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# INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

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**Our Community Is Thriving!**



Each a legend, one singing on pitch, the other making the pitch sing, calypsonian Crazy (right) and former West Indies cricketer Larry Gomes, greet each other at the Superstars concert on November 15. More on Page 21. Photo by Russell Lutchman



Graceful, lissome, and about to take flight, these dancing young ladies won the hearts of attendees at Shiva Mandir's cultural show on November 8. More on Page 16. Photo by Hinano Beekhoo

## 'Extraordinary' diaspora response to Jamaica's needs

— Canada's aid response to Hurricane Melissa is being led by extraordinary mobilisation within our Caribbean diaspora, anchored by Atlas Cargo's logistical operation while supported and strengthened via community businesses and charitable partnerships as Bedessee Imports and UniTnT, municipal action in Toronto, and with federal government funding from Ottawa.

**By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Special Report**

**Toronto** – Diaspora-led humanitarian efforts across the GTA have been surging in response to Hurricane Melissa's devastation in Jamaica, supported by coordinated municipal initiatives and federal emergency funding to deliver relief and wider recovery assistance to the stricken Caribbean island.

In the wake of Hurricane Melissa's onslaught, Canadian-based logistics company Atlas Cargo stepped up, and has become the central hub of an uplifting humanitarian response to the human trauma and infrastructural damage left behind by Hurricane Melissa.

Dr Ken Singh, Chief Executive Officer of the



In composite photo, relief foodstuff to be shipped to Jamaica by Bedessee Imports; top right, Bedessee Imports' President Raymond Bedessee; in photo at bottom left, Atlas Cargo's Ken Singh

Atlas Humanitarian Relief Program, has been coordinating this extensive, centralised, and generous relief deployment. At this time, Atlas Cargo is receiving and shipping all approved humanitarian donations free of charge to support the recovery of many hard-hit communities across Jamaica.

Supported by businesses, charitable groups, and individual donors across the GTA, Singh told *Indo-Caribbean World* last week that Atlas Cargo has

already processed and shipped over half-a-million pounds of humanitarian supplies to Jamaica.

Included in these supplies are building materials, medical and hospital equipment, hygiene and personal care products, non-perishable food items, children's clothing, tools, protective gear, and essential daily-use items.

Singh noted that the responsive and escalating aid so far has exceeded expectations.

"The outpouring of support from businesses, community organisations, and the Canadian public has been nothing short of extraordinary," he declared, adding, "Since launching our emergency hurricane relief initiative for Jamaica, Atlas Cargo

has already received, processed, and shipped more than 500,000 pounds of humanitarian supplies – all packed and loaded at our warehouse, and transported free of charge as part of our commitment to the people of Jamaica."

He added that shipments have included "an exceptional flow of food, medical supplies, tools, children's clothing, hygiene products, creams, and

**See Page 10: Caribbean diaspora**

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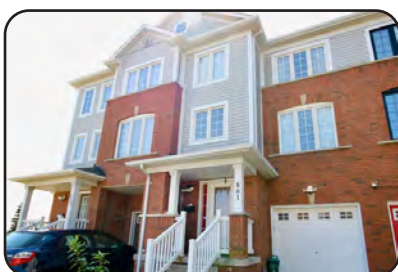
Welcome your new home in heart of Mount Pleasant! Stunning, open-concept corner suite flooded with natural light, features dark laminate floors, spacious den, granite counters! Oversized primary bedroom boasts a 3-piece ensuite, H&H closets. Suite mixes comfort, style, location steps away from local shops, transit, parks, all the best Mount Pleasant has to offer!



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## Triveni Mandir hosts You & the Law Conference

— A community-driven law conference at Brampton's Triveni Mandir will use a realistic impaired-driving scenario to educate families, guide aspiring law students, and highlight the devastating, far-reaching consequences of drinking and driving. Featuring judges, attorneys, and legal specialists, the event blends public safety with legal literacy to save lives.

**Toronto** – An upcoming *You and the Law Conference* at Brampton's Triveni Mandir will focus on the human and legal consequences of impaired driving through a fictional but deeply plausible scenario designed to promote education, awareness, and community safety.

Taking place on December 13 at Brampton's Triveni Mandir, the *Impaired Driving and Legal Education Conference* will bring together a panel with an Ontario Court of Justice judge, a Crown and Defence attorney, and an Insurance Specialist to examine the severe consequences of impaired driving.

Moderated by Dhaman Kissoon, Barrister and Solicitor, and Adjunct Professor with the Queen's Faculty of Law, the event merges legal insight with public awareness to help families understand how a single decision behind the wheel can dismantle families, lives, careers, and futures.

Taking place from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. at Triveni Mandir, 20 Daviselm Drive in Brampton, the program includes lunch from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., followed by the main session from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

The second portion of the conference will also provide an information session in educational outreach for students pursuing careers in the field of law, with opportunities for one-on-one discussions with members of the panel.

At the heart of the conference is a fictional scenario involving Roger, a 35-year-old Permanent Resident of Canada, whose life was irrevocably altered after he drove his family home on icy Brampton roads following a New Year's Day celebration. Despite consuming four beers and exhibiting slurred speech, Roger grew angry and refused his wife Renee's offer to drive.

"The roads were icy, and he lost control. All the passengers were severely injured," the Fact Situation released by the conference's organisers stated.

Renee's father later succumbed to his injuries. Post-accident



**Dhaman Kissoon**



**Vic Aujla**

tests revealed blood-alcohol readings of 145 and 140. Roger faced six charges, including Impaired Driving causing death and bodily harm, and Over 80 causing death and bodily harm. Apart from two speeding tickets, he had no prior record.

The incident also fractured Roger's family. He and Renee separated, and she and her relatives launched a lawsuit against him. Though insured, Roger carried only \$1 million in coverage, making him significantly underinsured for the scale of harm his actions had caused.

To highlight how impaired driving consequences extend far beyond criminal court, each expert on the panel will analyse Roger's case from their professional perspective.

Crown Attorney Vic Aujla will outline prosecutorial considerations, and the likely sentence he would seek. Criminal Defence Lawyer Savana Bhargal will detail potential defence strategies, including arguments for leniency, and possible fallout to Roger's immigration status as a Permanent Resident.

Insurance Defence Lawyer Christeena Lucknauth will examine the collateral financial implications of being underinsured, and Justice Andrew Falls will discuss the judicial factors influencing sentencing, including the prevalence of such offences in Peel Region.

The *You & the Law Conference* is founded on the recognition that many drivers, including in our community, underestimate the wide-ranging consequences of impaired driving. Its organisers note that the fictional account of Roger's undoing mirrors real losses experienced within our community involving family unity, traumatic death, livelihood, and immigration security.

By partnering with Triveni Mandir, *The Law & You Conference* aims to strengthen public understanding of the law, while at the same time guiding our community on how to avoid life-altering mistakes.

Its overarching goal is prevention via education, in empowering attendees to pause, reflect, and think twice before getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol, especially in family settings where the fallout can be devastating and permanent.

Admission is free, with lunch served between 12:00-1:00 p.m., followed by the program between 1:00-3:00 p.m. For more information, call Triveni Mandir at 905-450-3451; also see [display on Page 11](#).

## Sangeetanjali musical concert set for November 29

— Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre will host *Sangeetanjali*, a special all-female musical concert on November 29, spotlighting home-grown talent and raising funds for the Mandir's upkeep. With strong early interest, organisers encourage attendees to secure tickets in advance for the highly anticipated show.

**Markham** – Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre will present its ticketed musical concert, *Sangeetanjali*, on November 29 at 4345-14th Avenue in Markham. The event starts at 5:00 p.m.

The event's organisers describe *Sangeetanjali* as a "one-of-a-kind presentation" featuring an All-Female Band performing together for the first time at the venue.

The concert will be led by musician and keyboard player Anisa Dhar, a lead member of the Aakash Vani Band, and supported by a large ensemble of singers and musicians.

Performers include Neetu Rambharak, The Singh Sisters, Manisha Choudhry, Nanda Ramoutar, Priya Ramoutar, Olivia Kumar, Amy Rambir, Emily Sanasie, Aruna Paul, Anisa Mahadeo, Aleesha Mahadeo, Aryana Mahadeo, Haimshani Sharma, Ramona Sylvan, and Darshini Sanichar, among others.

The talented young ladies will showcase their skills on keyboards, harmonium, *tablas*, *dholak*, and accompanying percussion instruments. Enhancing the cultural program, STCC Dance Academy will present dance pieces, adding to the evening's artistic range.

Sound engineers Kevin Dhar and Sudesh Siewkumar will manage audio production, while the event will be hosted by Anantha Sriram and Natasha Prasad.

The concert is the brainchild of music teacher and Purohit Pt Dave Ramoutar and his family, who have worked extensively to ensure a seamless program.

Admission is \$20 for adults, \$10 for children 6-12, and free for those under five years of age. Organisers report strong early interest and recommend advance purchases to guarantee seating. Contact [tas@torontoaryasamaj.org](mailto:tas@torontoaryasamaj.org) for tickets.

A cash food booth will offer meals and snacks, with all proceeds supporting the maintenance and upkeep of the Arya

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**Sound by:**  
Sudesh Siewkumar & Kevin Dhar

**For More Info Contact:**  
Pt. Dave: 416-918-4038 Nadia: 416-452-0491  
Chandra: 416-617-3675 Satish: 647-717-3087

Samaj Mandir/Vedic Cultural Centre. Donations may also be made online at [tas@torontoaryasamaj.org](mailto:tas@torontoaryasamaj.org), with tax-deductible receipts provided.

The Vedic Cultural Centre notes its ongoing commitment to serving as a *Centre of the Performing Arts and Promotion of Talent*, and encourages community members to support this event featuring home-grown female performers.

For more information, readers can contact Adit Kumar at 647-866-1926, or Pt Dave Ramoutar at 416-918-4038.

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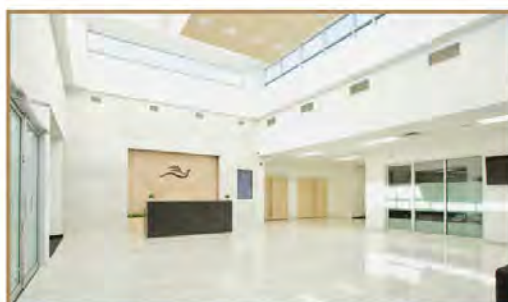
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Minister of Finance and National Revenue François-Philippe Champagne  
**Budget focuses on skills, support, labour mobility**

— Canada’s federal government tabled Budget 2025 on November 4, setting out a broad plan to train the workforce, support Canadians caught in global economic shifts, and improve mobility across key sectors. The budget places strong emphasis on skills, wages, labour protections, and faster pathways to high-demand jobs.

Ottawa – Canada’s Minister of Finance and National Revenue François-Philippe Champagne tabled Budget 2025 on November 4, outlining major investments to help workers adapt to labour market disruptions, strengthen skilled-trades training, and respond to new economic pressures.

“Canadian workers power our economy. We’re taking strong, targeted action to support those affected by trade disruptions and to help every worker build the skills and resilience needed for the future,” Champagne stated.

He added, “Our goal is simple: to maintain and expand Canada’s skilled, educated, and adaptable workforce, and empower the workers who care for us and build the strongest economy of the G7.”

Also speaking to Budget 2025 was MP for Brampton North-Caledon, Ruby Sahota, also Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), who said, “Canada’s workers are the backbone of our country. With Budget 2025, we’re investing in the people who care for our loved ones and helping internationally trained professionals put their skills to work faster to address labour shortages in important sectors like healthcare. Our government is making sure every worker can contribute to a stronger Canada.”

Both Champagne’s and Sahota’s remarks set the tone for a budget aimed squarely at building a more mobile, better-supported, and future-ready workforce.

A major focus of Budget 2025 is preparing Canadians for the surge in skilled work required to build infrastructure and millions of new homes across the country. To support this demand, the government will expand the Union Training and Innovation Program, which helps unions deliver apprenticeship training in key Red Seal trades.

The expansion is designed to boost the supply of trained Canadian workers who can step directly into construction, infrastructure, and related fields.

Personal support workers also receive dedicated attention in this year’s budget, with the introduction of a temporary five-year Personal Support Workers Tax Credit. Eligible workers in provinces and territories without existing federal wage-increase agreements will be able to claim a refundable credit equal to five per cent of their eligible earnings, offering annual support of up to \$1,100.

Budget 2025 also commits to improving job

mobility and competition by restricting the use of non-compete agreements within federally regulated businesses. Upcoming amendments to the Canada Labour Code will ensure that workers can move freely to higher-paying roles, or start their own ventures without restrictive clauses standing in the way.

Another major investment comes through the creation of a new Foreign Credential Recognition Action Fund. Beginning in 2026-2027, the fund will receive \$97 million over five years to help provinces and territories make credential recognition faster, clearer, and fairer, particularly in sectors like health care and construction where shortages are most acute. The intent is to help qualified, internationally trained professionals contribute to Canada’s workforce more quickly.

Budget 2025 also contains measures aimed at Canadians whose jobs have been affected by US tariffs and global market volatility. The government is rolling out a national reskilling package, which includes a new digital jobs tool and training platform to help workers match quickly with available opportunities. Temporary Employment Insurance supports, which were announced earlier by Prime Minister Mark Carney, will assist those facing reduced work hours or job loss linked to economic uncertainty.

A number of coordinated initiatives will build these supports into long-term, stable tools. These include additional funding for training through federal-provincial Labour Market Development Agreements, new Workforce Alliances that connect employers, unions, and industry groups, and a Workforce Innovation Fund to encourage region-specific solutions to labour shortages.

The reskilling and support package for workers affected by trade disruptions extends over several years and brings together digital tools, provincial training partnerships, and targeted Employment Insurance measures.

A new national online training and job-search platform will receive \$50 million over five years, with ongoing funding to keep it updated and responsive to labour market shifts. Alongside this, the federal government will provide \$570 million over three years through existing Labour Market Development Agreements, allowing provinces and territories to expand training and employment services for workers directly affected by tariffs and global economic changes.

Workforce Alliances will also take shape, backed by \$382.9 million over five years and additional ongoing funding. These alliances will bring employers, unions, and industry partners around the same table to identify skills gaps, support business needs, and coordinate public and private investment.



Ruby Sahota

# Community Outreach

## Avoiding Emergency Fraud scams

A Community Message from Special Constable Deanne Taylor, Crime Prevention, 31 Division

An emergency fraud scam (also known as a “grandparent scam” or “urgent help scam”) is a type of scam where fraudsters trick victims – often seniors – into believing that a loved one is in trouble and urgently needs money.

**What is an Emergency Fraud Scam?**

Scammers contact victims by phone, text message, or email, pretending to be:

- A grandchild, family member, or friend in distress;
- A police officer, lawyer, or doctor representing the family member;
- They claim there’s an emergency, such as:
- Being in jail or arrested;
- Needing money for bail, hospital bills, or a car accident;
- Being stranded in another country;
- They’ll pressure you to send money right away through:

- E-transfer;
- Gift cards;
- Cryptocurrency;
- A courier coming to your home to pick up cash.

**How to Prevent It**

1. Stay calm and think before acting: Scammers create panic so you won’t think clearly.
2. Verify the story:
  - Hang up and call the real family member or a trusted relative using a known number.
  - Do not use phone numbers given by the caller.



Special Constable Deanne Taylor

3. Never send money or share personal information with someone you don’t know or can’t confirm.
4. Use privacy settings on social media. Scammers often gather names and family details from public posts.
5. Talk about scams openly with family and friends, especially seniors, to raise awareness.
6. Report any incident to:
  - Police (416) 808-3100;
  - Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre: 1-888-495-8501; or, [antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca](http://antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca)

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Editorial

Our diaspora network

Hurricane Melissa did more than sweep across Jamaica's western flank; it revealed how exposed the Caribbean has become to a climate era defined by storms of escalating force. What happened in Jamaica is not an anomaly, but a preview of what our small island homelands now confront with unnerving regularity.

The toll is severe in Jamaica's west where Melissa made landfall. Hundreds of homes damaged or destroyed; tens of thousands displaced or living in compromised dwellings. Critical infrastructure such as electricity, telecommunications, and roads badly affected. In the agricultural belt, thousands of tons of crops have been lost. Food shortages and upward pressure on prices are inevitable. Tourism, too, has been disrupted, with recovery likely to take months.

Even with the US \$150 million catastrophe bond payout, and support through the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, Jamaica faces a difficult, costly recovery.

But if Melissa exposed fragility, it has also revealed the depth of our Caribbean resilience, particularly among our diaspora. Across the GTA, humanitarian mobilisation has surged, driven by businesses, charities, municipal leadership, and the federal government. Their coordinated response illustrates how essential our diaspora networks have become in the climate era.

Atlas Cargo sits at the heart of this effort. Under the leadership of Dr Ken Singh, it has become the central humanitarian hub, shipping all approved donations free of charge. More than 500,000 pounds of supplies including building materials, medical equipment, and non-perishables, have already been processed and shipped.

Singh has described the response from businesses, community organisations, and the Canadian public as "nothing short of extraordinary".

This centralised relief system is being strengthened by key partners. This week Bedessee Imports shipped its first six pallets of food supplies, and plans to send up to five pallets per week over the next four to six weeks. President Raymond Bedessee praised the coordination among Atlas, diaspora groups, and officials in Jamaica, noting the foresight to prevent relief from being hindered by bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, UniTnT and TicketGateway contributed \$3,000 each to Bedessee's first shipment. These leaders emphasised longstanding philanthropic ties, and the intuitive, unified responses in our shared Caribbean identity.

Municipal leadership in Toronto also responded swiftly. On November 7, Councillor Michael Thompson and Mayor Olivia Chow launched a city-wide relief effort, directing donations through the Jamaican Canadian Association's Hurricane Melissa Relief Fund. Twelve fire stations across Toronto now serve as drop-off points.

Thompson, whose own family in Jamaica has been affected, underscored the personal significance of the effort, while Mayor Chow reaffirmed Toronto's deep ties to Jamaica. Toronto Fire Services, led by Fire Chief Jim Jessop, is coordinating the logistical flow of donations.

At the federal level, the government has expanded its support. Secretary of State (International Development) Randeep Sarai announced matching funds of up to \$1.5 million for individual donations to the Canadian Red Cross Hurricane Melissa Appeal, retroactive to October 28, along with more than \$2.5 million in additional humanitarian funding for Jamaica, Cuba, and Haiti.

Canada's total humanitarian response now exceeds \$11 million, with overall support, when combined with long-term development assistance, surpassing \$17 million. Minister of Foreign Affairs Anita Anand pledged that Canada will continue to stand with the Caribbean "not just in response, but in rebuilding stronger".

Hurricane Melissa stands as a warning, telling us that recovery in the Caribbean is becoming a permanent posture. As climate turbulence and its concomitant shocks intensify, regional governments will need stronger infrastructure, deeper risk-pooling, and more resilient systems.

Meanwhile, our diaspora networks, along with Canada, must remain steadfast, not merely reacting to catastrophe, but helping build the future that Caribbean nations will need in order to withstand the next catastrophe that emerges.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.  
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Multi-layered approach needed for Indo-Caribbean diabetes

"Yuh gat sugah?" If you're from an Indo-Caribbean household, you've likely heard that phrase. It is a common phrase to identify when a person has diabetes. Unfortunately, diabetes is a disease that has plagued many families in our community.

With November being Diabetes Awareness Month, it presents an opportunity to examine this disease and its impact on the Indo-Caribbean diaspora – one of the most impacted communities by the disease.

Diabetes has become one of the most pressing health concerns in the Indo-Caribbean community, affecting families across Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and the broader diaspora. While it is widespread globally, research and community experiences show that people of Indo-Caribbean heritage face a disproportionately higher risk.

Studies on Indo-Caribbean diabetes in New York confirm a high prevalence, with a 2013 study on Indo-Guyanese adults in Schenectady showing an age-standardised prevalence of 31.6 percent. This pattern is linked to a combination of genetic, cultural, dietary, and socioeconomic factors.

Understanding these influences is the first step toward combating this disease, and assisting individuals and families to prevent, detect, and manage diabetes more effectively.

One of the strongest contributors to the high rate of diabetes in the Indo-Caribbean population is genetic predisposition.

People of South Asian ancestry, of which Indo-Caribbean people are a part, have long been shown to develop diabetes at lower body weights and younger ages compared to many other ethnic groups. This is due in part to a tendency to store fat around the abdomen, and to develop insulin resistance more easily. As a result, even individuals who appear lean may still face elevated risk.

Mass famines in India during the colonial era were severe, recurring crises caused by drought, crop failures, and British policies that worsened food shortages and led to widespread suffering. These famines ultimately impacted the body composition of our ancestors and have worsened through generations.

However, genetics alone does not explain the current trends. Cultural dietary habits, shaped by history and tradition, also play a major role. Many Indo-Caribbean households continue to prepare foods rooted in Indian culinary traditions but adapted over generations. Dishes such as roti, doubles, aloo pies, pholourie, sweet rice, gulab jamun, fried channa, and curries cooked in lots of oil are staples of celebrations and everyday meals alike.

While these foods are an important part of cultural identity, they often pack high levels of refined flour, sugar, and saturated fat. Combined with large portion sizes, this can create conditions that elevate blood sugar and increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes.

Another contributing factor is a sedentary lifestyle, which has



Ryan Singh

become increasingly common across the Caribbean diaspora. Modern work environments involve long hours sitting at desks, while urban living and safety concerns limit opportunities for outdoor physical activity. Traditional forms of exercise, such as walking to the market, agricultural labour, or community sports, have become less frequent.

Regular physical activity is essential for lowering blood glucose and improving the body's ability to use insulin, so this decline has had real health consequences. Layered with exercise-shame within the broader South Asian context, these have also impacted on the Indo-Caribbean community across generations.

Beyond physical health, socioeconomic and cultural attitudes also shape diabetes prevalence and management. In some Indo-Caribbean families, chronic diseases may be seen as a normal part of ageing, leading to delayed medical checkups and late diagnosis.

There can also be stigma around discussing illness openly, which limits awareness and early intervention.

Limited access to healthcare, especially for Indo-Caribbean populations in rural Guyana, Suriname, and parts of the diaspora, further complicates effective disease management. For many, medications, testing supplies, or healthier food options may be costly or hard to obtain.

Despite these challenges, there are strong protective factors within the community that can be harnessed for better health outcomes. Indo-Caribbean culture places tremendous value on family, togetherness, and shared meals.

These cultural strengths can be used to encourage collective lifestyle change, such as cooking with less oil, incorporating more vegetables and whole grains, reducing sugary drinks, and practicing portion control.

Community events, temples (mandirs), mosques, and cultural organisations can also play a role by organising health fairs, screening programs, and wellness workshops.

Education is another powerful tool. Recognising the early signs of diabetes, such as increased thirst, frequent urination, fatigue, and slow-healing cuts, can prompt earlier diagnosis and prevent complications. Communities can also benefit from culturally tailored health information, featuring recipes and meal plans that adapt beloved Indo-Caribbean dishes into healthier versions without sacrificing flavour or tradition.

Ultimately, addressing diabetes in the Indo-Caribbean community requires a multi-layered approach: acknowledging the genetic risks, improving everyday diet and exercise habits, expanding health education, and strengthening support systems. With increased awareness and culturally sensitive health strategies, Indo-Caribbean families can reduce the burden of diabetes and build a healthier future for the generations ahead.

Mistaken flight of a moth seeking heart of the sun in a lamp

The darkness of evenings in our little *adobe* hut during my youth in the homeland came with its own choreography after the sandpaper friction as a grain of match was struck on the side of its box. The miniature fireworks of sparks were followed by a noisy flaring; then came the flickering of the lamp that momentarily silenced a mole cricket, which had taken up residence in the thatched roof above.

Ma struck the match with brisk certainty, its flaring briefly lighting up the web of wrinkles on her face. The thin wick inside the lamp spluttered, and then as its confidence grew, began steadying itself inside the glass shade. That yellow flame was our personal sun: warm, loyal, slightly sulphurous; a small empire of light holding back the ambitious dark, from which lonesome toads croaked in call-and-response, their tone funereal and quite pessimistic.

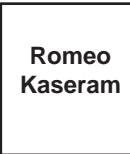
And inevitably, as if summoned, a moth slipped through the crack under the window and the sill, drawn to the light, perhaps as a pilgrim, a trespasser, a winged adventurer with a death wish. Aiming true for the lamp's glow, it hovered at the rim between darkness and the light, wobbling in neutral under the weight of its powdery wings, before choosing its trajectory with the certainty of a creature that had mistaken danger for destiny.

I was poring over my copybooks beneath the lamplight, trying to find daylight in volumes of vocabulary, comprehension, and the sharp-toothed jaws of arithmetic. My pencil, at times waved as a wand, tapped like a sceptre, or twirled like a baton, faltered just at the edge of meaning outside the textbooks Ma insisted I treat as sacred at the altar illuminated by the lamp.

The pages of my copybook, turned down as I contemplated the visitor, arched like winged shadows on the table, each a bird of prey eyeing the unwary moth as it trundled into danger.

Its first collision with the lamp shade broke the silence in the room, the soft thud of stunned flesh meeting soot-darkening glass barely registering on the contented flame within. The moth reeled backwards, spiralling outward in an erratic geometry of confusion, before it steadied itself.

But compulsion is as ancient as self-destruction. Yet again it launched out toward the enclosed flame, this time slamming sideways into the glass, rearing back and then forward again with battering-ram intensity, smudging the glass with the yellow, but-tery residue of its flailing, flaking body.



Child and witness, I watched the futility, my pencil frozen in mid-sentence. The lamp cast a white corona over my copybooks, each page a small shroud awaiting my archivist's script.

Shreds of broken wings drifted down, lit as gossamer. Yet the moth persisted, now with a kind of maddened dignity, its body weakening against the boundary it could not penetrate, misreading transparency for access, warmth for welcome, the flame for the heart of the sun.

In that frenzy of self-destruction, in the shredding of its decaying wings, in its morphing into a battering ram, there came an awakening in me; behind my empathy and pity a quiet suspicion was emerging, an enlightenment, that light itself has an unwholesome appetite.

Worn, defeated, and consumed, finally the moth retreated, wobbling and unsteady, wings beating like a failing heart, as it clung to a far wall. Oblivious to the drama, Ma called across the hut, telling me it was time to pack my books and get into bed.

Turning the tiny metal wheel with tiny teeth that lowered the wick, the flame was choked into darkness. Quietly, like water flowing into the room, the moonlight entered to stake its claim on the night, its cold, blue light sweeping across the dirt floor.

The shadows of table legs, chairs, and Ma's low bench, her *peerha*, distorted into grotesque silhouettes, elongating into creatures with broken hands and feet. Such were the appetites of light and night, transforming loyal objects during the day into shadows of the grotesque and malevolent.

Sleep folded over me in thick, forgetful layers. But waking in the night, just briefly, enough to recall and search among the shadows for the moth's silhouette, I felt that a dread which did not belong to children had somehow opened my eyes too early.

Now the house was residence to monstrous shapes; familiar furniture had been twisted into figures with lengthy limbs, and the packed earth floor a stage on which dark performances were being enacted to the limelight cast by the moon.

Morning brought its own blunt mercy. Schoolbooks in hand, shoes unevenly laced, I hurried out the door, avoiding the wall where the moth had sought its elephant graveyard. But Ma had already discovered it, and had pragmatically flicked it out the window with her *cocoyea* broom.

Entering the maelstrom of another school day, I swept through the chickens, scattering them away from the broken wings.



TT govt's national revitalisation blueprint building on dreams, action

Dear Editor,

Walt Disney, co-founder of the Walt Disney Company, once said, "All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them."

In Trinidad and Tobago, the PNM's manifesto 2025-2030, *A Bold New Chapter*, made headlines one week before general elections earlier this year, but that dream soon dissipated. That is now history and Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar revealed a new dream as she unveiled her government's ambitious national infrastructural development plan, the *Trinidad and Tobago Revitalisation Blueprint*.

However, before the ink had dried, the PNM's Brian Manning slammed the blueprint, claiming that "the UNC is out of fresh ideas and the *Revitalisation Blueprint* is Patrick Manning's *Vision 2020* by another name". Logic would suggest that if Manning's *Vision 2020* had been achieved, there would be no need for the UNC plan.

In November 2020, then prime minister Dr Keith Rowley said, "Port-of-Spain can be revitalised with private sector dollars". His dream was that tram cars, high-rise apartments, vast waterfront park can vitalise the capital city and offer residents a new quality of life. He lamented that Port-of-Spain had decades of "considerable urban decay", namely reduced private investment, depopulation, abandonment, decrepit infrastructure, unemployment, destitution, and crime.

Rowley said, "All over the world and throughout history cities have arisen, been nurtured, have grown and sometimes they stagnate and die." This dream died with little being achieved.

Thankfully, Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar has declared "Trinidad and Tobago open for business" with the *Revitalisation Blueprint* covering the entire country with 129 projects. Among them is the conversion of the Carrera Prison Island into a resort, a total makeover of Port-of-Spain (again), expansion of the port, and a free zone area in Sea Lots.



Persad-Bissessar arrives with two children to deliver her Revitalisation Blueprint speech

There are also a host of mega projects to develop San Fernando, Mayaro, and other areas through initiatives that include business centres, hotels, hospitals, financial hubs, and housing projects.

The difference this time is that business leaders are on board with the plan. ANSA McAL's executive chairman, A. Norman Sabga said, "We need to dream big, manage the details and move the country forward. It's huge, it's exciting; where they want to take this country requires dreaming big."

DOMA president Gregory Aboud said the presentation reflected genuine enthusiasm from both the Prime Minister and Works and Infrastructure Minister Jearlean John.

John said that groundwork for mega-projects have already begun, and "this is not just pie in the sky".

The American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago also came out in support, calling the initiative a "refreshing and much-needed national vision". The Chaguanas Chamber said the blueprint marks a shift "from talk to tangible action". The Greater San Fernando Greater Chamber said the southern business community was "excited" about redevelopment plans for the San Fernando waterfront, adding that "the inclusion of hotels and a healthy city reflect a forward-thinking vision".

Persad-Bissessar said funding for these mega-projects would come from private partnerships and foreign investments.

"In coming years, cranes will pierce the skyline of Port-of-Spain, dredgers will carve new horizons along San Fernando's coast, bulldozers will ready the earth in Tamana and Golden Grove, and scaffolding will rise like steel vines across our cities and towns," she said.

She recalled that during her recent visit to the US she held productive discussions with the Crown Prince of Kuwait and representatives from Saudi Arabia, making it clear that Trinidad and Tobago is open for business. She said this is the message she

wants to echo globally, while citing countries such as the UAE and Singapore that transformed their economies away from dependence on the energy sector.

"Diversification has long been an elusive dream – too often just a talking point without action. The projects we envision will not be white elephants or illusions of grandeur. They will be grounded in purpose, built to produce real results," she said.

Anatole France, a French writer, poet and journalist who won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1921, said that "to accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan, but also believe".

Persad-Bissessar urged the public sector to get on board, and promised there would be no financial mismanagement, declaring, "I want to assure the nation that under my leadership there will be no reckless spending."

This is no Mickey Mouse project, but just like Walt Disney, who was a pioneer, and whose company has grown into one of the largest entertainment conglomerates in transforming the family entertainment industry, we too must dream and make Trinidad and Tobago great.

Terrence Kalloo, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

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• IMPORTANT PUBLIC NOTICE •  
Re: New Guyana Passports

October 4, 2025

The Consulate General of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in Toronto, Canada wishes to advise that effective October 6, 2025 all nationals desirous of applying for a new Republic of Guyana Passport are required to make an appointment online at <https://guyanaconsulatetoronto.com> or by calling the Consulate General via telephone number 416-494-6040 to secure an appointment to begin their application for a new Republic of Guyana Passport.

Please note that after securing an online appointment all applications must be submitted in person at the Consulate General of Guyana. These modifications are vital to support the processing of the new Biometrics Passports.

The Consulate General thanks you for your co-operation and understanding.



Mani Singh  
Honorary Consul, Toronto, Canada  
Consulate General of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Toronto, Canada  
505 Consumers Road, Suite #707, North York, Ontario M2J 4V8  
Tel: 416-494-6040 • Website: [guyanaconsulatetoronto.com](https://guyanaconsulatetoronto.com)







Chapel Ridge's Eric and Glenn Tappenden present guests from the South Asian community with donations during the November 8 Open House



## Chapel Ridge holds Open House

— Chapel Ridge Funeral Home hosted an Open House on November 8 to introduce the South Asian community to the new North Toronto Crematorium, a purpose-built facility designed to support Hindu funeral traditions. Eighteen temples and seniors' groups toured the site during the event.

Its 'Everything in One Place' design has been highlighted by temples across the GTA, which are using the site while noting its beauty and sensitivity to Hindu rituals and traditions.

Eighteen temples and seniors' organisations were represented at the Open House, which featured tours, a ceremony, and refreshments. Donations were also made to the organisations in attendance.

The event provided an opportunity for community groups to view the new facility, learn about its features, and observe how the crematorium aligns with their cultural and religious practices.

Chapel Ridge also partners with St John's Dixie Crematorium in Mississauga to serve families from West Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, and surrounding areas.

The Dixie chapel holds up to 250 people and offers onsite services, witnessing, and cremation, broadening access for families seeking facilities equipped to support their needs.



Chapel Ridge Funeral Home & Crematorium hosted an Open House for the South Asian community on November 8 to showcase the new North Toronto Crematorium in Gormley.

The new North Toronto Crematorium, located at Highway 404 and Stouffville Road, was designed and built to accommodate Hindu funeral traditions observed by the South Asian community.

The facility includes a prayer room that can hold up to 150 people, along with state-of-the-art witnessing and cremation facilities.



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# Guyana's economy continues to experience strong, positive growth

**G**uyana's economy continued to fire on all cylinders in the first half of the year, fuelled by continued expansion of the oil and gas sector and robust performance of the non-oil economy.

At the end of the first half, it is estimated that the overall economy grew by 7.5 percent, and the non-oil economy by 13.8 percent.

As a result, it is now forecasted that real GDP growth for the overall economy in 2025 will be 15.2 percent, up from 10.6 percent, while the non-oil economy will grow by 13.9 percent, marginally up from the original forecast of 13.8 percent.



**Dwarka  
Lakhan**

tor, fish output grew by 16.1 percent, reaching 11,404 tonnes by the end of June 2025. However, overall growth was tempered by a decline in marine shrimp production, which fell by 42.4 percent to 5,520 tonnes, largely due to low fleet activity and poor catch rates. Despite this, the subsector is still projected to grow by 2.1 percent for the year.

The manufacturing sector expanded by 26.8 percent in the first half, driven by strong growth across all subcategories – other manufacturing (30.8 percent), rice manufacturing (12.4 percent), and sugar manufacturing (12.4 percent). This broad-based improved output in non-metallurgy, pharmaceuticals, and food.

In the agro-processing industry the government spent \$456.4 million of the budgeted \$800 million to support the development of the industry, with a drive to expand production of non-traditional crops.

According to the report, “the Guyana Marketing Corporation recorded 73 additional products being available in the first half of 2025 that included expanded product lines of wines, soaps, flours, and new products that included seasoning, condiments, and snacks.

In the extractive industries sector, the mining and quarrying sector is estimated to have grown by 5.9 percent in the first half of the year, driven by increased output across all subsectors – bauxite, gold, other mining, and oil and gas.

In this sector, the bauxite industry is estimated to have grown by 133.1 percent in the first half of the year, and the sector is now projected to grow by 65.9 percent for 2025.

The gold industry grew by an estimated 10.9 percent, with higher declarations from a single large producer and the small- and medium-scale miners. The sector's growth target for 2025 remains unchanged at 17.2 percent.

The other mining and quarrying industry, which comprises sand, stone, diamonds and manganese, is estimated to have grown by 24.2 percent in the first half, driven by greater activity in the construction sector. This industry is now expected to grow by 21.2 percent in 2025.

The petroleum subsector grew by an estimated 5.5 percent, with 115.7 million barrels of oil produced in the first six months of this year. The industry is now projected to grow by 15.6 percent for the entire year.

The manufacturing sector is estimated to have grown by 26.8 percent in the first half, driven by growth across all subcategories, other manufacturing, rice, and sugar. The sector is now projected to grow by 14.9 percent this year.

The services sector is estimated to have expanded by 6.6 percent in the first half of the year, primarily supported by growth in wholesale and retail trade and repairs, administrative and support services, financial and insurance activities, professional, scientific and technical services, and information and communication. The overall 2025 growth target for services is now 8.6 percent.

The construction sector is estimated to have grown by 29.9 percent in the first half, supported by the government's expanded Public Sector Investment Programme, along with robust private sector investments across several sectors. The sector is now expected to grow by 26.2 percent in 2025.

At a macro level, the overall balance of payments recorded a surplus of US \$10.3 million at the end of the first half of 2025, with the current account recording a surplus of US \$197.9 million.

The merchandise trade balance registered a surplus of US \$3,180.2 million. This mainly reflects the fact that while crude exports grew by 2.6 percent, less favourable oil prices prevailed. However, non-oil export earnings



**Guyana's rice industry has seen a 13.9 percent expansion this year**

increased by 12.5 percent to US \$919.7 million, mainly supported by gold and bauxite expanding by US \$147.5 million and US \$31.1 million, respectively.

Total import payments stood at US \$5,894.6 million at the end of the first half of the year, growing by 81.1 percent. Growth was mainly attributed to the expansion in the imports of capital goods, which rose to US \$3,881.7 million, and accounted for 95.8 percent of the overall increase. A significant portion of this increase can be attributed to the importation of the One Guyana FPSO, which valued US \$2,534.1 million.

While Guyana's economy continues to surge ahead, key risks remain. The heavy

importation of capital goods (particularly for oil-related infrastructure) places pressure on external accounts; favourable oil price movement remains uncertain; structural capacity constraints (infrastructure, labour skills) may constrain translating growth into broad-based welfare gains.

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

At a sectoral level, the agriculture, fishing, and forestry sector expanded by an estimated nine percent in the first half of the year.

Within this sector, sugar production expanded by 136.7 percent in the first half, a somewhat deceiving rate of growth given that production was only 15,954 tonnes, compared to 6,739 tonnes during the same period last year.

While sugar production remains historically low, employment in industry rose, with 470 new workers hired in the first half, bringing total employment at Guysuco to 8,362 persons as of June. Value-added production is also advancing, with Guysuco producing 2,686 tonnes of Demerara Gold packaged sugar, and expanding output of Albion Gems branded products.

Although the sugar industry continues to struggle, the half year report noted that, "The Government remained firmly committed to investing in the sugar industry with the sum of \$7.8 billion spent during the first half to advance the planned rehabilitation of the five sugar estates and to ensure the smooth operation of the sugar industry for expanded sugar production."

On a more optimistic note, while the rice industry recorded a 13.9 percent expansion, the other crops subsector gained 7.4 percent, and the livestock subsector 11.7 percent.

According to the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) production of 410,194 tonnes of rice equivalent for the first six months of 2025 is up from 362,030 tonnes in the same period last year. Favourable weather and continued government support, including \$2.2 billion in fertiliser and pesticide assistance, have helped sustain yields at 6.6 tonnes per hectare. The production target for the full year remains 804,000 tonnes, with an overall projected growth of 12.4 percent.

The other crops subsector experienced increased output across nearly all major categories: vegetables (6.9 percent), coconuts (30.3 percent), fruits (10.1 percent), root crops (14.1 percent), and spices (12.8 percent). This expansion has been supported by improved weather conditions, expanded acreage, and the continued spread of shade-house cultivation – with 97 new shade houses constructed so far this year, bringing the total since 2021 to 700.

The livestock subsector expansion was bolstered by higher output across all product lines. Poultry production increased by 12.8 percent. During the first half the government expended some \$867.7 million of the total \$1.7 billion budgeted for the industry, supporting key initiatives such as the installation of new duck hatchers, poultry facilities, and the ongoing construction of a beef abattoir and modular pig processing facility.

In the fishing and aquaculture subsec-

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# Caribbean diaspora takes lead in unified push to aid hurricane-hit Jamaica

From Page 1

essential daily-use items.”

He further noted, “Every box and every contribution, large or small, have made a direct and immediate impact on families devastated by Hurricane Melissa.”

Singh extended heartfelt thanks to the network of supporters fuelling the mission, stating, “We wish to express our deepest gratitude to the countless businesses, donors, volunteers, and caring Canadians who have stepped forward with urgency and compassion. Your generosity reflects the very best of who we are as a nation.”

As emergency relief continues, Singh said Atlas Cargo is now preparing for the next phase of recovery, focusing on rebuilding damaged homes, schools, and community facilities.

He also reaffirmed his company’s humanitarian objective, stating, “Atlas Cargo remains fully committed to this mission. All humanitarian shipments are being transported free of charge, a longstanding tradition of our organisation, and a reflection of our duty to serve.”

As Singh noted, the centralised logistics network established at Atlas Cargo’s Mississauga warehouse is being bolstered by coordinated responses from within our community. Among the responders have been Bedessee Imports, UniTnT, and TicketGateway, and many other groups, whose partnership, generosity, and ennobling humanitarianism have seen a steady flow of essential food supplies and cash support entering into the burgeoning relief operation.

On Monday, Bedessee Imports shipped its first six pallets of food supplies to Jamaica, company president Raymond Bedessee told *Indo-Caribbean World*. He added that his company aims to ship up to five pallets per week over the next four to six weeks, all handled through the centralised, logistical framework that is now in operation at Atlas Cargo.

Bedessee also noted with approval the coordination, and confluence, among Atlas Cargo, Jamaican and other Caribbean diaspora groups in the GTA, and involvement by the Jamaican government in ensuring all the moving parts remain in sync to seamlessly deliver aid to the recovering island.

Coordinated partnerships, efficient paperwork, and government-approved importing pathways set up beforehand for hassle-free facilitation of support were essential, he stated, adding

disaster-relief shipments “require proper documentation”, noting that without these structured channels, arriving relief supplies can stall at ports, and “get bogged down by bureaucracy”.

It was within these interconnected and smoothly moving parts that Bedessee Imports enabled its first shipment, aided in part through generous donations from the charitable group, UniTnT, and the Scarborough business, TicketGateway.

Bedessee also reflected on his company’s commitment to corporate social responsibility, and its historical generosity, which were driving the supportive response to the crisis in Jamaica.

“We have always stepped up when there was a need,” he said, adding, “Our family believes in giving back, especially in great times of need in the Caribbean. In the past, we have reached out to Grenada, to Trinidad and Tobago, and to *Doctors Without Borders*.”

Across the decades, Bedessee Imports’ ties to Jamaica have seen humanitarian, nurturing, and economic components working in tandem.

As Bedessee explained, some of the company’s suppliers are Jamaican farmers whose crops were devastated by Hurricane Melissa. He described the Canada-Jamaica relationship as symbiotic, with Jamaican agricultural output

feeding our diaspora’s cuisine, while Caribbean businesses here in the GTA, such as Bedessee Imports, help sustain the trade links that support livelihoods back in the homelands.

“It means if something is happening in one region in the Caribbean, it affects us all,” he said, speaking to the interconnectivity among regional nations, our diasporic linkages, and the sustaining of livelihoods across geographies.

“We are all one; we are all from the Caribbean, regardless from where we are”, and must support each other in times of crisis and great distress, he affirmed.

This interconnectedness, great depth in partnerships, and familial and economic linkages were echoed by Tony Chankar, president of UniTnT and TicketGateway.

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World*, Chankar confirmed that both organisations had donated \$3,000 each toward the first Bedessee Imports’ shipment of food supplies that left Canada for Jamaica earlier this week.

“This donation will translate into more than approximately \$10,000 worth of supplies at wholesale prices for Jamaica,”

he stated.

He added that both UniTnT and TicketGateway have long-standing philanthropic relationships with Bedessee Imports, and participate together in many joint charitable initiatives throughout the year both in Canada, and in the Caribbean.

“With Hurricane Melissa, we know how it has affected the people of Jamaica, and given our mandate to help, we are reaching out to help those who are in need,” Chankar stated.

Chankar also noted that TicketGateway’s contribution was similarly rooted in symbiotic business and economic ties to Jamaica, declaring, “It is our way of giving back,” he said.

There were further responses to Jamaica at the municipal level here in the GTA, when on November 7, **Councillor Michael Thompson and Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow** announced a city-wide effort to support relief efforts. Their response saw the launch of donation drives across Toronto, and the directing of financial contributions through the **Jamaican Canadian Association’s Hurricane Melissa Relief Fund**.

Residents can drop off **essential supplies at 12 fire stations** across the city. Among the requested items are bottled water, canned goods, rice, beans, pasta, baby formula, hygiene products, disinfectants, linens, tarpaulins, ropes, tools, flashlights, solar lamps, and medical supplies such as bandages, gloves, and face masks.

Thompson, who was born in Jamaica, underscored the personal importance of the relief efforts, saying, “The area of Jamaica where I was born has been decimated, and some of my family members are cut off from communication. I am so personally grateful and privileged to lead the partners here in Toronto as we support international relief efforts.”

Mayor Chow highlighted Toronto’s deep connection to Jamaica, saying, “Hurricane Melissa has caused devastating loss in Jamaica.”

She added, “Toronto is home to one of the largest Jamaican diaspora communities in the world, and we stand with everyone affected. Our city is proud to come together to support all those impacted.”

At the federal level, the government continued scaling up its response, with Secretary of State (International Development) Randeep Sarai announcing on November 12 that Ottawa will match individual donations made to the Canadian Red Cross’s Hurricane Melissa Appeal up to \$1.5 million for donations retroactive to October 28.



Tony Chankar

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## Jamaica's infrastructure recovery ongoing

— Flow and Digicel are intensifying restoration efforts across Jamaica following Hurricane Melissa, as both telecommunications providers work to stabilise disrupted networks. Last week both companies outlined the challenges hindering repairs and the timelines expected for returning service to affected customers.

...

**Kingston** – Flow and Digicel last week detailed the factors hindering full network restoration across Jamaica following Hurricane Melissa, outlining extensive damage to infrastructure, and complex external challenges slowing repairs.

Flow said the disruption in service for some customers resulted from several external factors since the hurricane's passage. These include unintentional cable damage during post-hurricane clean-ups, fires, power fluctuations, and vandalism.

The telecommunications provider said its technical teams "have been working around the clock to restore service", but noted that restoration has been slowed by issues beyond its control. According to the company, intermittent outages have affected both fixed and mobile networks.

Danielle Savory, Senior Manager, Communications at Flow, appealed to residents and organisations involved in clean-up efforts to exercise care when operating near telecommunications lines.

"We are appealing to residents and other bodies involved in restoration efforts across the island to be especially careful as they potentially may cause damage to both aerial

and underground telecommunications infrastructure," Savory said.

He also cautioned against practices that increase risk to the network, stating, "We also ask the public to avoid burning garbage and other storm debris directly beneath our wires and cables, as flames can cause severe damage and further delays in restoration."

Flow said it is concentrating repairs on sections of its core transmission routes to return the network to pre-hurricane stability. The company identified three key linkage points being prioritised – Ocho Rios to Spanish Town; Falmouth to Montego Bay; and Mandeville to May Pen. These routes are central to restoring islandwide connectivity as restoration continues, Flow stated.

Meanwhile, Digicel said at least 75 percent of its customers in four of the parishes most significantly affected by the hurricane are expected to have service restored by next week.

Senior company officials said full service would be restored to the parishes of St Elizabeth, Westmoreland, Hanover, and St James by the end of the year.

According to Digicel, 30 percent of its customers across the island continued accessing service immediately after the storm. Fourteen days later, that figure had increased to 60 percent.

Chief technical and innovation officer Bjorn Reynolds reported significant infrastructure loss, noting that 37 of the company's sites erected on rooftops had been destroyed, with eight expected to be restored by next week.



Fallen utility pole after Melissa



## Ask Jay...

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### FALL HOME MAINTENANCE: PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR WINTER'S CHALLENGES

**A**s leaves fall and the air turns crisp, autumn is more than just a scenic season – it's your yearly chance to safeguard your home before winter's cold sets in. With a few focused maintenance tasks, you can lower risks, prevent damage, and even add a touch of seasonal charm. Here's a guide to essential fall chores to keep your house healthy and warm all winter long.

#### 1. Turn Off the External Water Supply

One of the first steps I always suggest to my clients is to turn off the exterior water supply. This means closing the shut-off valve that feeds outdoor hose bibs, sprinklers, or garden taps. Then, open the taps and let any remaining water drain out (loosen the faucet cap if needed). This helps prevent residual water from freezing, expanding, and damaging pipes or faucet fittings.

#### 2. Clear Your Eavestroughs (Gutters) to Prevent Ice Damming

Clogged gutters are a major cause of winter roof issues. Leaves, twigs, and debris obstruct water flow, and when snow melts, water can back up and refreeze along the roof's edge, forming ice dams. These ice dams can force water under shingles, leading to leaks in walls or ceilings.

Cleaning your eavestroughs and downspouts helps ensure that meltwater drains properly away from your roof and foundation. While doing this, check for sagging sections, broken hangers, or rust spots, and repair or reinforce them as needed. Some homeowners also add gutter guards to prevent new debris from entering.

While cleaning, also check the roof edge. If you notice early ice buildup or significant shingle wear near the eaves, it could indicate ventilation or insulation issues upstairs.

#### 3. Seal Cracks and Openings – Keep Rodents Out

As the cold weather sets in, pests like mice, rats, and squirrels look for warm shelter. Your home might seem secure, but small cracks or gaps, around window frames, siding joints, utility entries, or beneath eaves, can be tempting entry points.

Inspect the exterior using a flashlight starting at ground level. Seal holes with masonry caulk, exterior-grade sealant, steel wool, or wire mesh. Be sure to check around HVAC vents, the dryer vent, electrical conduit, plumbing stacks, and beneath the fascia for potential entry points.

Inside, look for signs of droppings, gnawed wires, or disturbed insulation near wiring or plumbing. If you find evidence of rodents, clean and disinfect the area, then seal that space quickly.

#### 4. Clear Vegetation and Trim Shrubs Close to the Home

It is tempting to let shrubs, vines, or hedges hug the house all year – it looks cosy. However, in autumn, it is smart to clear plant growth away from siding or foundations. Branches and leaves that brush against walls can trap moisture, harm the siding, or give pests access to your home.

Trim bushes and trees at least a foot away from walls. Remove fallen leaves around your foundation, as they hold moisture that can cause materials to deteriorate and attract insects. Good clearance also helps with ice and snow removal, making it easier to inspect the lower walls for cracks or signs of water damage.

#### 5. Embrace Fall as Your Decorating Season (Seasonal & Practical)

As you carry out maintenance tasks, fall also offers an ideal opportunity for seasonal updates – install waterproof string lights along walkways before the snow arrives. Use this season to test or adjust outdoor holiday wiring, extension cords, and light timers. Ensure all your outdoor lighting, timers, and electrical connections are operational now; it is better to identify a frayed wire or loose plug in October rather than mid-December when snow is falling. Fixing these issues before the first freeze will make your home more comfortable, efficient, and protected during winter.

Fall maintenance keeps your home safe, dry, and stress-free. Spending a few hours now can prevent headaches later, and by the time snow arrives, your home is prepared to hunker down.

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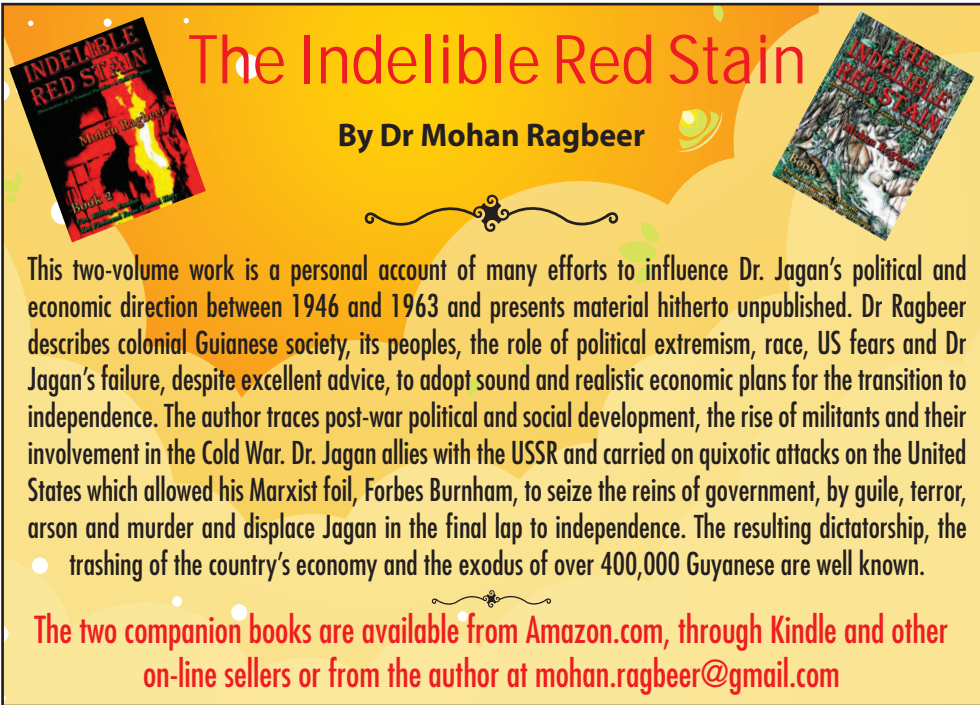
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The two companion books are available from Amazon.com, through Kindle and other on-line sellers or from the author at mohan.ragbeer@gmail.com



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# Caribbean Winterfest to warm up Blue Mountain with music and mas

— Caribbean sunshine, rhythm, and festivity will meet winter magic when the Toronto Caribbean Carnival transforms Blue Mountain into a snow-dusted festival ground for its second annual Caribbean Winterfest and the new DeFrost Party, bringing live music, costumes, cuisine, and vibrant cultural celebration from December 5 to December 7.

**Toronto** – The Toronto Caribbean Carnival will bring its Caribbean Winterfest and new DeFrost Party to Blue Mountain from December 5-December 7, creating a Carnival-inspired winter celebration featuring live performances, family activities, and cultural programming.

Blue Mountain Village will host a full weekend of Caribbean-themed festivities as the Festival Management Committee, producers of the Toronto Caribbean Carnival, extends its mission to bring the rhythm and spirit of Carnival “beyond Toronto” into communities across Ontario.

The three-day program blends music, costumed pageantry, culinary offerings, and family-friendly activities, transforming the ski destination into a Carnival-infused winter escape.

Returning for its second year, Caribbean Winterfest will offer a lineup of live bands, DJ sets, steelpan, calypso and soca performances, dazzling costume displays, dance parties, and a marketplace filled with holiday favourites.

Children’s programming will include costume-making workshops, drumming circles, and special treats. The event invites guests to enjoy skiing and winter activities by day, then step into the warmth and energy of Caribbean culture by night.

Celebrating “community, creativity and connection”, the Winterfest experience positions Carnival culture within a snowy wonderland, merging Canadian winter traditions with Caribbean expression.

**Saturday Night DeFrost Party Turns Up the Heat** - The celebrations will reach their peak on December 6, with the DeFrost Party at Rusty’s @ Blue, a high-energy winter fête illuminated by glow lights, holiday lamps, and live Caribbean performances. The event’s musical roster includes Anika Berry, Maestre and Friends Live Parang Band, Ossie Gurley and the Truth, and DJ sets by Dr Jay de Soca Prince, DJ Menace, and Greenz Connection.

Set against the mountain backdrop, the DeFrost Party



**A performer at Blue Mountain. TCC photo**  
promises an immersive Carnival night under the stars at Blue Mountain Ski Resort.

Jennifer Hirlehey, Executive Chair of the TCC, said, “The Toronto Carnival is a uniquely Canadian experience, connecting Canadians in all of their diversity. In the present geopolitical climate, the Toronto Carnival acts as a bridge to the people of the world coming together to create connection and community. Our 2025 theme, ‘Take Me Home’, speaks to the love affair between our homelands and Canada. It is a place where people of all nations can feel at home, experience joy, and feel connected to each other. Join us in Blue Mountain and share in the love affair.”

Chief Executive Officer Mischka Crichton added, “Caribbean Winterfest celebrates not only the vibrancy of Caribbean culture, but also its home in Canada – where people of all backgrounds come together to share in the rhythm, joy, and creativity that define our multicultural identity. Join us on the slopes!”

And TCC General Manager Adrian Charles emphasised the value of collaboration in sustaining the festival, saying, “Together, with the continued support of our partners like Blue Mountain Village and the community, we can ensure Toronto Carnival thrives for generations to come. We’re so happy to be bringing some real heat back to Blue Mountain this winter. I’m looking forward to a festive, joyous, and most of all, safe event weekend for everyone.”

The Toronto Caribbean Carnival began as a gift to Canada during the 1967 Canadian Centennial Celebration, and has commemorated Caribbean culture for more than half a century. With its origins rooted in emancipation, the festival marks a legacy in which Caribbean people celebrated freedom from slavery and indentureship, expressing pride, unity, and cultural continuity through music, dance, and the artistry of elaborate costumes.

Over the decades it has grown into North America’s largest celebration of Caribbean culture, representing a space where all races and cultures are embraced, and where the symbolism of freedom and shared heritage is brought to life on stage, on the road, and across community events.

Its influence extends far beyond the festival weekend, playing a vital role in promoting diversity, cultural appreciation, and social connection, while contributing meaningfully to Canada’s wider economic and cultural landscape.

Today, the Festival Management Committee’s work includes year-round initiatives that advance anti-racism, encourage intercultural understanding, and foster education. These programs involve partnerships with institutions such as the Toronto District School Board and Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, helping to cultivate awareness, build community connections, and support cultural literacy for future generations.

Through its expansive programming, historical legacy, and commitment to unity, the Toronto Caribbean Carnival continues to honour its origins while strengthening its role as a national beacon of cultural identity and shared celebration.

TORONTO CARIBBEAN CARNIVAL PRESENTS

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Swami Bhajanananda, Dr Budhendranauth Doobay, Pandit Bhoj Sharma, other religious officials, and devotees at the Canada Sevashram Sangha during a three-day Ramayana Yajna held earlier this month in commemoration of the life and missionary works of Swami Purnanandaji. Photos by Ramesh Ramkalawan

# Paying tribute to the life and works of Swami Purnanandaji Maharaj

Though the Guru has a human body, it is not really the human element that functions as the Guru. It is the divine realised by Him, or manifest in him invoked through Him that is the honest Guru. He embodies the supreme Guru – the Jagat Guru – for the individual disciple.

Only those who have acquired the competence, or are gifted by grace to perceive this truth can regard the Guru in human form as none other than the divine.

We pay tribute to the life and works of His Holiness Srimat Swami Purnanandaji Maharaj, Founder and Guru of the famous Hindu College in Guyana, the Trinidad Sevashram Sangha, the London Sevashram Sangha (UK), and the Bharat Sevashram Sangha in the US and Canada.

A description and commentary on the life and works of Guruji, his contributions to the world at large, is a legacy to mankind. Indeed, his life must be seen for what it was – an “offering” in the service to humanity. In this connection, we take cognisance of what he has achieved, and in his memory, dedicate this glowing tribute with humility and reverence.

The life of his Holiness Swami Purnanandaji Maharaj epitomised the Hindu spirit and philosophy, yet could never be regarded as partisan or limited to the spiritual organisation, the Bharat Sevashram Sangha, to which he belonged. For the work of a saint cannot be circumscribed, since all people are his children, and the entire world his domain.

Guruji visited Guyana for the first time in the mid-1950s, after a brief sojourn in Trinidad and Tobago, where he also set up an Ashram.



Swami Purnanandaji

At that time, due to the British government's suspension of the Constitution, people had become disenchanted and disillusioned, and many had lost interest in religion. His visit to Guyana literally transformed the lives of thousands of people with whom he came in contact. It was pure, unadulterated love in action.

Swami Purnananda started to work immediately by gathering some enthusiastic people at Cove & John on the East Coast of Demerara, Guyana, where a prominent business family in Guyana gave him a large plot of land. With an indomitable will and invincible spirit, he worked tirelessly and steadfastly to build the Ashram, and the two schools that now form an

integral part of the culture at Cove & John, one of those schools, The Hindu Primary, which is now renamed as Swami Purnananda Primary School, being the first Hindu denominational school in Guyana.

Apart from building schools, he is the author of the Hindu bible *Aum Hindutvam*, had translated the *Bhagavad Gita*, among the many books he had written.

His Holiness Shrimat Swami Purnanandaji Maharaj came from a long line of outstanding Gurus. He was a direct disciple of Acharya Shrimat Swami Pranavanandaji Maharaj, who is an incarnation of Lord Shiva, Founder of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha.

It was the Acharya's instruction to Swami Purnananda to go to the West and bring his children unto him and back to Godhead. But like rain in a drought-stricken land, and light in a dark tunnel, the ‘master’, as he could be rightly called, brought hope for many of the people. *He came, he saw, and he conquered*, not in the tradition of an army general, but through love, sympathy, and understanding for their cause. Both the religious and secular work of the Swami went hand in hand.

While establishing the schools referred to above, he trained several young Guyanese to become *Bramcharies* (ascetics), who would be trained to become monks, *Sannyasins*. It was the manifestation of the Gurukul system in which both religious and secular education were provided. In this connection, a dormitory was built to accommodate young male students

and train them.

It is the life of strict discipline, and students are taught Hindi, Yoga, the art of Meditation, Music, Philosophy, and Religious Rituals, and so on, which do not conflict with their academic training at school. It is a unique system in Guyana, as not only Hindus but non-Hindus and people of different ethnic groups participate.

A sound mind in a sound body is the end product of a period of studies at the Ashram – an ideal student environment. From the core of young men whom the Swami nurtured and trained emerged a strong and dynamic disciple who has since risen to the exalted position of a Swami, and who is currently in charge of the Ashram in Canada and Trinidad and Tobago.

Swami Bhajanananda sat at the feet of the Guru from the inception. It is undoubtedly a fine achievement to have been able to produce Swamis of such calibre from the humble beginnings in Guyana. Such an achievement stands to the credit of the great guru.

He was strong and powerfully built, and there was an aura of toughness and fearlessness about him. Yet he could be as tender as a dove to his disciples and devotees.

He could endure the pains of his people, and would fast for many days so that his work would be completed, especially when he was writing, which he did up to his last days. Of course, spirituality is not measured by academic learning but by spiritual enlightenment, which comes from obedience to the guru.



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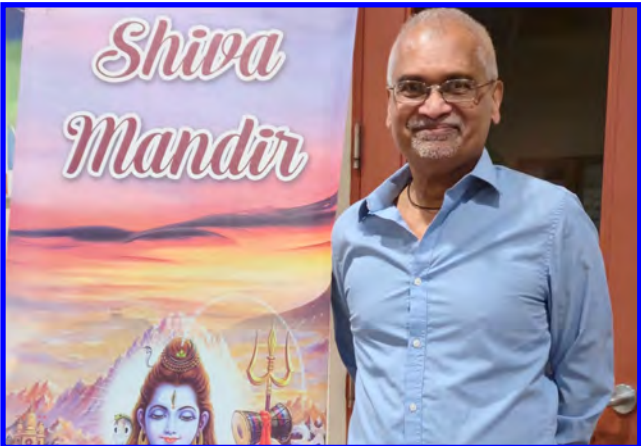
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Shiva Mandir & Cultural Organisation held its Grand Cultural Show on November 8 in an evening of celebration that lit up the Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham. A fundraiser event for its building fund, the evening flowed with relaxation, music, and vibrant entertainment, from Nayaroshni's live performances to dazzling dances by Vanessa, Jennifer, Shivanjali Arts Dance School, and Footsteps Dance School. The stage later came alive with a spirited fashion show, and the energy soared with appearances by the Naya Roshni Orchestra, Angie and Stephan, and special guest Omesh. Steven, Sadhana, Ravi, along with the children from Shiva Mandir added to the evening's beautiful tapestry of talent, togetherness, and cultural pride. *Photos by Hinano Beekhoo*



Even the sudden snowstorm on November 9 could not cool the spirit of unity, devotion, and support when Bhavani Shankar Mandir held its Annual Fundraising Gala at the Embassy Grand Convention Centre in Brampton. After a hectic and fatiguing year, once again the gala brought our community together in full support of the Mandir for its ongoing projects, and in the quieter months ahead. A sold-out crowd filled the hall with warmth, laughter, and gratitude, cheering especially for the children whose performances stole every heart in the packed hall. Guests enjoyed delicious food, joyful company, and a relaxed, celebratory atmosphere, a reminder that despite the inclement weather outside, our community remains warmly supportive and caring for each other.





# Native women's stories reveal agency amid erasure and exploitation

By Dhanpaul Narine

The old woman sat on a rock and unlocked the matrilineal puzzle. Below, the confluences of the river celebrated in a joyful cacophony as strong currents poured the debris into the sea.

All was not well and the woman could tell that worse was yet to happen. She closed her eyes and the pictures moved in the dusty heat as if it were yesterday. There was a time when the land was respected as the giver of life, when the birds flew undisturbed, and when the word of the people stood for something. But today it's different.

The lungs of the forests have been sucked dry by poisons; axes decimate the trees, and the rivers and their arteries are blackened by gold seekers. The manioc too has lost its shape and taste, while the birds have flown in the opposite direction.

The woman looked at the smoke in the forests. She heard the noise of the dredges and wondered why her people's lot was to minister over an ecosystem that may be eclipsed by the dawn of the crescent moons. As a Native woman, she was one with the ebb of the milk river. She was a keeper of the spirit.

Native American women, and indeed Indigenous women in other societies, have borne the brunt of abuse meted out by officialdom. History has not been kind to them. In the US native women were described as 'squaws', and that was an assault on their dignity. One of the most powerful media that was used to portray Indians as docile and lacking in refinement was the movie industry. Hollywood celebrated the conquest of Indians. They were savage beasts that had to be tamed. The white cowboys were the epitome of what was rational, while the backward Indian had to be subdued and the women captured as prizes.

Cowboys and Indians became interlocked in the popular imagination. Filmmakers such as D.W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille invented the narrative in which the cowboy represented a future that was filled with possibilities, and the Indian had to be rescued from his backward ways. But outside of Hollywood Native American Indians produced their own movies starting as early as 1909.

In that year, James Young Deer of the Nanticoke tribe produced *The Falling Arrow*, and in subsequent years there have been movies by the Navajo community such as *Weaving* by Victor Masayesva, and *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* by Zacharias Kunuk. There is also Sandra Sunrising Osawa of the Makah nation. She is considered to be a top Native American Independent film producer with films such as the *Lighting the 7th Fire* that has been screened at Sundance film festivals. In academia, there are also significant anthropological and other writings on the Indian condition by numerous Native scholars.

In recent years, there have been attempts to correct the ethnocentric labels that have been attached to Indians. Teachers in the public school system are in the forefront to change attitudes. The move from fluff and feathers to fact and realism takes greater shape when practical measures are suggested to change attitudes. One suggestion is to develop a culturally responsive pedagogy that emphasises the importance of living together in a multicultural environment.

If Hollywood wishes to redress the imbalance in its depiction of Native Indians, then a good place to start is to bring to the screen the life of Anacoana, the former ruler of much of Haiti. Before the arrival of Columbus, Caonabo a Taino Amerindian, was the cacique or chief of the island of Xaiti or Haiti. Columbus called the island Hispaniola, and proceeded to enslave the Indians there upon his arrival.

Caonabo was sent to Spain for opposing the Spaniards, but he drowned when the ship sank. This made his wife Anacoana the chief ruler, and from all accounts she was a woman of culture. But the Spaniards were not interested in



Winona LaDuke

the culture of the Indians. Columbus may have connected two continents, but he was a terrible administrator. His administration was obsessed with the acquisition of gold, and enslaving the Indians became the instrument to find it. Slavery did not improve the output of gold, and despite a system of tributes, and the *encomiendas*, the gold that was produced was not enough to pay for the upkeep of the Indians.

Bartolomé de las Casas has documented the decimation of Indians due to diseases and cruel treatment, and it shows genocide on a massive scale. In 1496, the Indian population was around 1.2 million, but by 1503 there were only about 65,000 remaining. In 1502, Nicolas de Ovando took over as the Governor of Hispaniola, and he immediately set about suppressing the Taino population.

A friendly feast was organised by the natives to honour Anacoana, the chief of Xaragua peoples. When de Ovando heard of the event he ordered that the houses be burned. Anacoana was captured. She refused to become a concubine and was hanged. She was only 29 years old. Anacoana is today honoured in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic as a woman that stood up to the might of colonialism.

The average school child is taught about the contributions of Pocahontas and Sacajawea who helped Americans to expand the frontier. Pocahontas befriended Captain John Smith in 1607, and cleared the way for trade between the English settlers and Chief Powhatan.

She married John Rolfe in 1614 and that became the first recorded inter-racial marriage in America. Sacajawea, on the other hand, played an important role as a translator and guide that accompanied the Lewis and Clark expedition to discover the Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean.

Another fascinating character was Weetamoo, who became the *sachem* or chief of the Pocassets. She was born around 1640 and grew up on the shores of Cape Cod. Weetamoo was a skilled hunter and swimmer and a good diplomat too. She was married five times and adopted many English customs.

Her most well-known husband was Wamsutta, who was the eldest son of Massasoit. According to historians, Massasoit was the grand chief of the Wampanoag, and he attended the first Thanksgiving with the Pilgrims in 1621.

Weetamoo led her warriors against the colonists whom they feared would usurp native lands. As ruler she was caught up in the intrigue of political infighting, and despite putting up a good defense, she met her end by drowning. Her head was put on public display.

By 1676, the colonists had succeeded in clearing most of New England of Native Indians. There are public places that are named in honour of Queen Weetamoo in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Who has heard of Kateri Tekakwitha? In 1612, Kateri became the first Native American saint. She was born in 1656 in a Mohawk village in present day New York. She contracted smallpox at a young age and had the habit of covering her face from the public.



Wilma Mankiller

Kateri converted to Christianity when she was 19, and spent much of her life undergoing severe penances. It is said that on her death in 1680 her smallpox disappeared. She was described as the Lily of the Mohawks.

Kateri was considered as the patroness of the 'Indigenous peoples of the Americas', and her canonisation was recommended in 1884. However, it was not until 2012 that Pope Benedict decreed that Kateri should become a saint.

One of the visionaries of this century has to be Wilma Mankiller. She was the first principal Cherokee Chief of the nation of Oklahoma. Mankiller overcame many obstacles, including having to relocate at the order of the US government.

Mankiller said that having to give up her community was jolting. She described that incident in her autobiography as traumatic, writing, "I wept tears that came from deep within the Cherokee part of me. They were tears from my history, from my tribe's past. They were Cherokee tears."

During her three terms as Chief, Mankiller concentrated on social programs,

doubling employment, and built new housing, health centres, and children's programs. Infant mortality declined and educational achievement rose.

According to observers, "Mankiller's leadership on social and financial issues made her tribe a national role model, and she remained a strong voice worldwide for social justice, native people, and women, after she left office in 1995."

Mankiller was the recipient of the Presidential Medal in 1998, having been inducted into the National Women Hall of Fame in 1993. She said that in Indian society leaders were encouraged to remember seven generations in the past, and to think about seven generations in the future when making decisions that affect the people.

In this US election season, the politicians would do well to remember her words, "America would be a better place if leaders would do more long-term thinking."

Winona LaDuke broke new ground in politics when in 1996 and 2000 she was the Vice-Presidential candidate of the Green Party. The ticket was headed by Ralph Nader. LaDuke has Ojibwe ancestry, and said that she grew up thinking of herself as an Indian. Her parents were activists, and LaDuke became environmentally conscious at an early age.

She addressed the United Nations on the environment when she was 18, and she also graduated from Harvard. Her philosophy is simple, "A hoe is a tool you use in the garden. We spend all our time doing all these fancy things to work out, but if you actually had a life, then you would probably be pretty healthy."

Native American women have come a long way. They are often overlooked in the literature, and social media tends to focus on glitz and glamour, at the expense of solid contributions from Native women. But they have kept the spirit well. There is more to do, but the ancestors and seven generations into the future should be proud of the remarkable Native women of the world.



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# Vernon Persaud's warmth, steady service, nourished our community

— Our diaspora mourns the loss of Vernon Persaud, who passed away on October 27 after a sudden illness. Store Manager at G. Prasad Caribbean & Oriental Specialty Foods in Scarborough, he is remembered for his kindness, quiet humour, and daily acts of care. He leaves behind a circle of family, friends, and customers whose lives he warmly enriched through his presence.

...

By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Special Tribute

**Vernon Persaud: December 4, 1964 - October 27, 2025**

Vernon Persaud passed away on October 27, 2025, following a sudden illness earlier that month. The announcement of Vernon's passing was made by the family, headed by George and Patricia Prasad, owners of G. Prasad Caribbean & Oriental Specialty Foods. Vernon was the Store Manager at the Scarborough location.

"After experiencing a medical emergency in early October and spending a month in the ICU with further complications, he found peace and freedom from pain," the family statement noted.

He spent several weeks in the ICU at Scarborough Health Network, where he received compassionate care from its medical team.

The family added, "In his final moments, he lovingly spoke of his mother and relatives who passed before him – a comforting sign that he is now surrounded by them and resting safely in their care."

Vernon was laid to rest on November 1 at Duffin Meadows Cemetery in Pickering. In their tribute, the grieving family wrote: "Vernon will always be remembered for his kind heart, quiet strength, and gentle presence. His warmth, laughter, and love will forever remain with us and within our family."

They extended heartfelt thanks to friends, business partners, loyal customers, and the medical staff of SHN for the care and compassion shown throughout his final weeks.

"The outpouring of love and understanding from our community has truly touched our hearts," the family said, adding, "Thank you for standing with us, for your patience, and for reminding us of the strength that comes from unity and kindness."

Born December 4, 1964, Vernon was a beloved son, brother, uncle, and friend, described by his niece Nadine Prasad as "a man whose strength spoke quietly".

Family, faith, and service were the pillars of his life. Those who knew him recall his steady sense of responsibility and his habit of showing love through what he did, rather than what he said – through his reliability, his hard work, and his readiness to help others without seeking recognition.

Vernon's days revolved around the people he served. The family's announcement of his passing captured this enriching devotion for others: "He had a deep love and appreciation for his customers, many of whom he considered extended family. His joy came from serving the community with care and sincerity every single day."

That responsive spirit was recalled in hundreds of posts of mourning on *Facebook*, and in the words and gestures from hundreds of mourners at the visitation and funeral ceremony, which were held at Odgen Funeral Homes in Scarborough on October 31 and November 1.

In a tribute in *Facebook*, Norma Kim Sue-Kam-Ling of *Norman Sue Bakery* wrote, "Vernon was part of our family too. We are deeply heartbroken with his passing. May God give you strength during this difficult time. We will cherish the many memories with him."

Also writing in *Facebook*, Mona and Cyrus Khan of *Mona's Roti Shop* remembered him as "a very loving, kind and honest person ... always very helpful for everything we needed at the store". They added simply, "We will surely miss you – peace be with you."

The Blackman family shared a detailed memory of appreciation and their touching loss, both recalling his attentiveness, caring, and generosity: "When our dad became unable to move around easily, we would go to the store to get his 'staples'. Once Vernon knew it was Dad we were shopping for, he knew exactly what Dad usually bought. Whenever our mom waited in the car, Vernon would take the time to go and say hello to her. He was a kind, thoughtful, and generous man who would go out of his way to help anyone in need. Our family will miss his warm and cheerful spirit."

Across two decades of everyday encounters, Vernon in his white apron, and standing at the store counter in Scarborough, made it a familiar meeting place for our diaspora. In mournful tones, customers described the store, and the front counter, as a place where laughter and advice travelled freely; here customers could find what they needed for our Caribbean cuisine, and yet at the same time would leave lighter, and more enlightened for laughter and pleasant conversation, than when they arrived.

Anne-Marie and Vibert remembered, "He was such a pleasant person, always with a smile or something funny. Every time



I visited the store, he would ask how my husband was doing, and would share advice or experiences when he cared for his dad. I will miss his bread, especially his Aniseed bread at Christmas."

Phillip noted, "Vernon always greeted you with a big smile, and would always have a *gaff* with you about Guyana."

Diane added, "Rest in peace Vernon, gone too soon! You'll be greatly missed ... love your freshly baked coconut buns."

From Peter came the note that his friend Lily was "very fond of Vernon, enjoying his special attention come Christmas time with her needs for Guyana thyme."

The comments continued unabated and warm with appreciation and celebration, even as his sudden absence from the front counter was starting to sink in. Sangeeta said he "always had a big smile" and "always helped you when you wanted something". Savitree wrote that he "always had a smile on his face".

Mezaun shared, "I'll miss you at the store, especially your smile and giggle, and all our great chats". Joanne remembered that he "always greeted customers by name and with a smile".

And Antonia summed it up, saying, "Vernon was so friendly and kind. He always shared a recipe, or a story, whenever we visited the store. We have shared decades of laughs and memories. Vernon has watched many of us grow into adults in our community."

Devi called him "a remarkable young man. He was a gem. His laughter was so infectious". Yvette added that he was "always a pleasant and jovial person", while Elizebell described him as

"warm and friendly".

Bernie wrote simply, "Always a smile, a joke, so pleasant – over 20 years of chats – you will be missed."

And in his poignant post noting the untimely departure and sudden loss of a friend, and with a hint of Vernon's life beyond his white apron, David closed his note stating, "Goodbye to a friend and brother ... here's to joining that cricket team in the Heavens, my brother."

There was a quiet pattern to the way Vernon's world connected us together as a diaspora. His presence at the front counter at the Scarborough store was more than a role at a work station; it was a meeting point where many of our lives branched and intertwined. Here stories intersected and travelled outwards from Norman Sue's Bakery, Mona's Roti Shop, and out of the homes of thousands of loyal customers.

Each conversation, each loaf of plait bread purchased, each shared joke sent new roots outward. What began as G. Prasad Caribbean & Oriental Specialty Foods Scarborough's location grew into something living, into a network of kindness that became self-nourishing, returning anecdote for anecdote, warmth for warmth.

Through this steady, extensive web of relationships, Vernon became both anchor and bridge. He linked generations, neighbours, and friends until the line between family and community all but disappeared. The current he created, and has left behind, still runs quietly beneath Scarborough's everyday bustle, unseen but sustaining us like roots that hold the earth together, keeping it from being washed away.

At his funeral service, niece Nadine spoke on behalf of the mourning family.

"We gather here today to remember and honour the life of Vernon Persaud – a beloved son, brother, uncle, and friend. Uncle Vernon was a man whose strength spoke quietly. He didn't need to say much for you to feel his steady presence. He showed his love through action – through his hard work, his dependability, and the care he gave to the people around him," she told the packed, solemn gathering at Odgen Hall Funeral Homes.

She continued, "His life showed us that real strength isn't loud – it's steady, patient, and full of heart. He was the one you could count on, whether things were going well or falling apart."

Like Norma Kim Sue-Kam-Ling earlier in her tribute, Nadine's voice also broke, her lamentation and loss touching, expressive, and keenly felt: "Even when life tested him, he faced it with quiet courage. He had a way of bringing calm when there was worry, and laughter when things felt heavy."

Nadine closed her eulogy stating, "Even in his final weeks, after all he went through, his spirit stayed gentle and brave. Today, as we say goodbye, we hold onto what he built: the sense of family he valued so deeply, the lessons he left us, and the love he gave so freely. Uncle Vernon – your journey here may have ended, but the impact you made will stay with us. You've left a legacy of love, loyalty, and strength that we'll carry forward. Rest peacefully, Uncle. You will always be remembered, and always be loved."

As his family, friends, customers, and our thriving diaspora continue to remember him, Vernon will always stand out as part of the living architecture that constitutes our Caribbean diaspora here in Canada.

His work and his spirit helped to construct a site of confluence where our Caribbean sunshine and dynamism met, a convergence at his store's front counter where we could share stories of the daily struggles in our lives, and so sustain and nourish each other.

Through every Aniseed loaf, every greeting, every remembered name, Vernon offered us nourishment that fills more than our cupboards; meeting more than our needs for our wholesome Caribbean cuisine, he enriched our collective sense of belonging and identity.

In Scarborough, where so many of us have built new homes away from our Caribbean lands, Vernon's kindness became a bridge between our homelands and our futures. The front counter at G. Prasad Caribbean & Oriental Specialty Foods in Scarborough was a place of connection, an even ground for meeting up, conversing, and for laughter. Here our Caribbean cultures met, stories intersected, and distances closed in.

For the many of us who walked through the front doors of the store at 4559 Sheppard Avenue East, we found more than *puja* items, currants rolls, and pimento peppers; we also found a fond, familiar voice, a steady smile, and a lasting reminder that we are strongest when we care for one another.

We mourn that Vernon has left us, so untimely, at so young an age; yet in the friendships and memories he has left behind, his generosity endures in a quiet strength running through our community like roots binding the ground upon which we stand firmly together as a thriving Caribbean diaspora.

For Vernon's life, example, and his legacy, we offer our sincerest, most profound gratitude; and in that gratitude, we source a core containing the courage for us to move forward.



# Gangadai Daljeet: A life of devotion, grace, love, and quiet strength

In Loving Memory of Gangadai Daljeet (née Jairam)  
January 14, 1937 – October 25, 2025

By son Anand on behalf of the Daljeet Family

Gangadai Daljeet passed away peacefully in her sleep at home on October 25, 2025, surrounded by her loving children and grandchildren. She was 88 years old.

She is lovingly remembered along with her late husband Kodai (Issac) Singh Daljeet by her devoted children and their spouses: Anand, Arvin (Shaila), Indra (Glen), Narendra (Nirmala), Rajendra (Leila), and Prakash.

Gangadai will also be greatly missed by her cherished grandchildren and their spouses: Genevieve (Adam), Nadia (Mikhail), Nikhil (Elena), Kabir (Clara), Roshan (Patricia), Mira (Ezreal), Sonya (Thanoja), Sarena, Dawn, Persis, and the late Simran, and by her beloved great-grandchildren Scarlett and Colton Brain, Logan and Mia Daljeet, Maksim, Leo and Isabella Kobakov, Rohan Daljeet and Camila Bacchus who will forever hold her memory close to their hearts.

Born on January 14, 1937, on Pitt Street in New Amsterdam, Guyana, Gangadai was the daughter of Dukni and Jairam, and sister to Oday, Mardai, Hundar, and Subhas. She grew up in a lively home filled with much laughter, good food, and many visitors.

Her parents' house was a welcoming stopover for travelers, and every guest was always offered a meal and a warm home. Gangadai's childhood was full of joy as she loved to play games with her friends instead of learning how to cook. She attended Roman Catholic School where she met her lifelong friend Norma Bacchus.

At the age of 15, her life took a new direction when she married Kodai Singh Daljeet on August 24, 1952, in a union arranged by their fathers, who were both key members of the Arya Samaj movement in Berbice. Kodai was a young, hardworking businessman who prospered in his business ventures.



Their marriage, like all great partnerships, faced early challenges, but through patience and resilience, they built a loving and welcoming home. The couple's first home on New Street became the cradle for their growing family, as they welcomed five children between 1956 and 1960, with their youngest, Prakash, born in 1964 at Pilot Street.

As Kodai's business, K & D Daljeet, flourished into a thriving enterprise serving much of Berbice, Gangadai's role expanded from homemaker to cashier, and eventually to manager of the retail section of the store. Her home remained a haven of warmth and hospitality, continuing the legacy of her parents and creating a place where family and friends were always welcome.

When the political changes of the 1970s in Guyana disrupted their business, the family migrated to Canada, first settling in Hamilton, Ontario. There, Gangadai became the steady foundation of a new chapter as she focused on her children's education, and helped her husband rebuild their livelihood as he started a small West Indian wholesale business.

She earned a diploma in artificial flower decorating arrangements for home and weddings, and used that talent in her flower arrangements at home. In addition, she became a lunch monitor at a local public school, interacting with children daily, which she thoroughly enjoyed.

Their home quickly became a gathering place for family and friends, especially for the Guyanese students at McMaster University, who found a surrogate mother, and enjoyed Gangadai's home cooked Guyanese meals and hospitality.

Later, in Mississauga, Gangadai and Kodai embraced the joys of grandparenthood. Their home was once again filled with laughter, children's games, and the aroma of delicious food. Christmas was a special time in this house, as both Gangadai and Kodai would have all of their children and grandchildren sleep over. Gangadai would spread blankets and pillows on the floor, gather her grandchildren, and tell them stories of Fine Foot, Big Head, and Long John, filling the room with giggles and love.

Gangadai was the heart of her family – the quiet force that held everyone together. Her personality radiated peace, kindness, and compassion. She treated every child and spouse equally, loved without judgement, and offered comfort without



condition. She was calm and non-confrontational, never raised her voice in anger, and chose understanding over criticism. Even when met with negativity, she responded only with grace and generosity.

She found joy in the happiness and accomplishments of others, never seeking attention or recognition for herself. Her humility and quiet strength inspired those around her to lead with love.

Her later years were marked by care, conversation, and connection. Though she endured loss, including her beloved husband's passing in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, she remained a beacon of light and faith.

Supported by her family especially her two sons Anand and Prakash and her devoted caregiver Daylin Tello, she spent her final years sharing stories, laughter, and blessings with those she loved most.

Gangadai Daljeet's life was one of devotion: to her family,



her faith, and her values. She will be remembered for her gentle voice, her warm hands that held others with tenderness, and her unwavering kindness.

Her final words, often spoken to those by her side, capture the essence of her spirit: "Thank you. God bless you. May the light shine on you. I love you. I love you."

Her presence was a gift; her love, everlasting.

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# Ken Puddicombe’s Last Straw boldly explores domestic, spousal abuse

**Ken Puddicombe:** *The Last Straw, A Play in Two Acts, Plus Three Short Stories*  
**A review by Dr Ken Ramphal**

*The Last Straw: A Play in Two Acts, Plus Three Short Stories* by Ken Puddicombe was published in Toronto in 2025 by Middleroad Publishers, which is owned by the author who is committed to providing opportunities for budding writers to publish their work.

The book comprises the title play, which won the first prize in the 2024 Guyana Competition for Literature-Drama, and three short stories from Puddicombe’s earlier text, *Down Independence Boulevard*, which was awarded the first prize in the 2022 Guyana Competition for Literature – Fiction. The theme of abuse is evidenced in the play, and in all the short stories in the book.

As Puddicombe stated in the Preface, the play is based on the short story, *The Last Straw*, one of the short stories in his prize-winning book. Set in Brampton, Ontario, it presents a harrowing account of the physical and emotional abuse experienced by 32-year-old Shanti Sharma, the second wife of Raj Sharma, who works as a security guard. Raj and his mother, Hemwattie Sharma, abuse Shanti, who is pregnant, and is regarded as a child-bearing machine and a work-horse.

It also portrays the challenges and struggles experienced by new immigrants to Canada, and the racism, including systemic racism, that they encounter. In the first scene, Raj’s brother, Arun, visits him and they share a bottle of expensive El Dorado 15-year-old rum, which Arun has brought from Guyana. Raj receives a letter informing him that he was not selected for the position as a police officer in spite of the fact that he was an officer in the Guyana Defence Force.

In spite of his disappointment, Raj twirls his handlebar moustache, which took him 25 years to cultivate, and of which he is extremely proud. His daughters, Kavita and Jasmattie, are watching their favorite movie, *Bobby*.

When Shanti accidentally knocks Raj’s glass over, it shatters on the floor and cuts her ankle. Jasmattie is more concerned about the drink spilt on her dress than the cut on Shanti’s ankle, and Raj chastises Shanti for wasting his expensive 15-year-old El Dorado rum. Raj later throws his dinner on the floor because it is too cold.

Owen’s dream of literary fame took a nosedive when all of his submissions to publishers were rejected. Maureen encouraged him, but mental depression held him in its vise-like clutches.

The mansion and unlimited cash that he inherited as an only child of wealthy parents could not compensate him for the shock and grief he endured when a drunk driver plowed into his parents’ car, killing them on the spot. The emotional breakdown had forced the 21-year-old to drop out of college, but he paid for Maureen to continue her studies.

Owen was shocked one night to discover Maureen sitting cross-legged on the attic floor in the middle of a circle of lit candles. Her double-voiced utterances raised every hair on Owen’s body. He held his breath when she stiffened her body and went silent, as if sensing his presence.

Owen slid down the attic ladder and sprinted to the bedroom, where he dived under the bed covers. When Maureen crawled into bed a few minutes later, he used lumbered breathing to pretend that he was in deep sleep.

Slowly, the fragments fell into place. Had she always performed her rituals in the middle of the night while he was dead asleep? His stomach churned at the thought that she was lacing his wine every night with sedatives to send him into deep sleep while she performed her rituals. No wonder he was always groggy and unable to focus on his writing.

“Owen, I serve the Old Ways,” Maureen whispered. “I belong to a coven.” Her confession stunned Owen. “I am their priestess.”

Owen felt betrayed by his wife’s deception. Was her empathy toward him a sham, like her pretence at attending church with him every Sunday?

Owen suspected that Maureen had targeted him at his most vulnerable time, when every news media outlet showed details of the accident and his million-dollar inheritance as the only child of the deceased. Maureen had appeared in his life at his weakest moment, and he was grateful for her support.

The divorce began bitterly. Owen could not forgive the deception. Maureen desperately tried to gloss over her satanic

The next scene portrays Shanti’s mother-in-law complaining about the dress that Shanti sewed for her, with Raj giving full support to his mother: “If she doesn’t like it, it must mean that it doesn’t fit her good. Just sew it again. You have lots of time anyhow.” This is in spite of the fact that the money Shanti earned from sewing provided the down payment for the house in which they are living.

In the final *Act*, Shanti can bear the abuse no longer, and wreaks revenge on the entire family, employing creative and effective strategies that the audience would never suspect she was capable of doing.

The theme of abuse is again explored in the short story *Down Independence Boulevard*. Jack is intimidated by his wife, Aisha, who threatens to sic her brother, Suleman, on him. Suleman has been in and out of jail so many times that people named him Jailbird. He confronts Jack with a cutlass and injures him on the head, and Jack retaliates by slashing Suleman on the wrist.

With blurred consciousness, Jack drives himself to the police station, and vaguely remembers a policeman driving his car to the scene of the altercation. However, Suleman is not there and Jack ends up in the emergency ward in Georgetown Public Hospital. He is given a bed in an open ward, and surprisingly finds himself next to Suleman, whose arm is in a sling.

Jack is released from the hospital the day after Suleman is discharged. Determined to leave Aisha, he goes to his flat in Albouystown to collect his belongings.

When he opens the door to the flat, Puddicombe then deploys his remarkable facility with language to describe the emptiness with which Jack is confronted: “As he stepped inside, he was greeted by silence – it bounced off the dull-blue of the walls, reverberated on the linoleum on the floor and ricocheted on the zinc sheets of the roof.”

The reader feels that Jack is vindicated for the actions he takes to liberate himself from an unhealthy situation.

Puddicombe once more gives attention to spousal abuse in the short story, *When Men Leave*. Ram Persaud retires from his job as a prison guard in Georgetown Prison after working for 3,653 days, and is accosted by striking prison guards because he is working as a scab during the country-wide strike in 1964.

His wife, Julie, gives him a list of grocery items and specific take-out food to buy, and Ram leaves on his motorcycle. When

he returns he observes Jack, another tenant, being exhorted by his wife: “Jack, ah want you back before midnight. ... Okay, but don’t go gallivanting all over the place hooking up with your whoring friends on the way home.”

Ram enters his apartment, to find his wife with heavy make-up and dishes piled in the sink. There is no food on the stove, and Julie berates Ram for forgetting to buy take-out food and compares him to his mother. She also blames him for his inadequacy in not getting her pregnant: “You only shooting blanks all the time.”

Ram feels as if he is in prison, remembers two prisoners on death row in Georgetown jail, and compares himself to inmates in prison. He takes off on his motorcycle, meets up with Jack, the other victim of spousal abuse, and the two victims implement their escape plan.

In *A Lovers’ Tryst*, John Dias is in Jack’s taxi as he goes to board a bauxite ship going to Montreal when Jack stops at an Offtrack Betting Shop to get some water for the radiator of his old Morris Oxford. As he waits in the car for Jack, John’s attention is riveted on a woman banging on the door of a shack with a large plank. The woman attacks the man who emerges, and the onlookers prod both contestants.

One female yells to the woman involved, “Don’t leh he take advantage over you”, while a male onlooker goads the man on, saying, “Done tekh no lip from no woman. Show she who wear the pants in de house.”

The man retreats, and the standoff continues. Meanwhile, the woman arms herself with a knife and a saucepan containing hot fluid, when a huge cyclist arrives and takes her away. The same crowd that was encouraging both contestants pleads with the cyclist to give the woman another chance. When the cyclist relents, Puddicombe brings the story to an expected ending, again giving the reader a sense of relief.

The play and short stories in *The Last Straw*, deal with a fact of life that many people would like to turn a blind eye – spousal abuse. However, Puddicombe boldly explores this subject and makes an indigestible topic become very palatable. The book is a treat to read, and I highly recommend it to anybody interested in spousal relationships.

...

Dr Kennard Ramphal is a retired education officer from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. He served as a teacher and an army officer in Guyana, and was Aide-de-Camp to the Acting Governor-General, Sir Edward Luckhoo, and the first President of Guyana, His Excellency Arthur Chung. Ramphal is the author of seven books, including *Slippery Ochro*, which won third prize in the Guyana Competition for Literature – Fiction.



Ken Puddicombe

## The Supernatural Beneath The Veil

practices but failed to penetrate the fortress of Owen’s devoutness that his parents had instilled in him. Five years of marriage were about to be snatched away from Maureen, but Owen’s mind was made up. He wanted her gone.

Owen’s resolve to end the relationship plunged him headlong into the dangerous world of supernatural outrage. The prenuptial agreement was just a minor setback in Maureen’s plans for Owen. She had already determined that there would never be a divorce. As Owen’s only living relative, Maureen had a more favourable outcome in mind.



Midnight visions that startled him out of sleep left him bewildered. How did Maureen, standing at the foot of the bed and chanting in the same strange language, get into the house after he had put her out and locked all doors and windows?

When in desperation, he consulted occultists; each one left him more unsettled than the last. One woman told him, “You have touched the veil. It will not let you go easily.”

On Halloween night, Maureen, dressed as a wizard, joined the trick or treaters beating a path to Owen’s door. She forced her

way into Owen’s mansion.

“Owen, please listen.” She ran deep into the residence. Tears streamed down her face. “The coven forbade me from helping you, but I have never wished you harm.”

“What are you talking about?” Owen raised his voice. “You are their leader.” He pointed his index finger at her face. “You said so yourself.” He gestured toward the door. “Get out before I call the police!”

Every decorative candle and the fireplace burst into instant flames, exposing the anger exploding through Maureen’s attempts at innocence.

Angered that Owen had found the strength to resist her charms, Maureen’s veil slipped, revealing the vileness of a cor-

nered beast. She stomped out of the house. She slammed the door with such violence that it shook the house.

After her departure, a sudden wind circulated throughout the home, blowing every candle out. When the fireplace died, a sinking feeling came over Owen. Did Maureen force her way into the mansion to leave a more dangerous presence behind?

Shaken and weak, Owen bolted the door and used the rails to propel his wobbly knees up the stairs to his room and fell asleep.

At midnight, he clutched his throat and propelled himself backward. The full moon illuminated a howling Maureen. Drool dripped off long, werewolf fangs. Her body retained its human form. Thunder and flashes of lightning in the room revealed 12 hooded figures standing behind her. His heart stopped when Maureen crawled onto the bed and knelt beside him. The terror from her foul-smelling growls burned his sinuses and froze the blood in his veins. In his failings to back away as far as possible from her, his hand knocked over a silver candleholder on the night table.

His dad’s childhood storytelling flashed in his head. “Pure silver can kill a witch or a werewolf.” With one quick motion, in a life-or-death split decision, Owen knocked the candle off the pin that impaled it and lunged forward in a fit of hysteria, to plunge the pin into her temple again and again, until she fell backward and lay still. Each of Maureen’s 12 disciples crumbled into a lump of gray ash on the floor. Maureen’s ash was dark, like her soul.

A psychic accompanied the police due to the bizarre circumstances. She revealed that Maureen’s real name is Spirellasti, a satanist, who was thousands of years old. She, along with her coven, had remained alive through the ages by human sacrifice on a full moon Halloween night every hundred years, on their coven’s sabbath. Owen believed that his dad had returned at his moment of peril to remind him about the weapon that his mom had placed on the night table to save his life.



Kamil Ali





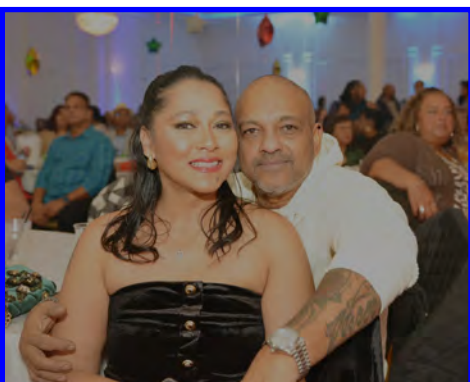
Parang galore as 2025 festive season begins

Island Music, Bad Lad Music, and Royco Refrigeration presented its Superstars parang, old soca, and comedy Christmas Concert on November 15 at the Royal King Event Centre in Etobicoke. The sold-out event featured Trinidad and Tobago's superstar performers Crazy, Scrunter, and comedian Kenneth Supersad. The high-energy evening also saw Connector & Guney entertaining attendees, with live bands Moses Revolution, Ronnie's Rhythm Roller, and Los Amigos Parang Band keeping the dance floor pounding.

Meanwhile, the evening before at Twilight Restaurant and Bar in Scarborough, the festive season got underway with Kris Boodhan's A2K Promotions and Twilight's Soca Parang After Work Lime. Similarly highly-energised, the evening featured Trinidad and Tobago's stellar parang entertainer Crazy, with special guest Connector. Also featured were Los Amigos Parang Band, and live DJs DJ Arnel and DJ Getbusy ensuring the dance floor remained busy.



In photos, at left, photographer Russell Lutchman captured the energy on the evening of November 15 at the Royal King Event Centre in Etobicoke; in photos at right, community ambassador Hinano Beekhoo caught the effusive and celebratory evening on November 14 as the festive season for 2025 got underway.





Dharmendra recovering at home as plans underway to celebrate 90th birthday

— Veteran Bollywood icon Dharmendra is recovering at home after a recent hospitalisation that sparked nationwide concern, widespread speculation, and a surge of support from family, colleagues, and fans. As his health improves, preparations have begun for the beloved actor's milestone 90th birthday next month.

Veteran actor Dharmendra is recovering at his Juhu residence after being discharged from Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital, where he was admitted earlier this month for medical tests that prompted widespread concern, media speculation, and an outpouring of support from the film fraternity.

Dharmendra was taken by the Deol family to Breach Candy Hospital, setting off intense public speculation about his health. His admission was accompanied by a surge of rumours, including false reports of a critical condition and premature death claims, which spread rapidly across social media.

During his stay, several prominent actors, among them Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, and Govinda, visited him at the hospital. He was discharged after several days of medical observation, with his family deciding to continue his treatment and recovery at home.

Dharmendra's doctor told PTI that he had been admitted for medical tests, though neither the family nor the hospital disclosed further details about his condition.

The wave of misinformation distressed the actor's family, prompting repeated appeals for calm. Esha Deol wrote on Instagram, "The

Mishra slams Bollywood entourages

— The long-running debate over Bollywood's expanding star entourages has resurfaced after actor-lyricist Piyush Mishra criticised the practice as excessive, contrasting it with the humility and fuss-free work culture he says defines the South film industry. Several directors have also raised similar concerns in recent years.

Actor and lyricist Piyush Mishra has criticised the growing trend of large star entourages in Bollywood, calling them unnecessary and burdensome for film budgets, while contrasting them with what he describes as the humble and efficient work culture of the South film industry.

Speaking in a recent interview with *Curly Tales*, Piyush Mishra said that many Bollywood actors travel with a large number of assistants and bodyguards, creating both logistical challenges and unnecessary expenses for film productions.

He questioned the need for such extensive support teams, saying, "People live in hang-ups, they have a lot of tantrums. Their entourage is so long. Almost eight-nine people will come with them, they will walk with at least 12 bodyguards, but why do you need these many bodyguards? You are a single person. Who is coming to kill you?"

Mishra added that his own approach to work is minimal, saying, "I have one assistant and one make-up artist and I don't need anybody else after these two. What is the need for so many people, one person is to drink with you."

He added, "One is to give you a drink, one is to comb your hair, one is to do your makeup. So I don't understand the meaning behind this."

Mishra contrasted this with what he described as the grounded professionalism of South Indian cinema. He said people in the South "have no such hang-ups", and that their work culture is warm and respectful.

Recalling his experience with S. Shankar



Dharmendra

media seems to be in overdrive and spreading false news. My father is stable and recovering. We request everyone to give our family privacy. Thank you for the prayers for papa's speedy recovery."

Wife and actor-politician Hema Malini, condemned the misleading coverage, posting on X, "What is happening is unforgivable! How can responsible channels spread false news about a person who is responding to treatment and is recovering? This is being extremely disrespectful and irresponsible. Please give due respect to the family and its need for privacy."

Dharmendra's hospitalisation escalated into

while filming *Indian 2*, he stated, "He is such a big director, but he came to introduce himself to me. I thought, such a big person, and he's speaking so humbly. The culture there is amazing."

He also praised Ranbir Kapoor for being an exception within Bollywood, noting his professionalism while working together on *Tamasha*.

"Ranbir... doesn't have any tantrums because he knows he's such a big star. He has no hang-ups. He is my favourite actor," he said.

Mishra is not alone in raising the issue. Director Sanjay Gupta previously mentioned an unnamed actor who reportedly travels with six vanity vans.

Anurag Kashyap also highlighted the impact of extravagant star demands on filmmaking costs. He told *Humans of Cinema*, "Somebody has a chef who charges Rs 2 lakh per day to make this strange healthy food."

He added, "A lot of money that is spent doesn't go into making the film. It goes into the paraphernalia; it goes into the entourage. You're shooting in the middle of a jungle, but one car will be sent to the city three hours away specifically to get you that five-star burger you want."

In recent months, filmmakers including Karan Johar and Farah Khan have also expressed concern about actors travelling with large entourages, warning that these demands inflate production budgets significantly.

Mishra began his career in theatre before making his film debut in 1998 with Mani Ratnam's *Dil Se*. He later acted in acclaimed films such as *Gangs of Wasseypur*, *Maqbool*, *Tamasha*, and *Indian 2*.

His work as a lyricist and dialogue writer in films like *Gulaal*, *Black Friday*, and *Gangs of Wasseypur* further cemented his reputation in the industry. Mishra was last seen in the 2025 film *Crazy*.

charge, while colleagues across the industry shared prayers and warm wishes online.

Dharmendra's film career spans more than six decades with over 300 films, including celebrated classics such as *Aye Milan Ki Bela*, *Phool Aur Patthar*, *Aaye Din Bahar Ke*, *Seeta Aur Geeta*, *Raja Jani*, *Jugnu*, *Yaadon Ki Baaraat*, *Dost*, *Sholay*, *Pratiggya*, *Charas*, and *Dharam Veer*.

In 2023, he appeared in *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani*, directed by Karan Johar. Earlier this year, he featured in the romantic comedy *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Ulja Jiya*, starring Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon.

Dharmendra is now gearing up for Sriram Raghavan's highly anticipated film *Ikkis*, co-starring Agastya Nanda, grandson of Amitabh Bachchan. The film is slated for release on December 25 this year.

With his health improving, Dharmendra's family, led by wife Hema Malini, has begun planning his 90th birthday celebration on December 8. According to a *Bollywood Hungama* report, a source close to the family said that "if God is willing" the Deols will celebrate two birthdays next month: Dharmendra's and Esha Deol's.

Esha's birthday was on November 2, but she postponed the celebration until her father's recovery.

Reflecting on his condition, Hema Malini told the media this week, "So far, he is okay. We are taking one day at a time."

After rumours and online speculation persisted, the Deol family issued a public note addressing fans and the press.

"Mr Dharmendra has been discharged from the hospital and will continue his recovery at home. We kindly request the media and the public to refrain from any further speculation, and to respect his and the family's privacy during this time. We appreciate everyone's love, prayers, and good wishes for his continued recovery, good health, and long life. Please respect him because he loves you."



THISTLETOWN LIONS CLUB

Pine Point Banquet Hall, 15A Grierson Rd, Toronto, ON M9W 3R2  
Club Website: [www.e-clubhouse.org/sites/thistletown](http://www.e-clubhouse.org/sites/thistletown)

President: 416-836-8104 Email: [thistletownlc@gmail.com](mailto:thistletownlc@gmail.com)

Monthly Meetings Regular Dinner Meetings 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesdays 7:00PM  
Regular/Board Meetings 4 Wednesdays 7:00PM



Hurricane Melissa, made landfall on October 28 in Jamaica with winds reaching 180-190 mph, leaving much of the island without power, displacing thousands, and devastating infrastructure across the island.

The Lions of District A-711 are now collaborating with all Lions in the GTA to provide non-perishable food items to be shipped to Jamaica.

We are appealing to our friends in the diaspora for your assistance with this worthy cause.  
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There is another drop-off area in Scarborough.  
Please contact Lion Rudy Misir  
416-830-7839

For further information or directions  
Call Lion Victor Yacoob  
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# Masters cricket drives tourism in SVG

— St Vincent and the Grenadines formally launched its 2025 Independence International Masters Cricket Tournament late last month, marking a major expansion of its sports tourism landscape with 21 teams, hundreds of visitors, and a marquee West Indian Masters XI versus Rest of the World showdown that headlined the nation’s 46th Independence celebrations.

**Kingstown** – St Vincent and the Grenadines officially launched its Independence International Masters Cricket Tournament, which ran from October 24 to November 1, 2025, bringing 21 teams and more than 400 visitors to the country for the nation’s 46th Independence celebrations.

The government of St Vincent and the Grenadines Tourism Authority, working with the SVG National Sports Council, the Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Sustainable Development and Culture, and the Ministry of Sport, coordinated the ten-day tournament as a centrepiece of the Independence season.

The event featured teams from across the Caribbean, the US, Canada, and the UK, creating a lively atmosphere of competition, camaraderie, and Vincentian hospitality.

The tournament culminated on November 1 with a T20 night match at the Amos Vale Cricket Ground, where the West Indian Masters XI faced the Rest of the World Masters XI in the headline fixture.

Cricket fans were treated to an all-star West Indian Masters XI that included regional greats Courtney Walsh, Curtly Ambrose, Mervyn Dillon, Sulieman Benn, and Vincentians Nixon McLean, Ian Allen, and Kesrick Williams. Their appearance, along with other former West Indies players, anchored a nine-day schedule that also featured finals in both the Fete Division and the Festival Division.

Among the visiting legends were Sir Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Ridley Jacobs, Philo Wallace, Sherwin Campbell, Dwaine Smith, Mervyn Dillon, Dave Mohammed, Pedro Collins, Stuart Williams, and Sulieman Benn. They teamed up with Vincentian former internationals Ian Allen, Nixon McLean, Deighton Butler, Kenroy Peters, and Kesrick Williams.

In his remarks at the launch, Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Sustainable Development and Culture, Carlos James said, “the Independence International Masters Cricket Tournament represents the spirit of our nation, one that celebrates talent, unity, and resilience”.

He added, “It is a proud reflection of St

Vincent and the Grenadines’ growing reputation as a destination where sport, culture, and tourism come together to create experiences that captivate the world. Hosting such a prestigious tournament during our Independence celebrations strengthens our sports tourism portfolio and provides meaningful opportunities for our people, from our vendors and hotels to our youth and athletes.”

James also extended the welcome to regional and international guests to what promised to be an extraordinary showcase of Vincentian pride, culture, and hospitality.

Minister of Sports Orlando Brewster also emphasised the event’s broader value, declaring, “This tournament underscores our commitment to sports development and the empowerment of our athletes and communities. It is more than a competition, it is a bridge that connects generations, inspires youth participation, and showcases the immense potential of sport as a driver of tourism and national pride.”

He added, “Through partnerships like this one with the Tourism Authority and the National Sports Council, we are demonstrating that sport is an essential pillar of our economic and cultural advancement. I am confident that this tournament will leave a lasting legacy for St Vincent and the Grenadines.”

The St Vincent and the Grenadines Tourism Authority partnered with the National Sports Council and the Ministry of Sports to position the tournament as a key sports tourism initiative, notably designed to drive visitor arrivals during the Independence season, and to enhance the nation’s standing as a premier sporting destination.

Officials noted that the competition was expected to become an annual fixture on the national sporting calendar, supporting St Vincent and the Grenadines’ long-term legacy as a hub for cricket, culture, and community celebration.

Organisers elevated the 2025 edition by formally showcasing a West Indian Masters XI versus the Rest of the World Masters XI. The Rest of the World lineup drew from top performers emerging from the Festival Division, integrating grassroots and elite cricket within the same celebration.

The marquee match took place on November 1 under the lights, closing a tournament that brought Vincentians and visitors together for a rare opportunity to see former West Indies internationals who once represented the region across Test, One-Day International, and Twenty20 formats.



In photos, players and teams in action at the SVG Masters’ tournament; above, the Canadian contingent. Photos by Russell Lutchman



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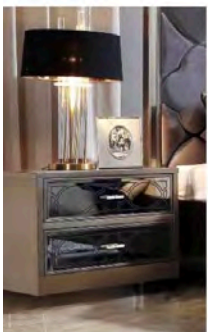
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