoints of all, including our political parties, trade unions, private sector, workers and social organisations."

He directly asked religious leaders for their input in ensuring that One Guyana materialises.

The President reiterated to the religious leaders that the One Guyana vision is about creating a more equal society, guaranteeing that everyone is afforded the opportunity to lead productive and happy lives, as well as reducing inequality in access to education, health, employment, income and justice.

He added, the "One Guyana vision, in this regard, aims to ensure that every citizen is accorded a dignified existence and with due respect for their rights and with equality before the law".

Based on press reports, the government has been making strenuous efforts to include Blacks who feel that they face discrimination. It has gone the extra mile to conduct outreaches in various communities, and to meet Guyanese directly in order ascertain what issues exist, and how they could be addressed effectively. The government has so far visited every region and engaged communities in strongholds of the APNU+AFC.

However, there is much more at stake for certain opposition members who want a share of power and consequently ignore the One Guyana vision.

In an address to the press earlier this year, Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo pointed out that there are several constitutional rights commissions comprising representative organisations, including that of the political Opposition – indicating inclusion of the Opposition. He also noted that the PPP/Civic has no difficulty with taking the issue of governance to an even higher level – to appease PNC interests.

He added that the PPP/Civic has signalled an interest in constitutional reform to further deepen the governance model, and that work on the constitutional reform process has already commenced.

He also noted that the PPP/Civic has never been opposed in principle to the idea of shared governance, but the actions of the PNC, especially under its current leadership, have not generated any hope that the party is interested in such an outcome.

However, he cautioned that any form of shared governance at the executive level cannot be imposed from the top, but has to be mandated by the people, possibly by way of a referendum.



Dwarka Lakhan



Sarah Ann Lynch



Guyana's Golden Arrowhead is prominent whenever Guyanese get together

But he observed that there has to be some seriousness on the part of the PNC if the process is to be advanced, adding that if the PNC wants to meaningfully engage in such discussions, it has to "move away from racism and it has to commit to democracy".

Its record so far has been anything but encouraging, and there is still a strong element of distrust as to the willingness of the PNC to put its political past behind it.

Although a collaborative approach will be useful for the sake of racial cohesion, and consequently One Guyana, it is hardly likely that the country's political parties can ever come to a viable agreement on One Guyana. They simply do not trust each other – and with good reason.


The truth is, building an environment of trust is a necessary prerequisite for shared governance. For that to happen, there has to be a commitment by the parties involved to shared values, including adherence to demo-

cratic norms and the rule of law, something which is currently lacking because of the politics of intransigence and deception by the main political Opposition, Jagdeo observed.

Arguably, conditions for greater collaboration will be dictated by the ruling party. Demands from the Opposition will always be greater than the government will be willing to accede to. On the other hand, racial tensions will lessen if the Opposition would simply cease stirring the pot.

Given these undercurrents in the political process, the One Guyana initiative will continue to be undermined by opposition forces.

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



IMDADUL ISLAMIC JAMAAT

EID DINNER

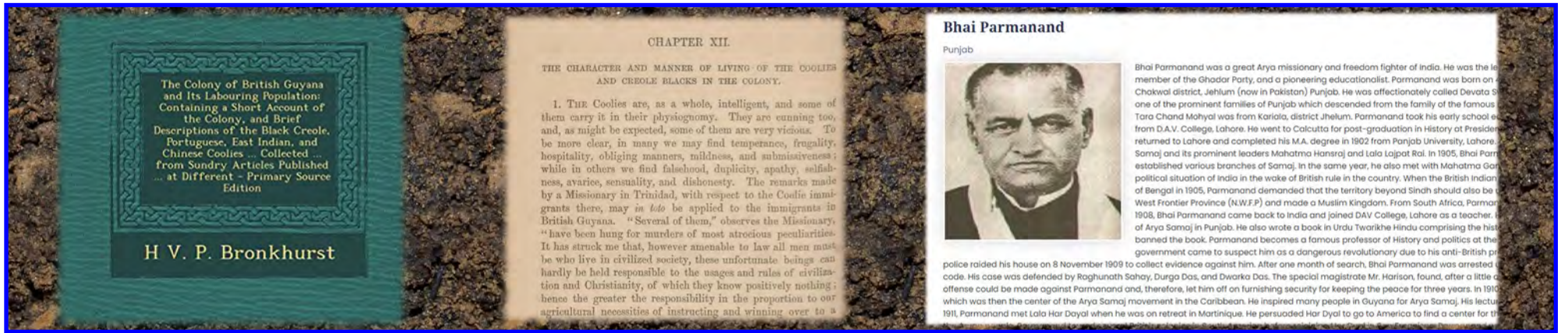
Venue: Imdadul Islamic Annex
30 Lepage Court, Downsview
(Keele, South of Finch)

Date: Saturday May 6, 2023
4 pm-6 pm

Admission: \$25

Children Under the Age of 7 Years Free
All Proceeds Go To The Annex

FOR MORE INFO:
416-636-0044 | 416-638-7021
416-452-4437 | 416-910-8954
Website: www.imdadulcentre.org
E-Transfer: imdaduljamat@gmail.com



Cover of Bronkhurst's *The Colony of British Guyana*; at centre, the start to Chapter 12; & at right, cutout from *Unsung Heroes*: Bhai Parmanand

Pandit Lakshman Prasad & the founding of Guyana's Arya Samaj movement

By Harry Hergash

During the Indian Indentureship scheme which lasted officially from 1838 to 1917, approximately 240,000 individuals were recruited in India and brought to Guyana (then British Guiana) to work as labourers on the expatriate-owned sugar plantations.

In his 1883 book, *The Colony of British Guyana and its Labouring Population*, H.V.P. Bronkhurst writes, "All immigrants in the Colony are of course looked upon as Coolies or day labourers, and so they are, for on their arrival they are expected to go and work in the cane fields with their shovels, hoes, and cutlasses, which they readily do, thinking that it is their ta lei ezhutter or ta lei vidi, i.e. destiny. In their own native land they were doctors or physicians, clerks, schoolmasters, teachers, sirdhars, shop or bazaar keepers, etc., but these caste or trade distinctions they are compelled to lay aside for a time in British Guyana, and turn out with a good will to do the expected of them work by their employers who are no caste people".

H.V.P. Bronkhurst was a Wesleyan Minister who was born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) of a Dutch father and a Ceylonese mother. He was brought from Ceylon to Guyana in 1862 by the Wesleyan Church to christianise the mainly Hindus and Muslims Indentured Indian workers. Despite his inability to gain more than a few converts and his request to leave the colony, he was instructed to remain. He passed away in 1895. His writing on the Indians is based on his personal knowledge of the history and culture of these workers. His writing is informative.

In commemoration of May 5, 2023, the 185th Anniversary of the Arrival of Indians in Guyana, this article highlights the story of Pandit Lakshman Prasad, an Indentured Indian, the father of two history-making, Guyanese-born sons, eminent journalist and acclaimed correspondent of several foreign news agencies, Chander Paul Prasad also known as Paul O'Hara, and highly respected Hindu priest, social activist, and PPP politician Pandit Chander Sama Prasad, Member of the Legislature in 1953, and Senator during the period 1961-1964.

The story of Pandit Lakshman Prasad who was indentured to Plantation Lusignan in 1898 gives credence to the view that at least some of the Indentured Indian labourers were highly educated. It should be noted that over the years the last name of the father and sons has morphed into Persaud in the public records.

An article by Ms Ameena Gafoor **CHANDR PAUL PERSAUD: Conversations with Ameena Gafoor** gives a glimpse of his birth. "Pandit Lakshman Persaud, a Brahmin (b. 1859) hailed from Amritsar, home to the Sikhs' holiest shrine, the Golden Temple". And from his son Pandit Chander Sama we learn of his death. Shortly after his passing, Pandit Chander Sama who was accompanying him on board the (ship) S.S. Orna to India, compiled and published a Hindu Prayer book titled VEDIC PRAYER with the notation "In memory of Pandit Lakshman Prasad who died in the middle of the Indian Ocean on his return voyage to Free India ... on February 5th 1949".

In Ms Gafoor's article, his son Chander Paul is quoted as saying, "His (Pandit Lakshman's) desire was to be cremated and there was no provision for cremations in the colony. However, the ship went to South Africa first and one day after it sailed from there, he passed away and was given a sea-funeral".

After completing his indentureship at Plantation Lusignan, Pandit Lakshman moved to Buxton Village, and this is where he and his wife Subhag had five children - Chander Paul, Chander Sama, Lilah (girl known as Lurlene), Narine, and Harry, known as Cyril or CP. In Buxton, Pandit Lakshman did farming and served as a Pandit (Hindu Priest). It was reported that often, after he performed a religious service as a Pandit at the home of a devotee and received a fee (dakshina), he would give away the money to little children he met on his way home. A similar



Pandit Lakshman Prasad (1859-1949)

practice was continued by his son Pandit Chander Sama who gave his fees to charity.

Pandit Lakshman grew up at a time in India when two revolutionary movements were gaining momentum, the Arya Samaj, founded on April 10, 1875, by Swami Dayananda, and the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The former offered an egalitarian, reformed version of Hinduism that took the religion back to its origin in the Vedas and denounced the prevailing caste system and other social ills in the society. The latter promoted nationalism and demanded political Independence from Britain.

With Arya Samaj, emphasis was placed on social activism, and many of the leading followers were prominent members of the INC. These likely had great influence on young Lakshman Prasad as a university student in the Punjab. The following quote from Chander Paul in Ameena Gafoor's article is telling: "In 1912, my father was part of a group that collected money for the private prosecution of the estate Manager at Lusignan estate, R.E. Brassington, who was alleged to have shot a male labourer. Workers marched with this labourer to the Public Hospital Georgetown on a khatya (narrow canvas bed) and marched back with him to Lusignan where he died. The estate Manager won the case on account of lack of evidence. He was a Member of Parliament and Mayor of the City. My father was banned (for life) from entering any sugar plantation in the colony".

The stature of Pandit Lakshman Prasad is captured in this obituary, which is included in his son, Chander Sama's Prayer book "Pandit Lakshman Prasad of Buxton, E.C. Demerara who died on his return trip to Free India is the founder of Arya Samaj South America. He came to British Guiana late in the nineteenth century. He was born in Punjab, India, and received his education in Lahore (then part of India). Leaving University, he visited South Africa on two occasions, once as

a labourer and then as a Vedic Missionary. Later he went to San Francisco, attached to the Ghadar Party. During his lifetime in British Guiana, he officiated at 197 seven-day functions which include Bhagwats, Veda Yajhas, and similar ceremonies. He also officiated at more than 35000 (sic) yet other religious functions in British Guiana, 128 in South Africa, and 17 in India."

The obituary in the Prayer book published in the latter part of 1949 or early 1950 clearly states that Pandit Lakshman Prasad "is the founder of Arya Samaj South America". However, an article captioned "Arya Samaj celebrates 100 years in Guyana" (*Guyana Chronicle*, July 17, 2010) states "In Guyana, Arya Samaj was established 100 years ago by a visiting missionary from India Bhai Parmanand who was not only an Arya Samajist but also a fearless freedom fighter for India's Independence".

Likewise in an article "180th Arrival Centenary: Indian connections" (May 13, 2018 *Guyana Times*), Ravi Dev writes "By 1905 the Arya Samaj had already established a mission in South Africa by Bhai Parmanand who then planted the seeds of the Arya Samaj here when he arrived in 1910".

This view of Bhai Parmanand's role is not supported by an **Indian sourced article** titled "Unsung Heroes Detail, Bhai Parmanand, Punjab" ascribed to "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, an initiative of the Government of India to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of independence the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements", which states, "In 1910, Bhai Parmanand visited Guyana which was then the center of the Arya Samaj movement in the Caribbean. He inspired many people in Guyana for Arya Samaj. His lectures increased the followers of Samaj".

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav indicates that in 1910 when Bhai Parmanand arrived, Guyana was already the centre of the Arya Samaj movement in the Caribbean. Based on his prior missionary work in South Africa and then coming to Guyana in 1898, it seems credible that Pandit Lakshman Prasad was the founder of Arya Samaj in Guyana.

Although documentation is scant, it appears that Pandit Lakshman Prasad was more than a typical Indian Indentured immigrant who worked as a manual labourer at Plantation Lusignan.

Based on his son, Pandit Chander Sama's account, Pandit Lakshman attended university in Lahore (then part of India). Before coming to Guyana (in 1898) he (Pandit Lakshman) served as a Vedic Missionary in South Africa.

In Guyana he continued to spread the Arya Samaj movement, and in addition, was a revolutionary Indian nationalist who went to San Francisco (California, US) to be attached to the Ghadar Party.

This Party was founded by revolutionary Indian expatriates who were living and working on the West Coast of the US and Canada with the objective to overthrow British rule in India through a revolution as did the Americans in 1776.

Anger, discontent and resentment with British rule were growing among these workers, mainly Punjabis from around 1904. The Party was established finally in 1913. It then spread to India and Indian diasporic communities around the world.

In Ravi Dev's article mentioned earlier, he writes "The journalist, Chandra Paul Persaud popularly known as Paul O'Hara once told me that the Ghaddar newspaper was smuggled into then British Guiana".

Prior to his passing, this information was communicated to me also by Rampersaud Tiwari, a prominent Buxtonian and close friend of the family of Pandit Lakshman Prasad, when he gave me a copy of a picture of Pandit Lakshman Prasad. That picture is reproduced with this article. As I conclude, it is not surprising that this fervent Indian nationalist wanted to return and be cremated in "free India".

Better understanding ourselves via legacy of our ancestors

By Vidur Dindayal

I am 88 years old and at the *sanyaas* stage of my life. I see my job now as mainly to prepare myself to meet my maker. I want no other job. If you ask me to share what I know/my experience, I will do so. I learnt this from my revered father who retired to Sai Baba ashram where he passed away.

I feel happy about my overall positive feeling about my life, as an Indian and a Guyanese. As an Indian I feel my life has been enriched by my upbringing at home, as a Hindu with so many role models in every walk of life.

I feel enriched as a Guyanese, with the uniqueness of living side by side with and absorbing cultural values of other races, European, African, Chinese, and Amerindian, a microcosm of the world.

My Indianness is my strength, in the multi-ethnic/cultural world we live in. On how to live with other people, my culture provides me with the *modus vivendi* for every situation, simply because it is natural, universal – like a smile, a helping hand, a song of happiness. You don't need to go to school to learn these.

Happily in today's world we embrace universally the values of equality – ethnically, socially, and religiously. To each his/her own. No one higher or lower – this has been dispatched to history.

Yet, even today, some relics of history impact our life. I see the 'C-word' in academic works and commentaries on our ancestors. I reject this, like Black people reject the 'N-word'.

I also see old photos of ill-clad Indentured labourers. This perpetuates the culture of the colonial masters, to assert superiority, to "put down" our people, to maintain an image, that we are backward, lower class, uncouth, and unsuited to society. We were not that. I am not that. I am Indian.

I went to India recently. Two things struck me about the Indians. They are hard-working and they are generally very



Vidur Dindayal



The Whitby Monument in Guyana



Milk sellers circa 1920s



Indentured Guyanese women

contented with their life.

I see a parallel here with our ancestors who came from India as Indentured labourers, after the abolition of slavery in 1834. Judging from the life of my parents, and what they told us of their parents and their likes who came from India, they seemed overall to have the same values as I saw in the Indians today in India – hard-working and contentedness.

Our ancestors lived a slave-like existence in the colony in the early days, but they saw their job being to work hard, regardless of the circumstances around them, to look after themselves and

their families, and to better their lot.

Our ancestors were poor. They came to Guyana with few clothes on their backs, and with little education, but they were human beings rich with a culture, which made them get on in life and eventually become the economic engine of the country.

Sadly, in my early days in our schools in Guyana, we were not taught anything positive about us as Indians. Even today, there is indifference to Indianness, due to the deep-rooted denigration of much about us – our names, our food, eating with our fingers, our customs, our dress, our music, and so on.

I feel very blessed that I was brought up to look up to things Indian, not because of feeling of superiority, but feeling that I am second to none.

I reflect on the precious values for living I have inherited, such as the following: **Saving:** Save for a rainy day. Waste not, want not. Sacrifice. Parents would sacrifice anything for their children. Suffering. *Dukh sukh dono barabar*. Pain and pleasure go together; **Santosh (Contentment):** Happy with salt and rice, sleep on the floor, basic minimum to live on; **Sangh (Society):** Being part of the society, duty to support it and it supports you.

Also, **hard work:** *Mehnat ka phal meetha hota hai* – the fruit of labour is very sweet. Eat the salt of earth, be grateful, must put something back into it; **Gratitude:** don't bite the hand that feeds; **Respect the Boss:** good or bad, they give us work.

Bhawna se kartabya ucha hai: duty is superior to feelings. Duty to family and society; **Joint family:** Everyone in the family supporting one another at work, at play, in grief; **the future:** our world now is a kaleidoscope of ethnicities, faiths, and cultures.

We are at the cusp of a sea change in what people the world over value in life. We have needs, emotional and spiritual, which are met by human values in our culture.

Our immigrant ancestors learnt in their travel across the world to shed the heavy baggage of division and intolerance, and embrace the new world secure in their cultural values, their *modus vivendi*.

This is their legacy to us. We are the cutting edge of social change, open, barrier free, not fearful of better understanding and fellowship across ethnicities, faiths, and cultures.

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In 'The Law & You' panel (left to right) are Hera Ramlakhan, retired lawyer from Ministry of the Attorney General; Rashmi Kumar, Assistant Crown Attorney; Christeena Lucknauth, Insurance defense lawyer; Dhaman Kissoon; Justice Sheila Ray; & Justice Sonia Khemani

Domestic abuse in focus at conference

Richmond Hill – A panel of legal experts convened at the Voice of Vedas Vishnu Mandir last month to discuss domestic abuse in Canada, to present professional viewpoints on a domestic violence scenario, and to speak to legal education law school.

Titled 'The Law and You', the conference took place on April 22 under the leadership of community lawyer and Adjunct Professor at Queen's University Faculty of Law, Dhaman Kissoon.

The panel included two members of the Ontario judicial Bench, Justice Sheila Ray of the Ontario Court of Justice, and Justice Sonia V. Khemani, also from the Ontario Court of Justice.

Other members of the panel included defence lawyer, Michelle Johal, a well-known defence counsel, and frequent guest on the television program, *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, as well as on *CBC News* and *CTV News*. Also on the panel was Rashmi Kumar, an Assistant Crown Attorney at the Newmarket Crown Attorney's Office.

The conference was well-attended by community members. Also in attendance were members of the Krasman Centre of Richmond Hill; Dr Suvercha Pasricha from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; and a representative from the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

Participants were warmly welcomed to the Vishnu Mandir by Chartered Professional Accountant Janty Ramkumar, Assistant Executive Vice President of the Voice of the Vedas, and President of the Laxmi Sabha.

Taking point in guiding the event was Hera Ramlakhan, a lawyer with close to 31 years of legal experience. She was also a member of the panel of legal experts.

Ramlakhan opened the session with hard facts on the state of domestic abuse in Canada, as well as globally.

As she told attendees, a woman is killed in Canada every 2.5 hours due to gender-based violence. Additionally, a woman is killed by her current or former partner or spouse in Canada every 2.5 days.

Domestic violence, also known as Intimate Partner Violence, refers to multiple forms of harm or abuse caused by a current or former partner or spouse.

Ramlakhan noted that the World Health Organization ranks IPV as one of the major global health public concerns.

The horrific implications for children witnessing domestic abuse in the family home were also emphasised. Statistically, children who witness domestic violence at home have twice the rate of psychiatric disorders com-

pared to children from non-violent homes.

The session was moderated by Kissoon, who presented a domestic abuse fact scenario to the panel of legal experts that involved an assault on a young mother of two children by her intoxicated husband.

Each panel member then had 20 minutes to explain her role in the judicial system after someone is charged with domestic violence.

Kumar explained that once a spouse is charged with assault, it cannot be dropped even if the spouse who called the police subsequently attempts to retract her story, sometimes due to family pressure, or sympathy for the offender.

Johal explained her role in defending persons charged with domestic violence, including providing legal advice to the accused.

As she noted, the accused is normally shaken up when confronted by the consequences of his actions, including being in a lock-up and separated from his family.

As she stated, the accused spouse has to face the sober reality that once charged, the criminal system then takes over, and his or her spouse or partner cannot request that the charges be withdrawn.

Justice Ray discussed the issue of bail hearing when an accused is charged and put in a lock-up. She also discussed various sentencing issues, and how they may affect the Immigration status of accused persons.

Justice Khemani explained that when cases of domestic abuse involving children come before her, she primarily focusses on what is in the best interests of the children involved in the dispute between their parents.

The hard reality of where the children should reside in situations involving domestic abuse was also discussed.

Justice Khemani also talked about support, and other custody issues.

Dr Budhendraauth Doobay, Chairman of the Board for the Voice of the Vedas, commented on the need for mental support for spouses involved in domestic abuse.

Dr Doobay also suggested that the system should place some focus on helping offenders so they do not re-offend.

The second component of the conference saw the panel speaking to their individual experiences, while offering suggestions for getting into law school. It was an intensively interactive session with attendees seeking insights from the panel about getting into law school.

Attendees interested in entering law, and their parents, received practical tips and advice on pursuing a career in law. They also took advantage of the opportunity to meet members of the panel afterwards for one-on-one discussions and guidance.



A section of attendees at 'The Law and You' conference



Ask Jay...

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BILL 97 - HELPING BUYERS, PROTECTING TENANTS ACT (HHPA)

The Toronto and Regional Real Estate Board (TRREB) took a leading role, vying for policy changes to help Ontarians get affordable housing. TRREB is Canada's most giant real estate board that serves over 70,000 licensed real estate brokers and salespersons. Bill 97 was introduced on April 6, integrating some of TRREB's suggestions. Bill 97 is summoning policy changes in three categories:

1. Helping landlords & tenants;
2. Streamlining land-use planning policy; and,
3. Helping homebuyers.

Helping Landlords and Tenants

There is a heavy stockpile of cases at the landlord and tenant board, and generally takes about eight months for a hearing. HHPA asked for a review of the Board's procedure. Also, the Board must assign an additional 40 mediators to clear the backlog.

Typically, heat is essential for an occupied home, and air conditioning is not. The new bill will allow tenants to install window or portable air conditioning units.

Bill 97 will bolster renter security from evictions such as renovations and when landlords want the property for their family or own use. If a landlord desires to evict a tenant to renovate, the landlord must give a written report from a qualified contractor. The landlord must mention if the landlord needs vacant possession for the renovation, and the approximate timeline the contractor will need.

When evicting a tenant for a landlord's personal use, the landlord must state a time frame by which the landlord will move in. Fines will double for landlords who have evicted tenants in bad faith from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals and \$250,000 to \$500,000 for corporations.

Another recommendation is to build more rental accommodations by revamping the municipal rental replacement by-laws. The new regulations will include rules that a replacement unit must have the same key features as the original unit and give existing tenants the right to move back into the renovated unit at the same rent.

Streamlining Land-Use Planning Policy

The new policy will untangle Ontario's land-use planning rules. Once implemented, all municipalities must provide a mixture of housing options such as low and midrise apartments, town-homes, semi-detached and detached homes. By doing so, the city will be catering to everyone.

Bill 97 recommends that municipalities should build up near transit. Twenty-nine of Ontario's most prominent and fastest-growing cities would be required to plan for growth in major transit station areas. When families live closer to transit, they will likely use the transit, and this will ease road congestion.

Another proposal is to support multigenerational farming families, and it would allow family-owned farms to have three building lots, and up to two dwelling units per lot. What needs to be clarified is whether a farmer can sell the dwellings to a third party.

With the new bill, municipalities will have more flexibility in deciding where and when to extend their settlement boundaries. With this flexibility, municipalities can then assign more land for housing.

Under Ontario's proposal, municipalities can work closely with school boards to build schools and daycare facilities within the new developments. By streamlining the development process, the province could avoid duplication planning for water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. This way, land development can be quicker.

Helping Homebuyers

In 2022, the federal government permitted prospective home buyers to open a first-time home buyer saving account, allowing buyers to keep up to \$40,000 tax-free. Ontario proposed to provide deposit protection insurance for these accounts.

Another proposed change is implementing a cooling-off period when someone buys a new freehold home from a builder. The builder must tell the customers about the cooling-off period, and permit buyers to cancel their purchase-of-sale agreement within a specified timeframe.

The gap between renters and homeownership is getting larger. Bill 97 is a step in the right direction, but the GTA population is overgrowing, and affordability is evaporating. One of the cheapest and quickest ways is to develop smaller towns with more readily available resources. To tackle the lack of housing, we must build more homes.

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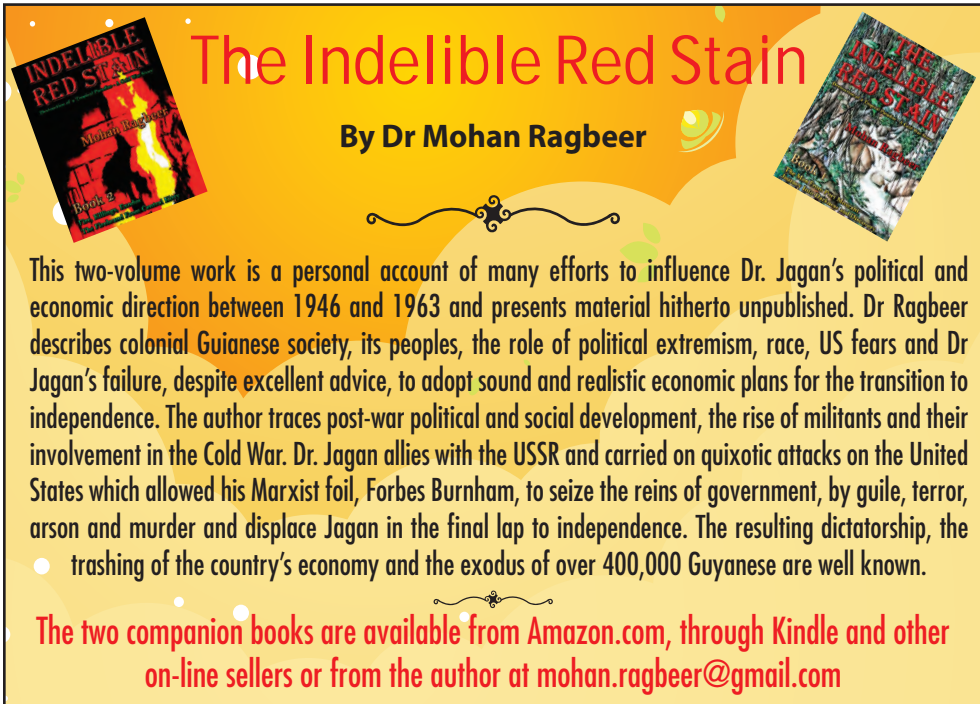
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The Indelible Red Stain
By Dr Mohan Ragbeer

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

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



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A life defined by love for family, mandir, & community

Chandai Ramcharan-Ramgarib

June 30, 1946 – April 8, 2023

Family, close friends, and many well-wishers gathered on April 14 at the funeral home, R. Stutzmann & Son on Jamaica Avenue, Queens Village in New York, to celebrate the life of love that defined Chandai Ramcharan-Ramgarib. Chandai passed away on April 8.

She is survived by her husband of over 50 years, Nagassar (Parry) Ramgarib, daughter Vidiya Ramgarib, son Rabindra Nath Ramgarib, and grand daughter Priya Roberts-Ramgarib; along with her siblings Ramesh, Hanu, Dean, Phool, and their spouses.

Chandai was born in Trinidad in 1946. As Vidiya noted in her eulogy, her mother “was a daughter first, then Gulwa/Didi sister and sister-in-law; then wife and partner to her husband for over 55 years; a loyal friend; Auntie Chan & Nani Wine to so, so many; mummy to me and my brother. But her most valued role was being Agee to her only grandchild, Priya.”

To apply the lens of a love story to Chandai’s life is to bring into focus her mother’s eternal value, Vidiya said. It began “with the love of her family”, she declared.

As Vidiya noted, “[Mom] adored and honoured her mother, Ellen, and father, Hargoon Das. [Also] her four brothers, Dean, Boya, Hanu, and Ramesh; and her sister Phool.”

Recalling Chandai’s narratives on her early years, Vidiya revealed that as a young girl her mother “didn’t have much time to play”; however, “she loved to sew, and made a lot of her own clothes”.

She added, “As [mom] grew up, she took on the role as a loving caretaker. As the eldest daughter she helped to provide for and support her family. It was a role that she was made for. With her family, she found a love of music, movies, and dance. When she was old enough, she started to work at [the Trinidad and Tobago company] Metal Box, and began to build a life for herself.”

Vidiya also recalled the events that led to Chandai’s meeting her husband-to-be, Parry.

“In the 1960s, while working at Metal Box, this handsome chap with a head of dark wavy hair... walked in on his first day and laid eyes on her. His friend said, ‘She is a good girl; so leave her alone’. In not so many words, he told his friend that he was going to marry her. So, he began to woo her, and woo her, and woo her, until she finally allowed him to drive her home.”

Vidya added, “Of course, that didn’t go as smoothly as he thought. While walking to his car, two girls were fighting over who would get a ride from him that day. My mom [turned to him and said] she will never fight over any man, and started walking home. As you can see, she held herself to a high standard. But, in true Bollywood fashion, this young chap followed her in his car until she decided to get in. In that moment, my dad found the love of his life, and his love for her took them through many trials, but they endured.”

Mom and dad were married after a meaningful courtship, Vidiya said.

“They [then] left Trinidad to start a life in the US. My dad



Chandai Ramcharan-Ramgarib



Chandai with husband Nagassar at right, and grand daughter Priya (centre)

came to New York first, and my mom followed not too long after. Their party of two soon became a family of four (now including my brother and me) who started their life in Spanish Harlem, then changing boroughs to the Bronx, and finally landing in Queens,” she said.

Additionally, “We spent quality family time: celebrating

birthdays, going to the beach, taking road trips, and creating lasting memories. [Mom] loved to cook, and that was her love language to ensure we knew that she would always provide for her family... no one ever left our house with an empty belly.”

Arriving in Queens in the 1980s saw the family working with the Trinidad and Tobago community “to cultivate our dharmic traditions”, Vidiya noted.

“One of the many virtues of our dharma as Hindus is generosity and goodwill... and Mummy was the most altruistic person I know. My mom’s karma has been written, and as a founding member of the Shiva Mandir, she was able to express her love for culture and faith,” she said.

Additionally, “While being part of the Mandir, she built a circle of close friends over the next 40 years, who until the day she left us, many would still call her for advice or comfort. However, it was the children, many of them now adults with their own kids, whom she simply adored, and would spoil every chance she had. She respected them, and they gravitated to their Aunty Chan.”

The love story that was Chandai’s life then saw a new chapter added in 2003, Vidiya revealed.

“In 2003, her greatest love entered this world, my niece, Priya,” she said.

Additionally, “Priya and her Agee (as she called her) had a uniquely special bond. What my dad, brother, and I couldn’t get her Agee to do, Priya was able to. They had their own language: it was silent, unspoken, but rooted in an adoration only they both had for each other. Their love for each other is timeless and ethereal (it truly has a light to it that will never go out),” Vidiya declared.

In speaking to her love for “Ajee”, Priya said her grandmother

“was a kind-hearted, loving and compassionate person to many”. Ajee “always wanted the best for me”, she affirmed.

Priya also shared a poem by Larry S. Chenges, which she said she had given to her Ajee many years before. Among its moving lines were, “You will always hold a special place in my heart./You always seemed so proud of me, no matter what I’d do./You made me feel important and that’s the best gift I ever received from you.”

And Priya said, “[If] I could have chosen another Ajee from all the world through, I couldn’t have loved one more, than I love you.”

Said Vidiya: “So, if you haven’t figured it out yet – my mom’s love story will never end, because her legacy is all of us who showed up here to honour her, and who will look back on a woman who lived her life by a few simple rules – be kind, give what you can (not what you don’t have), don’t take crap from anyone; but show compassion at all times, and love without expecting anything in return. She led her life with love, and it is something we can all hope to strive for.”

She added, “They say a father builds the house; but a mother makes that house a home; now the light in our home has forever been dimmed. I am honoured, and so blessed God chose me for my mum, and I couldn’t have asked for a better mummy. I will miss her for the rest of my days.”

Rasheed Sultan-Khan founder of Trinidad & Tobago 50Plus Association

Rasheed Sultan-Khan

April 16, 1928 - April 15, 2023

The Trinidad and Tobago 50Plus Association lost its founder, Rasheed Sultan-Khan, on April 15.

Sultan-Khan was the last of 11 children to Ogreen and Sultan Khan. He grew up on Coffee Street, San Fernando, and attended Grant School and Naparima College.

After graduating from high school, he joined the family enterprise, then went into his own wholesale business. He won an island-wide tenor singing competition, and was a frequent guest artiste on the Sam Ghany radio show on Sundays.

Sultan-Khan went to England in 1959 where he pursued studies in accounting. He returned to Trinidad and Tobago and married Feroza (née Khan) in 1963. The marriage was blessed with six children, nine grand-children, and three great grand children.

He immigrated to Canada with his wife and five children



Rasheed Sultan-Khan

in 1973. Following arrival, the next day he landed a job at the publishing company, Thomas Allen and Sons. When the company closed, he returned to school at Seneca College, where he furthered his studies in Finance & Accounting.

Sultan-Khan was then employed at The Chase Manhattan Bank until his retirement. After retirement he pursued courses in Property Law, Real Estate, and Life Insurance to get his certification licence.

Following his quadruple heart bypass surgery and during his stay in hospital, Sultan-Khan had a dream to bring Trinidad and Tobago citizens together to socialise away from their home. In 1996 that dream came true with the formation of the Trinidad and Tobago 50Plus & Seniors Association of Canada (Ontario Chapter).

It is notable that his love for seniors began at age 13, when he took seniors to air raid shelters during WWII.

Sultan-Khan once admitted that he sacrificed his family life for the Trinidad and Tobago 50Plus & Senior’s Association.

Whenever he was at home, he was on the phone 24/7, recruiting members, and following up on referrals.

He took membership forms rolled up in his pocket with him anywhere he went. This was especially true at parties, as he was always promoting the 50Plus & Senior’s Association, and inviting Trinidad and Tobago nationals he met to come to meetings.

At events that were held in parks, Sultan-Khan would have his wife, along with Yolanda Russell and Malcom Riley walk around the park, sometimes in the blazing sun, looking for Trinidad and Tobago nationals to join the association.

He was proud that the 50Plus Association marked its 27th year, and expressed the hope it would continue to be alive and vibrant under the stability of the various Executive Committee Members. In 2022, Sultan-Khan was honoured with the 25 Years Service Award from the association.

Sultan-Khan leaves to mourn his devoted wife Feroza Sultan-Khan (the couple was due to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on June 16), and children: Gayle Ali; Tyrone Sultan-Khan; Ferial Sultan-Khan; Nyla Ragoo; Reza Sultan-Khan; Aleem Sultan-Khan; nine grand-children; and three great grand children.

Indomitable & sharp, Jagessar was an author, story-teller, & activist

By Harry Persaud

It is with deep sorrow and regret that our beloved Ram Jagessar passed away on April 20. So many have shown their love and support for his wife Jiantee and sons Rishi and Arvind on this very sad occasion.

Today, we mourn the loss of a very special person, but today we also celebrate the life of a man who deeply cared for his family and friends.

Jiantee and Ram shared a fascinating journey together; she was very proud of him. They both graduated from The University of the West Indies, got married in 1974 in Trinidad, and subsequently became the proud parents of two wonderful boys.

Ram always reflected on his family in a very loving way, cherishing the things they have done together.

Here in Canada, Ram and Jiantee were nature lovers; often visiting parks and gardens, he was fond of taking pictures of flowers and interesting plants, always trying to catch a magical sunrise at Bluffers Park, or a flock of

Canada Geese flying south at the coming of the fall season.

I know how happy he was with the Japanese Maple sapling I gave him years ago, now a grown tree.

Ram and Jiantee frequently went on train and boat rides, and also visited India together. Ram had an experientially rich and fascinating life.

He was a prolific writer, poet, and story-teller, talented in the use of language. Many of us will remember his funny stories, his boisterous laughter, his cheerful disposition, always lifting the spirit of everyone in his presence.

Over the years, Ram published two books of his own, while editing the works of several established and up-and-coming writers.

He was one of the founding members the

Carican Writers Group, along with Harry Persaud, Roop Misir, Ken Ramphal, and the late Narine Datt, with the intent of bringing together the latent talent and creative abilities of Indo-Caribbean Canadian writers, and to offer them an opportunity to publish their writings.

Thus far, the Carican writer's group has accomplished 11 such publications, thanks to the determination, dedication, and expertise of Ram.

One of Ram's greatest causes in life has been the Indian community, reflected in his writings and organisational commitment.

Born and educated in Trinidad, Ram was very active as a student at The University of the West Indies in the late 1960s writing articles for the student newspaper, *Embryo*.

In 1974 he joined the Indian resistance group Mukdar, and was one of the editors of the group's underground magazine.

He also wrote in community magazines like *Tapia* and *Moko*.

Very early in his university life, he became a member of the university group Society for the Propagation of Indian Culture. Later, he was one of the founders of the Indian Revival and Reform Association, and one of its main writers.

Ram became the secretary of the Indian Arrival Day Committee in Trinidad and Tobago. His sole purpose was to foster the consolidation of people of Indian origin of several Caribbean nations, hence his extended visits to Guyana.

During his time in Trinidad, Ram also worked as a senior reporter for the *Trinidad Express* and the *Trinidad Guardian* daily newspapers.

Suffice it to say, for anyone who has achieved so much and had influenced so many people, is

indeed an old soul.

Ram migrated to Canada in 1989, where he continued his writing and activism, becoming the secretary of the India Canada Association in Sudbury, Ontario, where he and his family lived for some time.

Upon moving to Toronto in 1996, he wrote a regular column for *Indo-Caribbean World*, never afraid of expressing strong opinions, and ready to back them up with lively arguments.

Upon arriving in Toronto, Ram immediately helped in the founding of the Indo-Trinidad Canadian Association. This group expanded the celebration of Indian arrival in Canada to the point where it became Indian Arrival and Heritage Month, and then in 2001, the South Asian Heritage Month.

Ram and I were dedicated to the South Asian Heritage Month celebrations for many years, designing, editing, and setting up their annual magazine publications.

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention that Ram was a martial arts student under the tutelage of Sensei Frank Baehr and Harry Persaud for over ten years at our Shorin-Ryu Dhyana Karate Dojo located at the Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham, Ontario.

Ram was a dedicated student, rarely missing classes. His mind was always sharp as a whistle, always inquiring and improving his techniques, not afraid to put up a good fight showing his indomitable spirit.

The same spirit he showed throughout his life, as a fighter to the very end. I was very happy that I tested and promoted him to the rank of Black Belt so many years ago.

All the years I have known Ram, he has never shown remorse or regret of his life's purpose in Trinidad or Canada, but instead he took a big bite into the opportunities which were available to him using his many talents in the fulfillment of his life.

Ram, my dear friend, you will never be forgotten, wherever you are in this big Universe, you will continue on your journey and be a source of inspiration to us all.



Ramdath Jagessar

Leader Imam Buddy Ahmad Khan

In-naa lil-laahi wa in-naa ilaihi raajioon

There are lots to be said about al-marhoom Imam Buddy Ahmad Khan of Sunatul Jamaat of Ontario (Scarborough). He became one of the most respected community leaders who devoted his life to serving the community.

Al-marhoom Imam Buddy practised what he preached, promoting unity among the Greater Toronto Area's wide and diverse culture, and being there for those who needed him most.

On a personal note, I always treasured meeting him, and even though I was much younger, he always respected me in many ways and on every occa-

sion that we met. His wisdom and experience positively reminded me of my early interactions with Imams in Guyana, and especially with close and memorable interactions with my local Imams in my neighbourhood Masjid of Peter's Hall, Providence, Farm, Grove, and McDoom.

May Allaah forgive al-marhoom Imam Buddy Ahmad Khan and have mercy upon him. May Allaah bless his beloved family, relatives, and friends with patience and steadfastness during this difficult time, aameen.



Imam Ahmad Khan

Imam Shaykh Imran Ally, Vice President
- Canadian Council of Imams



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Guyana on the road to development, but bumpy spots need to be fixed

By Dhanpaul Narine

The old house is still standing. It is a testament to a time when life was unhurried, when the whistle of the trains dictated the routine of our lives, when the cane fields had their creole gangs, when crushed ice with condensed milk was the rage, and when we ran shirt-tail to school before the bell rang.

It was a time when Brother Enmore was the dominant figure in Side Line Dam, so that long after he died, people swore they saw him sitting on his front step. It was a time when we embraced each other with love, and race and skin color, did not matter. The only colour was on the kites that soared into infinity.

Yes, the house still stands, but there was no green grass to welcome me home. I looked for those who could remember when I had no book or pencil, and walked barefoot to school in Vergenoegen. Time had dented their memories, and the young were busy with their own lives.

I was about to give up but decided to check the last house. The lady welcomed me with a sparkling smile and to my surprise Mrs Zelle remembered the whole thing!

She said, "Your nana sold badam lacha, and your Ma caught shrimp. Life in that logie was rough. Sookoo didn't build any toilets. Everyone went to the waterside. I used to feel sorry for you all when the rains fell. The water flooded the logies, and people got sick. And in those days no one had money for doctors."

Sookoo Yard was two house lots away. I had to see it to free myself of the dreams. The land changed hands but there was the bush and pools of rancid water. It was hard to believe that once upon a time there was a community of logies here, with people that dreamed of a better world, and with me spending fourteen years of my life there. I thought of Ma and the old man and said a silent prayer for them.

The driver Zameer was something of an expert on roads. He had picked me up from the airport. His first comment was the state

of the roads from Timehri to Georgetown. Zameer knew where every pothole was, and he pointed them out with relish. It was midnight. The roads were dark, and the twists and turns tested Zameer's navigation skills.

"This place needs a modern highway," he said after we hit another pothole.

"Look at those heavy-duty trucks passing us with sand. They have no respect for the roads, and it's worse in daylight. Which

country with all this wealth would tolerate sub-standards roads? The road from the airport to the city is supposed to be a showpiece with proper lighting. And they can't say they don't have the money," he said.

It was hard to argue with Zameer. There are only so many times that you can patch an old tire.

It was now time for me to meet with a friend, one of the top newspaper persons in the country. I wanted to know how the country was doing. Who was helping themselves by pocketing public funds? Where was the corruption that we hear about? Are things as bad as they say? My friend thought long and hard.

My friend said, "It's difficult to steal from the treasury, with all the safeguards. The oil money is accounted for and there is transparency. The country is making progress."

Additionally, "But I would like to see more Afro-Guyanese participation in the procurement of contracts. That would help to level the playing field. Corruption is a popular word. If you say it often enough people would believe it. But in today's Guyana there are too many checks for officials to siphon off the money. One of those checks is called social media."

This led me headlong into that controversial land, the bogeyman that is known as race. I met Guyanese from all walks of life. I described the magical days in Stelling Road, when we looked out for each other. It was a time when the prefixes of aunts, uncles, and mothers were used to describe each other, when we shared, and the community nurtured us and cared for our well-being. Is it possible that we can go back to those days?

This was the consensus: "It is possible. The 'One Guyana' policy has encouraged people to think differently. At the end of the day people need the same things. They need food, justice and security. They need their children to go to school and feel safe. They need jobs and an economy that make prices affordable. If the economy is growing in big numbers, the poor should be able to see and feel it. There is a lot to fix in Guyana, and it will take time."

There can be no denying that race is an impediment to national development. We need no scholar with 'highfaluting' degrees to kerfuffle us about race. The country is split down the middle.

It seems that if the 'One Guyana' policy is to work it should be incorporated in the school's curriculum, as a start. There is also a need to reinforce the idea that Guyana belongs to all Guyanese, irrespective of race, religion, or creed.

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the University of Guyana, and the Public Free Library, should inaugurate a 'Guyanese Heroes Month' in which the focus would be to highlight the contributions of Guyanese in various disciplines. A monograph of their lives and achievements will probably occupy several

volumes, and they should be compulsory reading in schools.

Zameer reserved his most poignant observations for our final day. We passed a bustling Leonora Market, but mangoes were scarce. He proceeded to recite the prices of food from memory. He knew when avocados would be coming in from the Pomeroun, and the prices they would fetch. He also knew where to get items that were scarce, who were jacking up the prices, and by how much. That week the price of chicken dropped by (G) \$100 per pound. It might sound, well, like chicken-feed to the overseas visitor. But it meant a lot to families struggling to make ends meet.

I recalled that when I was a kid in Stelling Road - then food prices were far from our minds. Zameer was quick to remind me, "This time na lang time!"

We were now at Crane, on the way to the Demerara Harbour Bridge. The speeding car gave Zameer the chance to indulge in his favorite subject.

"The turn at Crane is a long stretch - why are there no lights? That's an accident waiting to happen. How many traffic lights are actually working? The one at Vreed-en-hoop is a white elephant and people have died there. There is too much speeding," he said.

He added, "People don't listen, they head hard. They want to see fair play. What should we do? Educate drivers. Put speed bumps. Have a database on speeding drivers, and take away their licence. Build more pavements. Install traffic lights and make sure they work. Put up neon signs on billboards that remind drivers of the speed limits. Build highways and widen existing roads. Employ more traffic cops. Clamp down on drunken driving and increase jail time. The carnage has to stop."

There is general agreement that Guyana is developing in a hurry. But many things need fixing. My slogan in the upcoming local government elections would be "Fix Guyana". And for the city that is congested, unsafe, strapped for cash, and cries out for urban planners, my motto would be "Fix Georgetown".



We need to work together to build a better Guyana



A section of Global Care's TWM participants at the 2022 event

'Humanitarian causes have no borders'

From Page 1

will participate again in 2023, saying: "[We]... will be doing the 5k in-person as part of Team Global Care Outreach".

Said Joseph: "As we run for dialysis, we are not only doing so for a good cause, we are also raising Guyana's profile on the world stage, we are promoting our diversity, and our uniqueness, and also promoting a healthy lifestyle."

Leader of Vishnu Mandir, and originator of the humanitarian dialysis initiative in Guyana, Dr Doobay, said he was thrilled with the growing momentum for the marathon event.

"I am delighted with the latest support from both the Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana Consulates," he said.

He added, "While I am looking forward to participating in my second consecutive TCS TWM run for dialysis, I am even more excited to be doing so alongside our supportive Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago Consulates. Welcome on board! And a special thank you to Grace and Tracey."

And Roy Doobay, who is leading the Global Care run for dialysis initiative, told *Indo-*

Caribbean World last week that the organisers, volunteers, and participants were "grateful, humbled, and honoured to have the Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago Consulates in Toronto join us in this humanitarian initiative".

Said Roy: "It is a clear demonstration that humanitarian causes have no borders. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Acting Consul General Grace Joseph, and Acting Consul General Tracey Ramsabagh-Mannette, and their teams, for their leadership and support."

Roy also reiterated Global Care's call to the diaspora to not miss out on an "incredible opportunity to do something for your health, while helping to save lives".

As he declared, his message to the community, the wider GTA, and to the diaspora, was to register, either for the in-person, or virtual event, and join 26,000 runners from 70 countries for what is "an unforgettable Toronto experience".

To register, or to make a donation, contact: Nutana, 437-332-0962; or Radha, 416-732-0604; Janty, 416-879-8805; Parbhat, 647-609-0321; or Roy 416-723-8879.

**Vedic Cultural Centre observes the
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Sari/Dhoti Wrap,
Mehndi,
Costume Display
Ethnic Food Booth (Cash)

Come enjoy an evening of
discourse on our heritage
ADMISSION: FREE

UPPER HALL: STAGE PROGRAM
6:30pm - 9:00pm

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Cliff Rajkumar

DANCE DRAMA: "Hesperus 1838 2.0"
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Ramharack reveals Alice Singh as a pioneer & agent of change

Ramharack, Baytoram, *A Powerful Indian Voice: Alice Bhagwandai Singh - Reflections on Her Work in Guyana*, Xlibris, 2023

By Janet Naidu

Through the ground-breaking research and work of Dr Baytoram Ramharack, we now learn about the life of Alice Bhagwandai Singh (1892-1970), a woman who made a significant impact in fostering an inclusive cultural appreciation within the multi-ethnic social spaces of Guyana.

Having published the biography of Singh's husband, Dr Jung Bahadur Singh of Guyana (1886-1956), Ramharack then turned his attention to Singh, a woman whose life and work represent a significant contribution to the promotion of Indian cultural awareness during the post-Indentureship, as well as in the post-Independence periods.

The book is comprehensively structured in three parts, covering Indian cultural historiography, Singh's background, and the impact of her cultural work. It examines the broader landscape of the pioneering role that women of Indian origin have played in Guyana.

More specifically, the study reveals to the world a woman who has been an enduring pioneer for advancing Indian culture, and more significantly, creating a cultural space for Indians in British Guiana. In Ramharack's words, Singh was "a feminist, a cultural activist, an agent of change and a writer – a combination of admirable qualities that were a rarity for an Indian woman".

Singh was born in Suriname and came to Guyana after her marriage to Dr Jung Bahadur Singh in 1910. Ramharack explores the social environment where she grew up and her family's influence, especially her father, who was a prominent community leader and inspiration for the young Singh.

There is a great deal to learn about the Indian presence in Dutch Guiana, and especially Singh's early years. Ramharack has also relied, to some extent, on her autobiography, a rarity for indentured Indians, or women, in the Caribbean region as a whole.

Ramharack has unearthed tremendous historical facts that have been buried in the archives. He brings to light the presence of Indians who struggled to introduce Indian culture in an environment where British Imperial rule, the English language, and British culture, were the dominant forces of the day.

It was an environment where the diversity of the inhabitants was most likely not seen as significant to the social development of a nation of diverse peoples. One can only imagine the

challenges that people of Indian origin faced in advancing an environment of inclusion, where Indian culture was intrinsic to social cohesion and equity.

Singh, among others, formed the British Guiana Dramatic Society, which was inaugurated at her home on March 10, 1937. She served as its first President, and during this pre-World War II era, was seen as a leader in the struggle to advance the cultural rights of Indians in British Guiana.

Undoubtedly, introducing readers to Singh is vital to the understanding of the legacy she has left behind. As Ramharack wrote, Singh "was a feminist, perhaps the first Indian cultural feminist in Guyana and the broader English-speaking Caribbean".

This study provides in-depth research on the BGDS, as well as its role in staging musical performances, dances, and dramatic plays such as *Savitri*, as depicted in the *Mahabharata*, and plays from the works of Rabindranath Tagore, and others.

The text acknowledges that while this level of awareness of Indian culture in the public domain was being fostered by a mostly middle-class group, it gave the leaders of the BGDS, themselves being descendants of indentured laborers and plantation life, an important position to advance Indian culture, and make it more visible for social acceptance and inclusion.

We are drawn to the awareness that Ramharack has raised the significance of the work of Singh to be viewed in its "historical and contemporary context", particularly in exploring the research done on the Caribbean Indian diaspora, and how women have been perceived in the research.

Readers learn that the BGDS was the first organisation that Singh spearheaded as its President. However, she was instrumental in many others, including the Sanatan Dharma Maha Lakshmi Sabha, and the Balak Sahaita Mandalee.

When the work of the BGDS became dormant after Singh passed away in

1970, her daughter Rajkumari Singh continued in Singh's footsteps as a cultural activist on a mission to promote and preserve Indian culture.

While Rajkumari continued the production and delivery of dramatic plays, she established the Messenger Group in this post-Independence era to further the promotion of Indian art forms. She encouraged and nurtured young writers and poets, such as Rooplall Monar, Mahadai Das, Henry Mootoo, Gushka

old as your bones.

Tube age – blood vessels – are another critical factor. You are as old as your tubes. Some say lifestyle is over 90 percent of longevity, genetics being the other ten percent. In general, it is suggested that in our generation, if you live healthily, you could probably live to 95.

I have one uncle, who lived in Guyana, who lived to 97, with his faculties still intact. He had never travelled more than 100 miles from where he was born. He was also reportedly one of the first known to swim the Demerara River both ways!

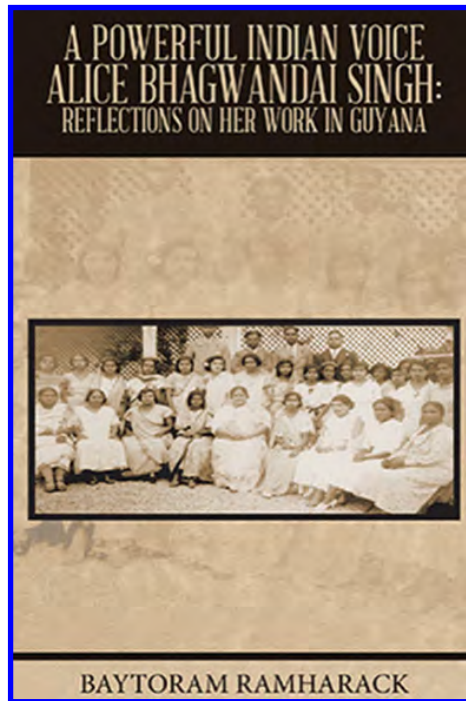
What can we do that may cost little if anything to keep on living? Take exercise for example. Many of us, as we age, become "couch potatoes". Many of us are developing an anatomy with a cranial, forward-leaning look, as a result of being addicted to our cell phone, and bending over constantly.

How about eating and drinking? Any water in the diet? It helps. To drink rum till you tumble down is not much help. Don't forget sleep. My father used to say sleep was his "only tonic". That and a regular cup of coffee I think kept him alive.

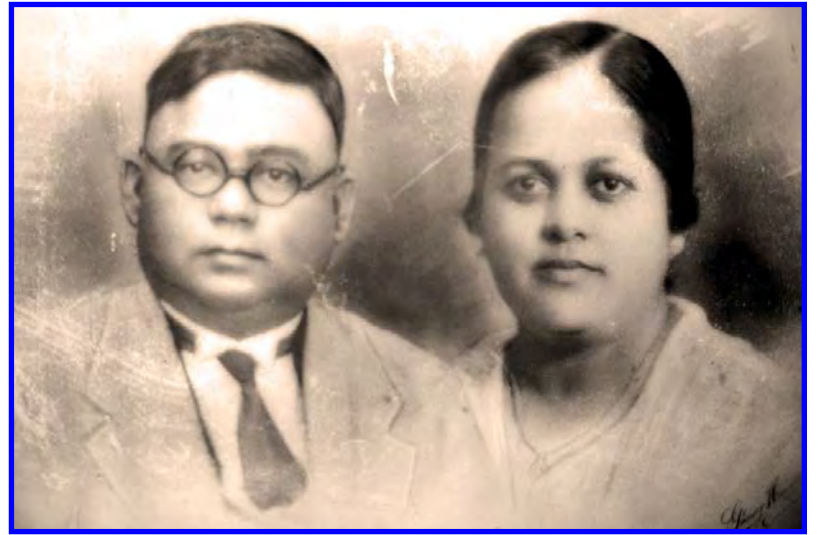
Maybe a drug will come along and jump-start our life span. Perhaps we need to keep ourselves more occupied as we age. Going into outer space can increase our lifespan by a few seconds. A number of folks are signing up, if you have the money. How about socialisation? Isolation is becoming a norm in our mass society. Family structures are disintegrating.



Baytoram Ramharack



BAYTORAM RAMHARACK



Alice Bhagwandai Singh (right), & Dr Jung Bahadur Singh. Photo - The Heritage Collection Dr Jung Bahadur Singh & Alice Bhagwandai Singh Photographic Collection

Kissoon, Gora Singh, Janet Naidu, Elfreda Bissember, among others. She then issued the *Heritage* publication with their poems and stories in 1973.

In addition, Rajkumari encouraged young artists to participate in the dance ensemble of the group to act in dramatic plays and poetry reading.

The legacy of Singh is also seen through Rajkumari's activism at a national level, when she worked within the Guyana National Service, heading the Cultural Division as its Cultural Coordinator.

Ramharack has brilliantly explored the shaping of Singh's consciousness of Indian culture and identity, bringing to life the unwritten history of this outstanding Guyanese woman. The book explores the impact of women who have produced written work, whether in the form of poems, novels, and other writings including those of Mahadai Das and later Ryhaan Shan, Lakshmi Kallicharan, and others outside of Guyana, such as Jan Shinebourne, Oonya Kempadoo, and Beryl Gilroy.

The uniqueness of Ramharack's work is central to the role women have played in producing cultural awareness in their literary works.

This study is a testament to the struggles of the movement of a people from place to place, past to present, a journey of the continuity of a people in a new land, and of Indians having departed the shores of India to make a home for themselves in then British Guiana and post-Independence Guyana.

Furthermore, it is a recognition of those who have played an integral part in the struggle to create a foundation upon which Indian cultural values are appreciated and recognised in national life.

In discovering the existence and work of Singh, one cannot help but recall the voice of Sarojini Naidu, the late nationalist and poet of India, when she queried, "How shall the wealth and power and glory of a nation be founded save on the immutable honour of its womanhood?"

Janet Naidu is an educator, diversity and inclusion expert, poet, and writer; she is Guyanese, and resides in Canada

Thoughts on extending the life span - take action with activity

What is the most accurate single indicator for length of life? Somewhat surprisingly, it is reportedly where you live! According to a United Nations Report, average lifespan of residents of Hong Kong and Japan is 85 years, Switzerland and Italy 84, Spain 83, Canada 82, Barbados and the US 79, and Guyana 70. There are a number of countries in-between. The figures given are the average of males and females. In general, females live several years longer than males.

What are some of the contributing factors? They include genetics, gender, health-care, hygiene, nutrition, diet, exercise, life style, and crime rates... The best predictors of a long life include mobility, strength, and balance. Life expectancy has reportedly doubled over the last 150 years.

As they say in real estate, it is "Location, location, location!"

If you move from Guyana to Canada, for example, as a number of Guyanese have done, would you have put on 12 years to your life? Think about it. Some say the cold weather helps to preserve you! When you go back to visit relatives in Guyana, they often say "you looking fresh" (young).

A number of scientists and investigators has created a new industry with techniques they say will lead to longer life. Supplements are being developed to have the ability to battle cellular decline, and cell therapies to reduce inflammation and disease in our bodies. There is bone or skeletal age – you are as

Bernard Heydorn



Mixed views on T&T's latest police plan to reduce crime

Port-of-Spain – The crime plan proposed by Police Commissioner Erla Harewood-Christopher to reduce murders by 20 percent in the next eight months in Trinidad and Tobago has received mixed reviews from two former police heads.

According to retired Deputy CoP Stephen Williams, Harewood-Christopher's violent-crime reduction plan is worth an A+ grade.

Williams acted as Trinidad and Tobago's top cop for at least seven years.

Meanwhile, former CoP Gary Griffith was critical of the proposal, saying it was too cosmetic. He served in the leadership role between 2028-2021.

According to Williams, "On the face of it, [this] is an excellent plan. Generally, in the police service we have annual operating plans and we have our strategic planning. The annual operating plan takes into consideration the work that will be done, but it will be done for the whole organisation over a one year period, and our strategic plan focuses on three to five years."

However, Griffith differed, saying, "Had this been a manifesto to win votes in an election, the campaign manager should get a bonus."

He added, "[The crime plan] says all the correct things – what is expected, a timeline, what should be done, and what you intend to do to get it achieved. I know the senior officers of the TTPS. They know better."

Griffith is also the political leader of the National Transformation Alliance party. In his view, the plan is a directive from politicians to "give the country something" with the hope that the population would see the "PowerPoint manifesto" and support it.

In the 41-page plan, Harewood-Christopher hopes to reduce murders and violent crimes by 20 percent; increase gun seizures by 15 percent; and improve the detection rate to 30 percent by December 31 this year.

The plan seeks to target criminal gangs by increasing the number of officers assigned to the anti-gang unit, and establishing anti-gang units in each of the ten police divisions.

Harewood-Christopher made a promise to reduce murders



Stephen Williams



Erla Harewood-Christopher



Gary Griffith

by June in the short term, and by December in the long term during a meeting of the Joint Select Committee on National Security in March. At that time she gave no figures.

To secure the country and ease the concerns fuelled by increasing violent crimes, Harewood-Christopher hopes to improve the detection rate for violent crimes to 30 percent and to reduce other serious crimes by 15 percent.

While he believes this can be done, Williams said the only concern will be buy-in from police officers.

"The violent crime reduction plan is excellent. The content of the plan is excellent. The challenge, though, is not necessarily the content of the plan, because this plan will get an A for content. The problem with plans is the implementation, and that is where the rubber meets the road."

Williams said it will all come down to the leadership of the police service to inspire the membership to follow the plan.

However, Griffith said: "Citizens do not want to know what you plan to do. They are weary of the talk. They want results, and rightfully so. Just go out there and do it, then you can thump your chest."

According to police statistics that were included in the plan, in 2022 there were 732 reports of shootings with 196 detected; rape and other sexual offences accounted for 669 reports with 133 detected; there were also 2,436 robberies with 455 detected.

In 2022, there were 4,557 violent crimes reported, the third highest between 2018 and 2022. Of that, 924 were detected, the lowest detection rate during the last five years.

With gangs and guns being a major contributor to vio-

lent crimes, it is Harewood-Christopher's hope that police charge 20 gangsters under the Anti Gang Act by the end of the year.

Additionally, police are directed to charge 40 priority offenders, and successfully prosecute 20.

Harewood-Christopher said there is a "very small number of people (prolific offenders)" responsible for most of the violent crimes in Trinidad and Tobago.

To address this item, she plans to focus on precision policing of the "power few"; dismantle

gangs; eradicate drug blocks; enhance police intelligence capabilities; build police legitimacy; increase visibility; and control movements on the road and public places.

Police will focus on gathering information on gangs including the size, locations, criminal *modus operandi*, and profile its members and associates.

The most violent gang members in each police district will be targeted she said, especially those with outstanding warrants.

Griffith said: "It is hoped that the goals mentioned can be achieved. It can be done if they simply reignite the 100-plus systems that were dismantled due to political pressure as they were seen as 'Gary's plans'. What has been presented is what is discussed in the CoP's weekly Compstat meetings. It is simply to show where we are, and where we want to be, and how to get there. It is not achieved via a PowerPoint presentation based on political directives."

Harewood-Christopher said she will speak with the executive of the police association to get the support needed to bring the plan to a successful completion.

Williams said such buy-in will be needed, adding the greatest challenge will be in its implementation.

"If the police could effectively implement it, and it will take a big effort, it will take all hands on deck; if they can in fact implement, they will get the results," he declared.

Griffith said Harewood-Christopher needs to think outside the box. Tactical operational plans must be intelligence-driven.

"You cannot 'road-block' your way to reduce crime," he concluded.

Persad-Bissessar calls on supporters to put UNC back into govt

Port-of-Spain – UNC supporters and nationals in Trinidad and Tobago were last week advised to stand their ground and work to put the party back in government.

The call came from Opposition Leader and UNC political leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and was made at an inter-faith service to mark the opening of the UNC's new party headquarters in Chaguanas, central Trinidad.

The inter-faith service also saw celebration of the 34th anniversary of the founding of the UNC.

During her keynote address, Persad-Bissessar referred to the legislation that the UNC is advocating for as a solution to stop home invasions in Trinidad and Tobago, declaring, "Let us stand our ground together to push forward and put our party back in government."

Recalling the highs and lows of the UNC's 34 years as a political party, Persad-Bissessar said, "We did it before, we will do it again. We will do better next time."

Persad-Bissessar also stated that the UNC is ready to challenge the PNM "in every single constituency".

"I want to remind you that we have asked for nominations for local government elections, and those elections may be due at any time. We know they are due soon and we will be ready. We have received many nominations. Now we have the new headquarters opened, we intend to begin screening nominees for the local government elections," she said.

Also, Persad-Bissessar said crime has been at its lowest on the two occasions when the UNC was in power.

"Crime is high under the PNM," she declared.

Highlighting the relevance of the UNC to Trinidad and Tobago as the nation continues to grapple with difficulties, Persad-Bissessar added: "Our nation needs the UNC. We need to continue fighting for the people to build a more just, equitable, and prosperous society for all."



Persad-Bissessar (centre) cuts the ribbon to open the party's new headquarters

Additionally, "We recognise that the UNC was made for this moment. This is the time, now is the time. This is the moment of darkness in our country in every sphere of life from education to schooling, national security, infrastructure – everything is crumbling, and therefore we have reached a point of no return with the present government."

Persad-Bissessar declared that the UNC is the only party to rescue the country, since it possesses the experience, track record, intellectual capacity, and "true love for the people, and not for the select few."

She added, "The only way forward now is together let us unite on the road to victory."

The UNC is more committed to national development, she maintained.

Persad-Bissessar also revealed that the new UNC headquarters are leased and did not cost (TT) \$100 million. All elected UNC representatives will make a monthly contribution that will go towards maintaining and operating the new facilities,

she revealed.

She also appealed to party supporters to fight with a new spirit to take the UNC into the government.

"You will never have a leader who loves you like I do," she reassured.

She also thanked the founding members of the party, including Basdeo Panday, John Humphrey, Govinda Roopnarine, Trevor Sudama, and Kelvin Ramnath, describing them as "brave and powerful souls who stood up for what they believed in".

The UNC is a national party based on nation building, not race, colour, and creed, she said, noting, "We have cemented our party on a mutual love for every person who makes up this twin-island state of Trinidad and Tobago."

According to Persad-Bissessar, during the UNC's tenures in government, it improved the socio-economic status of nationals while developing infrastructure such as schools, hospitals,

roads, bridges, and box drains to the point that they were branded a "box drain government" by their detractors.

She said the same box drains are now assisting in relieving flooding across the country.

Reflecting on her 13 years as political leader, she said: "The UNC for me means fighting to ensure mothers don't have to cry over their murdered children. Thirteen years ago, when I became your leader, I didn't do so for the position, I did so because I wanted to serve you. I wanted to fight for a better way of life for you. I wanted to ensure that your dreams, your goals, and your potential as a people were recognised."

She said she also wanted to ensure that no child was left behind, and no community was abandoned.

"Together we have grown this party into the most diverse political party in our nation's history. Together we have ensured that every UNC member has an equal opportunity to get into our Parliament. We have made the UNC the only viable political institution of hope," she said.

Solutions needed, not division in T&T

Port-of-Spain – Religious leaders should be offering solutions and initiatives to aid in the fight against crime, rather than making statements to further divide the society, Dr Jerome Teelucksingh has said.

Teelucksingh is an historian and lecturer in gender, racial and colonial history at the St Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies.

He made the comment following statements made by Aranjuez-based Pundit Satyanand Maharaj. Last month in a lamentation on the state of crime in the Aranjuez community, Maharaj claimed that East Indians were under attack by “urban youth from the East-West Corridor”.

Teelucksingh said Maharaj’s statements were “dangerous generalisations”.

“We cannot make these generalisations, because it’s a dangerous and a slippery slope,” he said.

Additionally, “It is a dangerous statement to make in a plural, diverse, and cosmopolitan society. And what it does when you make these statements is it further polarises the two major ethnic groups. Whenever people make these statements publicly, it’s a sort of regression. It pushes our society back ten years, 20 years.”

Teelucksingh recalled the recent spat between Housing Minister Camille Robinson-Regis and Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar, where Persad-Bissessar referred to Robinson-Regis’ name being that of a slave master’s.

He said this sort of racial “stupidness” was expected of politicians, not of religious leaders.

“When a religious leader does [this], it is something we don’t expect. The public needs solutions from the leaders in society. Focus on solutions. Find out what is failing us. These are the things I would hope religious leaders would be doing... offering



Jerome Teelucksingh

some solutions instead of making these inflammatory remarks,” Teelucksingh said.

He said the majority of Indo-Trinidadians did not agree with Maharaj’s statements.

Said Teelucksingh: “Bandits don’t target you because of your ethnicity or your religion. It is a socio-economic problem. We have to look at it from a class perspective; not as a race issue.”

However, Teelucksingh said there is obvious racial tension in Trinidad and Tobago, not only between the two major ethnic groups, but also towards migrants.

“There is a level of hate and racism and discrimination in the society. It is there and it is bubbling,” he said.

Additionally, “There is that tension there on the surface... we have a lot of racial tension with other migrant groups... the Venezuelan population.”

Head of the Inter-religious Organisation Pandit Lloyd Mukram Sirjoo distanced himself and the Hindu community from Maharaj’s comments.

Sirjoo said crime was happening all across the country, and the targets and perpetrators come from all races.

“It is not a one-sided affair, where East Indians are being targeted. I don’t know what statistics [Maharaj] has to prove his point,” he said.

Sirjoo said as far as he was concerned, Maharaj’s comments were not reflective of the views of Hindus or the East Indian population.

“We are not satisfied with the comments he made because it could cause a lot of racial strife in the country,” he said.

Sirjoo also said the focus should be on solutions, and not on blaming any particular race.

Experts: T&T crime plan needs national buy-in

Port-of-Spain – Two criminologists last week said that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service working alone would not be able to reduce murders by 20 percent using its new Violent Crime Reduction Plan.

Instead, all hands on deck was what was needed, with the criminologists saying the different arms of law enforcement, along with nationals, must work together to ensure that the crime plan succeeds.

With violent crime escalating throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and with continuous calls from various sectors for police to get a handle on crime, Minister of National Security Fitzgerald Hinds revealed parts of the latest anti-crime plan in the House of Representatives last month.

As was revealed, the TTPS expects to achieve 11 targets, which include a 30 percent homicide detection rate, using precision, intelligence, prevention, proactivity, and prosecution.

Its 15 objectives include dismantling criminal gangs, seizing illegal firearms, eradicating drug blocks, and identifying priority offenders.

The TTPS also seeks to increase focus on transnational organised crime, control movements on roadways and public spaces, and enhance police intelligence capabilities.

“With this plan, a significant decrease in the said crimes is anticipated, thereby improving the quality of life in all communities across Trinidad and Tobago,” Hinds said.

However, criminologists Dr Randy Seepersad and Daurius Figueira told the media earlier this week that while some targets are necessary, they would like to see the plan in its entirety.

Figueira said one must understand how the TTPS perceived the reality of crime and compare it with the measures.

Meanwhile, Seepersad said he was interested in how the police will execute its plan and learn the approaches it will take.

Seepersad recalled speaking to Grenadian Commissioner of Police Edwin Martin recently about the country’s 85 percent detection rate. He learned that collaborative work among law enforcement agencies, especially when targeting priority offenders, accounted for their ability to detect and prosecute.

“Whether it is financial intelligence, forensics, police, customs, or immigration, anyone with a part to play sits at the table, shares their information, and [puts together] a case strong enough to stand before a court of law. Their model has been successful. In Trinidad and Tobago, we do not cooperate at that



Randy Seepersad



Daurius Figueira

level,” Seepersad said.

One of the aims of the anti-crime plan is to target key gang members. Measures include enhancing police intelligence capability, and building police relationships with communities.

Commissioner of Police Erla Harewood-Christopher also hopes to charge 20 gangsters under the Anti-Gang Act and 40 priority offenders.

Figueira said the TTPS must address transnational organised crime simultaneously with gangs, since the players are connected. He said the TTPS plan aiming to dismantle gangs are necessary, but success depends on an effective rollout.

“What it outlined so far is Standard Operating Procedure. There has to be effectiveness now. The TTPS mentioned transnational organised crime in the plan, so I wait to see,” Figueira said.

The TTPS plans extensive data mining on gangs to ascertain size, locations, membership, and other features. It will also target the most violent members, including those with outstanding warrants, and drug dealers.

However, Figueira said he believed the TTPS did this as an operational standard, as is the case in other countries. Once done, prosecutors need witnesses to testify against those gangsters.

Acknowledging the TTPS hopes to build a relationship with communities, Figueira said this was necessary, and required a lot of work to break a code of silence in gang-ruled communities.

Meanwhile, Seepersad said police should have used these anti-gang measures before, and suggested it could work.

However, he added that the TTPS needs legislation to back its approach to target gangsters, recalling the courts released over 150 people arrested under the Anti-Gang Act during the 2011 State of Emergency. These releases

occurred as there was insufficient evidence to bring legal victories, and which later resulted in lawsuits against the State.

“The police could pursue certain people, and if they cannot meet the legal requirements for detaining or charging these people, everything will fall apart despite the best efforts and results of the police,” Seepersad said.

Additionally, he said: “You have to be very careful. It is one thing to say that intelligence points to certain people. It is very different to get evidence that will stand up in court even when a judicial officer does preliminary investigations to determine the suitability of the case to go forward to trial.”



Stanley John

Costly ‘missing’ file fee probe

Port-of-Spain – The fees to be paid to retired judges Stanley John and Rolston Nelson SC regarding the “missing” file in the Vindra Naipaul-Coolman murder case, but which was then found could hit (TT) \$800,000, the Leader of Government Business Camille Robinson-Regis said last week.

She said that the approximate fees which could be paid to Nelson and John were \$500,000 and \$300,000 respectively.

At the time, she was responding to a question on behalf of Attorney General Reginald Armour SC, in the House of Representatives.

Robinson-Regis said Nelson was retained by Armour to advise him “with respect to all legal issues arising from and relevant to the missing file in the Vindra Naipaul-Coolman case”.

It included advising “whether the default judgment against the State that was entered on January 8, 2021, can be set aside and/or appealed, and to appear in court in respect thereof”.

Robinson-Regis said Nelson will advise Armour “on the merits of any possible appeal of the decision of the assessment of damages, dated January 30, 2023 and to appear in court, in respect thereof”.

Nelson will also formulate the terms of reference for an investigating team. Those terms include providing the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs “with recommendations for the efficient operation of the departments of the Solicitor-General and Chief State Solicitor”, she said.

John was appointed by Armour as lead investigator in the matter of the missing file.

“Both esteemed gentlemen were retained by the Office of the AG and Ministry of Legal Affairs to provide the aforementioned services, and not otherwise,” Robinson-Regis said.



Scaffolding in the north chamber of the Red House Repairs ongoing at Red House

Port-of-Spain – The north chamber of the Red House should be ready for occupation by the House of Representatives come the end of May, Leader of Government Business Camille Robinson-Regis said last week.

The north chamber was closed last November following a Udecott report that material had dislodged from the ceiling due to air conditioning condensation issues. Sittings of the House of Representatives were then shifted to the Senate’s south chamber.

Repairs were expected to be completed last year, but continued into January. Udecott had recently said the north chamber would be ready by April 29; however, the timeline for completion has now been shifted to end of May.

Robinson-Regis said there was only one visible leak in the south chamber that was caused by condensation on the drain lines of the air handler.

“Whilst concerted efforts have and continue to be made to complete the north chamber, due to numerous shipping delays, the delivery of AC material was impacted and Udecott was compelled to reschedule critical items of work and deter key deliverables. Consequently, the completion date is now adjusted to end of May,” she said.

The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

Moving memories of movies at Rosignol

By Vidur Dindayal

I was barely five when I remember going to the cinema. It was called 'theatre' in those days, pronounced, 'T-A-Ta'. We were living then at Blairmont Sugar Estate, about a mile and a half from the cinema at Rosignol, which was the village nearby. Coming back, I was very sleepy and my dad carried me on his shoulder. I don't remember what movie we saw, but then, I barely had sense. All I know was we were going to see 'Pitcha'; that is, a picture.

My parents and people from Blairmont would walk the mile and a half to Rosignol on the dismal road. Everybody walked the miles to the 'T-A-Ta' at Rosignol. No light in the dark night, so you feel your way on the road. It was all right on moonlight nights.

In the early 1940s we came to live at Rosignol, where my parents had a shop. All their friends from Blairmont would come to buy goods. I remember them talking about the new 'pitcha' they were going to see. It was *Jhoola* starring Ashok Kumar and Leela Chitnis.

Before that I remember them talking about the film *Bharat Ki Beti*. In this, Rattan Bai was the lady star. She is the mother of Shobhana Samarth, famous for her role as Sita in the celebrated films about Lord Ram, *Bharat Milap* and *Ram Rajya*. Shobhana Samarth is the mother of famous stars Nutan and Tanuja. In this film also is Amirbai Karnatak, the famous old singer and actress.

Ashok Kumar and Leela Chitnis were the big stars in my early days. Just before that it was Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani.

The names Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani, and Bombay Talkies, bring to life memories of my young days.

Ashok Kumar came into films just by chance. Kumudial was his real name. It seems he was attracted to that 'new' world where his brother-in-law Sashadhar Mukerjee was. That was in the 1930s.

In much later years Sashadhar's son became the film star Joy Mukherjee. Younger still is film star Rani Mukherjee, the grand daughter of Sashadhar's elder brother.

Kumudial was enrolled at law college but his heart was not in it. He came to live with his sister in Bombay for a few months when his brother-in-law Sashadhar found him a job as laboratory assistant in the film studios at Bombay Talkies. He liked the job. Being an actor, and that too, a film star, must have been for him not even a dream. This was in the early 1930s

On the other hand Devika Rani was famous, as a big film star. She was widely regarded as the first lady of Indian cinema. She was from a wealthy, anglicised family. She was the grand daughter of Sukumari Devi, a sister of the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

From age nine she grew up in England. She had been a student at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, and

the Royal College of Music. In 1928 she met Himanshu Rai and married him the following year.

Himanshu Rai is one of the pioneers of Indian cinema. Himanshu and Devika founded the studio, Bombay Talkies, in 1934. Sashadhar Mukherjee was a senior 'partner'.

Bombay Talkies was one of the "best-equipped" film studios in the country. The studio was a launch pad for future actors including Dilip Kumar, Leela Chitnis, Madhubala, Raj Kapoor, Ashok Kumar, and Mumtaz. The studio's first film was *Jawani Ki Hawa* (1935).

Earlier, Himanshu produced a film titled *Karma* in 1933, the first Indian 'talkie'. Devika Rani played the female lead. Made in both English and Hindi, *Karma* premiered in London in May 1933. The film was well received throughout Europe. Devika Rani's performance was internationally acclaimed.

Following the release of the film, she was invited by the *British Broadcasting Corporation* to enact a role in their first ever television broadcast in Britain in 1933.

The film *Karma* established Devika Rani as a leading actress in Indian cinema. In the poster of the film, Ashok Kumar's name was tiny compared to Devika Rani's. The Music Director was Saraswai Devi, the first woman Music Director of Indian films.

The studio's next venture was *Jeevan Naiya*. Devika and her co-star developed a romantic relationship, and they eloped during the shooting of the film.

Sashadhar Mukherjee contacted Devika Rani and convinced her to return to her husband, Himanshu. Despite the expense in re-shooting many portions of the film, Himanshu Rai replaced the male star with Kumudial as the hero of *Jeevan Naiya*.

Here he was given the name, Ashok Kumar. This was the start of Ashok Kumar's six-decade career in Hindi films.

Ashok Kumar's subsequent venture with Devika Rani was in *Achhut Kanya*, one of the

early blockbusters of Hindi cinema. The runaway success of *Achhut Kanya* cemented Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani as the most popular on-screen couple of that era.

They did a number of films together, including *Janmabhoomi* (1936), *Izzat* (1937), *Savitri* (1937), *Vachan* (1938) and *Nirmala* (1938).

Anjaan, their 1941 movie, was a failure at the box office and it ended the career of Devika Rani. She was always the bigger star.

That enabled Ashok Kumar to emerge as a star in his own right. He and Leela Chitnis then became the big stars.

Devika retired from films in 1945. She received many awards including the Indian awards Padma Shri (1958) and Dadasaheb Phalke Award (1970), and the Soviet Land Nehru Award (1990).



Jiah Khan



Rabia Khan

Sooraj Pancholi acquitted

The final hearing on the Jiah Khan suicide case (2013) was held last month and the court passed an order in favour of the Pancholis, acquitting Sooraj Pancholi of all abetment charges. While Rabia Khan asserted that the verdict was wrong, and issued a statement about moving to the High Court, the Special CBI court observed that Rabia herself has been responsible for raising suspicion on herself owing to her allegations.

Rabia Khan not only accused Sooraj Pancholi of abetting her daughter Jiah Khan's suicide, but has also alleged several times to the media that her daughter was murdered.

However, the court has dismissed her claims stating that Khan even blamed the agencies like CBI for not conducting a proper investigation.

"The complainant in her evidence directly blamed both the investigating agencies stating that they had not conducted a proper and correct investigation. By giving such open contradictory evidence, the complainant himself has destroyed the case of the prosecution," the court stated in its order.

The court in its order observed that the prosecution's case clearly defined Jiah Khan's case as suicide, but Rabia's constant claims about the incident being a murder, not only contradicted the prosecution's case, but also destroyed it.

Furthermore, the court also maintained that despite the handicap evidence, the prosecution managed to lead the case, but in the end, the paucity of evidence is what led to the order of acquittal.

The court mentioned that disowning of statements has led it to believe that Rabia raised suspicion on everyone except herself.

"When expert witnesses gave their opinion regarding cause of death of the deceased as suicidal, the complainant took exactly contradictory view stating that doctors have given a wrong opinion. The complaint raised doubts even on the doctor who conducted post-mortem examination. The complainant raised doubts on everyone except herself. The evidence given by the complainant is found to be full-fledged with improvements and constrictions," the order said.

The court has also questioned the evidence, which included the letter submitted to the court allegedly "written by Jiah Khan about her failing relationship with Sooraj Pancholi", claiming that its authenticity cannot be proven, and along with that, the court also questioned the delay in the submission of the First Information Report.

Source sought for Jawan

Over the last two years, the plot of *Jawan* has been kept under wraps and the only aspect circulating was the Unique Selling Point of Shah Rukh Khan in a double role. Several speculations have come out in the media about the plot and probable places from where the film is inspired except for the real source of its content.

Bollywood Hungama reported sources close to the development saying that the Shah Rukh Khan-led *Jawan* is inspired by Amitabh Bachchan's *Aakhree Raasta*, which in itself was an official remake of a Tamil film, *Oru Kaidhiyin Diary* led by Kamal Haasan.

"*Akhree Raasta* and *Oru Kaidhiyin Diary* featured Amitabh Bachchan and Kamal Haasan in a double role of a father and son. Similarly, *Jawan* features Shah Rukh Khan in a double role of a father and son. Much like *Akhree Raasta*, *Jawan* is also a revenge story with the same conflict points," said a *Bollywood Hungama* source.

Atlee is a big fan of the Kamal Haasan original, and has sourced the core part of the story from *Oru Kaidhiyin Diary*.

"However it is not a remake, but an inspiration. Atlee has taken the core plot and come out with a new story for today's audience. The emotions remain the same, but the treatment is very modern," the *Bollywood Hungama* source further stated.

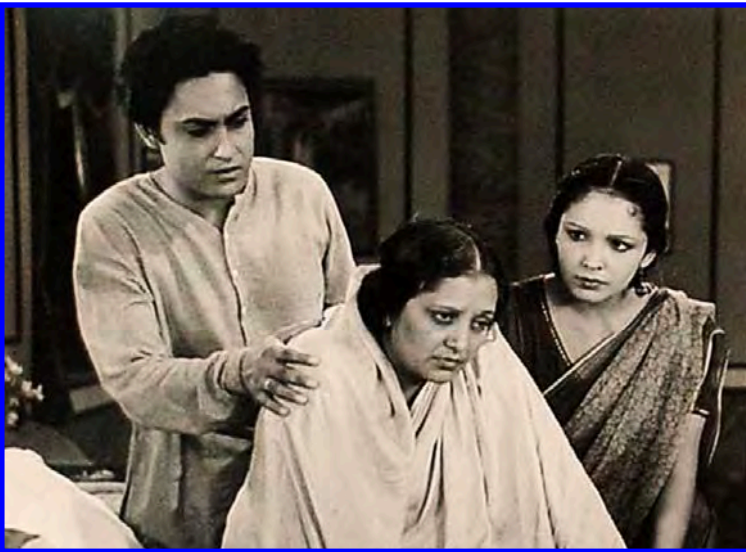
Jawan is confirmed to release on June 2, 2023, and more aspects of the plot will be clear in the days to come. Whether it is an official remake, or a mere inspiration is also an aspect that will be clear, but the characters, their traits, and trajectory are definitely in sync with the world of *Oru Kaidhiyin Diary*.



Devika Rani & a young Kamudial, later turned Ashok Kumar



Himanshu Rai, Devika Rani & Ashok Kumar on the set of *Izzat* (1937)



Ashok Kumar, actress Gulab of 1930s, & Devika Rani in the movie *Anjan* (1941)



Rishi Kapoor (left) with Rakesh Roshan

A friend remembers Rishi

Rishi Kapoor passed away on April 30, 2020 after fighting leukemia for two years. The actor, who can be called the OG chocolate boy of Hindi cinema, has been a part of many memorable movies like *Bobby*, *Chandni*, among others.

Rakesh Roshan has been among Rishi Kapoor's closest friends after the duo met on the sets of *Khel Khel Mein*, which also starred Neetu Kapoor. But clearly, even death does not seem to have ended their friendship, if one goes by Roshan's post. On Rishi's third death anniversary, Rakesh dropped a throwback picture with him and wrote, "Chintu you will always remain a friend".

Even fans got nostalgic and showered love on this picture. Actor Ronit Bose Roy wrote, "I think of him so often. I miss him so much." One user wrote, "Recently watched *Khel khel me...* awesome movie... but I miss your directorials... Pl give some good movies which you have been always giving... we as fans are waiting!"

In an earlier interview, Roshan had spoken about their bonding, and said Rishi was childlike. He had said that Kapoor was a foodie, and he enjoyed his drinks, though he did not get cancer because of that. Roshan could not meet him when he was diagnosed with cancer in 2018 and flew to New York, but they would catch up three-four times a week and chat for an hour or more when it would be morning here and night there.

Meanwhile, even Neetu Singh and daughter Riddhima penned emotional notes for the actor, and said they miss him every day.

Gangubai takes 10 wins at Filmfare Awards

Director and producer Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film *Gangubai Kathiawadi* swept ten trophies at the 68th Hyundai Filmfare Awards late last month. While Bhansali was honoured with Best Director, Alia Bhatt won Best Actress award for her role.

In his acceptance speech, Bhansali thanked Filmfare for the honour, saying, "*Gangubai* is a very special film and close to my heart. I get very emotional every time we talk about it. This award belongs to everyone who has worked in it. Then I come to my jaan, my jigar, mera jigar ka tukda, Alia Bhatt."

He continued, "I am very blessed to witness her perform *Gangubai* right in front of me. Every moment was so special and so young from the heart. This young girl came to me when she was nine years old and auditioned for my film *Black*. I didn't cast her because she had other things to do in life."

He added, "But at that moment, I knew that she is a heroine. Thank you for immortalising *Gangubai*, for making her soul feel so proud, and giving her the voice for all the issues which she fought for. She has reached out to the world once again. And I take this award for my mother Leela. It is her blessings that have always protected me, and to God for listening to my prayers."

As Bhansali went back to his seat, it was Alia's time to feel the glory of *Gangubai*.

Veteran actress Rekha presented the Best Actress award to Alia, and she was all praise for her. While accepting the award, Alia became emotional and went blank for a few seconds before starting her acceptance speech.

"I am blanking out because it took us two years to make this film. And the weird thing is, when Sanjay sir narrated me this

film, I was very scared. And the first question I asked him was, 'Sir, will I be able to do this? I don't think I'll be able to do this'. And sir said, 'Yes, you will do this.'"

She added, "Whatever I have done in *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, it was only thanks to Sanjay Leela Bhansali. At nine, I had this dream to work with Bhansali, and one day I'll be fit enough to be your leading lady. So thank you so much. I will always be forever indebted, and our journey has just begun."

Gangubai Kathiawadi is about Gangubai Kothewali, whose life was documented in the book *Mafia Queens of Mumbai* written by S. Hussain Zaidi.

The film depicts the rise of a simple girl from Kathiawad who had no choice but to embrace the ways of destiny and swing it in her favour.

Gangubai Kathiawadi premiered at the 72nd Berlin International Film Festival on February 16, 2022, and was released in theatres on February 25, 2022.

It went on to become the first *bona fide* Hindi-language blockbuster in 2022. It grossed Rs 153.69 crore at the domestic box office and Rs 209.77 crore globally.

Alia Bhatt with her award; bottom, left, Bhatt is congratulated by Bhansali





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Roach (centre of attention) celebrates with Surrey team mates after taking his 500th first-class wicket

Prolific Roach takes 500 first-class wickets

In yet another huge landmark in his already outstanding career, Kemar Roach took his 500th first-class wicket on April 29 in England.

He hit the milestone when he had Will Rhodes trapped leg-before wicket while playing for Surrey against Warwickshire at Edgbaston in the English County Championship Division 1.

Roach ended with figures of 5-34 off 13 overs – his 22nd five-wicket haul at this level, with Surrey winning the game by nine wickets.

Sir Curtly Ambrose lauded Roach for his amazing achievement, while urging him to keep on going.

“I’m a huge Kemar Roach fan and I enjoy seeing him bowl. I want to congratulate him on his milestone of 500 first-class wicket. That’s a huge achievement for a fast bowler,” Sir Curtly said.

He added, “He is one of the stand-out fast bowlers in world cricket and has always been a top-class performer. He should be proud of the accomplishment, and I urge him to stay fit and look to get more wickets under his belt.”

Roach is ranked in the top wicket takers in West Indies Test history, with 261 wickets in 77 matches which ranks him fifth on the all-time list.

SCG names gates after Lara & Tendulkar

The names of cricket legends Brian Lara (West Indies) and Sachin Tendulkar (India) have been immortalised with a set of gates named after them at the world-renowned Sydney Cricket Ground in Australia.

Cricket Australia announced last month that the names of the legendary pair were inscribed on the gates that visiting teams use to access the field of play. It is now the Lara-Tendulkar Gates.

Cricket Australia chose April 24 as the date to unveil the gates to mark Tendulkar’s 50th birthday. This date also signifies the 30th anniversary of Lara’s 277 runs at the venue, his first Test century, achieved in January 1993.

Lara paid tribute to the gesture by re-posting Tendulkar’s Instagram post, which thanked the Sydney Cricket Ground for the auspicious recognition.

“Such a special honour at one of my favourite grounds in the world. Having my name there along with my friend Brian Lara is one of the best gifts we could’ve got,” Tendulkar wrote. Lara re-posted the same.



According to *ESPNcricinfo*, Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley said, “Their feats will no doubt be an inspiration to not only visiting international teams, but all players fortunate enough to walk onto the hallowed turf of the Sydney Cricket Ground, for generations to come.”

He added, “This is a fitting and timely gesture by the SCG to recognise Sachin and Brian as two legends of the international game with exceptional records at

the SCG. Their feats will no doubt be an inspiration to not only visiting international teams but all players fortunate enough to walk onto the hallowed turf of the Sydney Cricket Ground.”

Now Siddons to focus on new Bangladesh talents

Bangladesh’s batting coach Jamie Siddons announced earlier this week that he will not be working with the men’s national team anymore, and will instead focus on developing the next crop of cricketers, the cricket website *Cricbuzz* reported.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board appointed former national head coach Siddons as their batting consultant for a period of two years in 2021. He was later included in the national team support staff after batting coach Ashwell Prince decided to step down.

Recently, the BCB appointed Nick Pothas as their assistant coach. It is understood that he will help out the batsmen in the national nets, along with head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who is now spending lot of time with his charges trying to hone their batting skills.

Said Siddons: “I’m back in Dhaka after a short break. I won’t be working with the National team anymore, as I feel my best value to BCB is working with the next generation to ensure the players just outside of the team are being well looked after, and are improving each day in preparation for their next opportunity to play for their country.”

He added, “I love coaching the skills of the game to young players, and so the BCB and I have made it happen. The glory is being with the National team and I love that, but most of the skill development, improvement, and training take place in the nets and heat when grinding it out in the nets at Mirpur. Looking forward to working with our future players with the A Team and the Tigers.”

Siddons is expected to guide Bangladesh A during their



Jamie Siddons

upcoming home series against West Indies A.

The visitors will play three four-day “Tests” against the Bangladesh later this month, Cricket West Indies has said. All matches will be played at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in the northeastern city of Sylhet, and have been designated with full first class status.

The tour marks the only second A team series for West Indies in the last three years due to the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

“We are again pleased to work closely with the BCB as we confirm the match schedule for this upcoming men’s ‘A’ team series,” said Roland Holder, CWI’s manager of cricket operations.

Holder added, “Last summer we had a competitive five-match series with red ball and white ball matches in St Lucia. This time around our players will get to experience foreign conditions, and this is a vital part of their development in the pathway toward full international selection, and provides a platform for further exposure and progress following the recent West Indies Championship and new Headley Weekes Tri-Series.”

The Headley-Weekes Tri-Series, which is now underway at the Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua, will wrap up on May 6. West Indies A depart the Caribbean soon after, and are scheduled to arrive in Bangladesh on May 11.

The Caribbean side will arrive in Bangladesh on May 11. The first four-day game will be played from May 16-19, while the second game will start on May 23. The final match is scheduled to be played from May 30 to June 2.

India recall Rahane

India last week recalled middle-order batsman Ajinkya Rahane for the World Test Championship final against Australia at the Oval in June, the *Guardian* has reported.

The former vice-captain Rahane played the last of his 82 Tests in January 2022, but has been in impressive form in the ongoing Indian Premier League Twenty20 tournament.

With Shreyas Iyer sidelined due to a back injury that required surgery, India have gone back to Rahane, who averages 38.52 in Tests with 12 centuries to his name.



Ajinkya Rahane

K.S. Bharat retained his place behind the stumps with first-choice wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant continuing his recovery from a car crash in December.

India will also be without spearhead pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who is completing his rehabilitation after undergoing a back operation in March.

Captain Rohit Sharma’s 15-member squad includes six specialist batters and three spin all-rounders – Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, and Axar Patel.

India reached the final of the inaugural WTC in June 2021, but lost by eight wickets to New Zealand in a rain-hit contest in Southampton.

Australia announced their squad for the contest starting on 7 June earlier this month.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, K.L. Rahul, K.S. Bharat (wicketkeeper), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Shardul Thakur, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav, and Jaydev Unadkat.



Azeem Rafiq

Yorkshire awaits measures

Yorkshire are expected to discover this week what punitive measures will be taken against them after accepting four amended charges of bringing the game into disrepute in the Azeem Rafiq racism scandal, the *Guardian* reported.

The club did not contest the charges, including a failure to address the use of racist and/or discriminatory language over a prolonged period, at the Cricket Discipline Commission hearing in March.

Punitive measures range from a deduction of points in the County Championship, One Day Cup and T20 Blast, to a fine, with a sanctions hearing to be held this week, the PA news agency reported.

Gary Ballance also admitted using racist and/or discriminatory language prior to the hearing, but he announced his retirement from cricket last month after relocating back to his native Zimbabwe. The England and Wales Cricket Board brought cases against six more former Yorkshire players and coaches: Michael Vaughan, Tim Bresnan, Matthew Hoggard, Andrew Gale, Richard Pyrah and John Blain.

Vaughan was cleared “on the balance of probabilities” of using racist language towards Rafiq, but the five others were found liable of using racist and/or discriminatory language by the CDC panel.

Only Vaughan appeared at the public hearing to give evidence to the CDC panel, which was chaired by Tim O’Gorman, with Bresnan, Hoggard, Gale, Pyrah, and Blain withdrawing from the process.

Some individuals may appeal against the guilty verdicts but their penalties – alongside that of Yorkshire and Ballance – are expected to be handed down sometime this week.



Issy Wong

Wong looking to test new Australian players

Summer 2023 would be a “great time” to play Australia in the Ashes despite their recent dominance of the women’s game, England bowler Issy Wong told the *British Broadcasting Corporation* earlier this week.

As the *BBC* noted, England have not won the Women’s Ashes since 2015, and will host this summer’s multi-format series starting June 22.

Australia have also won the last four World Cups across all formats.

Wong said Australia are the “best team in history”, but “it is a really good time to go at them and see if you’re as good as you were five years ago”.

She added, “It’s a pretty good time to play them, you know, just quietly,” she added.

Australia did not lose a match when they hosted the last Ashes series in early 2022, and have since won the 50 and 20-over World Cups, plus gold in the Commonwealth Games last summer.

Captain Meg Lanning took a break for personal reasons last year, returning to lead her side impressively to victory in the T20 World Cup in February, while vice-captain Rachael Haynes retired from internationals last September.

“I think they’re one of the greatest sports teams in history, of any sport, of any gender,” said Wong.

“Their record over the last ten years is absolutely outrageous. It feels like that kind of golden era they’ve had is you know... you have Rach Haynes retiring, we have had Lanning stepping

away, obviously coming back in ridiculous form, but there are a lot of new faces in that group that are unbelievably talented, but haven’t necessarily played the biggest part for them over the last couple of years,” she said.

Australia’s T20 World Cup win earlier this year was the sixth time they have won the tournament in the past seven editions, and third in a row.

“It is a really good time to actually go at them and say, ‘Right, you are the best team in history, but you’ve a couple of new faces in here, and let’s see if you’re as good as you were five years ago,’” Wong said.

She has never played against Australia. However, she played with and against many of this summer’s opponents in The Hundred, and when she starred in the Women’s Premier League in India last month.

Wong plays in the Hundred for Birmingham Phoenix, where she will again be a team-mate of Australia’s all-rounder Ellyse Perry later this summer.

“You’ve played against these guys so much that you kind of get to know them and not necessarily even know their games, but you know, they’re humans at the end of the day and humans do good things and humans do bad things,” she said.

Wong was left out of England’s squad for this year’s World Cup as Heather Knight’s side were beaten in the semi-finals.

But during the tournament Wong was signed by Mumbai Indians for the inaugural WPL season, and was the leading wicket-taker among pace bowlers.



Kate Levick

Levick: More contracts needed in women’s game

Yorkshire Diamonds spinner Katie Levick has called for the growth of professionalism in women’s cricket to continue until every regional team can boast an entire squad of full-time players, the *Independent* reported last month.

At 31 years old, Levick is now reaping the rewards of accelerated investment in the wider women’s game.

In 2019 the only paid-up pros were those within the elite international ranks, but the England and Wales Cricket Board has steadily opened the funding taps, and now pays for 80 players, split evenly to equal ten for each of the eight regional sides.

Levick acts as a player representative for the professional cricketers’ association. She also previously combined her leg-spin craft with her job as a marketing manager.

However, the progress in women’s cricket must not end there, she said.

“It’s been an incredible shift from what we could once have hoped for. Less than two years ago I had a job as well as doing

this,” she told the *PA* news agency.

Said Levick: “Previously you had to be in the best 15 in the country to earn any sort of money from cricket. Now there is an opportunity to earn a good wage, and you don’t have to be playing for England to represent at a very high standard. I think that’s great for the women’s game.”

She added, “It has been progressing every year, but obviously we want a full squad of professionals, and we’re conscious that we need a staffing structure to support that. There’s no point in having 15 professional girls and not having the staff. So we’re pushing for bigger infrastructure.”

Also, “Hopefully the contracts will keep increasing and we can get a full squad of girls fully focused on cricket, because that is how we’re going to get the best product out on the pitch. There are always things you want to see progressing, but the speed of things has been very encouraging for us and it’s great to be part of it.”

Cricket Schedule

(ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Sunday May 7, 2023

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2023
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 5th ODI, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi, 2:30 PM

Tuesday May 9, 2023

Ireland vs Bangladesh in England, 2023
Ireland vs Bangladesh, 1st ODI, County Ground, Chelmsford, 10:00 AM

Friday May 12, 2023

Ireland vs Bangladesh in England, 2023
Ireland vs Bangladesh, 2nd ODI, County Ground, Chelmsford, 10:00 AM.

Sunday May 14, 2023

Ireland vs Bangladesh in England, 2023
Ireland vs Bangladesh, 3rd ODI, County Ground, Chelmsford, 10:45 AM

Friday May 26, 2023

Ireland tour of England Only Test, 2023
Essex vs Ireland, 3-day Practice Match, Day 1, County Ground, Chelmsford, 11:00 AM

Saturday May 27, 2023

Ireland tour of England Only Test, 2023
Essex vs Ireland, 3-day Practice Match, Day 2, County Ground, Chelmsford, 11:00 AM

Sunday May 28, 2023

Ireland tour of England Only Test, 2023
Essex vs Ireland, 3-day Practice Match, Day 3, County Ground, Chelmsford, 11:00 AM

Thursday June 1, 2023

Ireland tour of England Only Test, 2023
England vs Ireland, Only Test, Day 1, Lord’s, London, 11:00 AM

Friday June 02, 2023

Ireland tour of England Only Test, 2023
England vs Ireland, Only Test, Day 2, Lord’s, London, 11:00 AM

Saturday June 03, 2023

Ireland tour of England Only Test, 2023
England vs Ireland, Only Test, Day 3, Lord’s, London, 11:00 AM

Sunday June 4, 2023

Ireland tour of England Only Test, 2023
England vs Ireland, Only Test, Day 4, Lord’s, London, 11:00 AM

Wednesday June 7, 2023

ICC World Test Championship Final 2023
Australia vs India, Final, Day 1, Kennington Oval, London, 10:00 AM

Thursday June 8, 2023

ICC World Test Championship Final 2023
Australia vs India, Final, Day 2, Kennington Oval, London, 10:00 AM

Friday June 9, 2023

ICC World Test Championship Final 2023
Australia vs India, Final, Day 3, Kennington Oval, London, 10:00 AM.

Saturday June 10, 2023

ICC World Test Championship Final 2023
Australia vs India, Final, Day 4, Kennington Oval, London, 10:00 AM

Sunday June 11, 2023

ICC World Test Championship Final 2023
Australia vs India, Final, Day 5, Kennington Oval, London, 10:00 AM

Friday June 16, 2023

The Ashes, 2023

England vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 1, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 11:00 AM

Saturday June 17, 2023

The Ashes, 2023

England vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 2, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 11:00 AM

Sunday June 18, 2023

The Ashes, 2023

England vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 3, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 11:00 AM

Monday June 19, 2023

The Ashes, 2023

England vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 4, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 11:00 AM

Tuesday June 20, 2023

The Ashes, 2023

England vs Australia, 1st Test, Day 5, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 11:00 AM

Wednesday June 28, 2023

The Ashes, 2023

England vs Australia, 2nd Test, Day 1, Lord’s, London, 11:00 AM.



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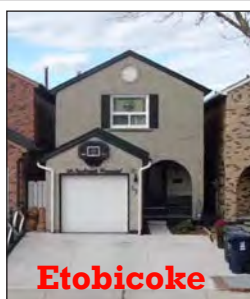
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