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Our Community Is Thriving!



Acting Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette lights the sacred diya during a Diwali celebration that was held at the Trinidad and Tobago Consulate General on October 20. In her message, she spoke to lighting a diya as a spiritual act, as well as a call to action. See story on Page 4.



With the Golden Arrowhead as a beacon, Honorary Consul Mani Singh receives a copy of the biography, *Janet Jagan: Freedom Fighter of Guyana*, from Nadira Brancier-Jagan at its October 15 launch in Toronto. See story on Page 5.



Woodbine Banquet Hall's Syed Marzuk (third, left) and Gurdeep Dass (third, right) are proud recipients of an award recognising their good work, elegance, and professionalism in hosting the CGCC's 2024 annual gala. Also in photo are (from left) the CGCC's Radharani Rajaram and Winston Kassim; from right are His Excellency Keith George, Guyana's High Commissioner to Canada, and the CGCC's Dhaman Kissoon.

CGCC gala ignites Canada-Guyana synergies

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – The Canada Guyana Chamber of Commerce's 2024 annual gala wrapped up in spectacular fashion on the evening of October 19, leaving a sold-out crowd buzzing with excitement from the dynamic networking opportunities and the flawless execution of the event at the Woodbine Banquet Hall.

Celebrated as the premier gathering for fostering Canada-Guyana trade relations, the evening highlighted not only the growing influence of the CGCC, but also the exemplary service provided by Woodbine Banquet Hall, which earned glowing praise from attendees and organisers alike.

Among the gala's standout moments were sharp and impactful speeches from the CGCC's leadership, including

Toronto lawyer Dhaman Kissoon, who co-chaired the event's logistics.

His enthusiasm was palpable when speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* earlier this week as he reflected on the success of the evening.

"We hit the ball out of the park! This event was definitely a home run," Kissoon declared, emphasising the cohesive and inclusive spirit of the occasion.

"It was a success and a community-building event," he further declared.

Kissoon was quick on the back foot in recognising the many contributors to the gala's success, extending heartfelt gratitude to the volunteers, especially the Rotary Club, who managed registration and gift distribution with seamless

See Page 10: CGCC's 2024 gala

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Bright and Spacious!

Spacious princess-bungalow features an overlong driveway & a lovely balcony. Take in the beautiful oak hardwood floors, the spacious eat-in kitchen, & enjoy the finished basement complete with a separate side entrance, kitchen & two bedrooms! Located on one of the best streets in Malton, you need to see it to believe it!



\$1,650,000

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Double-Sided Coin!

A roomy 5-level split home on a lovely premium location. Features internal access from garage, open conc. liv. & din. rooms, large kitch. & fam.room leading to covered patio. Lower level feat. in-law suite with kitch., bedrm & washrm. Ideal for investor looking for top-notch quality tenants willing to stay.



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Attending the CGCC gala on October 19 were the UGF's Princess Alexander (centre) and Fidel Hinds (at right); Toronto lawyer, university lecturer, and community stalwart Dhaman Kissoon is at left.

University of Guyana Foundation issues call for membership

The University of Guyana Foundation (UGF) is issuing a call for membership as it continues with its mission of fostering long-term development and sustainability for the University of Guyana.

Launched in February 2022, the UGF is focused on creating a substantial endowment fund to advance the university's capabilities, and, by extension, benefit the wider Guyanese economy.

Its key priorities align with the university's mission to address several grand challenges, including investing in human capital, promoting sustainability, and accelerating innovation. With these ambitious goals, the foundation seeks members who

share a vision for the future of education in Guyana, and who are committed to contributing to the university's growth and regional impact.

Among the foundation's strategic initiatives are investing in student-centred educational programs; securing a green and sustainably responsible university to serve both Guyana and the global community; modernising essential systems through advanced technology; and fostering innovation through research institutes and centres of excellence.

[Click here to visit the UGF's official website](#); or send an email to fidel.hinds@bell.net.

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Consulate marks Diwali

Toronto – In a heartfelt Diwali message, Acting Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette expressed gratitude to the Satya Jyoti Cultural Sabha Canada for their dedicated efforts in hosting the annual Diwali celebration at the Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto.

The event was held on October 20, and was the second collaboration between the Consulate and Satya Jyoti, which brought together the Hindu community and well-wishers in an event focused on the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil.

Ramsubagh-Mannette began by thanking the religious group for its hard work, saying, “This marks our second year hosting a [Diwali] celebration in partnership with Satya Jyoti, but I must say that calling it a collaboration might be giving the Consulate a bit too much credit. The truth is, Satya Jyoti handled all of the major and minor details with remarkable care to put on this event.”

She extended appreciation to the group’s volunteers, sponsors, and community members for making the event a seamless success, while also congratulating Satya Jyoti on its 35th anniversary of serving the community.

Reflecting on the significance of Diwali, Ramsubagh-Mannette spoke to the deeper cultural and spiritual meaning of the festival, touching on how it transcends religious boundaries in multicultural societies like Trinidad and Tobago.

“This festival holds special significance for Hindus in Trinidad and Tobago, Canada, and around the world,” she said, recounting the story of Lord Rama’s return from exile and the villagers’ lighting of thousands of *diyas* to guide the way.

“But being from a multicultural country like ours, we know that [Diwali] is not just dear to the heart of our Hindu community. Many of us from Trinidad and Tobago and those with Trinbagonian roots, regardless of religious affiliation, have positive associations with Diwali,” she stated.

Ramsubagh-Mannette further emphasised that the universal message of Diwali resonates with people from all walks of life, fostering a sense of community and reinforcing friendships across religious lines.

“Hindus and non-Hindus alike feel connected to the universal message and imagery of [Diwali], which bring us all hope and reassurance that, come what may, light will always dispel darkness, and good will ultimately triumph over evil.”

In a message that combined spirituality with a call to action, Ramsubagh-Mannette highlighted the symbolic power of light.

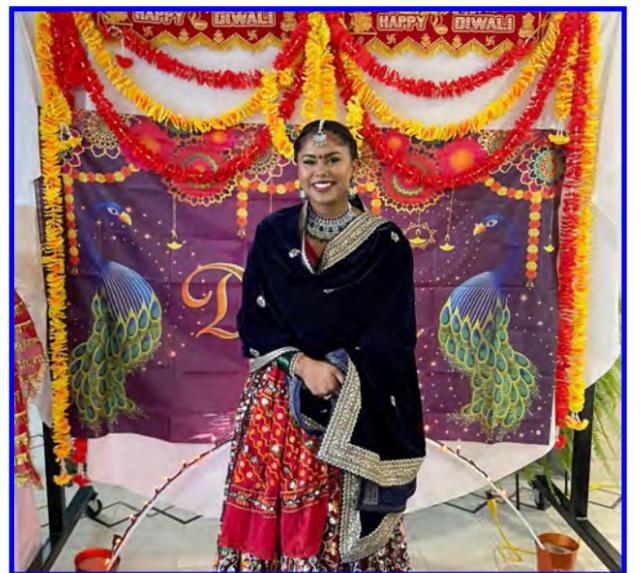
“No other element in this world is as significant as light,” she declared.

Also, “It is because of the light that we are able to attend to our daily duties... The upward movement of the flame denotes the path to wisdom and the path to divinity. Light is a true miracle. You can light a million lamps from one, but yet the first will not suffer any loss! Love too is like this. Share it with a million, it will still be as bright, vibrant, and strong.”

As the evening culminated with the lighting of *diyas* outside the Consulate, which was organised by community volunteer Hinano Beekhoo, Ramsubagh-Mannette encouraged attendees to carry the spirit of Diwali beyond the festivities.

“We’re still some days away from lighting *diyas* on October 31, but I encourage you to remember that every day is the best day to light your spiritual lamps, so that they might shine brightly in the face of fear, ignorance, and despair,” she told attendees.

She concluded by wishing everyone, “Shubh Diwali”.





Anirude Khelawan delivers his remarks



Nadira during her address



Nadira with Honorary Consul Mani Singh and guests



Singh with guests at the event



Consulate staff and Singh with Nadira

Biography on Janet Jagan launched

The enduring legacy of Janet Jagan, Guyana's first female president and freedom fighter was celebrated across borders when the biography *Janet Jagan – Freedom Fighter of Guyana* was launched in both Toronto and Guyana.

Written by Dr Patricia Mohammed, Professor Emerita of the University of the West Indies, the book pays tribute to Jagan's tireless activism and her pivotal role in Guyana's fight for independence and democracy.

The Toronto launch, held on October 15 at the Guyana Consulate, brought together members of the diaspora to honour Jagan's enduring legacy.

In her detailed presentation, Nadira Jagan-Brancier, daughter of Cheddi and Janet Jagan, read poignant excerpts from the biography, and shared heartfelt memories of her mother.

Afterwards, Jagan-Brancier signed copies of the book for attendees, adding a personal touch to the event.

Anirude Khelawan, Senior Lecturer at the University of Guyana, offered a reflective reading of the book's Foreword, and recounted his own memories of the iconic couple.

In his address, Honorary Consul Mani Singh described Jagan as one of the towering personalities in the struggle for Guyana's independence and freedom, and later for democracy and free and fair elections in Guyana.

The event, which was moderated by Consul Grace Joseph, fostered a sense of unity and remembrance, with attendees later mingling with Jagan-Brancier and her husband, Mark

Brancier.

A second launch then took place days later in Guyana on October 18 at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre.

The event drew an eminent audience, including Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance Gail Teixeira; Minister of Local Government and Regional Development Sonia Parag; and former President Donald Ramotar.

Also in attendance was the book's author, who spoke of her five-year journey to complete the biography.

"Janet Jagan's life and deeds are still of crucial relevance both to her memory, and to the political battles for democracy that we continue to wage currently, not only in Guyana but in every society today," she told the gathering.

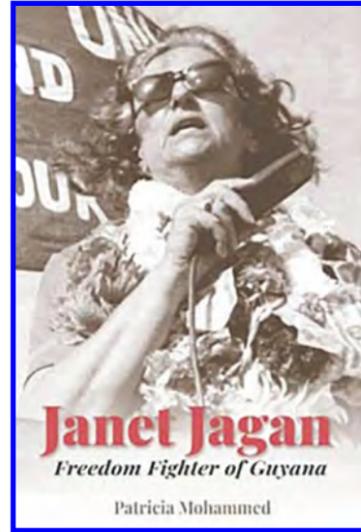
Highlighting Jagan's unwavering dedication to social justice, Mohammed explained that the book explores what freedom

meant to Jagan on a personal level, as well as from her philosophical grounding.

"For those who will read it closely, the book is structured around what freedom meant for her personally and ideologically, and how she worked with others to translate these into concrete goals, for all," Mohammed stated.

Teixeira, a close colleague of Jagan, spoke to the significance of the biography, stating that it "restored and reclaimed Janet Jagan to her rightful place in the broader history of Guyana and its political struggles".

All proceeds from the book's sales across both borders will go to supporting the work of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre.



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Editorial

Light versus shadow

Diwali and its lights will always be a beacon of resilience and transformation for our diaspora – whether we are in Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, or in Toronto and New York. More than an annual celebration, our festival of lights carries a deeper message about the triumph of good over evil, of light dispelling darkness.

As we face a world awash in conflict, environmental crises, and social division, the lights of Diwali offer us a metaphor for change. Each lit *diya* is more than the flicker of a small light; to spark a flame is a personal act of hope, a call to action – a signal that the power to create a brighter, more just world resides in the hand of the individual.

A billion hands working together in a call for action mean the collective glow of millions of *diyas* can surely illuminate the path forward so we can overcome our present-day darkness. This light, born from the simplest of actions, has the potential to guide us toward a future defined by peace, understanding, and global solidarity.

We cannot ignore the shadows that now darken our doors. Our world is marked by crises that threaten us: wars have displaced millions; climate change continues its relentless undermining of our homelands, eroding coastlines, decimating ecosystems, and sparking humanitarian disasters. These areas of darkness are not distant events; each day they knock on our doors, directly touching our lives.

But Diwali teaches us that no matter how formidable the darkness, there is always light. The *diya*, though small, embodies the power of individual actions. This tiny clay receptacle reminds us that each of us holds the potential to push back against these shadows threatening our world.

But this individual act is only the beginning. When one *diya* is lit, it shines with hope; but when billions of *diyas* are lit together, their collective brilliance becomes a force that can truly dispel the darkness.

This is where Diwali transcends its role as an annual festival to become a metaphor for global action. The fight against today's crises requires more than individual commitment; it demands our focused, collective momentum.

Thus, each of us must light our own symbolic *diya* by committing to positive change – whether by advocating for peace, taking responsibility for our environmental impact, or fostering empathy and understanding in our communities. It is through the unity of these actions, through the combined glow of billions of *diyas* across the globe, where real transformation can occur.

As we celebrate Diwali, let us remember that the *diya's* small flame is more than a tradition – it is a symbol of our personal responsibility to create a better, enlightened world. That each flame we hold to the wick is a vote for justice, a spark of hope for those suffering from war and displacement, and a call for urgent action against climate change. The global challenges we face may seem insurmountable, but together, through collective lighting, we can illuminate a path toward peace, sustainability, and unity.

Our Caribbean diaspora, both at home and abroad, has a unique role to play in this movement. As we celebrate Diwali in Georgetown, Port-of-Spain, New York, and here in the GTA, let our lights join the flickers around the world in a powerful demonstration of solidarity and resilience.

Today, these lights commemorate more than the historical victory of good over evil – they remind us that the battle between light and darkness is ongoing, and that we each have a part to play in overcoming it. By pulling together, we can turn the tide against division, hatred, and destruction, and work toward a future where light and goodness prevail.

Today, the meaning of Diwali transcends its festivity; it is now a call to action. Let the lights in our homes this season ripple outward, joining others in a global wave of positive change. The small actions we take – acts of kindness, steps toward sustainability, commitments to peace – can combine to become a powerful force, one with enough momentum to overcome the shadows haunting our time.

In these uncertain times, Diwali's message resonates with its power to dispel the darkness within. Each lit *diya* is a step toward a brighter, more just world. Let us carry that light forward, beyond the festival, and into our daily lives, so that collectively, we create a better future.

Light still shines despite Diwali's commercialisation

Bright, colourful displays, rows of decorated *diyas* (oil lamps made from clay with a cotton wick dipped in oil or *ghee*), and brass *puja* (prayer) items – it's Diwali... at the local Walmart.

Last weekend, I was in awe when I stopped at a Walmart in Markham here in Ontario. Greeting consumers as they entered was a massive "Happy Diwali" sign, accompanied by a stand-alone display dedicated to items for Diwali.

From an array of *diyas*, themed paper plates, napkins, and table cloths, garlands, trays, and even statues of Lakshmi (the Hindu Goddess of Wealth) and Ganesh (the Hindu "elephant" God), Walmart had it all!

Growing up in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s, I never imagined seeing a mainstream store sell products for Diwali. If we needed any religious items, we bought them at a local West Indian store, or from the mandir's gift shop.

However, the world has evolved, commercialisation has entered and adapted, and corporate interests have now seized on growth opportunities in a new, emergent market. As cultural communities has cemented prominently in Canada, so too have the opportunities to monetise their celebratory occasions.

More and more major retailers and brands are recognising the depth of the market when it comes to the Festival of Lights, and how they can capitalise on it.

Party City and HomeSense are two other retailers that are offering Diwali-specific items. Several brands (many unrelated) are also leveraging and capitalising on the festival, among them Lego, TDBank, Coca-Cola, and Quality Street (Nestle).

Diwali, also known as Deepavali, and well-known globally as the Festival of Lights, is one of the most important observances in Hinduism.

The period also has significance for Sikhs and Jains, and is celebrated not just in India, but in Nepal, Malaysia, Singapore and other countries where the South Asian diaspora has settled in large numbers.

As Indian communities began to settle in North America in the mid-20th century, they brought their customs and traditions with them. Initially, Diwali was celebrated primarily within Indian households and temples, serving as a way for immigrants to maintain their cultural ties.

However, as the numbers grew in the Indian diaspora, so did the visibility of Diwali in the broader North American context.

Today's proliferation of Diwali ad campaigns and products is



Ryan Singh

a demonstration of the growth and economic importance of the South Asian population in Canada.

Part of this evolution has come from the cleverness of various retailers and brands. They are not merely selling relatable items, but are also seeking to connect further with consumers. It is also part of the process of building and securing consumer loyalty. They lean in to ensure they become meaningful to potential buyers.

As mentioned, Lego is one of the brands that is using Diwali to gain traction with the South Asian community.

The company shared that Lego would be a wonderful gift idea during the holiday; however, their corporate website provided instructions for creating a *rangoli* (floor art) using Lego pieces that people already have at home, rather than seeking to purchase the traditional items at an additional cost.

It was inevitable that retailers and brands would adopt various marketing strategies to capitalise on the Diwali season. This shift was not just about catering to South Asian communities; it also provided an opportunity for non-Indians to engage with, and to learn about a rich cultural tradition.

However, while commercialisation has made Diwali more accessible to a wider audience, it has also sparked debates about the implications for cultural authenticity.

Critics argue that the commercial aspect can overshadow the spiritual significance of the festival, reducing it to mere consumerism. That the emphasis on shopping and partying can detract from the core and auspicious values of reflection, gratitude, and community bonding that the festival embodies.

Moreover, the presentation of Diwali in mainstream culture often skews toward a Westernised interpretation, potentially diluting its original significance.

This opens up a paradox, where for many South Asians, there is now tension between celebrating Diwali in a broader way that is inclusive and engaging, while simultaneously preserving the traditional core that contains its cultural and spiritual roots.

I have my reservations about purchasing Diwali-related items at a local Walmart. However, I admit that the notability of the occasion, and marketers and businesses seizing and capitalising on the opportunity represent a lot more.

It is in this notability and opportunity where the importance of Diwali becomes emphasised in a broader landscape. Also, at the same time, it means that our large, diasporic community now observing Diwali is being recognised and regarded.

'Get a bowl of peas to shell - I have a 'tory to tell'

I call a good friend, and even before she swipes the green phone icon, I am already preparing to apologise.

"I hope I haven't caught you at a bad time," I say. Of course, I know full well she is deep into Episode 67 of a *Netflix* marathon binge.

Now in my day back in the homeland, a phone call was not an intrusion. We had those clunky rotary dinosaurs that took up half the living room, with the gramophone occupying the other half.

A dial tone was a luxury, akin to our modern-day thrill in discovering a free Wi-Fi hotspot in a dead zone. Receive a phone call back then, and the voice on the other end hissed, as if the curled-up line connecting the base to the handset was indeed a snake.

"Bringggg-bringggg! Bringgggah-ringggg!" The floorboards vibrated, the windows rattled, and the ringing rippled outwards, crossing over a few hibiscus fences, putting the entire neighbourhood on close, listening alert. My aunt would shout into the mouthpiece, "Is who calling?!" as if talking down a really deep well to someone at the bottom of the world in faraway China.

It was pandemonium when her son called from overseas; right away all the neighbours took their pots off the fire to listen in.

"Oh gaam!!! My big son calling from 'Merica!!!" My aunt would clutch the receiver as though it was a lifeline with her drowning son tied to the other end.

"Quick march! Somebody run down by the rumshop and get this boy father!" she would instruct the room.

Needless to say, critical communication moments as these went down in the family's history.

And it was not just the phone calls that came out of the blue. Back then, dropping by unannounced was practically a given. No need for an RSVP invitation via email, a heads-up on a WhatsApp group chat, or a Save-the-Date reminder in Google Calendar.

Just hop on a passing cart pulled by a pot-bellied donkey, endure the sea-sickness of it maliciously hitting each pot-hole along the miles of dirt roads though interminable cane fields; urgently pull your dangling legs up onto the floorboards of the cart, out of the way of a marauding pack of village strays; and then transfer to an even slower cart drawn by a water buffalo deep in thought, and quite apathetic about its diarrhoea.

Arriving at auntie's doorstep meant being effusively greeted with a bear hug embrace from arms thickened with kneading

commercial quantities of dough for *roti* to feed her horde of children. Then there was that wet, sloppy kiss, delivered from similarly thick lips. And the cackling, chimeric commentary on one's height and expansive girth.

"Boy, you growing tall like water grass and wider than a silk cotton tree! What my sister feeding you? You eating the fowl growing mash?"

Pay an unplanned visit today? Drop by unannounced, and right away you feel the tension through the camera lens on the front door.

The door opens a crack, and you are told meaningfully, "I didn't get a text that you're coming over".

No bear hug from two tree trunks; no wet kiss from a pair of suction cups. No *roti* and peppery tomato *chokha*; there is a likelihood for a mild cup of tea, the bag saved for a second, longer steep after you have left, if you are not interrupted when taking off your shoes. Keeping your shoes on means the visit would be briefer than the time it takes to make a cup of instant coffee.

Then we have calling someone on the phone without sending out a preparatory, monosyllabic SMS.

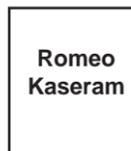
Now this is where the real comedy of modern life plays out. Intuition kicks in by the third ring, telling me the call is going to be re-directed to voicemail. Then comes the seamless shunting into the world of the dead, the transition to VM akin to entering a graveyard littered with cryptic distillations of an entirety of lived lives etched onto tombstones.

No need to leave a verbal novel in VM; just a brief RIP postlude – name, DOB and DOD; and a cryptic message, no more than 240 characters long.

Then a few days later, after landing in Timbuktu, the captain's comments on local weather conditions followed with the go-ahead to disengage airplane mode, and the following pings first in Messenger: "Hey! Just saw I missed your call! What's up? Let's chat via WhatsApp – let me know when you have a minute."

No mention of the VM. Some days I wonder whether Solomon's wisdom, that it is better visit a house of mourning, rather than one of feasting, could ever be made more meaningful. How we gorge today in troughs of information overload, rather than visit VM graveyards.

But some days there is nothing left on Amazon Prime Video to watch. Then the phone buzzes, and my friend says, "Get a bowl of peas to shell, and draw chair. I have a 'tory to tell!"



Romeo Kaseram

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication. Letters to be published will be edited where necessary. Publisher: Harry Ramkhelawan Editor: Romeo Kaseram Columnists/Writers/Photographers: Vidur Dindayal, Bernard Heydorn, Dwarka Lakhan, Dhanpaul Narine, Ryan Singh, Nalini Mohabir, Ramesh Ramkalawan, Russell Lutchan. Contact Information: Indo Caribbean World Inc. 312 Brownridge Drive, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5X1 (905) 738-5005; indocaribbeanworld@gmail.com Website: www.indocaribbeanworld.com

Questions over spending by TT's govt

Dear Editor,

Trinidad and Tobago's Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar recently called on Prime Minister Rowley to account for a proposed (TT) \$50 million allocation representing the entertainment allowance for the Office of the Prime Minister.

The call to justify such an extravagance in this time of economic hardships being endured by the populace would have certainly been welcomed by the many thousands who are struggling to provide daily meals for their families.

It is really adding insult to injury when tens of millions of dollars are allocated for PNM pleasures, as some would interpret the allowance, while schools remain in a state of disrepair for lack of funds. It is crystal clear where the government's priorities lie.

As always, the PM's justification was simply to highlight seeming shortcomings of the Opposition while it was in office. Rowley argued that the UNC government led by Persad-Bissessar spent roughly (TT) \$118 million more than the PNM government over a similar period.

The comparison was supposedly geared at shocking the fed-up citizenry into believing that it is perfectly alright for the OPM's allocation to be (TT) \$50 million now, since it was far less than what the UNC spent while in office.

But that smokescreen no longer works. If the UNC's entertainment bill was too extravagant, then the Opposition PNM should have

called for justification, which is what a proper Opposition is supposed to do to keep the government in check.

So, beyond this yesteryear distraction, the people of Trinidad and Tobago await a proper accounting for (TT) \$50 million of taxpayers' money for entertainment when much higher cash-strapped priorities are being ignored.

Another questionable expenditure is the (TT) \$25 million contract awarded to Diamond Systems and Supplies Ltd for the purchase/acquisition of 3,000 Huawei EC310 body cams with the related accessories and services. The value translates to (TT) \$8,333.33 per camera, inclusive of accessories and services.

However, a quick search on Amazon for the most expensive body cam revealed a retail cost of

(US) \$560, or roughly (TT) \$3,900. The question is: if accessories and services were to be added to that cost, would it amount to anything close to (TT) \$8,333.33, especially since it is a bulk order attracting lower prices?

Without delving into camera specification details, this government, if exercising frugality, should have secured a body cam option with adequate features realising millions of dollars less than the contracted cost.

Sadly, questionable spending in high office – followed by little or no accountability – is the *modus operandi* in this once sweet Trinidad and Tobago.

Dexter Rigsby, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Keith Rowley

RE/GUYANA GUYANA PROPERTY MATTERS

What to do with inherited property in Guyana

Anyone who has inherited property in Guyana should act to ensure the property is effectively administered, all fees and taxes due to the Guyana Revenue Authority are paid, the grant of probate is obtained, and the property is transferred to the new owner. Failure to act in a timely manner introduces the opportunity for property fraud as it is known by more persons that a property owner has passed on and their heirs are absent.

The documents required for the probate process would include the death certificate, the will of the deceased, a list of assets, and a valuation of the inherited land at the date of the death. The probate process usually takes approximately 6-12 weeks, and is best managed by an experienced attorney who prepares the necessary documents, manages the submission process with the Guyana Revenue Authority, and determines the applicable process fees and taxes.

Once a certificate of payment is obtained from the GRA, the application for probate is prepared and filed by the attorney, and the execution of the will and the transfer of the property can proceed. The cost associated with the probate process and transfer of ownership can be estimated by the attorney managing the case, and would be based on several factors including the value of inherited property.

In cases where multiple heirs are involved, the proceeds from the sale of the property would be distributed according to the will, or upon collective agreement by the heirs. Where the objective is to sell the property, it is possible to plan the sales process to coincide with the probate process so that the property is transferred directly to the buyer.

Many are torn between selling their inherited property or keeping it in light of Guyana's rising economic fortunes. For those that don't need the money, consider retaining ownership. Many have modernised their ancestral homes in Guyana into shared vacation properties used by the entire extended family. Others have renovated and rented out their properties, and receive significant incomes. Hanging on and renovating Grandpa's old house in the village may be one of the smartest investment decisions you might make.

RE/Guyana is a property services company dedicated to making it easier for overseas property owners to administer, divest, acquire, and develop their real estate assets in Guyana. [Click here to visit RE/Guyana's website.](#)

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Happy Diwali

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-MP Paul Chiang

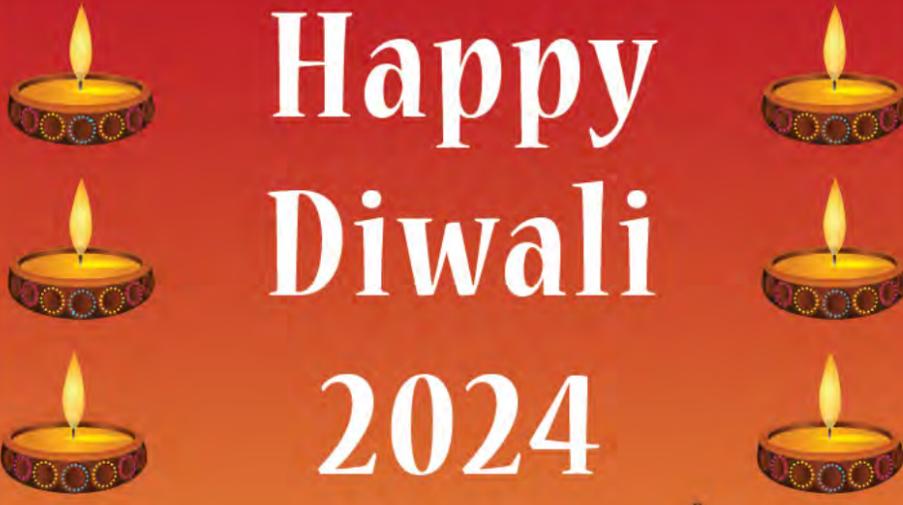


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Happy Diwali 2024





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Guyana's govt unveils cost of living relief amid growing oil wealth

Facing mounting political pressure from its people, combined with a promise to share its rapidly growing oil wealth, the government of Guyana, led by President Dr Irfaan Ali, unveiled an ambitious range of measures on October 10 aimed at improving the standard of living for the population.

The measures, which could be deemed a pre-election move, fulfill the government's promise to address the financial challenges faced by Guyanese in the wake of rising inflation and widening economic disparity. General elections are officially due before the end of next year.

Inflation, though not very high, has been putting a strain on household budgets in recent years. Food prices have risen the most, hurting the poor, in particular. Guyana's inflation rate stood at 4.69 percent in mid-2024, down from 5.47 percent in 2023 and 6.48 percent in 2022.

During his second address to the National Assembly since taking office in 2020, Ali presented a series of policies aimed at offering immediate economic relief and fostering long-term social equity. His speech, delivered at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre in Liliendaal on October 10, emphasised real, actionable solutions rather than political rhetoric.

With Guyana recording substantial economic growth from oil, the government has committed to ensuring that this newfound wealth reaches all citizens, paving the way for a more prosperous and equitable society.

In the first half of 2024, the overall economy grew by an impressive 49.7 percent, according to a mid-year report issued by the Ministry of Finance. The non-oil economy grew by an estimated 12.6 percent. The report forecasted that the overall economy would grow by 42.3 percent in 2024, with non-oil GDP expanding by 11.8 percent.

In the first three quarters of 2023, Guyana received (US) \$1.038 billion in oil revenues, representing a 32 percent increase compared to the (US) \$786 million received during the same period in 2022. Disaggregated, the government's natural resource fund (NRF) received (US) \$872.83 million in profit oil revenues, and (US) \$165.29 million in royalties. And revenues are expected to continue to rise thanks to higher production targets.

The highlight of the announced measures includes a one-time cash grant of (GY) \$200,000 (US \$960) to every household, amounting to (US) \$290 million in total government expenditure. This is part of a broader GY\$60 billion (US\$290 million) initiative aimed at alleviating the financial pressures caused by rising food prices and other living costs.

However, one week after announcing the \$200,000 grant, Ali revised the offer to \$100,000 for each Guyanese national 18 years and older as of January 1, 2024. He said the change was to clear up the logistical complications associated with the initial plan to grant \$200,000 to each Guyanese household.

"My government will now expand this benefit by providing a one-off cash grant of \$100,000 to every citizen of Guyana 18 years and above, as of the January 1, 2024, with a simple means of clarification being possession of a national valid identification card and/or a valid passport," stated the President in a press release.

He noted that this measure is now aimed at reducing the risk, the complexities, and the conflicts that were previously cited by citizens in their outreach to the cabinet and in his personal engagements.

He claimed that when the \$200,000 grant was

announced, there was a rush to transfer registration of utility meters and prepare tenancy agreements aimed at establishing a distinct household that would receive the grant. It appears that the revised grant allocation has been viewed more favorably by the people.

In another move designed to support low-income earners, the government announced plans to raise the minimum monthly wage for public sector workers to (GY) \$100,000 (US \$480) by the end of 2025. The minimum wage for the public sector is currently \$75,000. In June 2022, the minimum wage for private sector employees rose from \$44,200 to \$60,000.

In addition, families will benefit from a new (US) \$50 per child income tax allowance, easing the financial burden on parents. These measures aim to increase disposable income while reducing economic disparity across the country.

Currently, all students in Guyana receive a \$40,000 annual Because We Care cash grant plus an additional \$5,000 for school uniforms – another initiative that increases the disposable income of households.

One of the most notable announcements was a (US) \$50 million (GY \$10 billion) injection into the National Insurance Scheme (NIS). This will enable contributors who fall short of the full requirement for benefits to still receive some level of support in their retirement years, marking a critical step toward greater social equity. The details of this plan have not yet been announced but would be favorable if the level of benefits provided were pro-rated to the number of contributions made. Currently 750 contributions are required to receive a full pension benefit.

Ali also unveiled a comprehensive energy reform plan, promising a 50 percent reduction in electricity costs by the end of 2025. This initiative, which involves a government investment of (US) \$250 million, is expected to save citizens more than (GY) \$50 billion (US \$240 million). This substantial investment in infrastructure, which includes adding 17.4 megawatts of power and extending the power grid by 2,800 kilometers, is part of the administration's larger vision of delivering reliable, affordable electricity nationwide. The high cost of electricity has long been a burden on the average Guyanese household.

The government also announced new healthcare and education policies aimed at supporting future generations. Beginning in 2025, a universal healthcare voucher of (GY) \$10,000 (US \$47.87) will be issued for all children to cover essential medical tests, particularly for early detection and prevention of non-communicable diseases. This measure represents a proactive approach to improving the overall health of the population.

In education, a major breakthrough came with the decision to abolish tuition fees at the University of Guyana starting in January 2025, benefiting over 11,000 students. This policy, which will cost the government (GY) \$18 billion (US \$86 million), is part of a broader effort to ensure that higher education is accessible to all, laying the groundwork for a more educated and capable workforce.

As part of its commitment to making university education free, the government has started eliminating outstanding loans owed by graduates of the University of Guyana.

Measures announced by Ali represent a significant milestone in Guyana's trajectory towards equitable prosperity. Through strategic investments in public services, healthcare, education, and direct financial relief, the government is laying the foundation for a more



Dwarka Lakhan



Irfaan Ali



ONE-OFF CASH GRANT OF \$100,000

TO EVERY GUYANESE CITIZEN 18 YEARS AND ABOVE

- INSTEAD OF THE ONE-OFF CASH GRANT OF \$200,000 TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED

This cash grant will be given to every single adult citizen of Guyana who would have attained the age of 18 years as of the 1st January, 2024, with the simple means of verification being possession of a valid national identification card or a Guyana passport.

H.E. DR. MOHAMED IRFAAN ALI
President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana

16th October, 2024



The government of Guyana announces the one-off cash grant

inclusive and prosperous future.

By redistributing its oil wealth to ensure that all citizens benefit, Guyana is poised to enter a new era of shared growth and national unity. As these initiatives take shape, the government remains committed to improving the quality of life for all Guyanese, while ensuring that the country's wealth benefits the entire population, both today and in the years to come.

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

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CGCC's 2024 gala unites partnerships, sparks excitement

From Page 1
efficiency.

He also gave special thanks to the team of event planners who transformed the banquet hall into an elegant, celebratory space.

"A shout-out goes to the volunteers! Especially the Rotary Club who helped with registration, and at the end of the event, for distributing the gift boxes that attendees took away with them," Kissoon noted.

Among the centerpiece events of the evening was the celebratory recognition of Woodbine Banquet Hall for its ongoing support and professionalism, which earned them a prestigious award from the CGCC.

A prominent fund-raiser and organiser of key charitable events in the community, Kissoon is well-regarded for his success stories in supporting local and global charities.

"When I do these things, I pay particular attention to details," he stated about the venues where his events are held.

He added, "I have hosted events at different venues. However, I think that Woodbine Banquet Hall is emerging as the top venue in our community. It is attentive to details. The answer, 'No,' to a request is not in their vocabulary. They go out and get it done in an extraordinary manner!"

Kissoon added that the CGCC award to Woodbine Banquet Hall was recognition for their ongoing good service.

"It was not only recognition for this gala. We had another event and were well-treated. In my view, they were very accommodating for this event. In announcing the award, I noted that over the years they have treated the community with class and elegance. That was also part of the award that acknowledged their work over the years," he stated.

Both Kissoon's praise and the CGCC award reflected the high standards set by the banquet hall, whose attention to detail contributed significantly to the evening's success.

The gala's main address by Exxon senior official Ambassador Craig Kelly also made a lasting impression for its high standard and attention to detail. In his time at the microphone, Kelly delivered a compelling narrative of Exxon's exploration and the risks that led to the monumental discovery of oil off Guyana's shores.

Founding CGCC member Winston Kassim lauded the keynote, saying, "Ambassador Kelly's address resonated with his audience throughout the evening."

Kassim further emphasised the significance of effective lead-



ership and broadening the economic base for Guyana's economy as the country stands on the cusp of unprecedented growth.

"Now it is left to the Guyana government to deploy good governance and to diversify the economy," he stated.

Kassim, a Member of the Order of Canada and recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for Volunteerism, also spoke about the CGCC's broader initiatives beyond the oil sector, highlighting its role in promoting non-oil businesses in Guyana, including corn and soya production.

His words captured the CGCC's vision of fostering bi-lateral synergies to drive economic diversification and growth.

Managing Director of the CGCC, Fared Amin, similarly echoed the evening's celebratory mood, expressing gratitude for the support from the community and the CGCC's founding members.

"We can become a force to be reckoned with as the premier go-to organisation for trade between Canada and Guyana," Amin said, speaking to the CGCC's growing momentum.

Reflecting on the gala's success, Amin added, "It's not what the Chamber can do for you. It is what you can do for the Chamber," urging members with JFK's iconic statement to take

an active role in shaping the CGCC's future.

Looking ahead, the CGCC is poised for even greater success with two major events on the horizon.

The first, scheduled for November 30, will focus on the investment climate in Guyana, with an emphasis on the legislative and regulatory improvements designed to attract foreign investments. The second, on March 1, 2025, will delve into the legal requirements for conducting business in Guyana.

Both events are expected to draw significant interest from CGCC members and the wider business community, cementing the group's role as a key facilitator of Canada-Guyana trade relations. CGCC members, the business community, and the diaspora here in the GTA, are asked to save both dates.

With the 2024 gala closing on a high note, it was clear that the CGCC had set the stage for bigger ventures ahead. With its sights set on becoming a powerhouse in bi-lateral trade and policy, its leadership, members, and partners are riding a wave of positivity and momentum that shows no signs of slowing down.

In the words of Amin, the CGCC is on its way to becoming "a force to be reckoned with".

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Photos capture the energy and dynamism at the CGCC's 2024 annual gala, which was held at the Woodbine Banquet Hall in Etobicoke on October 19.





Indar Weir



Zulfikar Mustapha

Guyana, Barbados ramp up 25% by 2025

With the project to reduce the Caribbean's exorbitant food import bill by 25 percent by 2025 ramping up, both the Guyana and Barbados governments are seeking investments that will substantially increase the region's food production. This initiative is part of a larger, ongoing regional effort to cut the Caribbean's (US) \$6 billion annual food import bill, and offers a range of opportunities for investors in key food production sectors.

In these key sectors are livestock, seafood, and crops, as well as beef, mutton, poultry, livestock feed, shrimp, and fish, along with expansion in the cultivation of root vegetables, coconut processing, spices, and sauces.

These investment opportunities are highlighted in a ten-page report on Caribbean Food Security in the 2024 *Caribbean Business & Travel Business Magazine*, which is produced by the Florida-based marketing and communications firm, Carigold Signature.

As the Carigold Signature report noted, Barbados Minister of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Security, Indar Weir, also indicated that additional investment is needed for a (US) \$17 million abattoir, and capital for irrigation projects.

Weir also noted that Guyana's Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha, Chairman of the Caricom ministerial committee of the regional food security project, sent teams to Barbados to provide technical assistance on how to successfully grow shrimp, and boost cassava production. Mustapha's ministry also provided shade houses to protect crops.

Guyana's input in the project has also seen this nation assisting Trinidad and Tobago to significantly increase rice production. Also, Suriname is exporting 1,000 tonnes of fresh produce to Barbados weekly.

Barbados and Guyana have reported significant increases in crop production. Also, these two nations plan to reduce lamb imports from outside the region, and to this end, Guyana has received 750 Blackbelly sheep from Barbados.

Also, as Mustapha revealed, the (US) \$14 million Guyana food terminal at Yarrowkabra on the Linden-Soesdyke highway is scheduled to be completed mid-2025. Several phases of the project have started, and contracts have been awarded.

Too, the Barbados government is expected to begin construction of its food terminal, which will store produce for exports before the end of this year, and be operational in early 2026.

"The terminal will package local produce such as sweet potatoes and breadfruit, as well as Blackbelly lamb, and we will have the opportunity to package foods that would otherwise perish. So, it will be a pack house for storage

and do packaging," Mustapha explained.

Caricom Secretary-General Dr Carla Barnett also spoke to the work the regional body has been accomplishing, stating, "Caricom has been making commendable advancements in innovation and policy reform in agriculture. These gains contribute to the region's appeal as a preferred option for investments."

Writing in the magazine's editorial, Carigold Signature's Chief Executive Consultant, Sandra Ann Baptiste, highlighted the unifying efforts that are coming out of the initiative from Georgetown and Bridgetown.

As she stated, "The 25 percent by 2025 Caricom Food Security Initiative, spearheaded by Guyana's President Irfaan Ali, with Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley as the other key advocate for slashing the US \$6 billion of food imports into the region, has breathed fresh life into the regional integration movement."

"It's a game changer. It's a vision and strategy that has been gaining steam, and we are seeing investments on the ground and commitment from governments at levels we have never seen before," said Shaun Baugh, Programme Manager, Agriculture and Agro-Industrial Development at the Caricom Secretariat.

Mustapha also expressed similar confidence, stating, "I am optimistic that by the end of 2025 we will have reduced the region's food import bill by 25 percent; or surpass that goal."

Officials of the Caribbean Private Sector Organisation (CPSO), which has been focused on boosting trade and enhancing logistics, and Republic Bank, which has allocated the bulk of the US \$20 million for Caribbean food security projects to Guyana, have also provided updates on their role in the Caribbean food security programme.

Both the Guyana and Barbados governments are anticipating that the regional ferry service to be operational by the end of 2024. This ferry service will move produce and passengers between Barbados and Guyana, and to Trinidad and Tobago and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

The latest 2024 business magazine also showcases two special publications produced by Carigold Signature this year – the *Caribbean Perspectives* book, by author Sandra Ann Baptiste, a collection of articles on over 30 years of Caricom. It was launched earlier this year in May by Guyana's President Ali.

Also in the edition is the 2024 *Caribbean Tourism and Hospitality Investment Guide*, which promotes investment opportunities in 21 Caribbean countries.

There is also a focus on the annual Caribbean Hotel Investment Conference and Operations Summit, which will be held in Barbados from November 13-15, along with several features on tourism.



Executive Vice President of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce in Florida, Denise Jordan (at left), is presented with a copy of *Caribbean Business & Travel* by Chief Executive Consultant of Carigold Signature, Sandra Ann Baptiste.



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
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CAN I INCREASE MY RENT IF MY TENANT HAS OTHER PEOPLE MOVING IN?

As a landlord, you cannot arbitrarily raise your rent because your tenant has someone moving in. Landlords must follow Ontario's rental guidelines, which state that a landlord can only increase rent every 12 months based on the provincial rental increase guidelines. For 2025, an increase of 2.5 percent is allowed. The landlord must give the tenant 90 days written notice using the appropriate form from Tribunals Ontario. This form is N1. If you have a newly-built home or a new basement apartment as of November 2018, you are exempt from rent control and can increase the rent once the lease term expires. While the landlord cannot raise the rent because an extra person has moved into the rental suite, the tenant must also be careful to avoid eviction.

Landlords thinking they can charge more if a tenant's roommate moves into the rental suite is logical. As a tenant, if you receive a rental increase because of the recent additions, remember that you do not have to pay it. This is similar to having a newborn; the landlord wants more rent because of the addition, but it is not legal. However, if the tenant shares a bathroom or a kitchen with the landlord or the landlord's family member, the ruling does not apply. In such a case, seek the landlord's permission before a roommate moves in.

A landlord can evict a tenant when there is overcrowding. The Canadian National Occupancy Standard stipulates that every adult couple or every adult must have a separate bedroom. If there are three individual adults, there must be three bedrooms. A child under five can share a bedroom with another child of a similar age, and a child between the ages of five and 17 can share a bedroom with a sibling of a similar gender.

Toronto's by-law allows nine square meters of floor space per individual. The bedrooms must meet a minimum requirement of six square meters for one person or four square meters per person sharing a room. According to statistics, about 20 percent of Toronto's rental accommodation is overcrowded.

As a landlord, you must give notice for overcrowding with a termination date later than 20 days. Upon receipt of the notice, your tenant has seven days to reduce the number of occupants to comply with the health, safety, and housing standards. If this fails, the landlord can apply for eviction. However, the rental tribunal will close the case if the tenant complies before the hearing. Note that it is illegal for a tenant to profit by collecting rent from new roommates.

Renting condominiums can pose further problems; for example, some condominiums do not allow rental, while others may have by-laws that only allow single-family rentals. The condo declarations in some condominiums address the maximum number of residents per suite based on the number of bedrooms. As a landlord, if you plan on renting your condominium, check with the property management before committing to a rental agreement. You can end up with an expensive legal case where you signed a contract with a tenant, and in so doing, violated the condominium by-laws. With condominiums, landlords should make it a part of the agreement that the tenant will obey the condominium by-laws. If the tenant brings a roommate, and in so doing, breaches a by-law, then a landlord can evict the tenant on that ground.

Toronto has a large rental pool, and a record number of overseas students are looking for cheap accommodation. There are rental accommodations with 15 to 20 single beds, catering to a similar number of students who need cheap shelter. This arrangement is profitable for the landlord, but the insurance will deny the landlord's claim if there is an accident.

As a tenant, if you have extended family members or friends moving in with you, tell your landlord. If you are renting an entire home and paying the utilities, most landlords will work with you, but if you are renting a part of a home with shared utilities, it is better to compensate the landlord to cover the additional cost. Always be mindful of your new roommate because you are accountable if they are rowdy or damage the property.

Having a triple-A tenant is more important than a rental increase because of a family member. As an investor, you know that real estate is long-term, and having someone take care of your home during their tenure outweighs the rental increase.

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Calypso History Month celebrations took place at the Trinidad and Tobago Consulate General, Toronto, on October 19. The event featured presentations by historians, and many performances by well-known entertainers. Among the presenters were Dr Ramabai Espinet; radio host Mortimer; the grandson of the Mighty Bomber, Jesse Ryan; Kobo Town's Drew Gonzales; and historian/author George Maharaj. Among the performers were calypsonians Villaz, Mr Wonderful, King Cosmos, Moses (of Moses Revolution), Glen Cassa from *Los Pájaros* (photo top right), with musical backup from the Crab & Callaloo Kaiso Band. The event was hosted by the Trinidad Consulate and its Acting Consul General, Tracey Ramsubaugh-Mannette (in photo at left with George).



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Suriname's President Santokhi building for today and future generations

By Dhanpaul Narine

It was an elegant and classy affair when the President and First Lady of Suriname visited Richmond Hill, Queens, New York. The area has been christened "Little Guyana", and it has played host to a variety of celebrities over the years.

President Santokhi and First Lady Mellisa were warmly welcomed by the hundreds that turned up at the fabulous Citi-Palace in Lefferts Boulevard, in Queens, New York.

Dave Narain, the proprietor, and his staff must be congratulated for being excellent hosts. Herman Singh, Roshan Ali Ahmad, and Anand Jagessar planned a wonderful program that was inclusive and lively. Babloe Shankar and his group provided the entertainment to the delight of the guests.

President Santokhi is no stranger to New York. He has visited on several occasions and was always well-received. He has become an iconic figure in the international arena. One recalls his participation in the India Day celebrations, at the invitation of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

President Santokhi's recent visit was no exception. He took to the stage amid much applause and fanfare. He greeted all, and proceeded to bring the audience up-to-date with the latest in Suriname.

According to the President, "the purpose of life is to follow one's dream and to do one's best for the next generation, but one should not forget to keep the values, the faith, and the *parampara*. There will be negativity, but that is part of the job, part of the responsibility."

According to the President, his role is to bring the positive, and to outline policies to improve the lives of the people. He appointed Anand Jagessar as the Honorary Consul of Suriname to New York. He asked the Consul to build bridges and help to bring business to Suriname. He also acknowledged Herman Singh and Roshan Ali Ahmad, and others, for their help.

The role of the diaspora was highlighted, and it was encouraged to play a part in Suriname's development. Everyone is an ambassador, and can perform a vital contribution to the country, the President said.

He reminded all that his is a policy of inclusion. He wants all to be involved in the country's development. He said that the natural resources belong to the people.

He added that his government has designed policies for local content to benefit the nation. In this regard, the government has made it easier to do business in Suriname. Legislation is in place



First Lady of Suriname Melissa Santokhi-Seenacherry, President Chandrika Santokhi, and Dhanpaul Narine to ease movement.

"There is no visa requirement to enter Suriname. We will continue to ease travel arrangements for contractors. Companies that want to invest in Suriname with more than 20 employees will have a simplified and expedited system for a work permit to stay. This will take effect from November 1, 2024," he said.

In addition, the Suriname government has provided incentives for business; however, it has to safeguard the environment as well.

He also praised the measures he took four years ago to safeguard the fiscal health of the country.

"People seem to forget what happened four years ago," he stated, recalling that his government was given a treasury that was bankrupt.

"We had to put in place a structural reform program. Our government isn't for the next election. Our government is for the future, the next generation," he reminded the audience.

There was a problem to pay salaries, but through careful planning the government was able to do so without fail, and to abide with international law.

Investors have nothing to fear, President Santokhi said. They will get a good return for their investment, he stated.

He indicated that inflation is down from 60 percent to single digits, which is a good sign. The debt to GDP was 150 percent, and it is now 85 percent.

As far as economic growth is concerned, it was minus 16

percent four years ago, but at the end of 2024 the growth is projected to be a positive 3.5 percent. The international reserve was bankrupt four years ago. It was pointed out that several persons are currently under investigation for corruption. Meanwhile, under President Santokhi's government, the reserve has grown to (US) \$1.3 billion.

He was frank in his assessment of the current situation. He said that these achievements were realised "at a high social price". There were looting, protests, and a destruction of downtown Paramaribo, he noted.

This sent a strong signal to him and his government to have dialogue and communication, and it led to a comprehensive safety net program that included an increase in salaries, improved purchasing power, giving tax breaks, and helping with water and electricity costs.

According to President Santokhi, "I have to protect my people. They deserve it. They have sacrificed. It's time to give back. And I gave back. We had good negotiations with the unions. We have provided more financial support and have created a strong foundation and stability."

In dealing with his own situation, he declared, "I am not a president of popularity. I am a president who wants to build a strong foundation for this and future generations. When you are faced with opportunities in the oil and gas sector, the mining and bauxite sector, agriculture and tourism sector, you need strong leadership."

He added, "You need the guidance of the community. You need a comprehensive program which will benefit all the people of the country. That is what we will do in Suriname."

He pledged transparency in the oil and gas sector, declaring, "Suriname and Guyana will be the top gas producing countries in the world".

President Santokhi said that 2025 is election year. It is an election in which the people of Suriname will decide who can guarantee the best future of the country. It would be a choice to continue to go forward with international trust, and stability, or to stay backwards.

"We promise to provide good leadership and governance. We promise to have dialogue, to listen to the people, and we want to let them know that we would never change the direction and the destiny of the people," he said.

This went down well with the audience, and President Santokhi and his team left in an upbeat mood.

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Best wishes from our families to yours.

De la part du Premier ministre Justin Trudeau et de vos députés libéraux, nous vous souhaitons, à vous et à votre famille, un joyeux Diwali et Bandi Chhor Divas.

En ce jour, nous nous joignons à vous pour célébrer le triomphe de la lumière sur les ténèbres, du bien sur le mal. Alors que nous prenons part aux festivités organisées dans tout le pays, nous tenons à vous remercier pour vos incroyables contributions au Canada. En tant que propriétaires d'entreprises et entrepreneurs, en tant que médecins et enseignants, en tant que leaders de la communauté et de la culture.

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Naidu's *River Crossing* continues exploration of migration, displacement

A review by Romeo Kaseram
Local Journalism Initiative

Janet Naidu's latest collection, *River Crossing*, represents another moving contribution to her body of work that articulates her ongoing exploration of migration, displacement, resilience, and cultural memory.

With *River Crossing*, she continues on her writerly journey as a poet as she examines the complexities of identity for the Caribbean diaspora, bringing an empathetic yet unflinching perspective to the wider human condition shaped by migration.

As she continues to do, her poems weave together deeply personal narratives that resonate outwards to intersect with broader cultural and historical themes, positioning her within the lineage of post-colonial writers who are scrutinising our lived realities of displacement and adaptation.

Naidu's early life in Covent Garden on the East Bank Demerara, Guyana, left an indelible mark on her creative work. Arriving in Canada in 1975, she began to reflect on and preserve this heritage through poetry, which so far has seen multiple collections: *Winged Heart* (1999), shortlisted for the Guyana Prize for Literature; *Rainwater* (2005, republished in 2023); *Sacred Silence* (2009); and recently, *River Crossing* (2023).

The body of her work reflects recurring motifs of ancestral heritage, migration, uprooted movements, resettlement, resilience, and survival – themes that continue to resonate throughout our collective, Caribbean diasporic experience.

Her latest *River Crossing*, poignantly brings these motifs to life. The poem *Locked Away*, for instance, encapsulates the anguish of losing a loved one to the uncertainties of migration.

In it, Naidu narrates the story of a brother who went missing after what appears to be a failed attempt to migrate to a better life. The imagery of "backroads" as the only pathway out of futility speaks to the often-hidden narratives of those who take risks outside of legal or conventional systems to seek out fulfilment in other geographies by entering foreign sites of opportunities.

This poem captures the emotional toll of these choices – not only on those who set out on these perilous journeys, but also on those who are left behind. The narrator's search in retracing steps "hot under the sun" and the haunting absence of "your footsteps", evokes an inherent dichotomy, harsh realities, and the unpredictability in undertaking such precarious journeys.

This theme of disappearance, loss, and erasure, set against a backdrop of migration, underscores the broader post-colonial

discourse of displacement, an eternal absence of closure, and the emotional and psychological open wounds left behind.

In addition to the themes of loss and disappearance, *Locked Away* also captures the liminality and ambivalence that often define the migrant experience. The brother's journey through "backroads" symbolises a crossing into uncertain territory – a space that is neither here nor there, reflective of what the theorist Homi Bhabha describes as the state of being "unhomed".

This sense of liminality is further amplified by the narrator's search, which is ultimately met with the absence of any trace of her brother. The ambiguity of his fate underscores the ambivalence inherent in the migrant's journey, caught between hope and despair, alienation, and in some sad instances, an eternal, organic absence.

Naidu's exploration of these emotional landscapes speaks to the broader condition of those among us who are perpetually in transit, and who are lost and unaccounted for, as they navigate the tensions between mobility and stasis.

Similarly, *You Speak Good English* delves into the subtle and insidious effects of assimilation. The poem begins with a seemingly harmless compliment, "You speak good English!", which then goes on to unravel as a reflection on identity, loss, and the expectations of assimilation.

The protagonist's reaction – initially feeling compelled to legitimise her "good English" by referencing British colonisation – sits on a foundation of irony, even as it is a reflection of the internalised hierarchies shaped by colonial histories.

The poem speaks to the tension between adaptation and resistance, the need to be seen and validated, and the simultaneous erasure of cultural identity through language loss.

This experience of being "seen and yet unseen" resonates poignantly with Bhabha's concept of "double consciousness" – an awareness of oneself through the eyes of the dominant culture, while struggling to maintain an authentic sense of self. This tension is emblematic of the ambivalence that characterises the migrant's journey of assimilation, where one's identity is constantly negotiated and redefined.

Naidu's exploration of this tension speaks directly to our post-colonial experience, highlighting the cost of assimilation and the resilience required to navigate spaces that demand conformity while denying full belonging.

Naidu's poetry, through these personal and collective narratives, invites us to reflect on the lived experiences of migration, displacement, and the struggle for cultural continuity. Her work offers a mirror to our Caribbean diasporic community –

one that knows both the pain of separation and the resilience required to forge new lives in unfamiliar lands.

In *River Crossing*, the voices of those striving for equality, grappling with the loss of ancestral languages, and navigating the complexities of belonging are manifested vividly, providing a commentary on our diaspora's fluid condition of becoming.

I would like to conclude with an examination of the thinking of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian philosopher and writer, as articulated by the theorist Edward Said, who emphasised the importance of compiling an "inventory" of the historical traces that have shaped our identities.

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci argued that the starting point of critical self-awareness is understanding oneself as a product of the historical processes that have left countless "traces" without a clear inventory.

Renowned for his seminal work *Orientalism*, Said echoed this sentiment, pointing out that the lack of an inventory of these traces limits our understanding of who we are, and how we are shaped by historical forces. He urged that it is imperative to compile such an inventory, especially for those whose histories have been marginalised or erased by colonial dominance.

Naidu's *River Crossing* is part of our inventory – a record of the traces left by colonial histories, migration, and cultural transformation. It is through these poems that she attempts to map out the emotional and cultural landscapes shaped by her experiences, which we can link to our Caribbean community.

This collection serves not only as a personal reflection, but also as a contribution to the broader discourse on post-colonial identity. By documenting her lived experiences of migration and displacement, Naidu aligns herself with Said's vision of challenging the erasure of marginalised histories and contributing to the ongoing dialogue about cultural memory and resilience.

For Gramsci's idea of an "inventory" is about more than just historical awareness – it is about reclaiming agency over the narrative of our identity. For diasporic writers like Naidu, creating this inventory becomes an act of resistance against the forces that seek to define and confine them. It is a reclamation of our stories, voices, and histories that colonialism tried to suppress.

River Crossing stands as a testament to this endeavour – powerful for its poignancy, it is a necessary collection that reminds us of the importance of preserving our stories and ensuring that the traces of our past are acknowledged and understood.

It is also a call to our diaspora in the GTA, similar to *Indo-Caribbean World's*, to continue creating, documenting, and giving voice to our community, bridging the gap between the past and present, and contributing to the rich tapestry of our post-colonial identity, resilience, and our becoming in a new land.

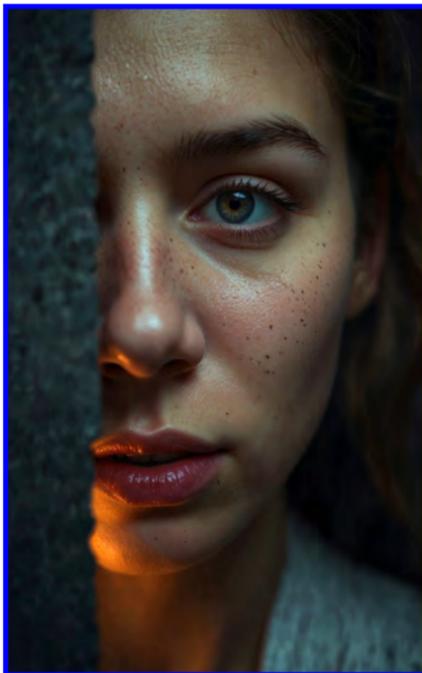


Janet Naidu

My footsteps dragged along the sidewalk. I was directionless and unhurried. I was not sure what happened or why I found myself roaming the streets aimlessly. My heart screamed in agony at my suspicion of betrayal by the people I trusted the most. The dream I was living was turning out to be my worst nightmare. A silent tear rolled out the side of each eye. How could I be so blind?

I loosened my tie and opened the first two buttons of my shirt as I trudged along, one foot at a time, not sure where I was going. Numb to my surroundings, my brain wobbled between getting lost in my thoughts on a park bench or curling up on my bed with the blackout shades pulled. A headache throbbed at the top of my head. Sour-tasting acid oozed into my mouth and forced me to bend over and clutch my belly whenever I retched over the edge of the sidewalk causing my empty stomach to shriek in anguish at each convulsion. I blew my nose on the tail of my tie and wiped my eyes on my jacket's sleeve to clear my vision.

The park came into view after my faltering steps took me 100 yards further. My knees felt weak, and I opened my mouth to suck more air into my lungs when my breathing became shallow and threatened to suffocate me. My flared nostrils were not enough to ease the pain of oxygen deficiency. I started to die by the second. When my vision darkened, I fought with all my mental strength to stay on my feet and propel myself forward. I locked my knees to keep them from giving out under me. My favourite park bench was just a couple of 100 steps away. An ironic smile broke through the misery that I felt. The bench that I used all these years to sit and eat lunch while I fed the birds and squirrels would now serve as my refuge. My usual confidence and positive attitude drained out of me. I felt alone and empty, trying to grasp the reality of my situation.



The Supernatural Disquiet Resolution

The sight of the park bench injected an extra ounce of energy into my body. I locked my eyes on my target and became blind to everything else around me until it was too late to avoid a collision with a man and two women coming at me from the opposite direction. I gasped a split second before the man slammed into me. I swore that I had seen him somewhere before, but did not know where or when. Through the flash of his smile and nod of his head, his eyes showed that he had also recognised me in that brief instant, throwing fuel into the storm of dark disconnected thoughts, like scattered pieces of a jigsaw puzzle raging in my head.

My breath cut and my heart froze when the man disappeared into my body and became one with me. He spun me around and I started walking in his direction, backtracking the way I had come, with his two female companions at my side.

I could not make sense of what was happening to me. My body felt numb and weightless. I glanced behind me to see if I had continued walking in my original direction or if I was just experiencing an illusion of being turned around. My heart felt heavy when the street and the park looked ash-gray. All the vegetation turned dark gray and there were no signs of the usual squirrels scurrying around or birds chirping and flitting from branch to branch in the trees. Dead silence blanketed a windless world devoid of life. Was that the world that I was about to enter? Icy fingers grabbed my heart and I collapsed to the ground and blacked out.

"He's back." A female voice pierced the dark corners of my

mind. "His will to survive contradicts his suicidal attempt."

When my eyes popped open, a doctor and his two nurses stood over me, with triumphant smiles. The doctor placed a pair of defibrillators in a case on the wall above my head. I watched them walk out of the room and heard the sounds of my heartbeats on the machine with tubes and electrodes hooked up to me. A sniff pulled my attention away from the machine's monitor. My head swung to the other side of my bed.

"Molly." My heart warmed at the sight of my wife. "What happened?"

"Oh, Claude," She stood and dabbed her red eyes with a tissue. "Thank God you're okay."

"Why am I in the hospital?" I stared into her eyes. "I think that I may have just escaped death." My mind flashed back to the other world.

Molly did not say a word but her glance at the top of my head drew my attention to a striking pain in my scalp. I took a deep breath to mask the discomfort.

"The doctors are trying to find out." Her fingers trembled when she raised the tissue to blow her nose. "Good thing Jeremy found you slumped on the floor in your office and immediately called the ambulance."

"You go home and get some rest, Molly." I smiled and nodded at her. "You must have been up all night." I let concern enter my voice. "I have to sleep off the effects of these drugs that they are pumping into my system." I nodded toward the drip bag on the stand at the side of my bed. I had to act fast. A second attempt on my life could prove successful.

The minute Molly left, I summoned the police and told them of my intuition. My business partner and my wife were having an affair and wanted me out of the picture. I showed them the needle puncture on my scalp.

The case was resolved but the betrayal broke my heart. Their well-placed suicide note was forged.

Kamil
Ali



Hinds draws Opposition criticism over crime rate comments

Port-of-Spain – As Trinidad and Tobago grapples with over 500 murders so far in 2024, National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds has come under fire for suggesting that nationals themselves are largely responsible for the country’s escalating crime rate.

In a series of public statements, Hinds urged parents to “make sacrifices” for their children, and highlighted poor education outcomes as a contributing factor to the country’s challenges with crime.

However, his comments sparked fierce criticism from members of the Opposition, who accused him of deflecting blame from the government’s failure to address the root causes of the crime crisis.

In a *Facebook* post, Hinds pointed to the performance of students in the Secondary Entrance Assessment, noting that of the 18,177 students who sat the exam, “10,527 scored over 50 percent, 259 scored over 90 percent, and 2,616 scored under 30 percent”.

He stressed that parents need to do more to ensure their children reach their full potential, saying, “We as parents and as a society have quite a lot of work to do.”

He added, “The lack of education and/or some marketable skill could be prevented if we sort them out early!”

Later, during a radio interview, Hinds doubled down on his statements, asserting that “it is the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago for the most part who are conducting the violence upon each other”.

He characterised Trinidad and Tobago as “a very violent society”, pointing to recent domestic violence cases and other criminal acts committed by nationals.

However, Opposition MPs swiftly condemned Hinds’ remarks, with added calls for his removal from office.

St Augustine MP Khadijah Ameen expressed astonishment at Hinds’ continued presence in



Fitzgerald Hinds

the government, saying, “I am amazed that every time Fitzgerald Hinds opens his mouth, Dr Keith Rowley does not fire him”.

She described Hinds as “unfit” for the position of National Security Minister, and criticised his laid-back approach to addressing crime, which she deemed the country’s most pressing issue.

Ameen also pointed out that the addition of a new minister in the Ministry of National Security has done little to improve the situation, adding, “I think it is really for ...Rowley to remove Fitzgerald Hinds as Minister and put someone more effective.”

Caroni Central MP Arnold Ram echoed similar sentiments, accusing Hinds of wanting “authority without responsibility”. He argued that this lack of accountability has driven some nationals to turn to a life of crime.

“We have the advent of kidnappings again in this country, and it reminds me of the 2000 to 2003 period, where kidnappings were happening every day,” he remarked.

Pointe-a-Pierre MP David Lee also questioned Hinds’ position on blaming citizens for the crime wave.

“We have two ministers of national security, and if he can say that the population should take some blame, I don’t know what he means by that. But it is a sad case, and I am very surprised by that,” Lee said.

He called on Rowley to be also be accountable, stating, “I think Prime Minister Rowley should take some responsibility also.”

Couva South MP Rudranath Indarsingh weighed in as well, recalling the promises made by the PNM before the 2015 elections.

“When they campaigned before the 2015 general elections, they told the country that as a political party they had all the answers to the issues facing Trinidad and Tobago, that was their mantra, and they have not been able to deliver,” Indarsingh said.

Opposition MP Saddam Hosein described the minister’s remarks as “grossly insensitive” and lacking concern for the victims and their families.

He stated, “The only person to be blamed is Minister Hinds for the prevailing crime situation”, and accused him of ignoring the critical issues of border security and failing infrastructure in the police force.

According to the data, Trinidad and Tobago recorded over 500 murders in under 300 days this year, with August recording the most deaths at 68, two more than for July.

August also tied as the second month with the most homicides in Trinidad and Tobago’s history with those of August 2022.

The all-time monthly record for homicides in Trinidad and Tobago occurred in November 2021, when there were 69 murders.

The monthly murder toll of 60 or more homicides has occurred more than ten times, with January and May of 2018 seeing 60 murders each; July 2019, 60; November 2021, 69; July (65), August (68) and October (66) in 2022; and January (61), July (66), and August (68) of 2024.



Justice Seepersad at the event

Judge: Stand against evil

Port-of-Spain – Justice Frank Seepersad last week called on nationals of Trinidad and Tobago to stand firm against all forms of evil, including bullying and domestic violence, in keeping with Diwali’s message of good triumphing over evil.

At the time, he was speaking at a Diwali celebration hosted by the Cultural Heritage Ambassadors of Trinidad and Tobago, alongside the Rotary Club of Penal and Shri Ganesh Mandir.

Seepersad delivered a powerful address, urging society to resist evil in its many forms.

“The actions of bullies are evil and they aren’t confined to our schools. There are adults in offices with nice titles who think they have the right to break the spirits of others so they can feel better about their miserable lives,” he stated.

His remarks drew attention to the pervasive nature of bullying, including within institutions like Parliament, where he alluded to a recent incident involving Energy Minister Stuart Young.

“Bullying is fostered by insecurity, intolerance, and a lack of respect,” he said, highlighting how children model poor behaviour from adults.

“Words matter, actions have consequences, and a no-tolerance approach needs to be engaged,” he remarked.

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Media, nationals disappointed after Young's 'unparliamentary' language

Port-of-Spain – The three of Trinidad and Tobago's leading daily newspapers last week sharply criticised MP Stuart Young for offensive comments made during a parliamentary session debating the 2024-2025 Budget, with each offering distinct but united calls for greater accountability and a higher standard of political discourse.

The *Trinidad Guardian*, *Trinidad Express*, and *Newsday* each condemned Young's conduct, with varied emphases on legal reform, the inadequacy of an earlier apology made on *Facebook*, and the degradation of parliamentary decorum.

The comments in question were made during parliamentary debate on October 10, where Young, the Minister of Energy and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, taunted Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar and other Opposition MPs with inappropriate remarks. While these remarks were made *sotto voce*, they were still caught on a hot microphone.

Most media reports omitted the exact unsavoury details of his comments. However, the tenor and quality of his language were widely regarded as crass, vulgar with an expletive, and wholly unbecoming of a parliamentarian.

Despite a later apology following his *Facebook mea culpa*, which the House accepted, the incident sparked widespread debate about the standard of behaviour expected from elected officials.

In its editorial, the *Trinidad Guardian* suggested the incident was part of a broader issue within Parliament. As it argued, Young's remarks highlighted the need for a more robust legal framework to govern the behaviour by MPs in the House, rather than relying on internal parliamentary rules.

"A rigorous set of rules and laws to govern the behaviour of those operating within its corridors must also be instituted," the *Guardian* contended, adding that the current system, in which MPs essentially police themselves, was ineffective, biased, and weighted in favour of the majority party.

It also insisted that Young's remarks – despite his apology – were symptomatic of a deeper problem.

"The fact is, though, that MP Young's revolting comment... is far from being an isolated incident," the editorial asserted. It also called for new laws that could subject MPs to civil and criminal penalties for serious misconduct.

Similarly, the *Trinidad Express* took issue with Young's response to the controversy, describing his earlier *Facebook* apology as insincere and insufficient.

Stating that Young's social media *mea culpa* offered what it described as a "non-apology", at the same time it highlighted his statement, "I accept that more is expected of me... and I wish to record my regret that this 'cross-talk' has unnecessarily distracted public discourse".

According to the *Express*, such passive language suggested that Young was not taking full responsibility for his words. The editorial emphasised that Young's failure to apologise directly to Persad-Bissessar, the main target of his outburst, revealed the shallowness of his contrition.

As the *Express* noted, "Language often reveals mindset", adding that Young's apology was more about managing public

relations than expressing an authentic remorse. The editorial further noted, reflecting on the decline in parliamentary decorum, that "[while] Parliament is not a tea party, robust debate need not be crude, lewd, or tasteless".

Meanwhile, *Newsday* took what was perhaps the most direct approach, emphasising that Young's remarks not only disrespected his political opponents, but also debased the entire Parliament.

The paper criticised Young's comments as emblematic of the deteriorating quality of political discourse in Trinidad and Tobago. Playing on the word "lower" in Parliament as the "Lower House", *Newsday* lamented that Young's words contributed to a growing public perception, which despite millions spent on the Red House's renovation, the quality of debate within its walls had not improved.

The editorial further pointed to the irony in Young's defense, noting that while he admitted to falling short of expectations, his apology and subsequent statements did little to rectify the damage.

"The minister's claim that this incident has served as an unnecessary distraction from pressing issues facing the country is completely correct", *Newsday* wrote, adding that it was "a distraction entirely of his own making".

Altogether, the three dailies newspapers acknowledged Young's offensive remarks were not an isolated incident, but part of a larger issue regarding the conduct of MPs in Trinidad and Tobago's Parliament.

At the same time, the *Guardian* called for legal reform, arguing that a lack of consequences allowed MPs to act with impunity. Meanwhile, the *Express* emphasised the insincerity of Young's

apology, and its implications for leadership and accountability. And *Newsday* pointed to the broader degradation of parliamentary debate, linking Young's remarks to a decline in political standards across the board.

Collectively, the editorials called for serious reflection on the behaviour of elected officials, and the need for concrete steps to restore dignity and respect to Trinidad and Tobago's highest political forum.

Meanwhile, public opinion was similarly critical of Young, with a Letter to the Editor stating that his apology lacked sincerity, and failed to meet the standards of a proper apology.

In the letter, its writer, Darren M. Kidar, outlined the necessary elements of a genuine apology, criticising Young for missing the mark.

"There must be genuineness and the apology must come from you," Kidar wrote, noting that Young should have targeted his apology first to those directly affected by his comments, rather than the public at large.

Kidar also speculated that the apology might have been a public relations move, rather than a heartfelt expression of remorse, adding that Young's actions reflected "a lack of professionalism".

Another letter writer similarly criticised Young, condemning his vulgar use of language. As Sita Kuruvilla wrote, Young showed "complete disrespect" not only to fellow parliamentarians, but also to nationals of Trinidad and Tobago.

Kuruvilla lamented the decline in parliamentary decorum, contrasting the past tradition of witty *picong*, or playful but intelligent banter, with the current atmosphere of vulgarity and "petty in-fighting".

She also linked the behaviour in Parliament to broader societal issues, while wondering, "Why are we seeing growing problems of anger, abuse, and bullying in our society? Look no further than our Parliament".



Stuart Young

Now Young acts as PM

Port-of-Spain – There were mixed reactions in Port-of-Spain on Sunday after it was learned that Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley had named Stuart Young acting Prime Minister yet again.

Rowley is now attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2024 in Samoa. A statement on Sunday from the Office of the Prime Minister indicated that Young will serve during Rowley's absence.

The move comes amid growing speculation surrounding Dr Rowley's tenure as leader of the ruling PNM following hints of his retirement during the recently concluded Budget debate, and who may be tipped to be his successor.

Both Young, the Energy Minister and a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, and Minister of Youth Development and National Service Foster Cummings, are said to be front runners for the leadership post, which will be constitutionally due within the party in 2026.

It also comes in the wake of Young facing backlash last week for inappropriate comments that he made toward Opposition leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar in a "hot mic" scenario during the Budget debate.

Young was forced to apologise to the House for making the salacious comments against Persad-Bissessar. He was reprimanded by House Speaker Bridgid Annisette-George, and so avoided being sent to the Privileges Committee.

The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

Love In Simla, Ghunghat, Kala Bazar remain timeless classics

By Vidur Dindayal

We are still looking at Golden Age movies. It is with great pleasure that present highlights of three 1960 released Golden Age high-grossing movies.

Love In Simla is a most happily entertaining movie with enjoyable songs. The movie is the first of a trilogy. The second was *Love In Tokyo*, released in 1966, and the third was *Love In Bombay*, all with hero Joy Mukherjee.

Simla the premier 'Hill station', among others, Nainital, Mussoorie, Ooty, and so on, is a cooler city where people escape to from the unbearable heat of the plains from places like Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, and elsewhere, for a summer holiday.

In the colonial days, for over a century Simla was the summer capital of the British in India. Every summer, the top rulers and senior bureaucrats, complete with their enormous entourages, would move to, and operate from, this hill resort, Simla, which was symbolic of the Raj.

I enjoyed a part of my college summer holiday in Simla in 1958. I stayed at the YMCA hostel, which was inexpensive. I enjoyed the strolls in the promenade, at one end of which lies the Christ Church, a Simla landmark.

Love in Simla was produced by Sashadhar Mukherjee. The film stars his son, Joy Mukherjee, in the lead role. *Wikipedia*, writing about the Mukherjee-Samarth family, illuminates Joy Mukherjee's connections in the film world.

Joy's father Sashadhar Mukherjee was married to Ashok Kumar's sister Satirani Ganguly. His brother Shomu Mukherjee was married in 1973 to Tanuja, daughter of Shobhana Samarth.

Sashadhar's nephew Ram Mukherjee (elder brother Ravindramohan Mukherjee's son) had two children, one of whom is actress Rani Mukerjee.

Actress Sadhana made her Hindi movie lead debut as Sonia in this film, and became a star. The film also starred Shobhana Samarth and Durga Khote.

Sonia, played by Sadhana, is orphaned. She lives with her aunt and paternal uncle, General (Kishore Sahu) and Mrs Rajpal Singh (Shobhana Samarth). Sonia is plain-looking, and often receives taunts from her aunt; also from cousin, Sheela, who plans to marry her boyfriend, Dev Kumar Mehra (Joy Mukherjee).

Fed-up with frequent taunts, Sonia challenges Sheela that she will make Dev fall in love with her.

With music by Iqbal Qureshi and lyrics written by Rajendra Krishan, all 11 songs were lively and entertaining, with a few including dancers.

I particularly like *Hasinon Ka Sawari Hai* – singers Mohammed Rafi and Suman Kalyanpur picturised with Joy Mukherjee pulling the rickshaw, with Sadhana as passenger, along the scenic mall with open view of the hills, both of them gesturing and teasing each another. Song *Dil Tham Chale Hum Aaj Kidhar* sung by Mohammed Rafi is also quite enjoyable, with lots of couples merrily dancing.

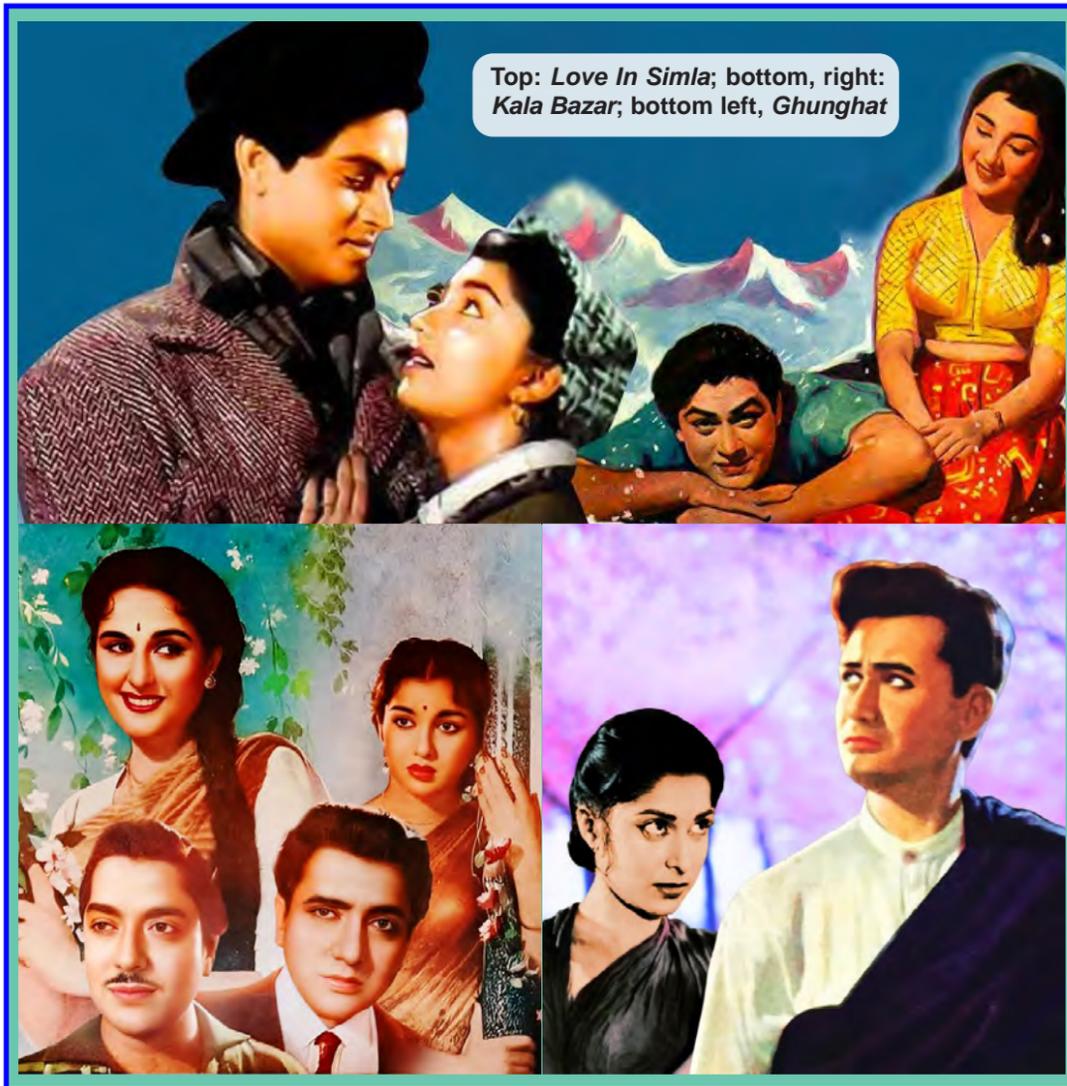
Love In Simla was released in 1963 in the Soviet Union, and came third place in that year's Soviet box office chart. It drew a Soviet box office audience of 35 million viewers, making it one of the top 20 most successful Indian films in the Soviet Union.

Ghunghat stars Bharat Bhushan, Pradeep Kumar, Bina Rai, Asha Parekh, Leela Chitnis, Rajendranath, Rehman, and Agha. It is an adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's 1906 Bengali story *Noukadubi* (*The Wreck*).

Ghunghat was produced at the famous Gemini Studios, based in Madras, a fertile ground for many well-known South Indian stars, and famous for its logo of the naked twins. It came into prominence with the movie *Chandralekha*. This movie, a spectacle, remembered for its drum dance and extensive sword fight sequence, was the first film to be released internationally with English subtitles, and was one of the biggest successes of its time.

S.S. Vasan, director of *Ghunghat*, was the director of *Chandralekha* and the following hit movies: *Insaniyat*, *Aurat*, *Paigham*, *Gharana*, *Grahasti*, *Zindagi*, *Raj Tilak*, and *Nishan*.

I watched this movie on *YouTube*, and I found it gripping, sad in certain parts, but thoroughly entertaining. I had to see



it through.

Using the filmstar names, here is an outline of the plot. Pradeep Kumar and Asha Parekh love one another, but Pradeep's dad wants him to marry the daughter of a deceased friend to fulfill a promise. So unhappily, he gets married to the girl.

Elsewhere, Bharat Bhushan comes to attend the wedding of his close friend's sister. That wedding did not happen because the groom's father demanded a big dowry. To save the situation, Bhushan decides to marry his friend's sister, Bina Rai.

The two married couples are in a train back to Delhi. The train de-rails. Pradeep looks for the girl he married. He sees a girl, unconscious, Bina Rai, with all the trappings of a bride. He picks her up and takes her home.

As an aside, here is a snippet of information about marriages back then: when the two marriages took place, the faces of the brides were veiled. Thus, the couples did not see each other's faces.

Bina Rai, was not the girl Pradeep married – she was Bhushan's bride. Having discovered the mix-up, Pradeep avoided closeness to her. Unaware of the situation, Bina Rai feels unwanted, and becomes aggrieved.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the marriage, Bhushan saw a deceased girl in bridal dress in the train wreck, and concluded his bride had died.

Bina Rai ends up as a servant in Bhushan's home. Later, she learns this was her rightful home, but was afraid to inform Bhushan, thinking he would consider her fraudulent. Eventually Pradeep ends up with Asha Parekh, and Bhushan with Bina Rai.

The film's music is by Ravi, while the lyrics are by Shakeel Badayuni. It became a hit at the box office. Musically all the songs were entertaining. *Laage Na Mora Jiya* and *Mori Chham Chham Baje Payaliya*, very enjoyable songs and sung by Lata Mangeshkar, were hit songs.

The song *Yeh Zindagi Ka Mausam Aur Yeh Sama Suhana* sung by Mohammed Rafi and Asha Bhosle is a very happy song, with Pradeep and Asha riding their bicycles in a picturesque hilly place accompanied by their friends – lots of girls and boys also on bicycles.

Do Nain Mile, Do Phool Khile is sung by Mahendra Kapoor and Asha Bhosle in a beautiful outdoor scene near a lake, while *Dil Na Kahin Lagana*, sung by Asha Bhosle, is a treat to watch with Helen and lots of girl dancers singing and dancing beautifully.

At the eight Filmfare Awards, Bina Rai won the Filmfare Award for Best Actress. This created an upset – with her copping the award for the Best Actress Award, instead of Madhubala, who gave a critically acclaimed performance in *Mughal-e-Azam*. *The Hindu* severely criticised Filmfare for its

selection. Agha was nominated for Best Supporting Actor.

Kala Bazar (*Black Market*), is a crime film produced by Dev Anand for Navketan Films. Written and directed by Dev's younger brother Vijay Anand, the film starred Dev Anand, Waheeda Rehman, Vijay Anand, Chetan Anand, Nanda, Rashid Khan, Madan Puri, Leela Chitnis, Mumtaz Begum, Kishore Sahu, and Helen.

Two notable things about the movie: one, the three Anand brothers act in it, Chetan Anand and Vijay Anand, apart from the star Dev Anand. It is the only film to star the three Anand brothers together.

And two, a number of stars are in the movie, each making a cameo presence at the premiere of *Mother India* at Liberty Cinema in Bombay. They were Nimmi, Nadira, Guru Dutt, Geeta Dutt, Kishore Kumar, Sohrab Modi, Mohammed Rafi, Mukhri, Rajendra Kumar, Mehmood, Yakub, Raaj Kumar, Dilip Kumar, and Nargis.

S.D. Burman composed the music, with lyrics by Shailendra. Out of the seven songs, *Khoya Khoya Chand* is quite popular and enjoyable listening; also, *Rim Rimjhim Ke Tarane*, which is done to the accompaniment of heavy rainfall.

The story is about poor Raghubeer (Dev Anand). He has an ailing mother (Leela Chitnis), and two younger siblings to look after. He is unable to provide for them after he loses his job

as a bus conductor. Noticing Kalu (Rashid Khan) selling movie tickets, Raghubeer gets an idea. A source of quick money, he decides to also black market movie tickets.

But first he needs money to buy the tickets, so he robs advocate Desai (Chetan Anand), and sets up his own network of black marketers outside the cinemas in Bombay.

Raghubeer is now doing well. Things change when a group of students, friends of Alka (Waheeda Rehman) buy movie tickets from him. She learns that the tickets were bought in the black market. She tears them up as she hates black marketing. This has a great impact on Raghubeer, since he has become attracted to Alka.

Alka was in love with Nand Kumar (Vijay Anand). He gets a scholarship and travels overseas. Alka's parents decide to take her to Ooty to take her mind off Nand. Raghubeer learns about this, and gets in the same train cabin as Alka and her family, where he attempts to woo Alka.

He sings *Apni To Har Aah Ek Toofan Hai*, a song which was like a prayer. He also helps to cure Alka's father's back pain with a massage, and soon, he becomes friends with the family. His feelings towards Alka makes him a changed man, and he gives up black marketing.

Alka rejects his love. Heartbroken, Raghubeer returns to Bombay. When he left Alka in Ooty, he promised that he would never do anything bad. Raghubeer tries to convince his partners to stop black marketing and get honest jobs. However, they revert to their bad ways.

Raghubeer continues to try and earn an honest living. To his surprise, he meets Alka one day in Bombay. Alka, meanwhile, also falls for Raghubeer, but hesitates to tell him. Finally, she writes a letter to Nand, telling him to forget her, because she loves Raghubeer.

Raghubeer is delighted and Alka tells him to come to talk to her parents. However, everything goes wrong when Nand returns. He comes to her house, the two of them argue, but finally both concede that their "love" was just childishness.

Now free to profess her love for Raghubeer, Alka goes to his house, only to learn that he has been arrested for black marketing. The movie takes a turn and the court case is with lawyer Desai (Chetan Anand). The courtroom drama shows how the black marketers changed the Kala Bazar to Safed Bazar, and all the people working for Raghubeer give statements that were about his positive side.

The movie ends with Dev Anand and Waheeda Rehman walking in the rain under a single umbrella, and the song being sung *Rimjhim Ke Tarane Leke* in the heavy rainfall.

Vijay Lokapally of *The Hindu* called *Kala Bazar* a "timeless classic".

Bollywood made real: Hema's and Dharmendra's unconventional love story

Sometimes the romantic plots of Bollywood movies spill over into the real world, becoming narratives just as dramatic and winding as the ones on the silver screen that make its audience shake their head in bewilderment, or reach for countless tissues to dry out tearful eyes.

In the case of Hema Malini and Dharmendra, their love story is a perfect example. It played out like a film reel in slow motion, full of twists, family ties, societal scrutiny with finger pointing, and a merging of two families under complicated circumstances.

Hema, the 'Dream Girl' of Bollywood, and Dharmendra, one of Indian cinema's most beloved actors, created a story of love that was anything but conventional.

Their journey began on the set of *Tu Haseen Main Jawan* in 1970, a film that would mark the beginning of a deep, life-changing connection for both. But love, as they say, does not always come easy.

At the time, Dharmendra was already married to Prakash Kaur and was a father of four – Sunny, Bobby, Vijeta, and Ajeita. For Hema, the decision to pursue her love for Dharmendra was met with significant public scrutiny. She was labeled "the other woman", a title she would carry throughout much of her life, but one she refused to let define her.

"I knew people discussed me behind my back," Hema shared candidly in her biography *Hema Malini: Beyond the Dream Girl*.

But she added, "I just knew that he made me happy. And all I wanted was happiness."

The world watched as Hema chose to live life on her own terms, maintaining her independence while loving a man who would never fully be hers in the eyes of society. She accepted her role as Dharmendra's second wife without disturbing his first family.

"I didn't want to disturb anyone. I am happy with whatever Dharamji did for me and my daughters," Hema revealed.

The public's fascination with this unconventional relationship never waned. The Bollywood glitterati had seen Hema as the perfect, delicate beauty – an image that Raj Kapoor himself had promoted when he first introduced her as 'Dream Girl'.

But her real-life role was far from the perfect fairy tale. When she fell in love with Dharmendra, Hema realised she was stepping into a complicated, already-established family dynamic.

Despite all this, Dharmendra remained committed to his first wife and their children. Prakash Kaur, in an interview with *Stardust*, expressed her side of the situation, sharing her thoughts on the bond between Dharmendra and Hema.



Hema Malini and Dharmendra

"He may not be the best husband, though he is very good to me, but he is certainly the best father. His children love him a lot," she said, making it clear that her children were always Dharmendra's priority, even if their marriage had its challenges.

It was not about competing for Dharmendra's time or attention. "I am not a police officer who needs to keep tabs on him. And I don't need to show people a roll-call register as to how many days he visits me and how many days he doesn't," she stated in her biography.

What mattered most to her was that Dharmendra was present for their daughters, Esha and Ahana, and that their lives were filled with love.

"Nobody wants to live like this," Hema admitted in an interview with *Lehren Retro*.

"But automatically, what happens, you have to accept. I am not sulking about it. I am happy with myself. I have my two children, and I have brought them up well," she admitted.

This acceptance has been the cornerstone of Hema's personal life – never demanding more than what Dharmendra could give, yet never sacrificing her own dignity.

While the love story between Hema and Dharmendra is well known, it is only one facet of Hema's extraordinary life.

Born on October 16, 1948, she entered the world of cinema through her debut in the Tamil film *Idhu Sathiyam* (1963), and her first lead role in *Sapno Ka Saudagar* (1968). From there, her career skyrocketed, and she quickly became one of Bollywood's most cherished actresses. Starring in both comedic and dra-

matic roles, she captured audiences with her poise, beauty, and undeniable talent.

She earned the title 'Dream Girl' in the 1977 film of the same name, a label that would follow her throughout her career. But beyond her beauty, it was her versatility that set her apart.

Hema won the prestigious Filmfare Award for Best Actress for her dual role in *Seeta Aur Geeta* (1972), and was nominated ten more times, the last being for her performance in *Baghban* (2003).

Her contributions to Indian cinema have not gone unnoticed, as she has been awarded numerous accolades, including the Padma Shri in 2000, the fourth-highest civilian honour in India.

But Hema's influence extends far beyond the silver screen. An accomplished dancer, Hema has been dedicated to the promotion of Indian art and culture. She received the Sopori Academy of Music And Performing Arts Vitasta Award for her contributions to dance, and in 2012, the Sir Padampat Singhania University honoured her with an honorary doctorate.

Her involvement in social and charitable ventures is equally commendable, and she has been a life member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

In addition to her artistic career, Hema has also taken on a political role, serving as a member of the Lok Sabha, representing Mathura since 2014 under the Bharatiya Janata Party. This combination of film, culture, and politics underscores Hema's multifaceted identity – a woman who has managed to navigate public life with grace, resilience, and strength.

Reflecting on her made-for-the-movies life's journey, Hema shared, "I am happy with whatever Dharamji did for me and my daughters. He played the role of a father, like any father would do. Today I am a working woman and I have been able to maintain my dignity because I have devoted my life to art and culture."

After more than four decades together, Hema and Dharmendra's story remains a testament to love in all its complexity, both on and off the screen.

Despite the societal judgments, the unconventional nature of their relationship, and the intertwining of two families, they have stood the test of time.

Hema, true to her image, continues to live as the Dream Girl – both on and off the screen, with a life that mirrors the drama, dreaminess, the ups-and-down, and the beauty of the movies she once starred in.

With files from the Indian Express, Wikipedia, Bollywood Life, APB Life, and Bollywood Shaadis

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New Zealand women celebrate their T20 World Cup win

Women's cricket growing in stature

West Indies women cricketers Deandra Dottin and Afy Fletcher have been recognised for their stellar performances at the just-concluded ICC Women's T20 World Cup by earning spots in the prestigious Team of the Tournament, a significant recognition of their growing stature on the world stage.

As women's cricket continues to surge in popularity and professionalism, the financial rewards for their skills are also climbing, with the prize money for the T20 World Cup winners doubling to (US) \$2.34 million in 2024, compared to previous years.

Dottin came out of retirement just three months before the World Cup. She immediately made an impact by hitting a tournament-high nine sixes, accumulating 120 runs with a stunning strike rate of 162.16, and taking five wickets, including a standout 4 for 22 against eventual champions New Zealand.

Fletcher also impressed, taking ten wickets across five matches, including crucial three-wicket hauls against Scotland and England, cementing her place as a key figure in the team's bowling attack.

New Zealand triumphed in the tournament,

defeating South Africa by 32 runs in the final to claim their first Women's T20 World Cup title.

Reflecting on the win, Amelia Kerr, named both Player of the Match and Player of the Tournament, led the charge with a record 15 wickets in six games. As she said, "It's what dreams are made of... It was an outstanding contribution from everyone to finish the job."

Despite the heartbreak for South Africa, who suffered their second consecutive final defeat, captain Laura Wolvaardt and her teammates continue to be recognised as forces to be reckoned with in the sport.

Reflecting on the tournament, earlier this week the *Trinidad Express* emphasised that women's cricket was the true winner, echoing *Sky Sports'* assessment.

"We could not have said it better," declared the *Trinidad Express*, adding that "the bottom-line marker of sporting success is money".

With financial growth fueling the sport, West Indies captain Hayley Mathews spoke about the opportunities for young Caribbean women to build a career in cricket. Similarly, Trinidad and Tobago's Karishma Ramharack expressed optimism for the future, saying women "have a lot to look forward to" in the sport.

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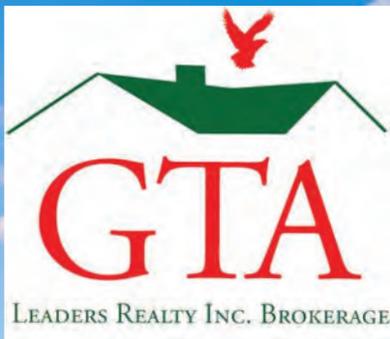
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Hon. Kamal Khera
Member of Parliament, Brampton West

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kamal.khera@parl.gc.ca

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Mississauga For Sale \$740,000

Location! Location!
Location! Welcome to this beautifully well-kept 3 bedroom townhouse in the highly sought after neighbourhood of Malton. Home features large living and good-sized dining room. Large kitchen with stainless steel appliances & granite countertops. Walkout to your fully-fenced private backyard. Upstairs features 3 good-sized bedrooms and updated bathroom. Lower level features recreation room with additional storage area and walkout to your private garage. Close proximity to highways, public transit, Go, Westwood Mall, schools, library, airport, park, and community centre.



Beeton For Sale \$1,139,000

Location! Location!
Location! Welcome to this lovely 4 bedroom, full brick home. This premium lot boasts a beautiful walk-out with patio, brand new glass façade deck above, both outdoor spaces providing an unobstructed view of the Beeton Creek. Hardwood throughout, freshly upgraded oak stairs with iron pickets, new light fixtures, open-concept kitchen with custom backsplash, quartz counters & breakfast bar, rough-in for central vac as well as three piece basement rough-in & an extended driveway.



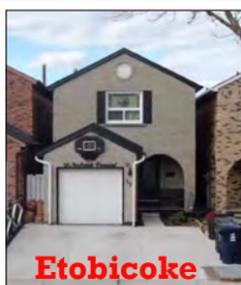
Pickering Condo For Rent \$2,800

Location! Location! Location! Step into the world of modern elegance with this exquisite 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom home for lease in one of Pickering's new vibrant neighbourhoods. This unit boasts an updated, open-concept living space, perfect for entertaining and relaxation. The kitchen shines with stainless steel appliances and sleek design. Unit features beautiful wraparound balcony with extravagant views. Nestled in a desirable neighbourhood, this home provides unparalleled access to local schools, shopping, and entertainment options. The proximity to Pickering GO Station makes commuting a breeze, while Farm Boy and Pickering Town Centre are just a short walk away. Highway 401 access further enhances your connectivity to the greater Toronto area. Seize the opportunity to be part of this vibrant community. This brand-new unit is more than just a home; it's a gateway to a lifestyle of convenience, luxury, and charm! Don't miss out!!



For Sale \$999,900

Family Friendly Neighbourhood, Walking Distance To Schools & Parks. **SOLD \$350,100 OVER ASKING PRICE**



Etobicoke

Ajax For Sale \$949,000

Location! Location! Location! Welcome to this BRAND NEW, NEVER LIVED IN modern 3 story 3 bedroom 3 bathroom townhouse in a highly sought-after neighbourhood in Ajax. The main floor beckons with its open-concept design, guiding you to a spacious second floor featuring a generous kitchen and breakfast area that overlooks the combined living and dining room. This seamlessly flows to a walk-out balcony, the third floor features 2 adequately-sized bedrooms with a large primary bedroom with 4 piece ensuite.



Richmond & Jarvis Downtown Toronto Condo For Sale \$598,990

Location! Location! Location! Bright & spacious 1 bed 1 bath corner suite located in the rarely available prestigious French quarters. The residence features a functional open concept layout boasting 9' ceilings. The spacious living room seamlessly transitions to a breathtaking private balcony overlooking quiet courtyard. Building features world class amenities; spectacular roof top garden with BBQ, gym, party room, lounge/library suites. Steps from the St Lawrence Market, distillery, and financial district.



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CityPointe Heights starting @ High 400s

Located at The Gore Road and Queen St E., CityPointe Heights is a new condominium community connected to three of the GTA's most beloved cities. Your favourite - and soon-to-be favourite - Brampton, Toronto, and Vaughan locations are very close to home. Discover two of the fastest growing cities in the Greater Toronto Area, and why with each passing year, they have more to offer.



Essa For Lease \$2,995

Beautiful 4 bedrooms, 4 washrooms, 2 storey home located in the quiet neighbourhood of Angus. Minutes to Barrie. Open concept main floor w/ walkout to fenced backyard. Finished basement with rec room, full washroom & laundry area. Large driveway w/ 4 parking spots. Walking distance to trails & parks. Stainless steel apps, recently upgraded w/ pot-lights & led lighting & much more. All light fixtures, fridge, stove, dishwasher, washer & dryer, central air-conditioning, hot water tank, furnace, & garage door opener.



A Beautiful Open Concept Renovation - 3 bedroom, 4 washrooms, Detached Home in York. Huge Backyard. Conveniently Located Within Walking Distance To amenities and schools. Extremely Close Proximity to Public Transit! A Great Place to Call Home.

Narrative Condos

STARTING FROM LOW \$300s



It all begins at 7437 Kingston Road - a unique project set against the backdrop of both nature and the city. Located on Kingston Road, adjacent to Rouge and Port Union, The Narrative offers the perfect balance of nearby green space, a diverse and welcoming community, nearby amenities, and easy access to the heart of Toronto via the 401.



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