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At the 'Mind Yuh Business' Expo (left to right) are Trinidad and Tobago Association of Ontario's Jean Turner, Deputy Counsel General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, TTAO's Alpha King, and Brampton City Councillor Rod Power. Story on Page 21.



IMO's celebration of Eid last month saw Toronto's Mayor Olivia Chow (right) in attendance, along with IMO's President Omar Farouk (centre), and IMO lawyer, Khalid Baksh on the left. More on Page 14.

Diaspora celebrates life of Feeroza Sultan-Khan

— The Trinidad and Tobago diaspora gathered in Scarborough on March 29 to celebrate the life of Feeroza Sultan-Khan, a foundational figure in the Trinidad & Tobago 50 Plus and Seniors Association of Canada whose quiet leadership, enduring compassion, and lifelong service helped shape one of our Caribbean community's most vital institutions.

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Special Celebratory Report

On a cool spring afternoon at Scarborough's TAIBU Community Health Centre, the room filled early and steadily, the footsteps quiet but determined, the

hall soon radiating with unspoken understanding that this was more than just a memorial; that it was more like a reckoning with legacy.

Family members, friends, and community leaders gathered shoulder to shoulder, their presence forming a living testament to a life that had, for decades, made space for others to belong. There were moments of quiet reflection, moments of laughter, and, at times, tears that seemed less an expression of grief than of gratitude.

At the centre of this gathering was the memory of Feeroza Sultan-Khan, known as 'Fee' to many, whose pass-

ing on December 22, 2025, at Centenary Hospital in Toronto marked not only the loss of a beloved matriarch, but the closing of a chapter deeply interwoven with the evolution of the Trinidad & Tobago 50 Plus and Seniors Association of Canada (Ontario Chapter).

Among those gathered for the celebration of Feeroza's life were two of her children, Nyla and Aleem; also, Scarborough Center's MPP David Smith; actor, playwright, and comedian, Rhoma Spencer; the executive of T&T 50 Plus; and many of the group's loyal membership.

Founded in 1996 by her late husband, Rasheed Sultan-Khan, today T&T 50 Plus has grown into a cornerstone of support for seniors of Trinidad and Tobago heritage in the GTA.

Yet to speak of its founding without speaking of Feeroza is to tell only half the story. For while her late husband, Rasheed, may have been its public architect, it was Feeroza who helped to furnish the internal structure, ensuring it became a home, one alive with warmth, continuity, care, and of course, good food.

"Feeroza was that strength," said current TT 50 Plus President, June Straker, delivering remarks that carried both the authority of



T&T 50 Plus executive members (left to right), Juliette Bideshi, Yavi Seupaul, president June Straker, Stella Bennett-Pinnock, Madge Hills, past president Shane Seupaul, and Vivian Young; missing, Terrence Brown

See Page 18: Celebrating Feeroza

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Youthful members of the Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala. Photos by Russell Lutchman

OHCA holds annual Chowtal singing, Holi celebration

— A vibrant display of devotion, rhythm, and Indo-Caribbean heritage unfolded in Mississauga as the Ontario Hindu Cultural Association hosted its ninth annual Chowtal Singing event, bringing together performers and community members in celebration of Holi and the enduring tradition of celebratory song.

Mississauga – The Ontario Hindu Cultural Association hosted its ninth annual Chowtal Singing event on February 28 at the Hindu Heritage Centre, drawing a large and enthusiastic audience for a day of music, devotion, and cultural celebration in honour of Holi.

Chowtal singing, traditionally performed during the 40-day period leading up to Holi, is a high-energy musical form rooted in Hindu devotional practice. It symbolises the triumph of good over evil and the arrival of spring, while fostering community connection and cultural identity within the Indo-Caribbean diaspora.

A total of eight Chowtal groups participated in this year's event, representing a range of traditions and regional influences. Among the participating groups were Devi Mandir Chowtal Group, Debe Penal Chowtal Group, Prakash Ramayan Gol, Shiva Milan Mandir Chowtal Group, Saraswati Prakash Gol, Kabir Association of Canada, and the youth ensemble Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala.

The programme opened with a traditional Ramayan Sumiran by Prakash Ramayan Gol, setting a devotional tone for the day. Throughout the event, groups performed in the classic Chowtal format, with two opposing lines of vocalists exchanging verses in call-and-response style, often accelerating in tempo.

Performances were marked by intricate rhythmic patterns,

including traditional 12-beat cycles, and accompanied by *jhals*, brass hand cymbals, alongside dynamic percussion that filled the hall with resonant energy.

Audience members were captivated by the powerful interplay of rhythm and voice, hallmarks of this enduring musical tradition. Each group delivered spirited performances that balanced authenticity with contagious enthusiasm, contributing to a festive and immersive atmosphere.

Host for the event, Rob Ramnarine and Soorajnie Jaundoo, guided the programme, maintaining a lively and engaging flow throughout the day.

The event also featured several solo performances by Jewan Persaud, Rakesh Ramnarine, Ajay Rampat and Sanjay Rampat, Torina Jaikisson, and Christina Persaud. A traditional dance presentation by Marissa Sahadeo added further colour and visual vibrancy to the celebration.

Festivities concluded with a raffle featuring more than 20 prizes, the presentation of recognition plaques to participating groups, and lively Tassa drumming. Guests were also treated to refreshments throughout the programme.

The Ontario Hindu Cultural Association, a non-profit organisation, has served the community for the past nine years with a mission centred on preserving and promoting Hindu culture while celebrating

Indo-Caribbean traditions and values.

President Shaw Jaundoo, along with members of the organisation, expressed gratitude to supporters, sponsors, performers, and volunteers whose contributions ensured the event's success.

With files by Christina Persaud



Lotus Funeral Home's Kamal Bhardwaj (left) with OHCA President Shaw Jaundoo



Members of the Shiva Milan Mandir Chowtal group

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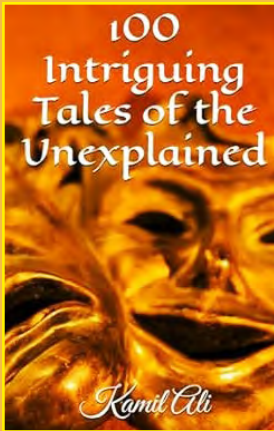
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Songs, dance, and unity highlight VCC Holi musical fundraiser event

— Music, community spirit, and cultural continuity came together at the Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham, where Toronto Arya Samaj hosted a packed musical fundraiser showcasing local talent while raising funds for ongoing repairs and accessibility upgrades to the 30-year-old institution.

...

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI News Report

Markham – Toronto Arya Samaj hosted a vibrant and well-attended musical show on March 14 at its venue on 14th Avenue, drawing a full house of supporters who gathered for an evening of song, dance, and community fellowship.

According to a release from the organisation, the audience responded enthusiastically as performers delivered a range of musical and dance presentations, creating what organisers described as an engaging and uplifting atmosphere.

Featured vocalists included Bash Nandalall, Devica Yassen, Neetu Rambharack, and Seema Maraj, all of whom “excelled and kept the audience thrilled with their performances”.

Dance presentations were delivered by the STCC Dance Academy, whose students performed “beautiful dance pieces” despite many being on March break at the time.

The event was supported by a team of musicians, including Kevin Dhar on keyboard, Devin Latchmana on *dholak*, and Sudesh Naraine on percussion.

Sound engineering was handled by Sudesh Siewkumar, while Suresh Persaud served as host, maintaining audience engagement throughout the evening.

Toronto Arya Samaj President Adit Kumar expressed appreciation for the volunteers who contributed to the event’s success.

As he stated, Toronto Arya Samaj was blessed with an amazing team of volunteers who always rose to the challenge, adding that the collective effort helped deliver a seamless and enjoyable programme.

Kumar noted that all proceeds from the event will support the Arya Samaj Mandir/Vedic Cultural Centre, which recently marked

30 years since its opening, and is now undergoing repairs and maintenance.

He added that the dinner served during the event was entirely supported by donations, with meals prepared by volunteers at the mandir.

The event raised just over \$3,000, with Kumar extending sincere gratitude to all who donated and supported the event.

Reflecting on the centre’s history, Kumar said that when the building officially opened on August 18, 1996, one of its founding objectives was to serve as a hub for the performing arts. He also noted it was with pride that the mandir has fulfilled that promise, with many artists showcased there over the years.

A commemorative booklet outlining the history of the Vedic Cultural Centre was also launched during the event. The publication traces the collaborative efforts of Indo-Caribbean and wider diaspora communities, including individuals from Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, who came together to fund and construct the facility.

The booklet further highlights the symbolic architectural features of the building. The four-sided glass dome represents the four Vedas, allowing sunlight to enter and “bless the devotees as they congregate in prayer”, the release noted.

Additionally, the 12 manikins at the base of the roof symbolise the 12 *Upanishads*, while the inverted “V” at the entrance reflects clasped hands in a gesture of Namaste.

The release also pointed to recent upgrades aimed at improving accessibility. A street-level elevator installed last year now allows easier entry for seniors and visitors, enabling direct access from the North Entrance to various floors. The addition also facilitates logistical support for events, particularly for performers transporting equipment.

Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre expressed gratitude to all donors who have contributed to these ongoing improvements and encouraged continued community support. For more information please contact Adit Kumar, [647-866-1926](tel:647-866-1926); donations can be made online at tas@torontoaryasamaj.org.



Vocalist Bash Nandalall above; at right, centre, Toronto Arya Samaj President Adit Kumar; in photos, performers and guests at the event



The Kisson family at Vishnu Mandir celebrating the birthday of matriarch Latchmin Kisson (third from right), who is with her seven children and a grandson; Mitra, who also marked his birthday on the same day, is standing at right

Kisson family celebrates two birthdays

The Kisson family marked a deeply meaningful double celebration, honouring matriarch Latchmin Kisson on her 89th birthday alongside her son Mitra, who turned 59, both sharing the same special day.

The occasion was observed with prayers at the Vishnu Mandir during the sacred period of *Navratri*, drawing a remarkable turnout despite a Tuesday evening gathering.

The celebrations continued with lovingly prepared family meals on both Tuesday and the following Sunday, reflecting the warmth, unity, and love for good food that define the Kisson

household.

In tribute to their mother’s enduring legacy, the Kisson children will once again host their annual golf tournament, with proceeds supporting the upcoming Latchmin Kisson Eye Clinic in Guyana. The clinic, an initiative of Vishnu Mandir’s Dr Budhendranauth Doobay in collaboration with Voice of the Vedas, is scheduled to be unveiled on April 21.

The family, including Mrs Kisson and her seven children, will travel to Guyana to witness this milestone moment, transforming celebration into service, and legacy into lasting impact.

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Editorial

Dr Frank Birbalsingh

The recognition of Dr Frank Birbalsingh with the 2026 *Bocas Henry Swanzy Award for Distinguished Service to Caribbean Letters* arrives as welcome news from Trinidad and Tobago, but carries deeper resonance for our Caribbean diaspora. It affirms not simply a distinguished career, but a lifetime spent building, preserving, and interpreting the intellectual traditions of a people shaped by history, migration, and memory.

Birbalsingh's scholarship, editing, and teaching engage the lived realities of Caribbean experience: slavery, colonialism, indentureship, displacement, identity, and survival. These are not abstractions, but the shared genealogies of communities across the Caribbean and its diaspora.

For generations, Caribbean experience existed without a formal intellectual home. It was filtered through colonial frameworks, often reduced to fragments buried in imperial narratives. Even as Caribbean writers emerged, the academic structures needed to study and sustain their work remained largely absent, especially beyond the region.

It is here that Birbalsingh's contribution is most significant. In introducing Caribbean literature at university level in Canada, when it had no place in academic curricula, he was not simply teaching a subject, but was helping to create a field. He gave institutional legitimacy to a body of writing long denied formal recognition, enabling Caribbean literature to enter academic discourse on its own terms.

His work unfolded alongside the emergence of postcolonial literature. What Birbalsingh recognised early was that Caribbean writing was not peripheral, but central to understanding the modern world. Through teaching and scholarship, he helped shape a coherent intellectual tradition through which Caribbean experience could be studied and understood with rigour.

The Swanzy Award carries a fitting symmetry. Named after the BBC producer whose *Caribbean Voices* programme helped introduce Caribbean writing to wider audiences, it now honours Birbalsingh as a scholar whose youthful story was broadcast on that programme in 1960. He returns, decades later, not as an emerging, creative voice, but as a custodian of the tradition it helped to ignite.

His work has extended beyond the academy. Through cultural leadership, including the founding of the *Ontario Society for Studies in Indo-Caribbean Culture*, he helped bring Indo-Caribbean experience into sharper focus within the region's wider narrative, creating space for history, identity, and cultural memory to be explored and affirmed.

For readers of *Indo-Caribbean World*, his contribution is close to home. For more than three decades, his book reviews and writings on cricket appeared in our pages, bridging scholarship and community life. In those writings, cricket was not merely sport, but a site where Caribbean history and identity converge.

The significance of this award extends beyond the individual. It recognises the labour of Caribbean intellectuals who have built the frameworks through which our histories can be understood. Scholarship, in this sense, is cultural work in preserving memory, challenging distortion and erasure, and shaping understanding.

This moment also asks something of our diaspora. Recognition must lead to engagement. Our histories and literatures must be read, discussed, and sustained within our communities. Cultural legitimacy depends not only on recognition, but on our generational participation.

Too often, success has been measured by distance from origins. Birbalsingh's life offers another model: global engagement anchored in continuity. His work reflects not departure, but connection between homeland and diaspora.

The Swanzy Award affirms more than a distinguished career. It affirms the importance of the intellectual work that has shaped Caribbean self-understanding, reminding us that the frameworks through which we interpret our stories are valid, and that they matter.

For our Caribbean diaspora, this recognition carries a quiet truth, namely, that our experiences are not peripheral to the modern world; instead, they are part of its foundation. And it affirms what we have always known: that we were never on the margins of history, only of its telling.

Philanthropy drives community growth, collective impact

Operating a non-profit offers a unique opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. It allows individuals and organisations to contribute to their communities in ways that are tangible, lasting, and transformative.

At the *Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association*, we experience this every day. Our volunteers dedicate countless hours planning, refining, and executing programs designed to support and uplift our community.

Our mission to "connect, serve, and amplify" Canada's Indo-Caribbean community is not just a tagline. It is the guiding principle behind every initiative we undertake. From youth programming and single-parent engagement to civic activism, food drives, and the championing of equal rights, our work addresses real needs and strengthens the social fabric of our community.

But impactful work comes at a cost. Materials, operational needs, and the production of events and programs require resources. While we strive to manage costs carefully, no matter how efficient a growing organisation becomes, there are always financial and logistical demands.

It is in this context that philanthropy becomes not just helpful, but essential.

This month, we will host our third annual Fete Gala, a charity dinner designed to raise the funds necessary to sustain our programming. While counting the dollars raised is gratifying, what truly inspires awe is witnessing the generosity of our supporters.

Over the years, we have built deep relationships with donors, ordinary citizens who are extraordinary in their willingness to invest in the well-being of others. Their contributions are often given without hesitation or expectation, driven purely by a desire to support community growth.

These donors exemplify the very best of philanthropy. Their acts of giving are not merely financial transactions; they are expressions of belief in a shared vision.

Philanthropy, in its truest form, strengthens communities by turning intention into action. It uses personal resources, time, expertise, or money, to address societal challenges and improve the lives of others.

The impact of philanthropy extends beyond immediate relief. It fosters long-term social development by supporting education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, and cultural initiatives.

At the *Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association*, donations translate directly into programs that enrich lives, provide opportunities, and empower individuals to reach their potential.



Ryan Singh

Every contribution creates a ripple effect, strengthening networks of collaboration, advocacy, and innovation within our community.

One of the most powerful aspects of philanthropy is its ability to cultivate a culture of generosity. We often see our contributors actively encouraging others to join the cause, expanding the circle of support and engagement.

Giving becomes contagious, inspiring more people to participate, contribute, and take ownership of the community's well-being. This collective effort amplifies the reach and effectiveness of every initiative we undertake.

Philanthropy also encourages accountability and promotes sustainable change. Unlike one-time aid, thoughtful giving involves strategic planning, clear goals, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that contributions have maximum impact.

Donors are not merely providing resources, they are investing in measurable outcomes and long-term transformation. This shared responsibility between organisations and supporters fosters trust, transparency, and mutual commitment to positive change.

Ultimately, philanthropy embodies the principle that communities thrive when individuals act together. It builds equitable, vibrant societies where opportunities are accessible to all, regardless of circumstance.

Philanthropy is both an expression of compassion and a catalyst for lasting, systemic improvement. Those who give freely to support the community do so without expectation of return.

A no-strings-attached attitude is philanthropy in its purest form. Their reward is the knowledge that their support makes a difference.

The many donors who have contributed to the *Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association* understand that we are a growing organisation guided by the best intentions. They recognise that through their generosity, they are enabling us to sustain programs, expand outreach, and make a tangible difference in the lives of countless individuals.

In celebrating philanthropy, we celebrate not just financial support but a commitment to shared values, to social responsibility, and to collective progress.

It is this spirit of giving, of connecting, serving, and amplifying, that strengthens communities, uplifts individuals, and leaves a legacy of hope and opportunity for generations to come.

Philanthropy is more than support; it is a partnership, a promise, and a profound expression of human kindness. To the donors who contribute to the work of the *Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association*, thank you.

Invitation with rice reveals troubling grains of truth

The afternoon lay flat and heavy, pressing down like Ma's heated charcoal iron, when our rickety gate began to rattle. Our two dogs pricked up their ears, sniffing the air, tails lifted and tentative, getting ready for major entertainment.

The voice from the gate met warning growls; but Ma was in charge despite being half in this world, half in somnolent rest, and raising a forefinger to her lips, silenced the dogs to an obedient whimper.

The call came again, traveling up the front steps, working its way around the bowl of peas Ma had abandoned from shelling, finding its way past the tense tails of the dogs to fill the hand Ma had cupped to an ear.

"Bahin? Bahin? Spare me a few moments, please."

The messenger shook the gate again, his shadow clinging close to his body from the overhead sun. Where his hair had thinned into silver, exposing the bare scalp, the sun was merciless, heating up the coconut oil he had pasted on so the pate glistened.

Some time ago age had started to bend him like a bow. Both feet had never known shoes, the soles cracked like a dry riverbed, each etched with the memory of many unpaved, gravel roads. Shoes would never contain his feet; and so he wandered through our villages neither laced nor bound, unshod, his immediate contact with the earth without insulation, and totally organic.

A sack was slung across his shoulders, roughly stitched, makeshift and functional, made from flour bags, the once-bold branding now similar for wear like the man, faded into ghostly impressions as minimal outlines of empire's blue and red.

The rope that was the handle for the sack, strapped across his neck and shoulders, was also frayed, its fibres silver with hand-held wear; loosened in places, these fibres appeared to share a quiet fellowship with the messenger's thinning hair.

Tiptoeing to the front to not trigger the dogs, I told Ma in a half-whisper, aware she was reluctantly returning from her deep sleep, "Naau stand up by the front gate waiting."

Naau moved from village to village, from front gate to yard, a messenger not bringing mail, but occasions. In my time as a boy in the homeland, before postmen rode out on bicycles carrying in their hands envelopes fanning out like playing cards, there were men like Naau: messengers, wanderers, quiet archivists of our arrivals and our departures.

In his sack he shouldered two callings: one, a restless drift that refused stillness; the other, a usefulness tethering that drift to

purpose, for wherever he walked, he delivered. And so with each delivery, this wanderer, uprooted, eternally mobile, found validity, and belonging, among us.

In that world, messages arrived spoken, delivered via breath and memory; sometimes the messages arrived as grains of ineluctable truths in the smallest of tokens.

That afternoon, Naau was bringing celebratory news. No fatal encounter had slithered in overnight into a hut in a distant village; no sudden passing had cast its shadow across a village, the mournful wailings smothered by millions of sugar canes swaying with nonchalance in the wind.

Instead, Naau told Ma a wedding was to be held, a few villages away, but near enough to matter for her participation as a repository of the old songs. He then reached into his sack and withdrew a pinch of coloured rice, grains tinted in soft yellows and reds, their brightness fresh against the bag's discolouration from weather, wear, and wanderlust.

Ma received the turmeric-coloured rice grains with reverence in prayerful, cupped hands. Already her eyes were lit against the midday light, her anticipation palpable with delight.

A wedding meant songs the night before the elaborate ceremony the next day, the singing anticipating the symbolism of the bride's sari knotted to the bridegroom's belt. Ma led the chanting, the songs replete within celebration, nostalgia, and mischief.

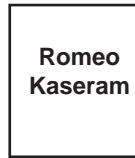
Ma said with an accompanying bow matching the arc of the messenger as he bent over her petite frame, acknowledging the handing over of the rice, "Thank you for the Nauta, Naau."

In that moment, I came to better understand the messenger; that it was likely his true name had been forgotten across the decades of driving rain nourishing the sugar canes, and with his ageless delivery of invitations, the Nauta, he was simply "Naau."

He bowed slightly, hands clasped, completing the ceremonial exchange; and invitation of coloured rice delivered, received, and acknowledged. Here were grains of our truth that had traveled across the seas, and now cultivated in a distant land, still carrying the memory of invitation, celebration, fertility, and death.

Ma said to Naau, "Tell them I will come; but do this for me: give my mother a few rice grains when you pass the cemetery so she will come and sing with me."

In that moment, Naau mirrored the sinking sunset in our eyes, both of us knowing that Ma was now inhabiting two worlds.



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

Turn in the south: Rethinking Guyana's refinery future via partnerships

Dear Editor,

The discussion now underway in Guyana's public space about the possibility of a national refinery deserves a more structured analytical frame than it has yet received. The question being debated is not simply whether Guyana should refine its own crude; it is whether Guyana can position itself as the industrial anchor of a genuinely continental energy partnership – one that turns the country's geography, its resources, and its relationships into a lasting structural advantage.

I want to propose a framework built around three partners and three distinct contributions. Together they resolve what has historically been the central obstacle: scale. Every previous refinery proposal has failed at the bankability threshold because it was framed for domestic or Caribbean consumption, markets too small to attract the capital a facility of this kind requires.

The framework I am proposing solves that problem by reorienting the market southward and westward, rather than northward.

The first partner is Canada. Canada's contribution to this partnership is not sentimental; it is technical and financial in the most concrete sense. Canada possesses world-class engineering expertise in refining light sweet crude, precisely the crude profile of Guyana's Stabroek production. Canadian engineering and construction firms can design and build a facility optimised for this feedstock at standards that satisfy international lenders and institutional investors.

On the financing side, Export Development Canada provides credit instruments – direct lending, loan guarantees, and political risk cover – that carry no adverse geopolitical conditionality.

At a moment when Guyana must navigate carefully between competing great-power interests, Canadian capital is uniquely clean: technically excellent, financially credible, and politically neutral. Canada is also actively expanding its hemispheric presence as a middle power. Its interests and Guyana's interests in this partnership are genuinely aligned, not merely convenient.

The second partner is Brazil. Brazil's contribution is absorption and skills. The northern Brazilian states of Roraima and Amazonas currently import refined products at significant logistical costs from distant facilities that were never designed to serve this corridor efficiently.

Guyana's geography, its river systems, its overland connections, and its position at the northern edge of the South American landmass give it exclusive natural access to these

markets that no Caribbean competitor can replicate.

When a Guyana refinery is scaled to serve Northern Brazil's refined product demand rather than only domestic or Caribbean consumption, the bankability calculation changes entirely. A facility that cannot be funded for a market of two million people becomes fundable for a market of tens of millions.

Brazil also brings technical labour, engineers, process specialists, and operational expertise from one of the world's most experienced petroleum economies, which complements what Guyana's own developing technical workforce can provide.

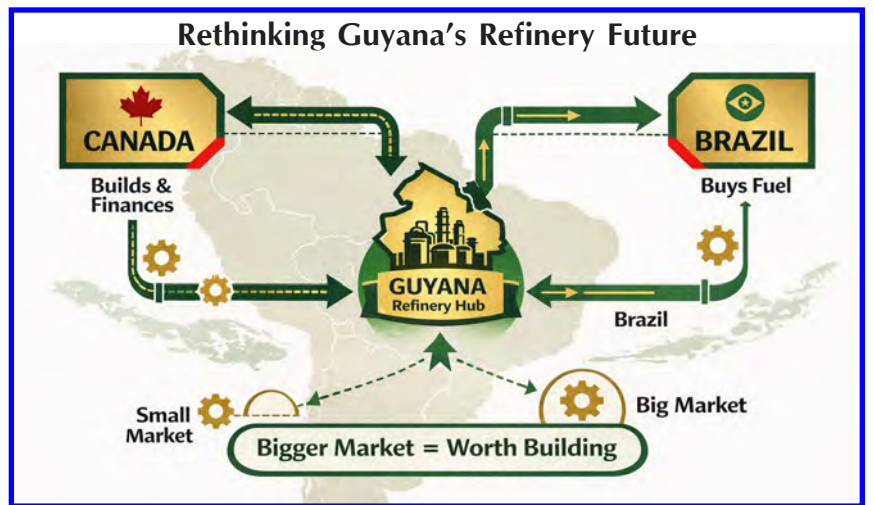
The third partner is Guyana itself. Guyana's contribution is foundational in every sense. It provides the land, the feedstock, and the governance framework within which this partnership operates. Guyana's light sweet crude is among the most refinery-friendly crude slates in the Western Hemisphere; it requires simpler, lower-cost processing configurations than the heavy crude that dominates regional competitors.

More fundamentally, Guyana provides the convening power, the ability to bring Canada's technical capital and Brazil's market demand into a single productive arrangement that neither could organise without Guyana at the centre. That convening role is not passive. It requires active diplomatic capacity, a mature regulatory environment, and a governance framework that gives all parties the certainty they need to commit long-term capital.

This is the dimension of the refinery discussion that has received the least attention and deserves the most. A refinery built on commercially sound terms but governed poorly will not survive its first decade.

A refinery built with proper governance architecture, transparent procurement, equitable benefit-sharing, robust environmental standards, and respect for the rights of communities in its vicinity becomes a generational asset.

This is what I mean when I argue that Guyana must turn South. The Turning South thesis I have advanced in these pages is not a rejection of any existing relationship; it is a recognition that Guyana's geography is its most underutilised strategic asset.



A continental refinery partnership anchoring Canadian capital, Brazilian market depth, and Guyanese resources and governance is the most powerful expression of what turning South actually means in practical terms.

It is not a theory; it is a project. And it is a project whose time has come.

Dr Walter H. Persaud, Guyana, via email.

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Leaders must set a good example

Dear Editor,

The recent comments made by Trinidad and Tobago's former Prime Minister Keith Rowley, which were directed toward the Honourable Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, not only impact her as an individual, but are significantly concerning for what they represent in our society.

In our society today, it is not up for debate that the Honourable Prime Minister may have thick skin; however, this issue extends far beyond the Honourable Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar.

The use of derogatory, gendered language against a woman in one of the highest offices in our land sends a dangerous message to the wider population.

From the perspective of criminology, particularly through Social Learning Theory, behaviour is learned through observation and imitation.

When an influential person such as a former prime minister engages in such conduct publicly and in the media, to which so many persons are exposed, it normalises disrespect and sexism toward women in our society, and reinforces harmful behavioural patterns.

In a country already facing significant levels of violence against women, this is deeply troubling. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reports that 44 percent of women in Trinidad and Tobago who have been

in relationships have experienced some form of violence.

Additionally, between January and August 2024, there were 1,227 reported cases of domestic violence, and 117 cases of sexual abuse, yet only a small fraction resulted in charges, highlighting a serious gap between crime and justice.

If our country is already facing such challenges with gender-based violence, why promote this kind of rhetoric?

It is not harmless. It contributes to a culture where women are devalued, disrespected, and subjected to verbal and even physical harm.

If an individual who once held the highest office in the land can use such language, it risks lowering what is considered acceptable behaviour in society. Our leaders, past and present, must be mindful of the example they set. Respectful discourse is not a weakness; it is a necessity in moving Trinidad and Tobago forward, and making it a place where our women – our mothers, sisters, and wives, can feel safe.

Taking away all political affiliations, it does not matter whether a woman is a public figure or an ordinary citizen. No woman should ever be subjected to such derogatory language, especially by someone who once held the office of prime minister.

Kyran Ramdath, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Kamla Persad-Bissessar



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Oil wealth, import demand drive Guyana's foreign exchange strain

Despite higher export revenues and a booming oil-fuelled economy, Guyana has been grappling with a persistent shortage of US dollars in its domestic market. The situation has sparked concern among businesses, importers, and consumers, raising questions about how an oil-rich nation could face foreign exchange constraints.

The shortage is most visible in the banking system, where businesses often struggle to access sufficient US currency to pay overseas suppliers. Reports indicate that some importers have been unable to settle international transactions, while others have turned to cambios or informal markets where exchange rates are less favourable.

However, the government maintains that Guyana is not experiencing a true foreign exchange crisis. Officials argue that the issue is one of liquidity and distribution, not an absolute lack of foreign reserves. Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo recently acknowledged the difficulties faced by business owners, but reaffirmed the government's commitment to balancing the need for foreign currency with the long-term stability of the economy.

He also reiterated the importance of prudent economic management, noting that while the country's foreign exchange reserves remain strong, the government must be strategic in managing currency flows to ensure sustainable economic growth.

It is estimated that the Central Bank has injected tens of millions of US dollars into the financial system to meet demand in recent years. According to Jagdeo: "While we have the capability to release as much foreign currency as necessary, we must be careful about how much we inject into the system. Excessive foreign currency can lead to an appreciation of the local currency, and that is something we must avoid," cautioned Jagdeo.

Incidentally, an appreciation of the Guyanese dollar could have serious consequences, particularly for the country's key export sectors. Jagdeo explained that a strengthened currency could lead to what is known as "Dutch disease", where an overvalued currency harms non-oil sectors like agriculture and manufacturing that rely on a competitive exchange rate to thrive.

The shortage of US currency can be attributed to several factors. In general, unprecedented demand fueled by rapid economic expansion and oil sector growth, coupled with suspected exploitation of the liberal exchange system by non-Guyanese entities. While inflows remain strong, high demand for imports, currency speculation, and outflows to neighboring countries have strained availability.

Guyana's rapid economic expansion, driven largely by oil revenues and infrastructure development, has significantly increased demand for imports. Large-scale projects require machin-

ery, materials, and services that must be paid for in foreign currency.

Heavy government spending on infrastructure and increased borrowing have contributed to high demand for foreign currency. Construction activity, in particular, is a major consumer of forex, intensifying pressure on supply.

Comparatively, Guyana's value of imports of goods traded totaled US \$5885.6 million at the end of the second quarter of 2025, representing an 81.0 percent increase when compared to the same period in 2024.

Foreign companies operating in Guyana, particularly in the oil and services sectors, often repatriate profits abroad. This creates significant outflows of US dollars, tightening availability in the local market.

In Guyana, the issue of inflated invoices, particularly in the oil sector, has come under scrutiny. A recent high-profile case involved a customs declaration for oil-well equipment imported on behalf of ExxonMobil Guyana, where the value was reportedly inflated from about US \$4.4 million to over US \$12 billion. Despite claims of a clerical error, the Guyana Revenue Authority is taking legal action, and the government has called for a review of past invoices to ensure transparency and accountability.

Authorities have identified cases where businesses and individuals access foreign currency without proper documentation, or use it for unintended purposes. Some foreign entities have reportedly used Guyana's liberal system to acquire US dollars, and transfer it overseas.

There has also been a sharp increase in credit card usage for international transactions, contributing to higher outflows of foreign currency. According to President Irfaan Ali, there has been a 317 percent increase in credit and debit card usage between 2010 and 2024.

While oil production generates significant revenues, the non-oil sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing, have not expanded sufficiently to earn foreign exchange. Additionally, issues like gold smuggling have reduced potential inflows.

Ali noted that the sale of foreign currency to the commercial banks between 2019 and 2024 grew by 1,744 percent to help support the growth and expansion to the economy.

He also said that a probe was ongoing into the possible exploitation of foreign currency availability in the local banking sector.

Said Ali: "We have to see whether there are other markets that are buying through our system for their markets, and that is something that we are looking at."

In response, the Government of Guyana and the Bank of Guyana have implemented several measures aimed at stabilising the foreign exchange market.

Beyond direct intervention in the market, the government is implementing stricter con-



Dwarka Lakhan



Irfaan Ali



Bharrat Jagdeo

trols on foreign currency access. It has introduced new rules requiring businesses to provide invoices, bills of lading, and tax compliance documents before accessing foreign exchange. These measures are intended to ensure that US dollars are used only for legitimate transactions, and to prevent abuse of the system.

Government authorities are also tightening oversight of credit card usage, large foreign currency transactions and capital outflows. An interagency task force has been established to monitor foreign exchange demand and identify irregularities.

As well, companies, especially in the oil and gas sector, are being required to maintain local bank accounts and repatriate foreign earnings into Guyana's financial system.

The government is also pursuing longer-term solutions, including the Gas-to-Energy project to reduce fuel imports; economic diversification to boost non-oil exports, and policies to reduce dependence on imports. These initiatives aim to increase foreign currency inflows while reducing outflows over time.

The US dollar shortage in Guyana reflects the

growing pains of a rapidly expanding economy. While foreign reserves remain strong, surging demand, capital outflows, and structural weaknesses in the non-oil economy have created pressure on the availability of US currency.

Government interventions, ranging from market injections to tighter controls, may provide short-term relief. However, lasting stability will depend on deeper structural reforms, particularly the development of export industries and improved management of foreign exchange flows.

In essence, Guyana's challenge is not just about access to US dollars, but about balancing growth with sustainable economic management in a new era of oil-driven prosperity.

...
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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Devi Mandir's Pt Gossai bridges faith, public service

— Devi Mandir has announced that its Head Priest, Pandit Jag Gossai, has been appointed as an Independent Consultant to Durham Regional Police Services, marking a significant moment of collaboration between faith leadership and public institutions, while recognising decades of spiritual service across the Greater Toronto Area.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI News Report

Pickering – Devi Mandir has formally announced that its Head Priest, Pandit Jag Gossai, has been appointed as an Independent Consultant to the Durham Regional Police Services, a role that underscores the growing intersection between faith-based leadership and public service.

According to a media release issued by Devi Mandir, the appointment reflects Pandit Gossai's "decades of spiritual leadership, academic excellence, and compassionate community service", positioning him to contribute cultural insight and interfaith perspective to policing initiatives in the region.

Pandit Gossai has served communities across the GTA for more than 25 years, officiating at weddings, funerals, pujas, and providing counselling and sacred rites.

For approximately 15 years, he has held the position of Head Priest at Devi Mandir in Pickering, where he delivers regular *Kathas* and scriptural discourses rooted in the teachings of the *Vedas* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Devi Mandir noted that his teachings combine "scholarly depth and practical clarity", contributing to the spiritual development of devotees and strengthening the broader religious community. Through his leadership of Bal Vikaas youth programs, he has also played a key role in mentoring younger generations in values centred on *dharma*, compassion, and service.

Citing a passage from the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:21), "Whatever a noble person does, others follow", the release framed the

appointment as an extension of Pandit Gossai's long-standing commitment to community upliftment beyond the temple setting.

In his new capacity, Pandit Gossai is expected to provide spiritual guidance, cultural awareness, and interfaith counsel to support inclusive engagement, and enhance trust between law enforcement and diverse communities.

The release further highlighted that in 2024, Pandit Gossai was certified as an Inter-Religious Chaplain through studies at the Hindu Spiritual Care Institute and the Graduate Theological Union. His chaplaincy work extends to hospitals, senior homes, and private residences, where he offers spiritual care during critical life moments.

Commenting on the appointment, Vishnu Sookar, Vice Chair of Devi Mandir's Board of Trustees, described the recognition as a milestone for both the mandir and the wider Hindu community.

"Pandit Gossai's appointment to the Durham Regional Police Services is a proud and historic moment for Devi Mandir and the broader Hindu community. His life embodies the principle that faith must extend beyond the temple walls and serve society at large," Sookar said.

He added, "For many years, we have witnessed his unwavering dedication to dharma, education, and compassionate service. This recognition affirms not only his personal commitment, but also the growing role of spiritual leadership in fostering understanding, unity, and peace within our diverse Canadian

society. We congratulate him wholeheartedly and offer our prayers for continued wisdom and strength in this noble responsibility."

Devi Mandir extended its congratulations to Pandit Gossai, expressing confidence that his work will continue to bridge communities while at the same time advancing values of service, inclusion, and spiritual guidance across both religious and civic spheres.



Pandit Jag Gossai



Holi is a celebration of renewal, unity, and joy, unfolding from the lighting of the Holika pyre to the tossing of coloured powders. At Devi Mandir, that spirit came alive last month with the graceful dancing by young ladies, the rhythmic energy of the mandir's Chowtal singers at the Hindu Cultural Association's ninth annual Chowtal Singing event, and shared moments captured in community, linking past to present, and carrying our Indo-Caribbean traditions forward. *Photos top and centre by Russell Lutchman; bottom photo, Devi Mandir's FB page.*

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Canada's Guyana diaspora shows strong roots, generational presence in GTA

— Canada is home to a significant Guyanese diaspora, with federal estimates pointing to close to 100,000 Canadian-Guyanese citizens nationwide. Within this population, the Greater Toronto Area, particularly Scarborough and Etobicoke York, has emerged as a key centre of settlement, reflecting decades of migration, community-building, and intergenerational continuity. Census-based data and municipal profiles highlight both the scale and the rooted presence of Guyanese communities across Toronto.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI News Analysis

Toronto – The Guyanese diaspora in Canada, and particularly in the Greater Toronto Area, represents a longstanding and deeply rooted community whose presence continues to shape the social and cultural landscape of the city.

According to Global Affairs Canada, there is “a vibrant diaspora with close to 100,000 Canadian-Guyanese citizens” across the country, underscoring the scale of the community and its continued connection to Guyana. The same federal overview notes that Guyana maintains official representation in Canada through its High Commission in Ottawa and a Consulate in Toronto, reflecting sustained bilateral and people-to-people ties.

Within Toronto, census-based municipal data point to concentrated settlement patterns in specific districts. The City of Toronto's 2021 Community Council Area Profile for Scarborough identifies Guyana as the “7th largest place of birth” among immigrants in that area, with 14,560 Guyana-born immigrants, representing 2.3 percent of the immi-



grant population. Similarly, in Etobicoke, York, Guyana is also listed as the “7th largest place of birth,” with 9,850 Guyana-born immigrants, or 1.6 percent of the immigrant population.

These figures, drawn from custom tabulations of Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, illustrate the geographic anchoring of the Guyanese diaspora within the GTA, particularly in communities that have historically been home to Caribbean and immigrant populations.

Earlier data reinforce the community's longstanding presence. Toronto Public Health's T.O. Health Check report, based on the 2016 Census, found that Guyana remained among the “top 10 countries of birth for immigrants in Toronto”, accounting for approximately three

of the city's immigrant population at the time. While subsequent waves of immigration from other countries have altered citywide rankings, the Guyanese presence remains firmly embedded in key neighbourhoods.

Municipal planning documents further situate Guyanese Canadians within broader immigrant communities across the city. In the Jane-Finch area, for example, the City of Toronto notes that “the majority of immigrants in the area are from Vietnam, Italy, Guyana, Jamaica, the Philippines, Iraq and Nigeria”, reflecting the diverse and multicultural environments in which the diaspora has taken root.

Beyond demographic presence, the Guyanese diaspora in the GTA is supported

by institutional and community infrastructure. The Consulate General of Guyana in Toronto provides consular, cultural, and informational services to Guyanese nationals and Canadians of Guyanese descent, reinforcing official ties between the two countries.

Community-driven initiatives also reflect evolving needs within the diaspora. Research from York University's City Institute highlights the development of Guyana Community House TO, described as an effort by members of the Guyanese-Canadian diaspora to establish “an affordable housing cooperative and community centre” to support seniors, families, and new immigrants in the GTA.

At the national level, Canada-Guyana relations have also expanded into economic and institutional spheres. Global Affairs Canada notes that the Canada-Guyana Chamber of Commerce, launched in Georgetown in 2020, was intended to support “trade and investment” between the two countries, with a presence in both Georgetown and Toronto.

Taken together, these data points and institutional developments illustrate a diaspora that is not only numerically significant, but also socially and geographically embedded across the GTA. From early settlement patterns to present-day community initiatives, the Guyanese presence in Canada reflects both continuity and evolution across generations.

As Guyana undergoes rapid economic transformation, the scale, distribution, and institutional presence of its diaspora in Canada provide an important context for understanding the role that overseas communities are playing in shaping connections between homeland and host country.

Strong growth and emerging pressures are shaping Guyana's outlook for 2026

— Guyana enters 2026 as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, driven by offshore oil production and sustained public investment. While headline growth is expected to remain among the highest globally, policymakers and institutions are increasingly focused on how effectively this expansion translates into lower costs, broader opportunity, and inclusive development.

Toronto – Guyana's economy continues to expand at an exceptional pace in 2026, supported by rising oil production and a large-scale public investment programme that is reshaping infrastructure, services, and economic activity across the country.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has described Guyana's recent performance as “remarkable economic progress”, noting that the country recorded the “highest real GDP growth rate in the world” in recent years, supported by rapidly expanding oil output and strong non-oil sector activity.

The IMF has further characterised Guyana's medium-term outlook as “highly favourable”, pointing to continued expansion across both oil and non-oil sectors.

Meanwhile, government projections outlined in Budget 2026 indicate that overall economic growth is expected to remain strong, following 19.3 percent growth in 2025, with continued expansion anticipated in 2026.

Non-oil growth is also projected to remain robust, reflecting sustained activity in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, and services.

However, oil production remains the dominant driver of economic expansion. Budget 2026 states that growth “will continue to be driven mainly by the oil and gas sector”, with output projected to reach “almost 307 million barrels” in 2026.

This trajectory places Guyana among the fastest-growing oil producers globally, with multiple offshore projects contributing to rising production and fiscal inflows.

At the same time, the non-oil economy continues to expand alongside the oil sector. According to Budget 2026, growth in 2025 was driven “largely by the agriculture, mining, construction, and services sectors”, with further

expansion expected in 2026.

The budget projects 25.4 percent growth in construction, 12.9 percent in manufacturing, and 7.6 percent in agriculture, supported by ongoing public and private investment.

Public capital spending remains central to this expansion. Large-scale projects in roads, bridges, housing, healthcare, and energy are being financed in part through oil revenues, with the IMF noting that Guyana's strong external position is supported by the Natural Resource Fund. Budget 2026 reports that (US) \$2.463 billion was withdrawn from the Fund in 2025 to support national development priorities.

The World Bank has also highlighted Guyana's role in regional economic performance, noting that growth in the Caribbean in 2026 and 2027 is being driven significantly by Guyana's continued expansion.

The Bank points to spillover effects from the oil sector, a strong public investment programme, and the Local Content Act as key contributors to non-oil growth.

Despite these gains, the outlook for 2026 also reflects emerging pressures associated with rapid expansion. Analysts have described the likely trajectory as a boom with bottlenecks, where strong growth is accompanied by inflationary pressures, execution challenges, and increased scrutiny over how economic benefits are distributed.

The IMF has identified potential risks including overheating, inflation, and capacity constraints, noting that the pace of expansion places pressure on infrastructure, labour supply, and institutional systems.

Budget 2026 similarly points to challenges related to project execution, procurement, and the availability of skilled labour.

Inflation dynamics are expected to remain mixed. While imported inflation may remain relatively contained, domestic pressures, particularly in housing, construction inputs, and food, are expected to persist in fast-growing areas. Labour shortages and logistics constraints may further contribute to price pressures even as overall growth remains strong.

In addition, geopolitical factors such as the ongoing territorial controversy with Venezuela

continue to represent a potential risk, although the International Court of Justice has ordered that the *status quo* be maintained while proceedings continue.

Overall, Guyana's economic outlook for 2026 reflects a continuation of extraordinary growth combined with increasing emphasis on delivery, inclusion, and sustainability.

As the economy expands, the focus is shift-

ing toward how effectively oil revenues are translated into tangible improvements in living standards, infrastructure, and opportunities for Guyanese nationals.

However, the central challenge is no longer simply how to grow the economy, but how to ensure that growth is broadly shared and effectively managed in a rapidly changing landscape.

Romeo Kaseram, An LJI News Analysis

Caricom appointment row deepens

— *Trinidad and Tobago has escalated its challenge to the reappointment of Caricom Secretary-General Dr Carla Barnett, citing procedural breaches and lack of transparency, while signalling reduced financial contributions, as regional leaders maintain that the decision received the required majority support.*

...

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago has formally objected to the process used to reappoint Carla Barnett as Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (Caricom), raising concerns about transparency, procedural integrity, and adherence to regional governance rules.

Foreign and Caricom Affairs Minister Sean Sobers said the government was dissatisfied with the manner in which the decision was handled at the 50th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government held from February 24-27 in St Kitts and Nevis.

In correspondence dated March 25 to Caricom Chairman and St Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Terrance Drew, Sobers stated that Trinidad and Tobago was neither included in discussions, nor given the opportunity to participate in deliberations surrounding the Secretary-General's second term.

According to the letter, the issue of Barnett's reappointment "was not placed on the Provisional Agenda" for the meeting, and was not discussed during plenary sessions.

Sobers added that although discussions reportedly occurred during a retreat of Heads of Government on February 26 in Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, along with Antigua and Barbuda and The Bahamas, was excluded.

"It is a matter of record that Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, and the Bahamas were not allowed to participate in this retreat. Consequently, Trinidad and Tobago was not privy to the deliberations on this matter," the letter stated.

Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar had departed the conference prior to the retreat, leaving Sobers as head of the delegation on February 26.

The Trinidad and Tobago government has argued that the process did not align with provisions of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, particularly Article 24, which stipulates that the Secretary-General should be appointed by the Conference on the recommendation of the Community Council, with any reappointment also requiring Conference approval.

Sobers emphasised that the government's position is not a reflection on Barnett personally, but rather on the integrity of the process, while reaffirming Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to strengthening and modernising Caricom.

However, the issue has since escalated beyond procedural concerns. Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar said she does not support the reappointment, and further indicated that Trinidad and Tobago will reduce its financial contribution to the regional body.

Speaking to local media in Trinidad and Tobago, she said, "Caricom has been failing for 52 years, and will continue to fail for the next 52 years. Trinidad and Tobago is not going to continue funding Caricom at the current levels that we are providing."

Trinidad and Tobago currently contributes approximately 22 percent of Caricom's budget,

in keeping with the organisation's funding formula under which more developed economies provide a larger share based on economic size.

Media reports indicate that this amounts to between US \$4 million and US \$5 million annually, with additional support provided through development funding, energy-related assistance, and trade financing programmes.

However, Drew has maintained that the reappointment was conducted in accordance with established procedures.

In a statement issued last week, he said that the "required majority" of Heads of Government agreed to Barnett's reappointment during the February meeting, with her second term set to begin in August 2026. Barnett addressed the matter briefly on March 27, deflecting questions about the process, while referring media inquiries to Drew's office.

Speaking to Guyana's *Demerara Waves Online News* after attending a Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony between Belize and Guyana, she said, "No, no, Sir. You don't need to ask me; you need to ask the Chairman. I don't participate in those discussions. Those discussions are held among the leaders."

When asked about concerns surrounding

her reappointment, she responded, "I don't have any concerns," and declined to comment on whether she should step down.

The announcement of her second term was made on March 25 through a brief statement from the Chairman indicating that a majority of regional leaders had agreed to her continuation in office.

Earlier on March 27, Sobers told Parliament that no formal communication regarding the impending end of the Secretary-General's current term on August 14, 2026 had

been circulated to member states. He suggested that the matter could have been addressed at the upcoming Caricom summit scheduled for July 5-8 in Saint Lucia.

Sobers said the government remained concerned about the transparency and legality of the process, noting that "the transparency and legality with which any organisation or body operates and makes decisions are fundamental to its credibility and reputation."

He added that citizens across the region must have confidence in the functioning of Caricom's institutions, and that the organisation must operate in accordance with the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

"Accordingly, the surreptitious nature in which the Secretary-General of Caricom is allegedly to have been reappointed has done irreparable harm to the institution," he said.

Sobers further noted that the issue was not raised during the meeting of the Community Council, Caricom's second-highest decision-making body, was not discussed during plenary sessions, nor referenced in the closing press conference or joint *communiqué* issued at the end of the February summit.

He also pointed out that the summary of confirmed decisions circulated by the Caricom Secretariat on March 2 made no mention of any decision regarding the reappointment.

Meanwhile, despite its objections, Trinidad and Tobago has reiterated its commitment to the regional integration movement, even as it calls for greater transparency and adherence to established governance procedures within Caricom.



Dr Carla Barnett



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
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THE TAX LESSONS EVERY LANDLORD LEARNS THE HARD WAY

"Good records and a good accountant are the two best tools a landlord can have"

Let me tell you about my first year as a landlord. When I bought my first rental property, I was excited about the extra income, but I quickly realised there was more to it than just collecting rent. Taxes, paperwork, Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) forms – it was overwhelming at first. However, with careful planning and a few hard lessons, I discovered you can save a surprising amount of money on taxes while staying on the right side of the CRA.

One of my first surprises happened during tax season when my accountant asked about every dollar I earned from the property. Apparently, all rental income needs to be reported to the CRA, even if I was only subletting or sharing ownership with a friend.

Luckily, my accountant showed me that being a landlord isn't just about paying taxes, that it's also about knowing what you can deduct. I kept a folder full of receipts for anything related to the rental property. As long as the expense was connected to earning rental income, and I could prove it, I learned I could deduct it. There were even a couple of slow months when my expenses exceeded my rent income, and I was able to claim that loss against my other income. That was a relief!

Here's what I learned about the kinds of expenses I could deduct:

1. Mortgage interest was deductible, but principal was not. I deducted the loan interest on the property I bought.
2. Property Taxes – Every time I paid a property tax bill, I kept the receipt. Those bills really added up, but at least I could deduct them on my taxes.
3. Repairs and Maintenance – I learned that expenses like repainting the apartment and fixing a leaky tap were deductible. When I had to replace the old furnace, my accountant explained that major improvements like that are considered capital expenses, so I could only claim a small amount each year as depreciation.
4. Utilities – In the first year, I paid the water bill myself, so I was able to claim it as a deduction. When the next tenant moved in and started paying their own utilities, those expenses were no longer deductible.
5. Home insurance – I made sure to get proper insurance for my rental, and those premiums were deductible, too.
6. Property management fees – The year I chose to hire a property manager. I realised their fees were tax-deductible.
7. Advertising Expenses – Running online advertisements to attract new tenants costs money, but every dollar spent on advertising is deductible.
8. Office supplies and property management apps dedicated to rentals were deductible.
9. Travel Expenses – For every trip to the property for repairs or showings, I kept a mileage log. Those trips added up, and my accountant showed me how to deduct a portion of my car expenses.
10. Depreciation (Capital Cost Allowance – CCA) – My accountant advised me to be cautious about claiming too much depreciation. Reducing your taxes now might result in having to pay more capital gains tax when you sell, as the CRA could add back the depreciation to your capital gain calculation.

At one point, I tried renting out my place short-term on a home-sharing site. This experience introduced a whole new set of tax considerations. I learned that the CRA might treat this as business income, and that it is fully taxable. They have different tax rules, and even if it's just a few weekends a year, you must report it. Apparently, if you earn over \$30,000, you also need to register for GST/HST. That was an eye-opener!

I've heard horror stories about CRA audits, so I keep at least seven years' worth of receipts, invoices, and contracts just in case anyone ever comes knocking.

A fellow landlord once told me about the surprise of selling his rental, that he didn't realise that half of his profit would be taxed as a capital gain. After hearing his story, I made a note to consider topping up my RRSP if I ever sell, to help offset the tax hit.

If there's one thing I've learned, it's that understanding tax deductions and keeping good records are the keys to paying less tax and sleeping peacefully at night. I can't imagine doing this without an accountant, and the best part is that their fees are deductible too!

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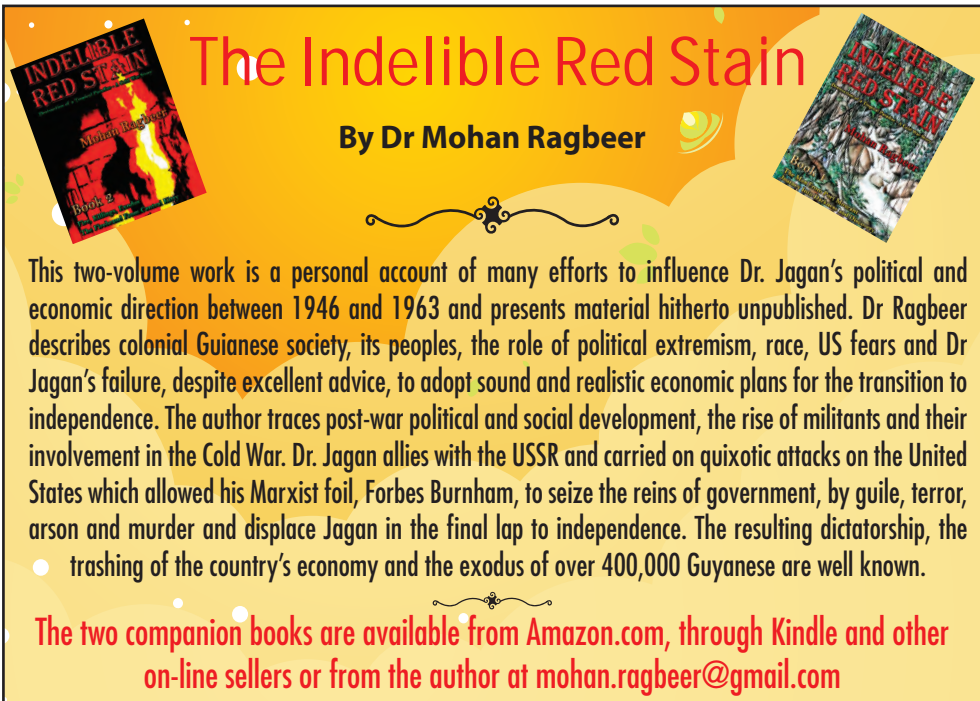


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The Indelible Red Stain

By Dr Mohan Ragbeer

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

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



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Community celebrates Eid

Celebration of Eid across the GTA last month unfolded in scenes that were both intimate and expansive, yet wholesomely prayerful. Joy and celebration were notable across the GTA in mosques such as the International Muslim Organisation in Rexdale, the Canadian Islamic Academy in Etobicoke, and with the charitable group One Love Table.

From the quiet moments of devotion to joyful acts of giving, last month's celebration reflected a community grounded in faith, generosity, and togetherness.

On the morning of Eid, rows of believers stood shoulder to shoulder in the mosques, united in gratitude and reflection. These prayerful moments, with heads bowed and hands raised, offered a poignant reminder that Eid begins in humility, in the recognition of blessings received and shared. These early cadences of prayer set the tone for a day that moved seamlessly from the sacred to the communal.

Beyond the prayer mats, the celebration blossomed into gestures of joy and care. Children, dressed in their finest, received toys with bright-eyed excitement, their laughter echoing throughout the halls. These small but meaningful gifts carried a deeper significance: the affirmation that every child is seen, cherished, and included in the embrace of community.

Equally uplifting were the scenes of charitable giving, where families received food donations to mark the festive occasion. In these exchanges, the essence of Eid, charity, compassion, and shared sustenance, were vividly abundant. These acts of giving were relational, a reaffirmation of dignity, support, and collective upliftment within our diaspora.

Together, these moments were more than a celebration, but a living testament to a community in motion: faithful, generous, and deeply rooted in the values that make Eid not just a festival, but a shared experience of belonging.





Haji Zafarullah Khan with long-time member who marked her 91st birthday



MPP Rakocevic with the co-owner of Elite Decor and Councillor Perruza



Owners of Ventures Car and Truck Rentals (centre) received the award for Outstanding Philanthropy from MPP Rakocevic and Councillor Perruza



Recognised with the Volunteer-Community Service Award, these members excelled in their volunteerism during the Holy Month of Ramadan

Imdadul holds celebratory Eid dinner

On the evening of March 28, members of the Imdadul Jamat and the wider community gathered for the mosque's signature Eid Dinner, an evening of celebration that brought together faith, fellowship, and shared achievement.

Marking the joy of Eid, the occasion also reflected the spirit of *Rizq*, the blessings of provision expressed through enduring friendships, personal milestones, and collective success.

Volunteers, the lifeblood of the Imdadul mosque, were at the heart of the evening's recognition. Their dedication was acknowledged in the presence of Humber River-Black Creek's MPP Tom Rakocevic, and local City councillor and Chair of the FIFA World Cup Organising Committee, Anthony Perruza, who joined community members in celebrating years of service and commitment.

Both officials offered commendations, underscoring the vital role of volunteerism in sustaining community institutions.

A deeply moving moment came with the posthumous recognition of Brother Rene

Mangal, whose lifelong contributions to the mosque and broader community were honoured following his passing on March 16 during the final ten days of Ramadan. His legacy was celebrated with quiet reverence.

Also, his beloved widow, Sister Jameela Mangal, herself a steadfast pillar of the masjid, was recognised for decades of unwavering volunteer service, with their children accepting both honours on behalf of the family.

The evening also welcomed representatives from neighbouring mosques, Islamic organisations, and community leaders, reflecting the interconnected fabric of the wider Muslim community.

The program was enriched by *Qur'anic* recitations, thoughtful reflections on its verses, and stirring *nasheeds*, adding an uplifting spiritual cadence to the celebration.

Imdadul's leadership has also extended the invitation to its upcoming community events, including the Good Friday International Food Fair on April 3, which begins at 11:00 a.m.

With files by Sayem Khan



MPP Tom Rakocevic (left) and Councillor Anthony Perruza presents Brother Kassim with the award for Outstanding Philanthropy



Imdadul's Eid dinner was well-attended



Some of the members of Imdadul's Board of Directors with MPP Rakocevic and Councillor Perruza

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Historic injustice remains as reparations demands intensify worldwide

By Dhanpaul Narine

You are standing at Goree Island, off the coast of Dakar, in Senegal. You descend to the dungeons and the shackles and chains greet you, echoes of history that wouldn't go away.

It is estimated that over 20 million Africans passed through Goree Island as slaves, during the period 1530 to 1848. Conditions on the island were brutal. Records show that as many as 30 men would sit in an eight-square-foot cell with only a small slit of the window facing outward.

There were diseases that took their daily toll. Once the slaves passed through the 'door of no return' it was miles of sea and cruelty. Another port, Luanda in Angola, also played a pivotal role in the trans-shipment of slaves.

Those that survived the Middle Passage were sold in the Caribbean, and North and South America to help shape a new world.

Over the years, there have been calls for reparatory justice. A powerful voice is that of Sir Hilary Beckles, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies. He invested a considerable amount of time to make a case for justice for the descendants of natives, slaves, and the Indentured.

It was simple and compelling. But former Prime Minister David Cameron was not buying into it. He said that reparations were not the answer. When he addressed Jamaica's Parliament in September 2005, Cameron admitted that slavery was "abhorrent", and that the "wounds run very deep", but he did not give much hope to the pro-reparation argument. In fact, Cameron wanted the Caribbean to move on and put the past behind.

According to Cameron, "I hope that as friends who have gone through so much together since those darkest of times, we can move on from this painful legacy and continue to build for the future."

Cameron's "building for the future" included money to upgrade the Jamaican prisons so that criminals can be sent from British prisons to serve out their sentences in Jamaica. There was also a \$600 million grant to develop infrastructure in the Caribbean.

While some welcomed these proposals, there were those that saw the British package as a band-aid treatment to forget what is a major wound to the psyche of the Caribbean.

In other words, the British response did not go far enough. It is no secret that slavery and indentureship uprooted families and imposed a culture that was alien to the victims. The statistics show that around six million Africans were transported to America and the Caribbean during the period 1610 to 1865. When slavery ended, East Indians, Chinese, Portuguese, and poor whites were taken to the Caribbean to supply labour on the plantations.

Indigenous Peoples too faced the wrath of the masters as their culture and economy were disrupted. Many of them were ordered to hunt runaways, and spent months away from their communities. There was no program in place to attend to their welfare.

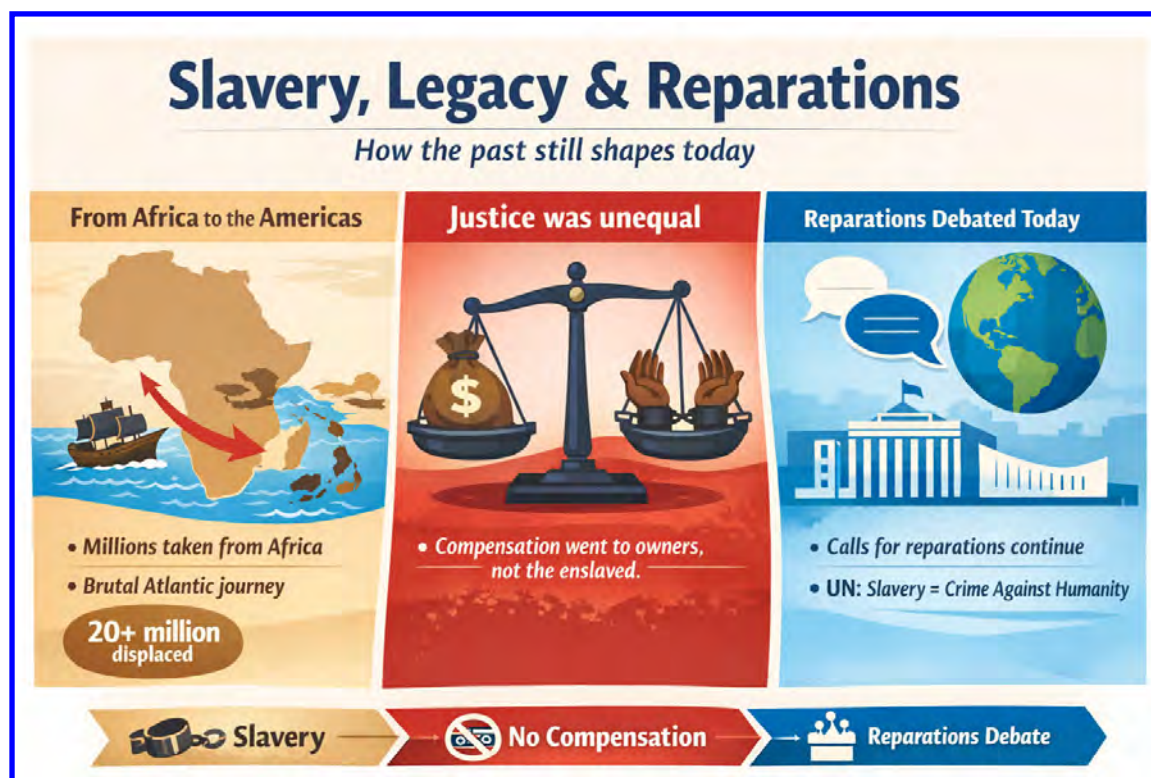
The idea of reparations has never really included slaves or their descendants. In 1852, US President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill ending slavery in the District of Columbia that called "for immediate emancipation and compensation to former owners who were loyal to the Union for up to \$300 for each freed slave."

This emancipator of slaves cared little about the future of Blacks. By the end of 1862 a total of 930 petitions were approved from former slave owners. When the Civil War ended, General William Tecumseh Sherman proposed 40 acres and a mule apiece for former slaves, but nothing materialised.

In 1825, Haiti agreed to pay France 125 million francs with interest in compensation for lost property that included slaves. The sum was finally repaid in 1947, which helps to explain why Haiti has remained poor.

In 2010, French President Nicholas Sarkozy visited Haiti and said that Haitians "have been wounded but they are standing". No offer of reparations was made.

Over the years, the call for reparations has been intensified.



Sir Hilary Beckles

Ta-Nehisi Coates argues that the system has made it difficult for Blacks to move up the ladder, and that America has a duty to repay its debts to Blacks.

In 1998, Representative John Conyers introduced a bill H.R. 40 in Congress to discuss reparations, but it is still to be passed.

In 2007, then UK Prime Minister Tony Blair said that slavery was "shameful", and a year later William Hague called the system "inhumane". These statements fell short of an apology, and added little to the debate.

In 2014, Caribbean governments unveiled proposals to demand reparations for the sufferings inflicted by the slave trade. Sir Hilary became one of the principal spokespersons for the pro-reparations lobby. He spoke at the House of Commons on behalf of Caribbean governments, and made a passionate plea for reparations. Sir Hilary pointed out that British slave ships "brought 5.5 million enslaved Africans into their Caribbean colonies and when slavery was abolished there were just 800,000 remaining".

He called for the terrible wrongs to be corrected as it was the same House of Commons, in which he was speaking, that enacted legislation to enslave millions.

Sir Hilary also made a case for the East Indians and Amerindians, who along with Africans "were three acts of a single play", a trifecta in chains in an imperial domination. They were part of a process in which the British extracted wealth through exploitation.

As in the case of America, slave owners were compensated by the British Parliament, and not a penny was given to the enslaved since they were seen as property. In fact, the ex-slaves were required to work for free for four additional years after 1833 in a system of

Apprenticeship.

It was fitting then that Sir Hilary's sterling advocacy should take him to New York, a city that was also built by slave labour. The setting was Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn at the Caribbean Research Center.

The Center was celebrating its 30th Anniversary, and some of the leading lights in education were present. They included college President Dr Rudy Crew, Dean Dr George Irish, Provost Dr Augustine Okereke, and a wonderful singer, Ayanna Irish.

Dr Crew, a former Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, hailed the work of the Center, and supported the call for reparations. Dr Irish thanked Dr Crew for his magnificent work at Medgar Evers College, and said that reparations were long overdue.

Dr Okereke said that he was pleased that visits were made to Nigeria, and referred to the important links between Nigeria and the Caribbean.

Sir Hilary gave the keynote address, *From Reparations to Sustainability*. He described Medgar Evers as a place of communion. He said that he was grateful for the support of Danny Glover, who has lent his voice for reparatory justice.

Sir Hilary praised the work of the Caribbean Research Center, and defined the Caribbean as a unifying civilisation of modernity. But the Caribbean is much more.

He said that an anchor from Columbus' ship, *Santa Maria*, and a portrait of the Haitian leader Toussaint L'Ouverture in the

national museum in Haiti represented the beginning of a new world.

According to Sir Hilary, "This was the thesis and antithesis, the beginning of a world based on the genocide of our native peoples, and the chattel enslavement of Africans. This was a world constructed on those principles. The Caribbean is a civilisation dedicated in its intellectual energy, its cultural force, its philosophical mission to turn that world upside down and create a world of justice."

This position was impressive, and it set the tone for a healthy discussion on the role of the reparatory movement.

Sir Hilary pointed out that it was in the Caribbean that the idea of destroying slavery was first institutionalised to create a just society. In Haiti, for instance, the Constitution of 1805 stated that any person of African or Native American descent that arrived in that country will be classed as free and would be given citizenship.

This move was ground-breaking in a hemisphere built on chattel slavery. Sir Hilary added that whether one listens to the music of Bob Marley, or reads the works of Walter Rodney, one is bound to feel the energy of the Caribbean.

The idea is to build sustainable societies. The ex-slaves are leaders of their countries, and are responsible for governance, and this makes them unique.

The struggle continues for a just society, and it has taken hundreds of years to come to terms with genocide and apartheid. Conflict and struggle have become the hallmark of Caribbean societies in Haiti, Cuba, and the English-speaking Caribbean.

A number of Caribbean leaders went to prison as part of the Independence struggle, including Guyana's Dr Cheddi Jagan and Jamaica's Alexander Bustamante.

One of the legacies of colonial rule was to keep the subjects in a state of dependency. In Haiti, as we have seen, it was to repay a huge debt. In other countries, such as in Jamaica, only a fraction of the people was literate at Independence on August 6, 1962.

The colonial powers had extracted wealth from the colonies through a mercantile economy. But many countries have done well after Independence.

As Sir Hilary puts it, "Jamaica has done magnificently in converting a colonial mess into a nation state."

It is fitting that Marlon James won the 2015 *Man Booker Prize*, and to praise Jamaica's rich literary tradition. The Caribbean has come a long way. It has shown resilience and fortitude despite the forces of history being against it.

Sir Hilary discussed two concepts as part of reparatory justice. The first is that the Caribbean will take responsibility for its future. This means that the Caribbean does not want imperial donations. He said that given the complicated nature of the global financial system, the Caribbean is moving ahead with building societies that celebrate human freedoms.

He then proceeded to make the point that, "All of those colonial and slave-owning powers who have extracted the wealth and enslaved the peoples of the Caribbean have a responsibility and a duty to return to the scene of this impoverishment and enslavement and participate in the process of human development."

This is a powerful statement that strikes at the heart of the problem. Sir Hilary has made the case for reparations. The Caribbean is not interested in pittances. Debt write-offs, the building of educational institutions, the setting up of viable industries, reconnecting with the motherland, and programs that foster a sense of pride within the region are good starting points for sustainability.

In March 2026, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which declared that the "trafficking of enslaved Africans was the gravest crime against humanity". The UN called for reparations as "a concrete step towards remedying historical wrongs".

The US voted against the resolution, while the UK and all 27 members of the European Union abstained. The leader of Britain's Conservative Party Kemi Badenoch is of Nigerian origin. She is opposed to reparations.

"Britain led the fight to end slavery. We shouldn't be paying for a crime we helped to eradicate and still fight today," she said.

Badenoch would do well to listen to Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama. He stated at the UN that slavery was the greatest crime against humanity, and that the exploitation against Blacks continues to reverberate today.

The UN resolution is not legally binding, but it is more than a jolt to the conscience that reparatory justice is long overdue.

Prestigious Swanzy Award for diaspora literary pioneer, scholar Birbalsingh

— Dr Frank Birbalsingh, a Guyana-born Canadian literary scholar and long-time Toronto academic, has been named the 2026 recipient of the Bocas Henry Swanzy Award for Distinguished Service to Caribbean Letters. The honour recognises his decades-long contribution to Caribbean literary scholarship and diaspora cultural life, and will be presented at a private ceremony in Toronto.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Literary Feature

Long regarded as a pioneer in Indo-Caribbean literary studies and a foundational figure in diaspora scholarship, Dr Frank Birbalsingh has been named the 2026 recipient of the Bocas Henry Swanzy Award for Distinguished Service to Caribbean Letters.

The recognition places Birbalsingh among a distinguished lineage of Caribbean literary architects: scholars, editors, and cultural stewards who have shaped our Caribbean region's intellectual inheritance.

At the same time, the Bocas award has affirmed Birbalsingh's pioneering role as a foundational builder of Caribbean literary studies that has bridged the homeland and diaspora, and helped define how Caribbean literature is read, taught, and understood today.

The honour, conferred by the Bocas Lit Fest out of Trinidad and Tobago, places Birbalsingh among a distinguished lineage of Caribbean literary architects whose work has sustained, interpreted, and expanded the Caribbean's literary tradition beyond its geographic shores.

Named after Henry Swanzy, it recognises not a single publication, but a lifetime of service to Caribbean letters, a framing that aligns closely with Birbalsingh's enduring intellectual and cultural legacy.

In a biographical narrative, written by Harry Hergash, and published in *Indo-Caribbean World* in February, 2021, it was noted the youthful Birbalsingh, then a young student at the University College of the West Indies, had his short story read on the airwaves of the *BBC's Caribbean Voices* in 1960.

This was the very programme shaped by Swanzy himself, after whom the Bocas award is named. That moment of recitation, modest at the time, now reads as an early echo in a life that would come full circle for Birbalsingh as a young scholar, emerging author, and later scholar and pioneering academic.

As Hergash noted, Birbalsingh was born in 1938 in Sisters Village, West Bank Demerara, in what was then British Guiana, his early life unfolding within the layered realities of a colonial plantation economy. His father, Ezrom Sahadeo Birbalsingh, was a teacher in the Canadian Mission school system, while his mother, Miriam Khan, managed the home.

Within a week of his birth, the family relocated to Canal Polder Number One, and later to Better Hope on the East Coast Demerara, where his father assumed the role of headmaster. It was here, in these formative years, that Birbalsingh began to observe the structures that would later inform his intellectual inquiry.

He witnessed the operations of the class and colour system on the sugar estates, gaining an early awareness of the plight of the mainly Indo-Guyanese sugar workers, a reality that would quietly shape his later engagement with postcolonial literature and identity.

In 1949, under the tutelage of his father, Birbalsingh won a Government County Scholarship to attend Queen's College in Georgetown, one of the colony's premier institutions.

At a time when secondary education was not free and largely reserved for the privileged, his entry represented both personal achievement and a crossing of entrenched social boundaries.

After completing his Advanced Level examinations in 1956, he had a brief tenure as a teacher before leaving Guyana in 1957 to attend the University College of the West Indies in Jamaica. There, amid a burgeoning intellectual climate, he began writing short fiction – one of which would be broadcast on *Caribbean Voices*, linking him, however briefly, to a programme that would play a defining role in Caribbean literary history.

Upon graduating in 1961, he returned to Guyana before accepting a Commonwealth scholarship to pursue postgraduate studies in India. Though the academic programme proved repetitive, the journey offered him an encounter with the land of his ancestors, adding another layer to his evolving sense of identity.

From India, Birbalsingh travelled to London, entering a space long imagined by Caribbean migrants as the imperial centre. As Hergash noted, the London many envisioned often differed from the London they encountered, which was a place



Dr Frank Birbalsingh. Herman Silochan photo



The OSSICC years, (front row, left to right) Deo Kernahan, Jeunesse Hosein, Dr Frank Birbalsingh, Sheila Bellow, Dr Unus Omarali; in the back row from left to right, Neil Lalsingh, Martin Latchana, Balram Seepersad, Krishna Nankisoor, Dr Krishna Persaud, Sasenarine Sankar, Henry Ramjass, Harry Persaud, Manshad Mohamed, Michael Latchana, and Krishna Reya Ali.

shaped as much by imagination as by lived reality.

In London, Birbalsingh immersed himself in cultural life, attending museums, theatres, opera, and ballet, while working as a supply teacher in some of the city's most economically challenged neighbourhoods. He then enrolled at King's College, University of London, earning his MA in 1966 with a thesis titled, *Novelists of the British Caribbean, 1940-1963*.

This period marked a deepening of his intellectual trajectory, one that would increasingly centre on Caribbean literature as a field worthy of rigorous academic study.

By the late 1960s, Birbalsingh and his Jamaican-born wife Norma had migrated to Toronto, where he once again began teaching while pursuing further academic work. In 1970, he joined York University, embarking on a career that would span more than three decades.

Initially teaching Canadian literature, Birbalsingh soon introduced a course in Caribbean literature, a move that positioned him as a pioneer.

"At that time, the subject was not known in the university curriculum in Canada, or anywhere else outside the Caribbean," Hergash writes.

In what was a foundational moment, Birbalsingh was not simply teaching a subject. What he was initiating was the creation of a field, giving institutional legitimacy to a body of writing that had long existed without formal academic recognition.

Birbalsingh's work extended beyond the classroom into editing, publishing, and cultural advocacy. His scholarship traversed literature, history, politics, and cricket, the latter of which he approached not merely as sport, but as a lens through which Caribbean identity could be understood.

His 1996 book *The Rise of West Indian Cricket* explored how the game functioned as a unifying force in the region, reflecting broader social and political dynamics. As noted in a commentary by Petamber Persaud in Guyana's *Kaieteur News*, Birbalsingh once said cricket in the Caribbean is "debated in the same breath with politics and religion".

Also, through edited collections such as *Indenture and Exile: The Indo-Caribbean Experience* and *Jahaji Bhai: An Anthology of Indo-Caribbean Literature*, Birbalsingh helped to foreground voices that had often been marginalised within the broader Caribbean narrative.

In 1987, alongside activist Deo Kernahan and other com-

munity leaders, Birbalsingh co-founded the Ontario Society for Studies in Indo-Caribbean Culture (OSSICC). The organisation played a pivotal role in promoting Indo-Caribbean history and culture through seminars, workshops, and public programming.

As Hergash writes, "In the years that followed Dr Birbalsingh took a lead role in OSSICC, organising activities that included seminars, workshops, and lectures that highlighted the history, culture, and contribution of Indo-Caribbeans in Guyanese and Caribbean societies. Through its work, OSSICC gave voice and visibility to Indo-Caribbeans, and helped to dispel the perception that the region was primarily made up only of Afro-Caribbeans."

OSSICC's 1988 commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Indians in the Caribbean brought together scholars, artists, and political leaders, including eminent figures such as Dr Cheddi Jagan and Basdeo Panday, underscoring the significance of Indo-Caribbean contributions to regional life.

For our readers of *Indo-Caribbean World*, Birbalsingh's influence has been both direct and enduring. For more than three decades, his book reviews and writings on cricket appeared regularly in this publication, offering insight and reflection that bridged academic scholarship and community discourse.

In our pages, Birbalsingh's work found a different kind of audience, one rooted not in academia, but in lived diasporic experience. His writing helped to interpret literature and culture for our readers navigating their own identities within Canada and beyond.

Across his career, Birbalsingh authored and edited numerous works that are now foundational to the study of Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean literature. These include *From Pillar to Post: The Indo-Caribbean Diaspora*, *Jahaji Bhai*, and *Indenture and Exile*, among others. His work also extended into political history with *The People's Progressive Party of Guyana, 1950-1992: An Oral History*, and into national narrative with *Guyana: History and Literature*.

Taken together, these texts reflect a sustained effort to document, interpret, and preserve our Caribbean experience, and to build on the inventory and archive of identity that spans geography and our generations.

Despite his long residence in Canada, Birbalsingh maintained strong ties to Guyana. In 1996, he was appointed by President Cheddi Jagan

to the Board of Governors of the University of Guyana, contributing to efforts aimed at revitalising the institution.

He also played a key role in establishing a formal relationship between York University and the University of Guyana, fostering academic collaboration between diaspora and homeland.

As Hergash notes, "In an attempt to improve the University of Guyana following years of neglect, in 1996 Dr Jagan appointed Dr Birbalsingh as an external member of the UG Board of Governors. Dr Birbalsingh negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding between York and UG, which established a formal relationship for the benefit of both institutions. The MOU was signed by Susan Mann, President of York, and Dr Jagan, President of Guyana."

These efforts reflect a broader pattern of scholastic and societal intervention in Birbalsingh's life in his commitment not only to departure and discovery, but to return and reconnection.

Reflecting on his career, Birbalsingh once observed that when he began his research in the early 1960s, what was then known as Commonwealth Literature was only just emerging.

As he related then, "It was a new field, and I spent my life exploring it because my colonial experience in the Caribbean is part of it. The exploration helped me to understand myself, my history, and my culture. Today the field is called 'Post-colonial literature'."

In that statement lies the essence of his work, in scholarship as a means of understanding not only texts, but the lived realities from which those texts emerge.

With Birbalsingh being the recipient of the 2026 *Bocas Henry Swanzy Award for Distinguished Service to Caribbean Letters*, the moment resonates beyond individual achievement. It reflects the maturation of Caribbean literary studies as a field, the enduring contributions of diaspora scholars, and the ongoing dialogue between our homelands and our thriving diaspora.

From the sugar estates of Better Hope to the lecture halls of York University, from the airwaves of *Caribbean Voices* via London, UK, to recognition by the Bocas Lit Fest, Birbalsingh's journey traces a path that is at once personal, pioneering, and collective.

It is a journey that speaks to the power of literature to carry history, to bridge worlds, and to return enriched and wholesome to the communities in the homelands, and in our diaspora, from which it first emerged.

Celebrating Feeroza's life of service

From Page 1

leadership and the intimacy of lived experience.

Straker added, "Though she may not always have been at the forefront, her fingerprints were on everything."

Those fingerprints are visible today not only in the organisation's programming, its vibrant and thriving ecosystem, but in its very ethos: a commitment to dignity in aging, to fellowship that transcends formality, and to the preservation of cultural memory within our diasporic landscape that often risks forgetting, if not erasure.

Born on March 23, 1940, in Curepe, and raised on Harris Street in San Fernando, Feeroza's early life was shaped by both tenderness and trial. Her father's passing at when she was nine introduced her early to the realities of deep loss and immediate responsibility.

Her mother's remarriage into an extended family brought with it a widening circle of kinship with siblings, step-siblings, and relationships. It was a merging that would help form the foundation for her understanding, and appreciation, of community not as abstraction, but as a weave of unity through daily practice.

Feeroza attended Naparima Girls' High School in south Trinidad, a respectable institution known for cultivating discipline and intellectual rigour, before beginning her professional life with Scotiabank. It was an early path that would define much of her working life for its steadfastness, purposefulness, and one marked by an adaptability that would later serve her well across borders, industries, and communities.

In 1963, she married Rasheed Sultan-Khan, forming a partnership that would span six decades. In time, this partnership would give rise to one of the most enduring organisations within our Trinidad and Tobago diaspora here in Canada.

It was a union that was not only familial but foundational, their two lives intertwined not just in love, but in a mutual journey of giving back, and in unconditional service.

In 1972, with their four young children and a step daughter, the family migrated to Canada, joining the growing wave of Caribbean families seeking opportunity abroad. Like many of her generation, Feeroza navigated the demands of building a new life while holding fast to the cultural rhythms that defined home. She worked at a career, raised her children, and quietly helped anchor a family in unfamiliar terrain.

Yet hers was not a one-way journey. In 1979, the family returned to Trinidad and Tobago, where she worked with the retail giant Kirpalani's, managing multiple stores in southern Trinidad. This return, which is often absent from simplified migration narratives, speaks to a deeper truth about our holistic life in the diaspora, one that is not merely about arrivals and departures, but about circulation through prospecting, pioneering, and journeys seeking more fertile ground. It is a narrative speaking to homes that are not abandoned, but carried to new places, or revisited, and then wholesomely reimagined.

By 1986, the family had returned once more to Toronto, where Feeroza continued her working life, including roles with In Store Focus, and a later career in real estate, from which she retired at the age of 73.

Across these career transitions in banking, retail, marketing, and property sales, Feeroza demonstrated the quiet mastery of reinvention, never seeking attention, but quietly mastering each career iteration, and consistently delivering value.

Then came her retirement, which was when her most enduring work began. Alongside husband Rasheed, she devoted herself to the formation and development of the Trinidad & Tobago 50 Plus Association. What began as a modest initiative then grew, over time, into a vibrant organisation offering monthly meetings, weekly drop-in sessions, cultural programming, and community outreach.

Members gathered to play the card game All Fours, to engage in light exercise, to listen to guest speakers, and, perhaps most importantly, to be seen, appreciated, and to make a difference.

Feeroza understood, instinctively, that aging within the diaspora could carry with it a particular vulnerability in the risk of isolation, of invisibility, in fading away. Through T&T 50 Plus, she helped create a counterpoint: a space where elders were not only supported, but celebrated, and enabled with new meaning.

She was a strong believer in the importance of our elders in the diaspora having a voice, a place to be centered, and to feel an appreciative sense of worth. It is a belief that now reads less as philosophy and more as praxis, and is evident in every program, every gathering, every moment of sociable connectivity fostered under T&T 50 Plus' spreading canopy.

Her leadership within the association was both formal and informal. She served as its seventh president from 2017 to 2019, and was named a trustee for the 2026-2028 term, remaining active until the very end of her life.

Yet titles alone cannot capture the breadth of her influence. She was, in equal measure, advisor, encourager, listener, and, as some of the tributes on March 29 recalled with humour, a gentle, matriarchal guide, and a late night corrector.

There was also, as those closest to her recalled, a playful side, one that revealed itself in moments that brought smiles,

See Page 19: Feeroza turned care



A Certificate of Condolence was presented to the family from the office of Scarborough North MPP Raymond Cho. In photo, above, at right, Noah Ng, Executive Director in Cho's office, hands over the certificate to Nyla at left, and Aleem, centre. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo. (In photo, below left, Rasheed and Feeroza Sultan-Khan.)





Orchids were presented to siblings Nyla (second left) and Aleem (second right) by executive members of the T&T 50 Plus, Vivian Young (left) and former president Shane Seupaul at right. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo



Feeeroza turned care into community

From Page 18

laughter, and tears, during the remembrance celebration.

"It was always a pleasure to be around her," Straker reflected, adding, "She would often make some remark to get you laughing while her face would be as serious as ever."

That juxtaposition, seriousness of expression, lightness of spirit, will always be recalled as one of Feeeroza's key signatures.

Even in her later years, Feeeroza approached life with a curiosity that defied expectation. Inspired by the belief that "opportunity is ageless" and that one is "never too old to learn", as Straker affirmed, she embraced the full range of programs offered by the association.

Whether participating in computer training, trying her hand at floral arrangement, or learning to play All Fours, she arrived not as a figure of authority, but as a student, one who was eager, attentive, engaged; and an inspiring leader for others.

In one of the more memorable acts of her later life, she stepped onto the stage as part of the play *Simi Dimi*, presented at Toronto Metropolitan University. The experience required memorising lines, rehearsing, and performing before an audience, tasks that many might hesitate to undertake at any age, let alone in the later stages of their years. She did so with pride, with remarkable delivery, and inspirational aplomb.

And then, in a moment that has already passed into community lore, she took to the microphone as a stand-up, or, as was affectionately described by Straker, a "sit-down" comedian, embroidering her signature humour into her delivery that left her audience in stitches.

In these moments, Feeeroza did more than entertain. She redefined what it meant to age within community: she did not age inside withdrawal, but within participation; not as limitation, but as expansion into overlapping social spaces.

The passing of her husband in April 2023 marked a profound personal loss. Yet even in grief, she found a way to build. In late 2024, she established the T&T 50 Plus' *Founders Award* in his honour. It was an initiative designed to recognise service, compassion, and leadership within the community. In many ways, this legacy was a distillation of everything she and Rasheed had worked toward: a mechanism to ensure that values would not fade, but be carried forward.

If grief is often described as an ending, then Feeeroza transformed it into continuation.

Today, the organisation she helped nurture stands as a living archive of those values. Its programs, its gatherings, even its laughter bear traces of her influence. Her legacy is not confined to memory, but is now embedded in practice.

Beyond the association, her impact extended into our broader Canadian and back-home community. Through initiatives such as scholarships for Caribbean youth, partnerships with educational institutions, and fundraising efforts for relief in the Caribbean, she contributed to a wider network of care, one that now links generations, geographies, and goals in our wider community.

Yet for all her accomplishments, those who knew her speak most often not of what she did, but as the eternal writer Maya Angelou tells us, of how she made people feel. At her celebration, many spoke to how she made people feel "seen"; how she welcomed many; and about the value she brought to their lives.

These are not small accomplishments; they are, in many ways, the foundation upon which any community is built.

Feeeroza's family, her children, grandchildren, and an extended network of relatives, remain at the heart of her legacy. But so too does the wider circle of individuals, that "extended family", whose lives intersected with hers through decades of service. In them, her influence continues to move, quietly, persistently, and with fond remembrance.

At the close of the March 29 tribute, words of comfort were extended to her family, accompanied by an acknowledgment that resonated throughout the uplifted, and noticeably moist-eyed gathering: that our community has been irrevocably touched by Feeeroza's relationship-building hands.

"We are grateful beyond words for you sharing her with us," a visibly moved Straker intoned to family members with a profound depth of feeling and authenticity, adding, "Her light continues to shine in every life she touched; and in the association she helped to build."

In that moment, the boundaries between family and community merged, just as they had throughout Feeeroza's fulfilling life.

Her passing leaves a void, undeniable in its depth. Yet it also leaves a structure behind, carefully built, lovingly sustained, and now entrusted to the good hands of those of us who remain.

To honour Feeeroza, then, is not only to remember, but to continue: to gather, to support, to celebrate, to ensure that no one within our community is unheard, unseen, or left behind.

In this way, Feeeroza Sultan-Khan endures, not only in memory, but in the generational momentum she created, nurtured, and has now left with us to nourish, and to nurture.

May her memory remain a blessing, and her legacy a guide for our diaspora as a shining star now resident in the Great North, secure in the tremendous beauty of our Northern Lights.

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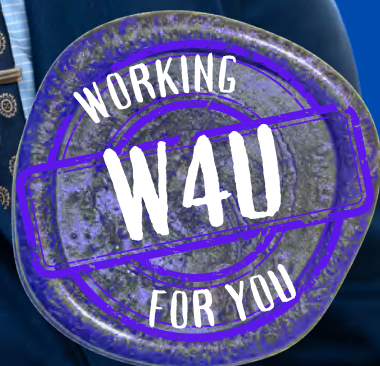
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SCARBOROUGH CENTRE



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Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette with Brampton City's Alisa Cheddi; in photos, guests and attendees at the Expo. Photos by Russell Lutchman and Shaira Ali



TTAO's 'Mind Yuh Business' Expo advances Caribbean enterprise in Ontario

— The 'Mind Yuh Business' Expo, hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Ontario on March 28, brought together entrepreneurs, cultural performers, and community leaders in a vibrant showcase of Caribbean enterprise, reinforcing economic opportunity, cultural pride, and diaspora collaboration across Ontario.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI News Report

Toronto – The 'Mind Yuh Business' Expo, hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Ontario (TTAO), brought together entrepreneurs, cultural performers, and community leaders on March 28 for a dynamic showcase of Caribbean enterprise and cultural expression. The event took place at the Lion's Banquet Hall in Brampton.

Delivering the feature address, Trinidad and Tobago's Deputy Consul General in Toronto, Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, framed the event as more than a marketplace, positioning it as a call for intentional growth within the diaspora.

Humorously riffing off the more colourful connotations associated with the chronic and overzealous neighbourly curiosity that gave rise to the Trinidad and Tobago expression 'Mind Yuh Business', Ramsubagh-Mannette then pivoted to note how the phrase had been reconceptualised and "reclaimed as a call to action" in the Toronto setting.

"It encourages us to take ownership of our ideas, to nurture our talents, to be disciplined and strategic, and to invest in our own growth," she affirmed.

Framed within this vision, the TTAO's Expo featured a wide cross-section of local vendors offering products and services, alongside Caribbean cuisine and live cultural entertainment. Visitors moved through a marketplace landscape that blended commerce with community, creating opportunities for engagement, discovery, collaboration, and lots of "Trini ole talk".

Ramsubagh-Mannette also noted that entrepreneurship has long been embedded in the national character of Trinidad and Tobago, pointing to a legacy that spans family enterprises, creative industries, and global innovation. She added that this same spirit continues to thrive within the diaspora in Ontario.

That spirit, in turn, finds expression in events such as 'Mind Yuh Business', which she said provide critical platforms for entrepreneurs to expand their networks and form meaningful partnerships, while reinforcing a culture of mutual support.

"When we shop local, collaborate across sectors and mentor the next generation, we strengthen not only individual businesses but the entire diaspora community," she told attendees.

She further underscored the economic significance of the diaspora, describing it as a vital link between Trinidad and Tobago and Canada.

"Our diaspora is a powerful bridge between our two countries. You contribute to the Canadian economy while maintaining strong ties to home. In doing so, you create opportunities for trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchange," she declared.

Within this broader framework, the Acting Consul General encouraged entrepreneurs to explore avenues for deeper collaboration with Trinidad and Tobago, including joint ventures, investment in emerging sectors, and the sharing of expertise, noting that diversification and innovation remain key priorities for the government.

Beyond economics, the programme also reflected a deliberate integration of culture and enterprise, with performances of steelpan, calypso, spoken word, and song reinforcing the creative foundations of Caribbean business.

"Our culture and our commerce are not separate. They are intertwined," Ramsubagh-Mannette said, pointing to the steelpan as an enduring symbol of innovation born from resilience, and calypso as both storytelling tradition and entrepreneurial expression.

Addressing young people in attendance, she offered a direct message of encouragement.

"Do not underestimate your potential... Seek mentorship. Build your skills. Be bold. And yes, 'Mind Yuh Business!'"

In closing her address, Ramsubagh-Mannette reaffirmed the Consulate's commitment to supporting programmes that promote economic empowerment and cultural pride within the diaspora.

A guest at the event, Brampton City Councillor Rod Power also praised the Expo, highlighting its role in strengthening both economic opportunity and community cohesion.

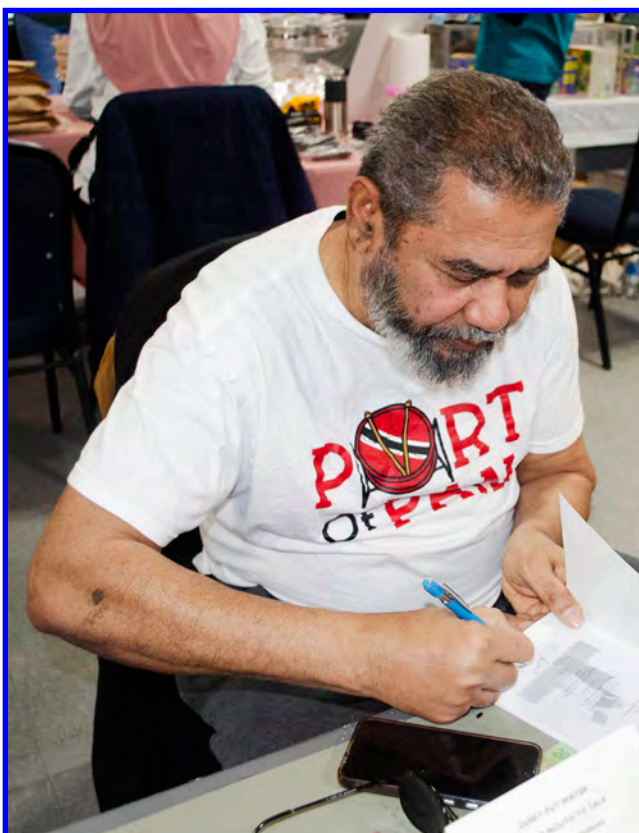
"The 'Mind Yuh Business' Expo is a powerful reflection of the entrepreneurial spirit and cultural pride within our Caribbean community here in Brampton," Power told the gathering, adding, "What stands out most is the warmth – this is a community that welcomes you like family, where connections are genuine, and support for one another runs deep."

Drawing a parallel to his own upbringing, he added, "That sense of belonging reminds me very much of my own roots in Newfoundland, where community means looking out for your neighbour, celebrating together, and lifting each other up in times of need."

He continued, "While the cultures may be different, the values are remarkably similar – resilience, generosity, and pride in where we come from. I'm proud to support the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Ontario as they continue to create opportunities, celebrate culture, and empower local entrepreneurs who are helping shape the future of our city."

Collectively, the 'Mind Yuh Business' Expo 2026, organisers noted, continues to serve as a platform for connection, collaboration, and the sustained growth of Caribbean entrepreneurship in Ontario.

Founded in 1976, the TTAO remains a cornerstone institution within the diaspora, dedicated to fostering cultural preservation, civic engagement, and community development across the province.



Dhurandhar: The Revenge – Spectacle, star power driving global success

— With movie theatres alive to the hum of anticipation, *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* settles into its stride as a film that invites audiences in gently through spectacle, familiarity, and the steady draw of a story carried by star power and scale.

There is an ease to *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* that becomes apparent early. It does not rush to prove itself; instead, it unfolds at a measured pace, allowing its world to open up gradually. For audiences, that sense of familiarity in knowing what kind of experience awaits becomes part of its appeal.

Across cinemas, both in India and within our diaspora hubs here in Toronto, the movie has drawn audiences looking for that shared, big-screen moment.

The response has been steady and warm, with viewers settling into the rhythm of a cinematic experience that balances action with emotion, and spectacle with story.

At the centre of this experience is Ranveer Singh, whose performance has been widely recognised as the movie’s driving force. Reviews have consistently returned to his presence as the element that holds everything together.

As the *Hindustan Times* noted, the film is “a roller-coaster ride elevated by Ranveer Singh’s brilliance”, underscoring the way his performance anchors even its more expansive moments.

There is a certain fluidity to his portrayal as it moves between intensity and restraint that allows the audience to stay connected, even as the film shifts gears around him.

Director Aditya Dhar approaches the film with a clear sense of scale. The story expands beyond its earlier chapter, opening into a broader canvas of action and intrigue, while maintaining a through-line that keeps audiences engaged.

Some critics have focused on the film’s construction, particularly its more ambitious sequences.

Lensmen Reviews, for instance, described the film as “a masterclass in justifying masterstrokes”, pointing to the way its set pieces are designed and delivered. These moments, which are carefully staged and visually detailed, give the film much of its momentum.

At the same time, there is an understanding across the reviews that the film occasionally stretches in its storytelling. Certain passages feel extended, and the narrative does not always hold as tightly as it might.

Yet, even here, the film finds ways to recover



its balance, often returning to its central performances and visual energy to carry it forward.

The viewing experience is shaped by this interplay. There are sequences that land with clarity, in those moments where the pacing, performance, and visual design come together seamlessly.

And then there are also moments that drift slightly, where the film lingers longer than necessary.

Mainstream commentary has acknowledged this balance. While praising the film’s energy, the *Hindustan Times* also observed that it “lacks the finesse of the original”, reflecting a broader sentiment that the sequel, while engaging, does not always match the precision and smooth flow of its predecessor.

Still, these observations do little to disrupt the overall flow. For many viewers, *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* remains accessible and engaging, offering a consistent rhythm that carries them through its runtime.

If the critical response offers a measured view, the box office provides a clearer indication of the film’s reach.

Dhurandhar: The Revenge opened to

approximately US \$28-29 million worldwide on its first day, quickly building momentum over its opening weekend to cross US \$60 million. Within ten days, it had surpassed US \$145 million globally, and its current total stands at roughly US \$165-170 million worldwide.

These figures reflect a sustained interest across markets. Domestic collections in India have remained strong, while overseas audi-

ences, particularly within diaspora communities like ours, have contributed significantly to its overall performance.

Audience reactions have echoed this enthusiasm. Early responses described the film as “a power-packed action ride with emotions and twists”, as the *Times of India* noted, capturing the elements that have resonated most strongly with viewers.

In theatres across the GTA, the film appears to have found a natural home. Screenings have drawn families, groups of friends, and long-time fans of Hindi cinema, all gathering to take part in a familiar ritual.

The experience extends beyond the screen and into conversation, into shared reactions, into the quiet satisfaction of a story enjoyed together.

This sense of connection is part of what gives the film its staying power. It is not only about what unfolds on screen, but about how it is received, collectively, in real time, and across many borders.

What *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* ultimately offers is a film comfortable in its own space. It does not aim to redefine the form, nor does it move too far from what audiences have come to expect.

Instead, it leans into those expectations, shaping them into an experience that is both familiar, engaging, perhaps fulsome, most likely satisfying.

The movie’s strengths are clear in its attributes of performance, scale, and moments of well-crafted spectacle. Of course, its limitations are also visible, particularly in the areas where the narrative stretches. But within that balance, the film finds a carrying rhythm.

And in that rhythm, obviously, it finds its audience.



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Let us Carry The Fire together through cricket, community, and hope

— Come May 30, Mississauga's Celebration Square will be transformed into a vibrant field of purpose as hundreds of participants gather for Cricket to Conquer Cancer, a street cricket fundraiser organised by the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation. The event aims to unite community, corporate, and philanthropic support to advance cancer research, care, and education, while inviting our Caribbean diaspora to play a leading role in the effort.

When the coin rises into the air above Celebration Square and spirals down onto the pitch, it will signal more than the start of a match. It will mark the beginning of a day in which cricket, community, and cause come together in a shared effort to confront one of the most pressing health challenges of our time.

Cricket to Conquer Cancer returns for its second staging in 2026 as part of a growing national initiative that has already demonstrated its capacity to mobilise community support and generate significant funding for cancer research.

In 2025, the inaugural event drew more than 500 participants, 40 teams, thousands of spectators, and 160 volunteers, collectively raising approximately \$1.16 million in support of the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre's highest priority needs.

According to the PMCF's 2025 Cricket Impact Report, the event's success reflects a broader movement rooted in community engagement and philanthropic commitment. Dr Miyo Yamashita, President and CEO of the foundation, emphasised the transformative impact of that support.

"Your support of The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation Cricket event helped The Princess Margaret's most pressing funding needs across cancer research, care, and education," she stated in the report.

She further noted the direct outcomes of that support, adding, "You ignited discoveries in early detection with the goal of preventing cancer from taking hold. You accelerated the development of innovative, tailored therapies that are paving the way for bold, new horizons in precision medicine. You understood that caring for someone with cancer is not just about looking after their physical health – addressing their emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as that of their loved ones, is also vitally important."

Dr Yamashita also underscored the collective dimension of the initiative, describing participants as part of a broader network of advocates and supporters.

"You became part of a community of philanthropic champions who Carry The Fire for all cancer patients, so they not only survive but thrive," she said.

The 'Carry The Fire' initiative has since emerged as a central theme of the foundation's outreach, representing resilience, determination, and sustained commitment to advancing cancer research and care. Through Cricket to Conquer Cancer, that message is translated into direct community action, where participation, fundraising, and awareness converge in a single public event.

Here in Canada, the urgency of that effort is underscored by the scale of the challenge. Two in five Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Behind that statistic are individuals, families, and communities navigating diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. It is this shared reality that gives the tournament a significance extending well beyond the boundary.

Participants in the event will include teams formed by colleagues, families, friends, neighbours, and community organisations. As outlined by organisers, the tournament is structured to emphasise accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that individuals of all skill levels can take part.

The format is designed as a high-energy T5 competition, with each team fielding eight players at a time: a bowler, a wicketkeeper, and six fielders. Matches are played over five overs per side, with rules adapted to maintain constant engagement and participation. Batters retire after reaching 15 runs, allowing others to take their turn at the crease, while bowl-outs are used to resolve tied matches, adding an additional element of excitement.

Additional features include designated targets that offer bonus runs when struck, as well as active play rules that require batters to run on contact, keeping the pace of play consistent throughout the day. Sixes are not permitted in the traditional sense; a ball hit cleanly over the boundary without bouncing results in a penalty, reinforcing the ground-based, participatory nature of the format.

Organisers note that these adaptations reflect the informal street cricket traditions familiar to many within Caribbean and South Asian communities, where accessibility, improvisation, and shared enjoyment have long defined the game.

For our Caribbean diaspora in particular, cricket continues to function as more than a sport. It is a shared cultural reference point, connecting generations and communities across geographic boundaries. Whether played in neigh-



bourhood streets in Port-of-Spain, Kingston, Bridgetown, or Georgetown, or followed at international venues, cricket has historically embodied resilience, teamwork, and collective effort.

Those same qualities are reflected in the broader fight against cancer, where progress depends on sustained collaboration among researchers, clinicians, patients, and supporters.

The funds raised through Cricket to Conquer Cancer are directed toward three primary areas identified by the PMCF: early detection, innovative treatments, and comprehensive support.

Early detection initiatives aim to identify cancer at its earliest stages, improving outcomes, and in some cases, reducing the need for invasive treatments. Innovative treatment research focuses on developing more targeted and effective therapies, including advances in precision medicine that move beyond traditional approaches such as chemotherapy. Comprehensive support programs address the full spectrum of patient care, including emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as support for families and caregivers.

Dr Yamashita highlighted the cumulative effect of these efforts in the foundation's report, noting, "Decades of research progress and clinical innovation, bolstered by philanthropic funding, have deepened our understanding of cancer and uncovered effective ways to tackle it. This is the pivotal moment. Thanks to your support, we can now imagine a world free from the fear of cancer."

The 2026 edition of the tournament aims to build on that momentum, with organisers projecting participation from more than 100 teams and setting a fundraising target of \$1 million. Teams are encouraged to raise a minimum of \$6,000, with top fundraisers gaining opportunities to engage with well-known figures from the cricketing community.

Fundraising begins at the point of registration, positioning each team not only as competitors on the field, but also as contributors to the broader mission of advancing cancer research and care.

Corporate teams are expected to play a significant role, using the event as a platform for employee engagement and inter-organisational collaboration. At the same time, community-based teams, composed of families, friends, and local networks, continue to form the backbone of participation, reflecting the grassroots nature of the initiative.

Beyond the competitive elements, the event is designed as a full-day community gathering, featuring high-energy matches, spectator engagement, and opportunities for supporters to contribute through donations and sponsorship.

Throughout the day, each run scored, each wicket taken, and each partnership built will carry a significance that extends beyond the immediate outcome of the match. Organisers emphasise that every dollar raised contributes directly to advancing research and improving patient outcomes.

The symbolic alignment between cricket and the fight against cancer is also reflected in the structure of the game



The Princess Margaret
Cancer Foundation UHN

CRICKET

The message shines brightly from the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation: *Carry the Fire*, both a call and a promise. When we step onto the field for Cricket to Conquer Cancer, we are doing more than playing a game. Each team, each run scored, each dollar raised helps carry that fire forward, lighting the path toward brighter tomorrows for cancer patients everywhere.

Fundraising efforts through the tournament help *Carry the Fire* for a new generation of patients, supporting the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation's trailblazing work to transform what it means to be diagnosed with cancer.

As the PMCF explains, cancer is complex. It is not a single disease, but a group of hundreds, shaped by lifestyle, environment, and genetics. The challenges are immense. Yet the belief guiding the work at PMCF is equally powerful: through collaborative research, intensive training, and engaged philanthropy, those challenges can be overcome together.

Today, the PMCF's world-renowned team of doctors, researchers, and scientists continue to carry that fire forward. Their mission is to advance early detection, develop innovative treatments, and expand comprehensive patient support so that those facing cancer can benefit from the very best outcomes and experiences.

The goal is clear: to help cancer patients everywhere live longer, healthier lives; and ultimately, to build a future where fewer people live in fear of the disease.

And come May 30, as the bat meets the ball at Celebration Square, our diaspora will help keep that fire burning.

itself. Cricket's emphasis on patience, incremental progress, and teamwork mirrors the realities of scientific research and clinical care, where advancements are achieved through sustained effort over time.

Cricket to Conquer Cancer brings these parallel narratives together in a format that is both accessible and impactful, enabling participants to contribute meaningfully while engaging in a familiar and culturally resonant activity.

For members of our Caribbean diaspora and the broader Canadian community, the invitation is clear. Participation can take multiple forms in recruiting a team, contributing financially, or attending in support of the event, with each representing a tangible step toward addressing a shared challenge.

As the tournament approaches, organisers continue to encourage registration and community involvement, emphasising that collective participation remains central to the initiative's success.

When play begins on May 30, the action on the field will unfold in familiar rhythms with deliveries bowled, runs taken, and wickets contested. Yet the significance of the event will extend beyond those moments, shaped instead by the collective effort of those who have come together in support of a common goal.

In that sense, Cricket to Conquer Cancer represents more than a sporting event or a fundraising initiative. It is a demonstration of what can be achieved when community, culture, and purpose align.

And as the first ball is delivered at Celebration Square, the match that unfolds will not be measured solely in runs and results, but in the shared commitment to advancing a future in which the fear of cancer is diminished, and hope is sustained through our participatory and collective action.

Pandit Ramoutar leads an evening of song, spirit, and service

There are evenings that entertain, and there are evenings that endure. Since its success in 2024, *Sangeet Ki Kahani 3* has grown into the latter as a gathering where melody becomes memory, and memory, in turn, becomes a quiet architecture of belonging. Come April 18 at 5:00 p.m. that architecture will rise again to uplift our community into a shared space of song, devotion, and purpose.

The resonance of this upcoming evening is shaped in no small part by the echo of what came before. *Sangeet Ki Kahani 3* left audiences animated and entertained, uplifted by the charismatic Pandit Joe Jaglall. His ease with the microphone, his instinct for rhythm and engagement transformed performance into participation. Around him was a constellation of artistes, volunteers, and supporters, each contributing to an atmosphere where music did not simply fill the room, but connected the audience with it.

But memory alone does not sustain the tradition created by *Sangeet Ki Kahani 3*. For its continuity, it must be renewed, reinterpreted, and reoffered. And so, come April 18, *Sangeet Ki Kahani 4* shifts from the memory of a good time into anticipation, this time guided by the eminent musicality of the well-known and beloved Pandit Dave Ramoutar.

To understand the significance of this moment is to understand Pandit Dave at its centre. For this artiste, music has never existed in isolation. It has always been bound to service, woven into the everyday act of giving, teaching, organising, and upliftment.

Pandit Dave's journey, which began in Guyana and continues in Canada, reflects a life shaped by work, discipline, and an indefatigable commitment to community. From his earliest days, balancing responsibilities in farming, carpentry, and work in the Guyana government, while nurturing his musical gifts, he cultivated a philosophy that has remained constant: that each day must offer something of value to others.

That philosophy did not diminish upon his arrival in Canada, but expanded in many varied ways. Within days of

his arrival he was already into the rhythm of work, laying the foundation for a life that would soon intertwine family and faith with cultural and community stewardship.

Pandit Dave shares this life's journey together with wife, Nanda, whose own early sacrifices made their future possible. Together, alongside children Devindra and Priya, they formed not simply a household, but a collective in that moves, serves, and creates as a single family unit.

It is perhaps here where Pandit Dave's story takes on its most distinctive shape. For while many contribute as individuals, the Ramoutar family contributes as an entity, always present at mandirs, community events, celebrations, and moments of grief alike. Their music accompanies joy, but just as readily offers solace. Their presence is not occasional, but constant.

Over the years, this constancy has translated into respected leadership. At the Toronto Arya Samaj, Pandit Dave served across nearly every level of the institution, from committee member to president; beyond administration, he taught music and philosophy, shaping not only events, but minds.

That commitment to cultivation found fuller expression in the founding of *Sangeet Vidyalaya*, a music school, and in an enterprise in the *Sangeet Store Toronto*, now a trusted source for East Indian musical instruments.

Through these ventures, he not only performs music, but has built the very infrastructure through which it can be sustained and transmitted to our community.

And as always, deeply woven through this work is an inner drive toward service. Whether organising fundraising concerts for mandirs, supporting humanitarian initiatives in Guyana, or rallying community members to build a home for a relative in need, Pandit Dave has returned repeatedly to a simple principle: that what is given with sincerity multiplies in its impact.

And this is where this principle intersects with, and finds expression, in *Sangeet Ki Kahani 4*. Come April 18, the evening's lineup will feature Anthony Prasad, Nalini Chaitan, Kevin Dhar, Devin Ramoutar, Devi Singh, the Mahima Dance

Academy, with top-of-the-line input from Sangeet Vidyalaya, Akashvani Rhythms, and Amargeet Music.

This lineup of acclaimed and renowned artists reflects not a collection of isolated performances, but a carefully assembled tapestry of voices, instruments, and performances that will converge in a shared offering. It will all be guided by Pandit Dave's musical directorship, whose life has been dedicated to precisely such a collective expression.

But beneath the music lies a deeper note.

For more than two decades, the *Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir & Cultural Center* has stood as a spiritual home for families across the GTA, from Scarborough to Whitby, Brampton to Mississauga. Founded in 2000, the mandir has grown into a space defined by inclusivity, cultural education, and service. It has nurtured youth, supported families, and extended its reach into wider charitable initiatives.

But like many institutions that grew through devotion rather than design, it now faces a challenge that cannot be ignored. Operating from the basement of a commercial building at Midland and Eglinton in Scarborough, the mandir has become inaccessible to many of its senior members, and for devotees with mobility difficulties.

The absence of elevator access has, over time, created a quiet, noticeable, and profound exclusion, one that stands in contrast to the mandir's deeply held values of openness, community, and belonging.

Sangeet Ki Kahani 4 emerges, then, not only as a celebration in song and music, but as a response. It is an invitation to our community, not simply to attend, but to participate in shaping a more inclusive future. Proceeds from the event will support the mandir's efforts to secure a street-level space, one where all devotees, regardless of age or ability, can gather without barrier.

There are symmetry and intersection in this purpose of inclusivity with community. Pandit Dave, whose life of giving has also been defined by service through sound, now leads an evening where music itself becomes service. A community that gathered for years in shared devotion now gathers again, this time to ensure that no one is left behind.

Organisers of *Sangeet Ki Kahani 4* anticipate another full house, following the sold-out success of the 2024 event. Call the mandir at **416-261-0281** for reservations; also [see the advertisement below for ticket information](#).



Pandit Dave Ramoutar and wife Nanda

शिवसेवा संग्घे मन्दिर

Presents

SANGEET Ki KAHANI 4

Vedic Cultural Center, 4345 14th Ave. Markham, ON L3R 0J2

Saturday, April 18th @ 5 p.m.



Anthony Prasad



Nalini Chaitan



Pt. Dave & Nanda



Neel Khedoo



Anisa Dhar



Kevin Dhar



Sudesh Siewkumar



Devin Ramoutar



Priya Ramoutar



Akash Choudhary



Dhanesh Bephia



Dave Doobay



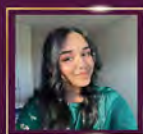
Devi Singh



Raymond Lutchman Singh



Sara, Divia & Vashti



Priya Persaud



Devina Persaud



Mahima Dance Academy



Nriya Kala Mandir

CONTACT FOR INFO

MANDIR - 416.261.0281
NADIRA - 416.873.4487
RAYMOND - 416.659.8967

DONATION INFO:

Etransfer (Canada) - donate.sssm@gmail.com
PayPal (Canada & USA) - donate.sssm@gmail.com
Cheque Payable to Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir

ADULT: \$20

CHILD (6-12 YRS): \$10

CHILD (5 YRS & UNDER): FREE

FOOD & SNACKS WILL BE ON SALE