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Chutney soca powerhouse, Trinidad and Tobago's Rashika Dindial, performs at the Twilight Restaurant on April 11. See Page 18. Photo by Hinano Beekhoo



Shiv Seva Sangh Mandir presents Sangeet Ki Kahani 4 on April 18 at 5 p.m. at the Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham, what promises to be an evening of music, storytelling, and devotion featuring performers Pandit Dave Ramoutar and wife Nanda, Anthony Prasad, Nalini Chaitan, Neel Khedeo, Anisa Dhar, and many more top artistes. See Page 7 for more details.

Writers shine at Guyana Consulate book launch

— A multi-book launch at the Guyana Consulate in Toronto brought together four authors whose works span poetry, personal narrative, children's literature, and historical fiction, offering the diaspora a renewed invitation to read, reflect, and reconnect with Guyanese history, identity, and cultural memory.

...

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI News Report

Toronto – A celebration of four newly-published books at the Guyana Consulate in Toronto unfolded as more than a literary gathering, becoming a quiet but compelling call to our Caribbean diaspora, particularly Guyanese Canadians, to rediscover their stories, histories, and themselves through the written word.

The event, held as part of Guyana's 60th Independence anniversary commemorations, showcased the works of Janet Naidu, Natalie Scott-Chin, Nirmala Ramprasad, and Dennis Hosannah, four authors whose writings traverse landscapes of memory, resilience, healing, and cultural continuity.

Host Gillian Williams set the tone for the afternoon on April 5, welcoming attendees to what she described as "the launch of four incredible books", noting that such occasions

extend beyond the ceremonial unveiling of new titles.

"A book launch is more than the introduction of a publication; it is the celebration of ideas, creativity, and the dedication it takes to bring a story, a vision, or a body of knowledge to life," she affirmed.

Her words framed the gathering as more than an event; instead, it was elevated to become an act of cultural engagement, one that placed literature at the centre of diasporic identity and intellectual exchange.

"These books will inspire reflection, tell an important story, and we are excited to explore the pages and the conversations they will spark," Williams noted with foresight and prescience.

The afternoon's programme introduced each author in an alphabetised order, revealing an egalitarian and diverse, yet interconnected body of practitioners and their work that spoke to the many dimensions of the Guyanese diasporic experience here in Canada.

Janet Naidu's *Along Many Roads*, a collection of poetry, explores themes of despair, alienation, homeland, resilience, and aspiration. A seasoned educator and literary figure, Naidu has published five books, including *Winged Heart*, which was shortlisted for the

See Page 14: Guyana's voices



At the book launch were Honorary Consul Mani Singh, centre, with Natalie Scott-Chin (left to right), Janet Naidu, Nirmala Ramprasad, and Dennis Hosannah

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Imdadul Fair finds flavours, flair, and fellowship

— The Imdadul Islamic Center's International Food Fair on April 3 blended culture, cuisine, and community into a vibrant showcase of togetherness, while also pointing to future initiatives, notably its upcoming matrimonial event, which continue to strengthen connection and belonging within the diaspora.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Toronto – The Taste of Imdadul is fast becoming more than just an event as it evolves into a signature expression of community identity, where culture is plated, shared, and delectably savoured.

On April 3, the Imdadul Islamic Center marked yet another significant cultural milestone by hosting its annual International Food Fair, drawing members of the community together on the auspicious occasion of Good Friday.

From the moment attendees arrived, they were greeted by a sensory tapestry, with lines of tables packed with bubbling dishes, the rich aroma of spices hanging warmly in the air, and the hum of conversation weaving through it all.

The event of community and food captured what Imdadul has long represented: a vibrant, multifaceted community brought together not just by faith, but by shared experience and mutual appreciation.

The Food Fair featured an impressive spread of home-cooked meals, snacks, and desserts, each prepared with care by a vibrant cadre of community chefs. These were not simply dishes, but deeper expressions of heritage, memory, and pride. Whether savoury or sweet, every offering carried a personal touch that elevated the event beyond a typical food fair into something far more intimate and meaningful.

Throughout the day, a steady stream of attendees filled the packed hall, moving from table to table, sampling, purchasing, chatting, and reconnecting. There was a natural ease in the way people gathered in the communal eating area, where old friends



Osman Khan (left) with Sayem Khan; in photos, the mosque family at the Imdadul Food Fair

gathered, and new connections formed, underscoring the role of food as a universal language and a medium for meeting, bonding, and strengthening relationships.

What made the occasion particularly unique was its seamless integration with Friday prayers. The transition between spiritual reflection and communal celebration felt organic, reinforcing a sense of balance with faith and fellowship co-existing side by side. It created an atmosphere that was not only festive, but deeply grounded in togetherness, shared purpose, and authentic prayerfulness.

But beyond the warmth of the present moment, the Imdadul Islamic Center is also quietly building pathways for the future, extending its role from a place of gathering to one of meaningful connection.

At this time, Imdadul is preparing to host a dedicated matrimonial event on June 20, at its annex in North York, offering structured opportunities for single Muslim participants aged 40 and under to meet through guided introductions, group activities, and shared meals.

This initiative, much like the Food Fair, reflects a broader philosophy in the recognition that community is not accidental but cultivated. Where the food fair brings people together through shared culture and cuisine, the matrimonial event seeks to nurture lasting personal bonds, reinforcing Imdadul's role as both cultural and social, anchored in futurity within the diaspora.

Meanwhile, organisers of the food fair expressed heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to its success, noting that proceeds will support the mosque's ongoing initiatives. At the same time, from the growing numbers of attendance by community members, it is apparent that Taste of Imdadul will continue to grow, transcending its foundation as a culinary showcase into becoming an elevated platform for young and aspiring chefs.

Email imdadulmatrimonial@gmail.com for the matrimonial event; also, visit Imdadul's website for more information.



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Ottawa launches national strategy to address disparities in men's health

— Canada has launched its first federal Men and Boys' Health Strategy, opening a national consultation to address persistent disparities in male health outcomes. The initiative seeks public input on mental health, masculinity, and access to care, with submissions open until June 1, 2026.

Canada has taken a significant step toward addressing persistent health disparities among men and boys, with Health Minister Marjorie Michel announcing the development of the country's first federal **Men and Boys' Health Strategy**.

Unveiled on February 23, the strategy is accompanied by a nationwide consultation process designed to gather insights from Canadians, health professionals, and community organisations. **An online survey, launched March 2, remains open until June 1**, alongside a formal call for written submissions.

Speaking at a February press conference, Michel framed the initiative within a broader national vision for public health, stating, "We can only build Canada strong with healthy Canadians."

The strategy aims to confront a range of long-standing disparities affecting men in Canada, including shorter life expectancy, elevated suicide rates, and higher incidences of substance use and related harms.

On April 7, marking World Health Day, Michel reiterated the federal government's emphasis on evidence-based health policy, declaring, "We underscore our government's commitment to ensuring all Canadians have access to high-quality, inclusive health care that is rooted in science," she said.

Expanding on this theme, Michel noted, "This year's theme, *Together for health. Stand with science*, reminds us that science is central to protect public health. Sharing evidence-based information, strengthening our research capacities and working together for healthier beginnings and brighter futures are key to a



Health Minister MP Marjorie Michel announcing plans for men's health strategy

stronger and more equitable Canada."

The minister pointed to research highlighting the urgency of targeted interventions. "Evidence shows that men in Canada face distinct health challenges. That is why we recently announced our work on Canada's first federal Men and Boys' Health Strategy. The Strategy will help address these challenges, including lower life expectancy, higher suicide rates, and greater rates of substance use disorder and problem gambling."

She added that the initiative will operate alongside broader federal efforts to advance health equity.

"This will complement our efforts to improve the health of women and girls, and foster inclusive health care for everyone," she said.

Federal data underscore the scale of the disparities. Men in Canada have an average life expectancy of approximately 80 years, compared to 84 years for women. They also

account for a disproportionate share of premature deaths, including approximately 70 percent of opioid-related fatalities nationwide.

Higher rates of certain infectious diseases, chronic conditions such as diabetes and ischemic heart disease, and gambling-related harms further illustrate the uneven health burden faced by men.

Equally significant is the gap in health-seeking behaviour. Studies indicate that 65 percent of Canadian men wait more than six days after the onset of symptoms before consulting a physician, reflecting lower engagement with primary care and preventive services.

The government has emphasised that these disparities extend beyond biology. Social, economic, and cultural factors, among them education levels, incarceration rates, and homelessness, play a defining role in shaping health

outcomes among men.

Michel highlighted the importance of early intervention in addressing these structural inequities, stating, "Similarly, research shows us that by addressing the root causes of health inequities early in life, we can give people the opportunity to live their healthiest life possible."

She further noted that the federal government currently invests more than \$144 million annually in community-based programs supporting pregnant women, children, and families experiencing health inequities, with the goal of fostering long-term health outcomes.

As part of the consultation process, organisations and subject-matter experts are being invited to submit written briefs addressing key questions central to the strategy's development.

These include how to support boys and men in navigating traditional concepts of masculinity in healthier ways, including overcoming stigma and feeling comfortable seeking help. Contributors are also asked to consider how men can be encouraged to build healthy relationships, adopt positive habits, and engage with care systems for mental health and substance use challenges.

The consultation further explores how different life stages, ranging from adolescence and early adulthood to fatherhood, midlife, and retirement, shape well-being, and where targeted interventions may be most effective during key transition periods.

Written submissions must follow specific guidelines, including a maximum of 1,000 words over two pages using 12-point Arial font. All content within the submission, including graphs, images, and footnotes, counts toward the limit.

Submissions are due by June 1 at 11:59 p.m. PST and should be sent via email to menshealth-santemasculine@hc-sc.gc.ca.



At the grand opening of Brampton City's first municipally supported Commercial Kitchen, Mayor Patrick Brown with food entrepreneur Denise Edwards for a live cooking demonstration, marking the launch of a public health-certified culinary hub designed to support local chefs, bakers, and small food businesses. Above, Mayor Brown (left) exchanges culinary tips with Edwards; in photo below, Edwards showcases her Tropix Coconut Drops products, highlighting the kitchen's role as a launchpad for community-based culinary enterprise. Brampton City photos.



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Editorial

Santokhi's passing

Chandrikapersad Santokhi belonged to a rare class of Caribbean leaders shaped not in the theatre of politics, but via the discipline of enforcement, one where order is not debated but applied, and where certainty, not compromise, is the currency of decision-making. His journey from police officer to President of Suriname was not merely a career trajectory, but a translation of one philosophy into another, more volatile arena.

He entered public life carrying the imprint of the lawman. As Minister of Justice and Police, and later as President, Santokhi's instinct was to stabilise, to structure, to apply coherence on systems long shaped by rupture.

That ethos was most clearly tested in his engagement with one of Suriname's most painful historical episodes that was the 1982 December killings. In confronting that legacy, he positioned himself within a narrow and precarious corridor: between justice and political survival, between national healing and the reopening of wounds. It was a role that required not only administrative resolve, but moral steadiness; an understanding that the past, however distant, continues to exert pressure on the present.

He assumed the presidency in 2020, when Suriname was under severe economic strain. The decisions that followed would define his tenure. Turning to the IMF, Santokhi pursued structural reforms aimed at stabilising the country's finances. These were not choices made in comfort, but rather, the decisions of a leader confronting limited options in an unforgiving fiscal environment.

Draconian reform in small and vulnerable economies is rarely an abstract exercise. The removal of subsidies and the rise in living costs translated quickly into public discontent. By 2023, that discontent had spilled into the streets, culminating in the storming of Parliament.

In this, Santokhi's presidency revealed its central paradox: he governed with a logic of necessity, but within a society governed by the immediacy of hardship. Stability required sacrifice; but sacrifice, unevenly borne, eroded consent. It made his electoral defeat in 2025 not simply a political outcome, but a culmination of an unresolved tension between reform and acceptance.

And yet, to measure Santokhi solely through this tenure would be to misread his place in the region's political imagination. Beyond Suriname's borders, he was regarded as a figure of quiet diplomacy and regional commitment.

Guyana's President Irfaan Ali warmly captured this dimension, describing Santokhi as "a brother forged not by blood but by conviction... leaders who understood that the destiny of our nations is woven from the same cloth". Ali's words clearly position him as a participant in the ongoing project of Caribbean cohesion.

Similarly, Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar framed his life through the lens of service, noting his "discipline, integrity, and a firm commitment to the rule of law". Her tribute also situated Santokhi within a broader Indo-Caribbean continuum, one in which public service is both inheritance and obligation, shaped by our histories of migration, resilience, and institutional striving.

For our Indo-Caribbean diaspora, Santokhi's presence in high office carried additional resonance. He stood as both symbol and substance, a reminder that our ancestors had not only endured indentureship, but had emerged to shape the governance of nations; his leadership extended beyond history and policy into representation, into the broader realm of regional and global recognition.

Santokhi's layered life resists easy summation. He leaves behind the recognition as a man of discipline navigating disorder; a reformer constrained by reality; a regionalist grounded in national responsibility. His legacy may be best understood not in the volume of his achievements, but in the nature of his choices. He chose stability in instability, reform in resistance, and authentic engagement in a region that continues to negotiate its shared future.

Our Caribbean, and our diaspora, have lost a statesman whose presence was measured, whose voice was steady, and whose contribution will linger in the quiet architecture of institutions, in the relationships he helped to shape, and among many of us who will continue to respect his legacy.

Floor crossing rekindles debate over democratic mandate

In Canada's parliamentary tradition, few acts provoke as much immediate reaction from the public as "crossing the floor". This is the practice of when a Member of Parliament leaves their political party in the House of Commons and takes a seat with another party.

It is an occurrence that exaggerates parliamentary theatre with constitutional reality, but a stark reminder that in the Westminster system used in Canada, MPs are elected not only as partisans but as individuals.

The recent decisions by several opposition MPs to join Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberal government have reignited debate about the legitimacy and prudence of floor crossing.

Carney's government, which was a handful of seats shy of forming a majority government, recently welcomed four members from the Conservative Party, and one from the NDP.

Critics argue that such moves distort the electoral verdict, particularly in a minority Parliament where each seat carries heightened weight. Traditionalists counter that floor crossing is an established and constitutionally permissible feature of Canadian democracy.

Historically, floor crossing is hardly novel. Since Confederation, hundreds of MPs have changed party affiliation mid-term. In 1868, Stewart Campbell left the Anti-Confederates to support the government of John A. Macdonald.

In more contemporary times, party realignment has often followed ideological shifts or structural upheavals. Scott Brison crossed from the Progressive Conservatives to the Liberals in 2003 amid the reconfiguration of Canada's centre-right. Years later, Leona Alleslev left the Liberal government to join the Conservatives, citing differences in policy direction.

These moves cut across party lines and political eras, underscoring that floor crossing is not the exclusive tool of any one faction.

The recent moves to join Carney's Government are distinctive because of the math. The Carney government entered this session without a majority. Each MP who has chosen to sit with the government benches strengthens its capacity to advance legislation without the constant brinkmanship that can characterise minority rule.

Basically, this means greater predictability in budgeting, foreign policy positioning, and long-term program planning.

However, there is a democratic tension at play. Canadians cast ballots primarily along party lines. Campaign branding, leadership debates, and national platforms dominate electoral discourse.

Grief draws family together around the kitchen table

Bad news in those days when I was growing up back home, such as a relative critically ill, or an untimely death in the family, magnetised our kitchen table, attracting my parents, and family members from some distance away, so they convened over cups of strong, untouched tea to partake in crumbs of hushed and subdued conversation.

Such is the sparse fare that is offered when a collective of misery gathers. There, at the easel of the kitchen table, they began drawing, and re-drawing numerous worry lines as thick brushstrokes of anxiety that overlapped on foreheads, their faces shaded in deepening shadows, with fingers tracing and re-tracing with muscle-memory the untouched rims of their teacups.

This is how it was with family when bad news arrived, never welcome and always uninvited, in our household back home.

In our house that was daily filled with a lit fireside, laughter, and a kitchen sink overflowing with teacups and dishes, it was as if on a sunny day dark clouds were suddenly pouring out from a lightning flash episode of spontaneous combustion in the nearby hills, and were now advancing rapidly and inexorably towards the house as a consuming brushfire.

So quickly were the shadows thrown forward, and so convincing was its imminent darkness, that the birds stopped singing, and the chickens, confused with being unfed, began seeking out their night perches while vigorously shaking their heads with disbelief.

I recall quite a few of these days of the family coming together during crises, momentarily putting aside discord and differences, and preparing the defences to contain rapidly approaching tribulation. There were more than a few of these calamitous episodes during my boyhood growing up back home.

Those were the days when my happy-go-lucky mien was interrupted in its unguarded and upper flights when my grandmother began gesturing to me with both palms descending downwards, her manner like a veteran musical director calming a symphony orchestra that had gone rogue.

But perhaps, given my boyhood surges of undiminished energy, her actions were more with the futility of a mere mortal pair of hands attempting to restrain a fault line that

When an MP elected under one banner adopts another, some constituents understandably feel that their collective choice has been altered without consultation.

Yet Canada's constitutional design does not bind MPs to their party label. They are not delegates in the strict sense; they are representatives. As party discipline has grown stronger over time, the underlying principle remains: MPs hold their seats as individuals.

Requiring an automatic by-election for every party switch would fundamentally alter that balance, transforming caucus affiliation into a quasi-contractual obligation, rather than a political alignment.

In the case of MPs joining Carney's government, some have framed their decision as one rooted in stability and policy progress. Minority Parliaments can be productive, but they can also descend into procedural stalemate.

If an MP sincerely believes that joining the governing caucus allows them to advance legislation they deem beneficial, it can be on economic management, climate adaptation, or international trade.

Yet still, their choice can be seen not as opportunistic, but as pragmatic. This does not mean floor crossing should be insulated from scrutiny.

Transparency matters. Constituents deserve a clear explanation. MPs who change parties must accept that voters will render judgment at the next election. In that sense, the ballot box remains the ultimate referee.

Still, there is something quietly reassuring about the persistence of floor crossing in Canadian life. It signals that our system, though strongly partisan, retains a measure of fluidity. It allows space for political conscience, recalibration, and even reconciliation across ideological lines.

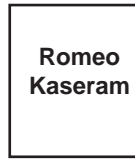
In an era when democratic systems worldwide are strained by polarisation, the ability of MPs to realign without triggering a constitutional crisis speaks to institutional resilience. The debate over floor crossing will continue. It touches on core questions about representation, mandate, and trust.

But history suggests that while the optics may be dramatic, the practice itself is woven into the fabric of parliamentary governance. When exercised thoughtfully and explained honestly, it can serve not as a distortion of democracy, but as an expression of its flexibility.

Ultimately, Canadian voters will decide whether those who crossed the floor were guided by principle, pragmatism, or politics. That judgment, rendered in due course, is the final and most important word.



Ryan Singh



was ineluctably being pushed upwards by waves of tectonic heaving.

Accompanying her actions for moderation was a firm and fixed stare past my short-cropped hair, her short-sighted eyes accurately reading at a distance my old man's subdued body language as he inexplicably approached the house.

It was an unusual arrival; this time he was coming home in what was a break in his work routine. His arrival brought with it foreboding that Ma was reading with eyes widening with dread, even as she calmed down my hooting following a successful chase and acquisition of a fistful of feathers.

The old man's unexpected arrival meant all was not well outside the perimeter of my marble-pitching, mango-pelting, grandmother-teasing, and chicken-feather-gathering world.

The household was sailing into turbulence, and the old man was the messenger bringing news of the gathering storm.

If his weary gait, sloped shoulder, and eyes weighted down by a heave of eyelids were not clues that he was the bearer of bad news, then it was not difficult to miss with his absentmindedness after he did not lovingly lean the entirety of his sturdy Brooks bicycle against the far wall underneath the house, and pat its saddle like a cowboy who reassures a loyal horse.

Instead, he put it aside with detachment, leaning the heavy Brooks crookedly so its front wheel angled outwards, causing the Cyclops-eyed headlamp to lift upwards in an awkward gaze, and then to stare morosely at the underside of the cobwebbed, wooden floorboards.

By now Ma had put a warning forefinger to her lips, her gaze gluing me in place, cautioning me to stand down, even while she was keeping my world-weary old man in her blind spot.

"She take-in," my old man told our kitchen table. It meant a close relative was now quite ill; the gesture of his palms flat on the table and motionless spoke to health complications so dire, that there was nothing left to do but await the inevitable.

Eyes around the table began turning inwards, each gaze seeking out a happier time with our relative who was passing away.

My grandmother gathered me into her skirts; silent with grief, she placed her soft chin on the top of my prickly head.

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, Dhanpal 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

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Diplomacy not the solution to fixing TT crime

Dear Editor,

There is a growing chorus claiming Trinidad and Tobago is "damaging" its relationships with Caricom and Latin America by strengthening ties with the US to confront narco-terrorism.

Let's be frank – this argument is dangerously disconnected from reality.

For decades, our country has been under siege by the narcotics trade. Not in theory; not in diplomatic briefings, but on our streets, in our communities, and inside our homes.

We have buried the victims. We have watched families collapse under the weight of violence. We have seen entire communities gripped by fear.

At one point, Trinidad and Tobago ranked among the most dangerous countries in the world by murder rate. Illegal guns flood our borders. Gangs operate with growing sophistication. Drugs continue to poison lives and destabilise entire neighbourhoods.

This is not a time for comfortable foreign policy debates detached from lived reality. This

is a national emergency.

The government's decision to engage stronger international support, particularly with the US, is not a betrayal of regional partnerships. It is a necessary response to a crisis that has gone on far too long.

Yes, our relationships with Caricom and Latin America matter. But relationships must be rooted in mutual understanding. If our regional partners cannot fully grasp, or worse, choose to ignore, the scale of the crime crisis facing Trinidad and Tobago, then we must ask: who is truly failing whom? This is not about geopolitics; it is about survival.

We cannot diplomacy our way out of crime. We must confront it, with every tool, every partnership, and every ounce of political will available.

Because the real damage is not who we stand with. The real damage is what happens if we stand still.

Leisha S. Dhoray, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Call to TT govt to challenge affordability crisis

Dear Editor,

Trinidad and Tobago's Cabinet must confront the growing affordability crisis now confronting families, where even children's clothing in malls is priced near adult levels: a long pants at TT \$250 and a T-shirt at \$169, despite these items being sourced at minimal cost from countries such as China and India.

This widening gap between low import cost and high retail price, driven by layered taxes, freight, overheads and aggressive mark-ups in a small-volume economy, is colliding with stagnant wages and eroding purchasing power, forcing citizens into garage sales and second-

hand markets to meet basic needs.

It has now become a situation that is signaling not just inflation but a dangerous structural imbalance where the cost of living is outpacing income growth, squeezing the middle class and undermining social stability.

Urgent policy action is required to review import duties and VAT on essential goods, incentivise local garment production, reduce commercial rental pressures, and restore affordability before this silent crisis deepens into long-term economic and social decline.

Gordon Laughlin, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



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Govt spending climbs higher even as flood waters continue to rise

Flooding in Guyana has become a recurring and intensifying challenge, shaped by a combination of geography, climate pressures, and structural limitations. This is largely due to a complex interaction between natural vulnerability and human systems that struggles to keep pace with changing conditions.

As a result, for more than a decade – accelerating sharply in recent years – the government of Guyana has poured billions into drainage, irrigation, and flood control infrastructure. From the reinforcement of the East Demerara Water Conservancy to the construction of the Hope Canal and the expansion of pump stations and drainage networks, the scale of intervention is undeniable. Yet, across the country’s low-lying coast, a troubling reality persists – after even moderate rainfall, communities get inundated with water.

The underlying reality is that Guyana’s coastal plain, where the majority of the population resides, lies below sea level, and depends heavily on an intricate network of drainage canals, kokers (sluices), and sea defenses. This low-lying geography makes the country inherently susceptible to flooding, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall.

In addition, climate change has significantly worsened the situation. Increasingly erratic and intense rainfall patterns, especially during the May-August and November-January rainy seasons, often overwhelm drainage systems, whereas high tides in the Atlantic Ocean can also impede the discharge of inland water, causing it to accumulate.

Deforestation and land-use changes further exacerbate the problem. The removal of vegetation reduces natural water absorption, while rapid urbanisation, particularly around Georgetown, has led to blocked drains, unregulated construction, and reduced permeability of the soil. In addition, aging and poorly maintained infrastructure often fails under stress, highlighting gaps in long-term planning and investment.

The impacts of flooding in Guyana are widespread and often severe. Agriculture is one of the hardest-hit sectors, with rice, sugar, and cash crops frequently destroyed by prolonged inundation. This not only affects farmers’ livelihoods, but also threatens food security and export revenues.

Flooding also disrupts daily life and economic activity. Homes in particularly rural and low-income communities are often inundated, leading to displacement and property damage. Public infrastructure such as roads, schools, and health facilities can become inaccessible, compounding social and economic strain.

Health risks rise significantly during flood events. Stagnant water creates breeding grounds for mosquitoes, increasing the incidence of diseases such as dengue and malaria, while contaminated water supplies can lead to gastrointestinal illnesses.

From a macroeconomic perspective, repeated flooding places a heavy burden on government resources. Emergency response, rehabilitation, and infrastructure repairs divert funds from long-term development priorities, creating a cycle of reactive rather than preventive spending.

Recent reports indicate that flooding has affected communities across all ten administrative regions, though severity varies widely depending on geography. The coastal areas are most severely affected.

The contradiction between rising expenditure and persistent flooding, demands closer scrutiny. It raises a fundamental policy question: has Guyana’s flood mitigation strategy

been effective, or is it misaligned with the nature of the problem it seeks to solve?

There is no question that progress has been made. Since the catastrophic 2005 Guyana floods, large-scale investments have reduced the likelihood of a similar national emergency. The Hope Canal, in particular, has enhanced the system’s capacity to release excess water from the conservancy, while upgrades to embankments and control structures have strengthened resilience against overtopping and failure. In this respect, the government has succeeded in addressing the most extreme risks.

As a result, flood mitigation has become a major fiscal priority, particularly through the agriculture and infrastructure sectors. Between 2020 and 2025, over (G) \$150 billion has been allocated to drainage and irrigation. In the country’s 2025 budget, \$73.2 billion was earmarked for expanding drainage systems, while \$81.9 billion was allocated in 2026 for drainage and irrigation, whereas \$97.6 billion was directed to agriculture in 2024, with heavy emphasis on flood control.

These funds are largely channeled through the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), which is responsible for maintaining Guyana’s extensive network of canals, kokers, and pumps.

However, Guyana’s flood control strategy remains overly focused on capital-intensive engineering solutions, while underinvesting in the systems that make those investments effective.

Maintenance is the most glaring gap. Canals that are not regularly desilted, drains clogged with debris, and poorly timed operation of kokers and pumps can render even the most sophisticated infrastructure ineffective. Billions spent on expansion cannot compensate for weaknesses in upkeep. Yet maintenance, less visible, less politically rewarding, continues to lag behind new construction.

Equally problematic is the absence of robust land-use planning. Rapid urban expansion, particularly around Georgetown, has proceeded with limited regard for drainage capacity. Wetlands have been filled, natural waterways obstructed, and impermeable surfaces expanded, all of which exacerbate flood risk. In effect, development policy is working at cross-purposes with flood mitigation efforts, creating new vulnerabilities even as the State attempts to reduce existing ones.

Climate change further complicates the equation. Rainfall patterns are becoming more intense and less predictable, while rising sea levels and high tides increasingly constrain the country’s gravity-based drainage system. Much of Guyana’s infrastructure was designed for a different climatic reality. Without a fundamental redesign grounded in forward-looking climate models, even well-funded systems will struggle to cope.

There is also a strategic imbalance in the policy approach. Heavy reliance on “hard” infrastructure, such as canals, pumps, and dams, has not been matched by investment in nature-based solutions, such as mangrove restoration and wetland preservation, which can provide critical flood buffering at lower long-term cost. Nor has sufficient attention been given to community-level adaptation, where households are often left to devise their own coping mechanisms in the absence of structured support.

None of this is to suggest that the government’s efforts have been misplaced. On the contrary, the scale of investment reflects a clear recognition of the problem’s urgency. But recognition alone is not enough. What is required

now is a shift in policy emphasis – from building more infrastructure to managing existing systems more effectively, from reactive spending to preventive planning, and from short-term fixes to long-term resilience.

Flooding in Guyana is not a problem that can be engineered away entirely. Much of the country’s coastland lies below sea level, and its drainage system will always depend on the rhythms of the Atlantic. But this reality makes it all the more important that policy be precise, coordinated, and adaptive.

If billions in public funds are to deliver meaningful results, the government must close the gap between investment and outcomes. That means prioritising maintenance, enforcing land-use regulations, integrating climate science into infrastructure design, and embracing a broader toolkit that goes beyond concrete and steel.

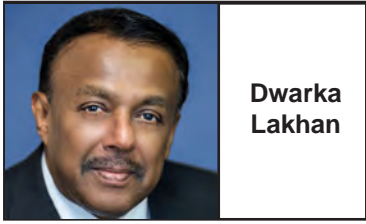
Flooding is not merely an environmental issue; it is a development challenge that intersects with climate resilience, infrastructure, governance, and social equity. While efforts have been made to upgrade drainage systems and improve disaster preparedness, the increasing frequency and intensity of floods suggest that more comprehensive, forward-looking strategies are needed. These include climate-resilient infrastructure, stricter land-use planning, and

sustained investment in maintenance and modernisation of drainage networks.

Without such measures, flooding will continue to undermine economic stability and quality of life in one of the Caribbean’s most geographically vulnerable nations.

Until then, the paradox will remain: a country spending more than ever to fight flooding, while its citizens continue to live with water at their doorsteps.

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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Dennis Latchmana's 75th birthday celebrated with faith, family, and fellowship

— A moving tribute by Vishnu Sookar marked Dennis Latchmana's 75th birthday at Jai Durga Temple in Markham, celebrating a life shaped by faith, service, music, and community leadership, and reflecting the enduring bonds of family, friendship, and diasporic presence in Canada.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Under the soft glow of temple lights and the quiet cadence of prayer, the 75th birthday celebration for Dennis Latchmana unfolded on April 4 as both celebration and consecration in an event where memory, music, and devotion converged at Jai Durga Temple.

Officiated by Pandit Bhoj of Vishnu Mandir, the gathering brought together family, friends, and members of our diasporic community to honour a life lived with purpose, humility, and quiet distinction.

At the heart of the evening was a deeply personal and resonant tribute delivered by Vishnu Sookar, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees at Devi Mandir, whose words moved fluidly between reflection, reverence, and brotherhood.

Addressing Latchmana not merely as a friend but as kin, Sookar began with a gesture rooted in tradition and affection: "On this blessed milestone of your 75th birthday, I offer my heartfelt *pranams* and gratitude to the Divine for your life, your friendship, and the beautiful bond our families share."

Sookar noted the bond was not formed overnight, but forged across decades of shared experience beginning in the early years of migration, and maturing into a relationship that now carries the weight and warmth of family.

Additionally, he noted that Latchmana's journey reflects a remarkable diaspora narrative of achievement while tracing a familiar arc: "From your early days arriving in Canada as a young man filled with hope and determination, you built a life of purpose, dignity, and success."

Through enterprise and perseverance, Latchmana established a thriving trucking business while nurturing a family rooted in shared values and enduring love.

Sookar paid tribute to this legacy, acknowledging not only Latchmana's achievements, but the family that stands as its living extension with his wife Roshnie, children Devin and Natasha, daughter-in-law Anita, and grandchildren who embody "the love and values" cultivated across generations.



Dennis Latchmana with wife, Roshnie



Pandit Bhoj officiating at the event

Yet, as the tribute unfolded, it became clear that achievement alone did not define the man being honoured. Instead, Sookar situated Latchmana within a deeper moral and spiritual framework, describing his life as "a true expression of karma, *seva*, and faith". These principles rendered in action, service, and devotion, formed the philosophical spine of both the tribute and the life it sought to honour.

Sookar recalled the origins of their friendship in how it lay in shared service at Devi Mandir, where what began as collaboration gradually transformed into lifelong brotherhood.

"What began as service grew into a lifelong brotherhood," he

said, attributing their meeting to "Divine grace".

Together, the two devotees contributed to the growth and cultural vibrancy of the mandir through fundraising efforts, and the hosting of renowned devotional artists, including Hari Om Sharan, Anup Jalota, and Anuradha Paudhwal. These events, Sookar emphasised, transcended performance.

"These were not merely events; they were sacred acts of devotion," he affirmed.

Indeed, music emerged as a defining motif of Latchmana's life. A gifted singer of Indian classical music and Bhajans, he has long used his voice as a conduit for spiritual connection. In Sookar's words, "your voice uplifts hearts and brings souls closer to the Divine", offering not entertainment but "true *bhakti*" to those who listen.

Still, it was in the quieter, less visible acts of kindness that Sookar located Latchmana's deepest legacy. Turning from public achievements to personal witness, he reflected on moments that revealed the essence of his friend's character, stating, "I have witnessed it time and again, in the gentle way you care for others, and in the quiet generosity with which you serve those less fortunate."

Recalling their shared travels, Sookar spoke of a compassion that required no audience, stating, "You never hesitated to make sure someone in need was fed, comforted, and remembered."

It is this instinctive humanity that defines Latchmana most profoundly, Sookar affirmed, noting, "Your kindness is not done for recognition; it flows from who you truly are."

As the celebratory event progressed, the tribute widened to include not only the man but the network of relationships that surround him. The friendship between the two families, Sookar noted, has deepened over time into something enduring and seamless.

As he declared, "Whether we are together often or meet again after some time, it always feels as though no time has passed at all."

Such continuity across years, across families, across shared values formed the emotional and spiritual anchor of the celebration. In a final gesture that returned the gathering to its devotional roots, Sookar offered a prayer that resonated across the temple space: "May all be happy; may all be free from illness."

He extended blessings to Latchmana and his family, invoking health, peace, happiness, and continued grace, and closed with words that carried both affection and affirmation: "You are truly a blessing to our family and to all whose lives you have touched."

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Politics, power, and policy shape historical Guyana-US partnership

By Harry Hergash

In an interview with *News Source Guyana* on March 30, US Ambassador to Guyana Nicole Theriot stated that the US is monitoring the Guyana-Venezuela case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and is “prepared to stand with Guyana against Venezuela... we are willing and ready to defend Guyana... we stand by you against any threat...”

In my view, and I believe in the view of most Guyanese, these words, as well as the earlier statement by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, are reassuring, and indicate that Guyana’s President Dr Irfaan Ali’s support of US foreign policy is paying dividends as Guyana faces a threat to its territorial integrity from Venezuela.

Over the past few months letter writers in Guyana’s major national newspapers and social media activists on television have been excoriating President Ali for embracing US policy in the Caribbean and distancing his government’s relations with Cuba, claiming that Guyana has surrendered its sovereignty to the US. It seems that these individuals neither have an understanding of the dynamics of government, nor a familiarity with Guyana’s past history. And the tiny few critics from the Burnham era seem to have acquired selective amnesia.

For the record, Guyana’s sovereignty has been influenced by the US since Guyana, then British Guiana, was a colony of Britain in the late 19th century. In 1823, US President James Monroe enunciated the Monroe doctrine. The [US Government website](#) notes, “The European powers, according to Monroe, were obligated to respect the Western Hemisphere as the United States’ sphere of interest”, and “warned European powers not to interfere in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere”.

I believe every adult Guyanese is aware of the Guyana-Venezuela border dispute, which has been ongoing since before Guyana’s Independence in 1966. That dispute stems from the 1899 Arbitration Award that settled the matter between Venezuela and Britain, the colonial power that governed Guyana at the time, but which Venezuela resurrected just prior to Guyana’s Independence. What may not be widely known is the US’ role in the 1899 settlement of the border dispute that was simmering since 1841.

A further [US government Office of the Historian document](#) is informative. It states, “In 1876 Venezuela protested and appealed to the United States for assistance, citing the Monroe Doctrine as justification for US involvement. For the next 19 years Venezuela repeatedly petitioned for US assistance, calling on its neighbour to the north to intervene by either sponsoring arbitration or intervening with force.”

Finally, in 1895 the US intervened, and when Britain refused to submit the matter to arbitration, “(US) President Grover Cleveland asked Congress for authorisation to appoint a boundary commission, proposing that the commission’s findings be enforced ‘by every means.’ Congress passed the measure unanimously, and talk of war with Great Britain began to circulate in the US press”. Finally Britain acquiesced, the matter was arbitrated, and the 1899 settlement was approved by all.

While Venezuela was unhappy with the outcome, this document notes, “Internationally the incident marked the US as a world power and gave notice that under the Monroe Doctrine it would exercise its claimed prerogatives in the Western Hemisphere”. In 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt added the Roosevelt Corollary justifying US authority to intervene in any country in Latin America “to restore order”, a euphemism for regime change. Subsequently, the corollary was officially abandoned by President Franklin Roosevelt, but it continued to influence US policy indirectly.

Fast forward to the early 1960s when Guyana was on the verge of gaining independence under the PPP government headed



by Dr Cheddi Jagan, a nationalist and self-proclaimed Marxist who expressed support for the 1959 Cuban revolution. From 1961 to 1964, US administration under President John Kennedy and then under President Johnson pressured the British government to prevent Guyana from gaining Independence under a Jagan-led government. Britain succumbed to the pressure, Independence was delayed, the voting system was changed from first past the post to Proportional Representation, and new elections held in 1964.

Although the PPP won the elections by a plurality of votes, contrary to British convention, Dr Jagan was not allowed to form the government. Instead, Forbes Burnham, leader of the PNC, and who had given assurance to the US that a government under him will not trade with Cuba or recognise the former Soviet Union, was asked to form a government.

As suggested to Burnham by the US in order to have a governing majority, he joined with Peter D’Aguiar, leader of the business-oriented conservative party, in forming a coalition government of their two parties, the PNC and the UF.

Independence was then granted in 1966 with Burnham as Prime Minister and D’Aguiar as Finance Minister. So, once again the US influence was effective, and although Burnham kept his promise to the US up to 1972 regarding no trade with Cuba and no diplomatic relation with the Soviet Union, no concern was ever expressed about Guyana surrendering its sovereignty to the US.

The US aided Prime Minister Burnham in rigging the 1968 elections to retain power. From then onwards until 1992, Burnham’s party, the PNC, rigged every national election to retain power.

Finally in 1992, with the economy in shambles, poverty and starvation rampant, and major sources of loan financing no longer available, then President Desmond Hoyte reluctantly accepted the recommendations of former US President Jimmy Carter and held free and fair elections, then won by the PPP, still under the leadership of Dr Cheddi Jagan.

Subsequently, the PPP, under new leader-

ship, continued to win future elections until 2015 when the US, dissatisfied with decisions of then President Donald Ramotar, took an active role through the International Republican Institute in defeating the Ramotar-led PPP in the 2015 national elections.

David Granger, then leader of the PNC became Guyana’s President. However, shortly after his party lost a No Confidence Vote in

parliament, he started to act unconstitutionally. In the ensuing 2020 national elections, Guyana Election Commission officials attempted to declare fraudulent results in favour of Granger’s party.

The US and Canadian ambassadors took a leading role in protesting the apparent fraud, and a series of court challenges followed, lasting five months during which time Granger refused to concede defeat. Finally, after US threats of sanctions against government officials, Granger conceded defeat, and allowed the PPP/Civic to form the government under Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali as President.

With Guyana becoming an important oil producer in the region, Venezuela commenced aggressive activities both militarily and legislatively against Guyana’s territorial integrity, despite the fact that the border dispute is before the ICJ. Militarily, Guyana is no match for Venezuela.

The website [Global Military](#), which tracks world military forces through open-source intelligence offers the following comparison: “Venezuela (ranked #46 globally) holds a stronger overall military position than Guyana (#148) on the Global Military Index. Venezuela fields 343,000 active troops – 114:1 Guyana’s 3,000, backed by 8,000 reserves and 220,000 paramilitary. Venezuela’s \$0.8B defense budget is 3.8x that of Guyana (\$0.2B). In the air, Guyana operates 11 aircraft including 0 combat jets, while Venezuela fields 226 with 54 fighters. Venezuela operates a 42-ship naval fleet; Guyana has no navy. On the ground, Guyana deploys 0 main battle tanks vs 172 for Venezuela. Neither Guyana nor Venezuela possess nuclear weapons”.

President Ali’s foremost responsibility to the nation is to protect its territorial integrity. With such an overwhelming military strength in Venezuela’s favour, undoubtedly Guyana needs the support of the US. From the statements of Secretary Rubio and now Ambassador Theriot, Guyana has this support, which is certainly based on President Ali’s US policy. Consequently it is difficult to understand the criticism of armchair critics who have no official responsibility for the nation’s sovereignty.

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Suriname's Santokhi passes at 67

— Former Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, known for his transition from policing to national leadership, has died at 67. His career spanned law enforcement reform, political rivalry, and economic restructuring, leaving a complex legacy across Suriname and the wider Caribbean region.

...

Paramaribo – Chandrikapersad Santokhi, the former President of Suriname who rose from a career in policing to lead the country through a period of economic reform and political tension, died on March 30 at the age of 67. Authorities have not disclosed the exact cause of death.

Widely known as “Chan”, Santokhi remained a prominent figure in Suriname’s public life even after his presidency ended in 2025. His passing marks the end of a decades-long career that bridged law enforcement, governance, and regional diplomacy, leaving an imprint on both national and Caribbean political life.

Santokhi’s professional journey began in criminal investigations, where he built a reputation for discipline and diligence before rising to become Minister of Justice and Police. In that role, his firm stance on crime earned him the nickname “The Sheriff”, reflecting an administrative approach grounded in order and accountability.

One of the most defining aspects of his career was his involvement in investigating the 1982 December killings, a traumatic episode in Suriname’s history involving the execution of political opponents. His efforts placed him at the intersection of justice and political sensitivity, as he pursued accountability in a context shaped by powerful interests and historical wounds.

Santokhi’s political life was also marked by a long-standing rivalry with former leader Desi Bouterse, a central figure associated with the 1982 events. Their relationship underscored the broader ideological and personal tensions that shaped Suriname’s political landscape over several decades.

When Santokhi assumed the presidency in 2020, he inherited an economy under severe strain. His administration turned to the International Monetary Fund, initiating a series of reforms aimed at stabilising public finances and restoring economic confidence.

However, those reforms came at a significant social cost. The removal of subsidies on essential services contributed to rising living expenses, fuelling public dissatisfaction. In 2023, protests escalated into the storming of Parliament, underscoring the depth of public frustration and the political risks of austerity-driven policies.

These challenges ultimately contributed to Santokhi’s electoral defeat in 2025, reflecting the delicate balance between economic reform and public acceptance in times of national hardship.

Despite the turbulence of his presidency, Santokhi’s leadership extended beyond national borders. His diplomatic engagement, particularly within Caricom and with countries such as India, drew recognition from regional and global leaders.

Guyana’s President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali paid tribute in a deeply personal reflection, stating, “It is with a heavy heart that I have received the news of the passing of Chandrikapersad Santokhi, former President of the Republic of Suriname. A voice of wisdom has fallen silent. A friend has left us.”

He continued, “On behalf of the Government and people of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, and on my own behalf, I offer our deepest condolences to the Government and

people of Suriname, and to the family of the late former President.”

Ali’s tribute offered a window into Santokhi’s regional role and personal relationships. “Former President Santokhi was a brother forged not by blood but by conviction, not by birth but by the shared calling of service. During his tenure as President, we walked a path together – leaders who understood that the destiny of our nations is woven from the same cloth.”

He added, “We were brothers in regionalism, standing shoulder to shoulder in the councils of Caricom, labouring in the vineyards of unity when the harvest seemed distant, and the work was hard. We were friends in the advancement of our shared global interests, raising our voices together on matters of principle.”

Reflecting on their personal connection, Ali said, “In the quiet spaces between formal engagements, we were simply two men who had come to trust one another and to understand one another.”

He further noted the strengthening of bilateral ties under Santokhi’s leadership, stating, “Under his steady guidance, the relationship between Guyana and Suriname blossomed. He understood, as I do, that the river which divides us also connects us, that our histories are intertwined, and that the prosperity of one cannot be separated from the prosperity of the other.”

Ali concluded, “The region has lost a fine statesman, one who carried the mantle of leadership with grace and humility... The sun sets now on a life well lived... the light of his example... will not fade.”

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of Trinidad and Tobago also

expressed condolences, stating, “It is with sincere sadness that I have learned of the sudden passing of Suriname’s former President, Chandrikapersad Santokhi... following a medical emergency.”

She added, “On behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, I extend heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Suriname, and to his family and loved ones during this time of grief.”

Reflecting on his career, Persad-Bissessar said, “President Santokhi’s life was defined by service to his country. He began his career in law enforcement, rising to the rank of Police Commissioner, before entering public life as Minister of Justice and Police, where he earned a reputation for discipline, integrity, and a firm commitment to the rule of law.”

She continued, “He later founded and led the Progressive Reform Party... and went on to serve as President of Suriname from 2020 to 2025, guiding his country through a period of economic challenge, reform, and renewed international engagement.”

Highlighting his regional impact, she noted, “At the regional level, his leadership as Chairman of Caricom in 2022 helped to advance cooperation among our member states and strengthen the bonds that unite the Caribbean region.”

Persad-Bissessar also underscored shared cultural ties, stating, “Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname share close and enduring ties, rooted in our common history, cultural connections, and cooperation within the region... including strong Indo-Caribbean traditions that form an important part of our regional identity.”

She concluded, “His legacy of public service, discipline, and commitment to national development will endure... May his family find comfort, and may his soul rest in eternal peace.”



Chan Santokhi



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
TheBrij@TheBrij.com or call: 416-418-2745

THE LETTER NO HOMEOWNER WANTS: UNDERSTANDING POWER OF SALE IN ONTARIO

When the Thompsons received a Notice of Sale, they feared the worst. Here’s what every Ontario homeowner needs to know before panic turns into costly mistakes.

“Power of sale is serious — but silence is what costs families their homes.”

Let me tell you about a family I met recently – let’s call them the Thompsons. For years, they enjoyed living in a peaceful Ontario suburb, raising their kids, making memories, and never missing a mortgage payment. However, when the economy shifted and property values fluctuated, everything changed.

I remember when the Thompsons called me, their voices tense with worry – they’d just received a Notice of Sale in the mail. Like many homeowners, they didn’t initially realise how serious it was, but a Notice of Sale is more than just a warning – it marks the start of Ontario’s legal power of sale process. If you miss payments and are in default for at least 15 days, your lender can send you that notice. If the payments remain overdue for three months, the lender can proceed with the power of sale.

When the Thompsons asked if they would lose their house right away, I reassured them that, under a power of sale, the lender doesn’t simply take the home away. Instead, the lender has the legal right to sell the property, and any remaining surplus is returned to the homeowner.

I often need to clarify the difference between power of sale and foreclosure. In a foreclosure, the lender goes through the courts, takes full ownership, and you lose both your home and any future equity. With a power of sale, the lender sells the property, and you might recover some equity. It is usually faster and less costly. Foreclosure means the bank owns your house; power of sale means they have the right to sell it, but it is still technically yours until it is sold.

In Ontario, borrowers usually have at least 35 days to redeem their mortgage. This means that if you can gather the funds to cover missed payments, interest, legal fees, and penalties, you can bring your loan back into good standing and stop the process.

Lenders usually encourage borrowers to contact them early, explore relief options, and provide clear information. None of these protections matter if you don’t answer the phone or open the letter. I always tell my clients: silence is your worst enemy in these situations.

Contact the lender immediately. The sooner you reach out, the more options you’ll have, such as payment deferrals, temporary interest-only plans, or extending your amortisation period. You can also explore refinancing before the lender lists the property – sometimes that involves obtaining a second mortgage, a private refinance, or using equity to cover arrears. Once the lender lists your home, costs rise and your options shrink.

For some families I’ve worked with, a controlled sale is the best option – selling the house on your own terms before the lender gets involved. When you decide to sell, you choose your agent, handle your pricing strategy, lower legal fees, and retain more of your hard-earned equity. When the lender sells, their main goal is to recover what’s owed, not to maximise your return. That’s a tough truth, but an important one.

If there’s one thing many homeowners wish they’d done differently, it’s preparing for the unexpected. I always advise homeowners to keep three to six months of mortgage payments in reserve, avoid borrowing to the max, and, most importantly, open every letter from the bank. Buying a home is only half the journey. Managing it, especially during difficult markets, is the other half of the equation.

Power of sale is not an immediate eviction. It is a structured legal process that balances lender efficiency with borrower protection. You have rights – the right to redeem, the right to surplus funds, and the right to fair market value.

In real estate, I’ve seen delays cause families to lose their homes and peace of mind. If you’re falling behind, don’t wait – take action today.

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Honorary Consul Mani Singh (right) with Gillian Williams at the book launch; in photos, authors, guests, and invitees at the literary event

Guyana's voices shine

From Page 1

Guyana Prize for Literature.

Her longstanding contributions to the literary community include founding the Pakaraima Writers Association and leading Guyanese Canadians for Unity. Her work continues to reflect a deep engagement with identity and belonging, shaped by her roots in Covent Garden, East Bank Demerara.

In contrast, Natalie Scott-Chin's *Spinal Curve: Can I Still Dance?* offers a deeply personal narrative grounded in her journey alongside her daughter through the diagnosis and treatment of scoliosis. The book extends beyond memoir into a resource for families navigating similar experiences, emphasising healing, resilience, and shared understanding.

Scott-Chin, an educator and advocate for inclusive, equitable learning, brings her professional and community-oriented perspective into her writing, amplifying voices often underrepresented in traditional spaces.

Nirmala Ramprasad's *All About Guyana* turns its focus to younger readers, presenting a children's book designed to connect families with Guyanese culture through storytelling and everyday experiences. An educator and community leader, Ramprasad draws on more than a decade of charitable work in Guyana, crafting a narrative that encourages cultural pride and intergenerational dialogue.

Completing the quartet was Dennis Hosannah's *Kilmanack*, a work rooted in the historical experiences of communal farming in Guyana's hinterland. Drawing from his own life, which includes his early years in Buxton Village and his involvement with the Guyana Young Farmers' Cooperative Society, Hosannah's novel reflects on community-building, labour, and the pursuit of collective progress. His journey, which spans service in the Guyana Police Force and later work in Canada, underscores the transnational dimensions of the Guyanese experience.

In brief remarks, Honorary Consul at the Consulate General of Guyana in Toronto Mani Singh congratulated the authors, attributing their achievements to "passion, commitment, dedication and hard work in the literary field".

He noted that their works offer "glimpses into Guyanese history that few had a chance to experience", bringing to light stories and struggles that might otherwise remain obscured.

Describing the authors as the "cream of the crop" within the Canadian diaspora, he emphasised the importance of their contributions in promoting Guyana's "rich history, heritage and culture through their literary works and poetry".

He added that the event aligned with a broader initiative by the Guyana Consulate in Toronto, reflecting the vision of President Dr Irfaan Ali to showcase the achievements of Guyanese abroad across art, culture, literature, and history.

The gathering drew a cross-section of the community, including Victor Moses of the Queen's College Alumni Association and long-standing diaspora supporters as Roy Doobay, Roslyn and Michael Bacchus, and Lindsay Davidson, with Cledwyn Longe receiving special mention for inspiring the production of the event.

Meanwhile, beyond the speeches, acknowledgements, and interventions by the authors, the event acquired deeper affirmation in the productions of texts and reading as acts of connection. In a diaspora often navigating distances in geography, generations, and cultures, the launch of the books by these authors presented to the gathering a means of return, and a way of re-engaging with the histories that inform our present identities.

As Williams invited attendees to "sit back, engage, and enjoy the experience", she also expressed a hope that the launch would "inspire connection, dialogue, and new ways of thinking". It was an aspiration that reached out beyond the Consulate's walls, into homes, classrooms, and communities where these stories and texts have started to circulate.



Ramharack's Wismar Massacre book invites diaspora to engage with the past

— A significant new work on Guyana's history and memory arrives in the GTA this May, as Dr Baytoram Ramharack launches *The Wismar Massacre: A Case of Ethnic Cleansing of Indians in Guyana*. The dual events are an invitation to our diaspora to read, reflect, and reclaim with a deeply researched account of trauma, survival, and historical reckoning.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI News Report

Toronto – The Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area will have a timely opportunity this May to engage with a pivotal chapter of Guyanese history as Dr Baytoram Ramharack launches his latest book, *The Wismar Massacre: A Case of Ethnic Cleansing of Indians in Guyana*, at two community venues.

The first launch is scheduled for May 23 at the Bharat Sevashram Sangha Canada, located at 2105 Codlin Crescent in Toronto, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. A second event follows on May 24 at the Vedic Cultural Centre, 4345-14th Avenue in Markham, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.

Copies of the book will be available for purchase and autographed by the author, offering readers a direct and personal connection to a work shaped by decades of scholarship, careful crafting, and care.

That care is evident in the depth and scope of Ramharack's research. Drawing on more than 20 years of archival excavation, transnational government and media document recovery, eyewitness accounts, oral testimonies, and legal and philosophical analysis, the book crafts what can be described as a sorrowful and gripping postcolonial narrative, one that moves between documentation and memory, between record and reckoning.

At its core, the work presents a detailed historiographic account of the violence that unfolded in the Wismar-

Christianburg area between May 24 and May 26, 1964.

Over the course of roughly 38 hours, approximately 3,000 Indo-Guyanese were targeted. More than 230 homes and businesses were destroyed, and at least 1,300 people were displaced, forced into flight as refugees under conditions of fear and dispossession. The violence was both widespread and deeply personal, one that was marked by murder, assault, and acts of extreme brutality.

In revisiting these events, Ramharack situates the violence within its broader political context, one that is made manifest by entrenched ethnic and ideological divisions between the two political parties, the People's Progressive Party, largely supported by Indo-Guyanese, and the People's National Congress, supported primarily by Afro-Guyanese.

These tensions, long embedded in the colonial and postcolonial fabric of British Guiana, erupted with horrific and devastating consequences in May, 1964.

Yet Ramharack's latest book moves beyond political framing to foreground human consequence. With a particular emphasis on the voices of victims, especially of women, Ramharack brings forward perspectives that have remained largely absent from official narratives. In doing so, he advances a central and carefully argued claim: that the events at Wismar meet the human rights framework of "ethnic cleansing".

Equally significant is the book's call for what the author terms the "un-silencing" of this history. For many survivors, the trauma of Wismar was not only endured but buried, with its painful memory carried quietly across generations, often overlooked

within national and regional discourse.

It is here that the book extends its reach beyond scholarship into responsibility.

For our diaspora, which is now generations removed from the immediacy of 1964, the question is no longer simply what happened, but what is remembered, what is read, and what is being allowed to fade. In this sense, these two upcoming launches are not passive cultural events. Instead, they are invitations to our diaspora to participate in the act of remembering.

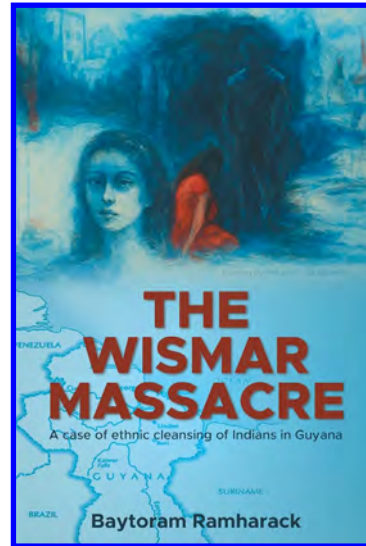
To read this work is to enter into a difficult, necessary conversation about Guyana's past, one that seeks not only to acknowledge trauma, but to better understand the complex social, economic, cultural, and political relationships that helped to shape, and continues to shape, Guyana today.

For readers, families, and younger generations in Guyana and abroad within our diaspora, the launch of *The Wismar Massacre: A Case of Ethnic Cleansing of Indians in Guyana* is a call to engage with the written word as a bridge between memory and history, between past fracture and future

understanding.

In that light, Ramharack's book becomes more than a text, with its elevation in a new archive that is being created, one that is challenging silence and erasure in its examination of a painful and brutal history.

For more information on the book launches, contact **Lake Singh at 416-825-2700, Ram Sahadeo at 416-970-1492, or Adit Kumar at 647-866-1926.**



Free community workshop helps to plan today, prepare for tomorrow

— A free estate planning workshop in Rexdale is inviting community members to take a proactive step toward protecting their families, blending expert guidance with a warm, accessible approach to one of life's most important conversations.

Toronto – In a community where family, legacy, and responsibility are deeply interwoven, an upcoming workshop in Rexdale is offering residents a timely opportunity to turn reflection into action.

The Brij Team Wealth Workshop, hosted in collaboration with Hawley Chatwal & Company LLP, Chartered Professional Accountants, will bring together community members for an afternoon focused on one of the most quietly significant aspects of life planning, notably, estate preparation.

Framed as an educational and empowering session, the free workshop is designed to make estate planning less intimidating and more accessible, particularly for individuals and families who may have postponed these conversations.

At its core, the workshop begins with a simple but often overlooked premise: estate planning is not reserved for the wealthy or the elderly; instead, it is a practical necessity for anyone seeking to protect loved ones and provide clarity in times of uncertainty.

Organisers will guide participants through the foundations of estate planning, addressing common misconceptions while explaining why having a structured plan in place can ease emotional and financial burdens for families. From there, the session will move into the essential components of an estate plan, including wills, trusts, and powers of attorney, each explored in



clear, relatable terms.

The workshop also places a strong emphasis on the human dimension of planning. Topics such as guardianship for minor children and provisions for family members with special needs are expected to resonate with attendees, underscoring how estate planning extends beyond finances into care, continuity, and responsibility.

Practical concerns will also take centre stage. Participants will be introduced to the probate process and strategies aimed at minimising associated costs and delays, while also learning how to keep beneficiary designations and asset structures up to date.

Recognising the realities of a changing world, the session will explore modern considerations such as digital assets, including the management and security of online accounts and digital property, which is an area of growing importance for many households.

For entrepreneurs and small business owners, the workshop will offer insights into succession planning, addressing how businesses can transition smoothly while preserving value and stability for future generations.

In addition, attendees will benefit from an overview of tax-efficient planning strategies, including approaches to gifting and charitable contributions, helping families make informed decisions that align with both personal and financial goals.

The session will also highlight common pitfalls, such as outdated documents or incomplete plans, providing participants with practical steps to avoid costly oversights. Recent legal updates and emerging trends will further equip attendees with current, relevant knowledge.

An interactive question-and-answer segment will conclude the workshop, allowing participants to engage directly with presenters and explore real-life scenarios in an open, supportive environment.

Beyond the technical details, the workshop carries a broader message, one that is rooted in community care and shared responsibility. By bringing these conversations into a collective space, the event reflects a growing recognition that planning ahead is not just a private task, but a communal act of preparedness and protection for our diaspora.

See back page for registration details.

Uncovering an overlooked legacy of Irish Indentureship in the Caribbean

By Dhanpaul Narine

They are largely ignored in Caribbean history. The literature is filled with tomes on slavery and the unspeakable cruelty that occurred for centuries. Then there was Indentureship in the Caribbean with Indians, Chinese, and Portuguese taking the place of the ex-slaves.

But there was another group that played a significant role in the development of the region. They arrived in thousands as Indentured servants, worked alongside the slaves, and experienced brutality that was no less different than that of slavery.

This group of Indentured servants were known as the poor Irish. They were called 'Redlegs' due to the intense heat of the tropics. The term was also synonymous with the lower class of the colonial society.

Many of the history books on slavery and Indentureship give only a passing glimpse of this population. As the scholar of the Black Atlantic and the history of slavery Stefan Wheelock pointed out, the exploration of the poor Irish in Barbados is a "relatively understudied topic that has not been subjected to close investigation by many historians".

Sir Hilary Beckles is one of the few historians who has discussed white labour in a Black plantation society in Barbados. He argued that Irish labour was temporary, but slavery was permanent.

The United Nations' resolution on slavery in March 2026 opened wounds on the transatlantic slave trade. Despite the brutal and inhumane aspects of slavery, a number of countries either abstained from the reparations vote, or chose to vote against the motion.

The big players in the slave trade were Britain, America, Holland, France, Spain, and Portugal, among others. Britain abstained in the vote, although Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch stated that it should have voted against, since Britain was in the forefront in fighting against the slave trade. But the anti-slavery movement in Britain did not affect national policy during the height of the slave trade.

The US did not disguise its dependence on slavery for its existence. The Southern States flourished on slave labour, and a Civil War was fought when those States refused to accept Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation.

The promise of General William Tecumseh Sherman of a horse, and 40 acres of land to the ex-slaves, never materialised. In fact, America and Britain compensated slave owners for their loss as a result of emancipation. In the Caribbean, there was a period of Apprenticeship for an additional five years after emancipation that allowed the planters to recoup their expenses. This shows further that the system was designed to benefit the planters and not the ex-slaves.

As is well known, labour was introduced in the Caribbean in the form of Indentureship. John Gladstone's Indians arrived in British Guiana in 1838, and in Trinidad in 1845. The cargo brought men and women who crossed the seas to fill the plantations that were vacated by the slaves.

It is estimated that from 1838 to 1917 over ten million persons were displaced from India, China, and Portugal to the Caribbean, and other places. But where does the poor Irish fit into this picture? They too were an Indentured group that arrived in the Caribbean, but unlike the East Indians, the poor Irish worked alongside the slaves in the plantations.

The arrival of the Irish began around 1632. They were in two categories: those that were genuine Indentured servants on a contract, while the others were vagrants that were sent to the Caribbean as a punishment. One myth was that the Irish were the original slaves, and that they faced more hardships than Blacks, who were already on the plantations.

The reality was that the legal status of both groups was well-defined. The Indentured servants had certain rights, which were denied to the slave. When their contracts ended, they could return to Ireland, or choose to remain in the colonies. Slaves had no such rights. Their existence was at the whims of the master. The cruelty was unspeakable, and in law they were property, rather than people. The Barbados Slave Code of 1661 defined the Irish as servants and not as slaves.

Richard Ligon's description of life in Barbados is rather striking. In his 1650 memoir, he described the sugar plantations "as stately buildings", and pointed out that sugar was the fulcrum that determined Barbadian history. It was established that many Irish people were displaced as a result of Oliver Cromwell's conquest of Ireland. Thousands were stripped of property rights. In a letter to the Speaker of the British Parliament in 1649, Cromwell stated that he considered the poor Irish transporta-



Montserratians in a moment of celebration as they mark their African and Irish Heritage on St Patrick's Day

tion to Barbados as "a righteous judgement of God upon these barbarous wretches".

Liam McKee points out that "as well as the cost of passage, the Indentured servant bound for the sugar plantations could also expect their contract to include some kind of bonus payment, in land, in animals, or in coin".

During the period 1640 to 1660, Barbados had transitioned from tobacco and cotton cultivation to sugar. Irish Indentureship to the island was so popular that it became a verb – people were 'Barbadosed', which meant that many were sent against their will to the colony.

The numbers showed that the slave population of Barbados grew from 6,000 persons in 1638 to around 20,000 in 1658, of which 8,000 were Irish Indentured servants. But Irish Indenture was not only confined to Barbados. The 39 square mile island of Montserrat has Irish names that exist today. As in the other colonies, Montserrat was used as a dumping ground for a penal colony by Oliver Cromwell. But brisk immigration took place from Cork ports to St Kitts in the West Indies and from thence to Montserrat. The island was first under British control in 1632 when the Irish arrived there. In 1662, slaves were transported to Montserrat. The French took possession of it in 1664 and 1667, but Montserrat became a British colony again in 1783.

A Census in 1678 showed "a vibrant community of 1,900 Irish men women and children. Family names suggest that most came from County Cork, with smaller contingents from Clare, Donegal, Galway, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath and Wexford".

It was estimated that seven out of every ten whites were Irish. One of the reasons for immigration to Montserrat was its remote location, and its willingness to allow Catholics to practice their religion freely. According to a priest Father Mackin, "Montserrat was a haven of religious liberty for Irish Catholics in the New World, before Maryland was a haven for English Catholics." It is little wonder that Montserrat was described as the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean.

As in Barbados, some of the Irish worked as Indentured servants. In 1768, the number of whites that lived in Montserrat was 2,682 out of which 1,644 were bonded. Many who stayed "scraped out a livelihood as tradesmen or small tobacco, cotton or indigo farmers". By 1768, slaves had outnumbered the white colonists three to one. The disparity and discontent with the system led to the Montserrat Slave Uprising.

The staging of uprisings against plantation owners was noth-

ing new in the Caribbean. In 1675, the slave owners of Barbados discovered a plot by slaves to overthrow colonial rule. The Governor, Sir John Atkins, acted with speed. Trials were arranged and 32 slaves were executed, while others were imprisoned.

There were six major revolts during the years 1770 to 1801 in Trinidad. The 1805 Christmas Rebellion was uncovered leading to "hangings, executions, dismemberment and burning of key leaders".

The 1763 Berbice Slave Rebellion in Guyana was led by Cuffy on the Canje River. The 2,500 enslaved were in control for over ten months, but the rebellion collapsed because of internal divisions and the arrival of reinforcements by the Dutch.

The 1823 Demerara Rebellion suffered a similar fate. A total of 12,000 slaves rebelled on 60 plantations, but it was put down by British soldiers. The most famous slave rebellion was in Haiti in 1791 that led to the first independent Black republic. Toussaint Louverture and his army defeated the French and slavery was abolished.

Louverture became Governor General for life in 1801, and his leadership paved the way for Jean-Jacques Dessalines to defeat Napoleon Bonaparte's forces. The Haitian Revolution also inspired other enslaved peoples, sent shockwaves to planters, and led to severe restrictions on plantations.

A number of other slave rebellions occurred in the Caribbean. There was the Busta Rebellion in Barbados in 1816, revolts in the British Virgin Islands in 1790, 1823, and 1643; the Aponte rebellion in Cuba in 1810; the Tula Slave Revolt in Curacao; the 1784 Balla Slave Rebellion in Dominica; the 1796 Fedon rebellion in Grenada; the 1821 rebellion in Puerto Rico led by Marcos Xiorro; the 1848 rebellion on St Croix and St Thomas' the 1795 uprising in Saint Lucia that were part of the Brigands War; the Carib Wars in St Vincent in 1773 and 1795; and a number of revolts in Jamaica.

One of the earliest revolts that involved the Irish and slaves took place in Barbados in 1649. It was driven by food shortages, but the uprising was suppressed by the planters. It is also argued that the Irish joined forces with the Maroons in Jamaica to organise hidden settlements.

One of the most famous rebellions that is linked to the Irish occurred in Montserrat in 1768. The slaves picked St Patrick's Day to revolt against their masters. They figured that in the merriment the slave owners would be distracted. But an Irish woman overheard the plans and alerted the planters. The authorities hanged nine people including the ringleader Cudjoe. His head was placed in a silk cotton tree for all to see. It became a grim reminder that rebellions could cost slaves their lives.

But the people of Montserrat had other ideas. They used the experience of Cudjoe, and others, to celebrate St Patrick's Day in style and merriment. In 1985, St Patrick's Day became a national holiday on the island with a ten-day celebration with parades, festivities, and lectures. It is probably the only place in the world, outside of Ireland, where such a celebration takes place.

But what is unique in the celebrations is that the island has been able to weave Afro-Caribbean history with its African-Irish identity. However, writers such as Howard Fergus have warned that the message of the rebellion appears to be lost in the revelry and partying.

Montserrat has had to deal with natural disasters that have crippled most of the island. In 1989, Hurricane Hugo caused severe damages. In 1995, a volcano erupted for the first time in 350 years that caused thousands to flee the island. Two years later, another volcano erupted that left most of the island uninhabitable, and more volcanic damage occurred in 2001 and 2003.

Despite the disruptions, the people remained brave and proud of their ancestry. In 2002, Britain granted citizenship to Montserratians, and has helped with the rebuilding in the island.

It is said that a person can go anywhere in Montserrat and he or she would not be in the wrong place. People can leave their keys in cars and their house doors unlocked. The lost phones are taken to the radio station to be reunited with their owners.

Montserrat has been described as a hidden gem for visitors, and it was featured in the *New York Times*' top 52 destinations for 2025. Apart from its natural beauty, a strong point is its African-Irish heritage. Black Irishmen and women sporting shamrocks and dancing to African drumming presents a unique blend of cultures. And yes, Montserrat stamps visitor's passports with a green shamrock when they arrive at the island.

Yvonne Bobb-Smith documents her lifelong journey of becoming

— From a childhood marked by abandonment in Belmont to a life of intellectual leadership across Trinidad and Canada, Dr Yvonne Bobb-Smith's journey, captured in her memoir *Whose Child Are You?*, is a profound meditation on identity, resilience, and the lifelong practice of self-definition.

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Diaspora Feature

At 95, Yvonne Bobb-Smith still moves across memory, music, and meaning. At last month's launch of her memoir *Whose Child Are You?*, she did not simply read from the text. She staged it with calypso, theatre, and dance. And in a highpoint of animation and celebration, as Luther Vandross's *Dance With My Father Again* filled the room, she herself took to the floor, uplifted from her wheelchair physically, symbolically by a partner, and by a life that had long refused to remain grounded in the expectations imposed upon it.

Here was a striking image: a woman in her tenth decade, dancing her story into the present. But the arc of that movement begins elsewhere, with a word, blunt and burdened: "Nobody."

Born in Trinidad in 1931, Bobb-Smith entered a world that marked her early with absence. Abandoned by both parents, and labelled into the colonial hierarchy as lacking and of illegitimate birth, she grew up with what she would later recognise to be not only material modesty, but as something more elusive and more wounding: a "dearth of emotional support".

Responsibility for her care did not reside in one place, but was dispersed thinly and uncertainly across her early, inherited circumstance. And yet, even in that dispersal, something else gathered.

She was raised by three elderly women in Belmont in north Trinidad, the "three Grans", and later by an adoptive figure, Mama Glory. These were more than caretakers; in effect, her first philosophers. From them she absorbed lessons that would become the grammar of her life: self-reliance, critical thinking, and responsibility.

As she would later write, "Creole women were not prone to victim-hood". They held families together; were the glue that



bonded communities together. In doing so, they too held her together.

Belmont itself was no passive backdrop. It was, as historian and University of the West Indies Professor Emerita Bridget Brereton observes, a vibrant, multi-cultural space, alive with Hosay processions, the early pulse of steelband in 1945, Shango ceremonies, and Chinese Double Ten celebrations.

This was a landscape of syncretism, overlapping worlds, and identities in motion.

"Belle Eau Road stirred in me a desire to learn about culture... diversity in an inclusive space," Bobb-Smith reflects.

It is here, in this convergence of absence and abundance, of emotional uncertainty and cultural richness, where her lifelong practice of reflection begins to take shape.

From her teenage years, she cultivated what would become her defining habit: self-examination. While others defended, she interrogated; while others accepted, she questioned.

She notes, "Many people are quick to defend their actions, but reluctant to examine themselves".

For Bobb-Smith, this inward gaze was not indulgence;

instead, it became self-construction. It was within this internal space that a self was rooted and nurtured, where none had been securely given.

Even so, the journey toward self-recognition was not immediate. As a young woman, she carried what she describes as a lingering sense of being "less than". The colonial hierarchies of race, colour, class, and legitimacy, so sharply etched into the society of Trinidad and Tobago, indubitably left its marks. She endured slights from schoolmates, from teachers, from those around her. In this sense, she was both participant in, and subject to, the debilitating social order of her time.

But here is a narrative that resists simplification. The "victim narrative", as Brereton astutely observes, is continually countered by resilience, agency, and a refusal to remain defined by circumstance.

A tiny, illustrative moment captures this shift: among a lively circle of friends who gathered weekly to "lime", Bobb-Smith once volunteered, quietly, to sing backup. When she was done singing, the applause startled her: "Yvonne, you're so brave," they said.

It was a modest moment; but then, something reoriented in her. She was no longer merely the one who stood behind; she had stepped forward, and was seen; and with her singing voice articulated, she was being heard.

If Belmont was the site of her formation, migration would become the site of her expansion. In the 1950s, a casual conversation at a party, an almost accidental encounter, opened a path to Canada through a government scheme. There was no grand design, no carefully plotted ambition. Instead, it was her intuition, an ambition and willingness to say yes.

In Canada, the early years were marked by domestic service, in labour that echoed the hierarchies of authority she had known in Trinidad. But this was not where she remained. Moving into library work, she began to align labour with intellect, and intellect with opportunity. She pursued her studies with determination, earning a Bachelor of Library Science from the University of Toronto in 1963, and later advancing to graduate and doctoral work, culminating in a

See Page 19: Documenting

Standing in a backyard in his pajamas, without remembering how he got there and struggling to keep his balance against the chilly gusts of early November, he glanced around to find his bearings with a pit in his stomach. Did he sleepwalk to get there? And most worrying, he did not know who he was or where he lived.

The cold autumn wind that threatened to blow him off his feet stung his eyes. He turned away with his cold palms and fingertips covering his cheeks and ears. His bare feet on the cold grass sent a chill up his spine. He wished to be in a warmer place.

The burning sensation in his fingertips and toes yanked him out of sleep. He found himself in a bed in an unfamiliar room, not sure how he got there. The stinging of his extremities from the blood rushing back into them puzzled him. He rubbed his palms together for friction to warm them and smooth out the prune-like appearance at his fingertips and toes.

While he lay in bed and stared at the ceiling to get a grip on reality, a movement at the side of his eye stopped his heart. He glanced over to see a shiny little head rise over the edge of the bed until the full face of a toddler smiled knowingly at him.

"Who are you?" He gasped and jumped back. The baby did not make a sound. "Do you live here?" His heart pounded. The baby turned and walked through the bedroom wall. He thought of following him when he instantly appeared in the small kitchen, with the baby holding his hand and pointing to a photo album on a corner bookshelf. A glance around told him that the tiny home with no basement consisted only of two bedrooms and a kitchen.

The baby seemed to sense when he spotted the album and suddenly appeared on the dining table in the middle of the kitchen. The toddler sat cross-legged with a wide grin at him, seemingly anticipating that he would sit and open the album.



The Supernatural Mystic Reality

After flipping the cover open, his eyes beheld an old, faded eight-by-ten black-and-white photo of what appeared to be a man and a woman, and their two sons. The toddler pointed to the likeness of himself in the photo, then to himself, then touched the photo of the man and pointed his index finger at him. The baby made a motion of a bird flying away when he touched the woman's image.

"And who is this?" He pointed to the other boy in the photo, who looked like the older of the two children. "Is this your brother?" He smiled when the baby nodded. "What's your name?" The baby motioned toward the album. He smiled at the toddler for his understanding and effective nonverbal communication. He turned the pages until he found another family portrait with name tags. He found out that his name was Stan, the woman's name was Debra, the older boy was Tom, and the baby was Ted.

"What happened to you?" He searched Ted's face for answers. Ted covered his nose and mouth and fell flat on his back on the table. "Who did that to you?" Ted pointed to Tom. Stan's heart dropped. Did his older son suffocate his baby? "Is this why your mom left?" He stared at Ted in disbelief when the baby made a circular motion with his index finger pointing to his temple. "She went mad?" His eyes followed the direction of the baby's pointing finger. "Is she in a psychiatric ward?" He hoped against hope, but Ted's shoulder dropped when he nodded. "And me, where am I?" Ted disappeared again into the bedroom.

Stan instantly appeared beside Ted, who stood at the foot of the bed, staring at the comatose body of himself.

"Oh my gosh!" Stan gasped. Ted pointed to a stand with

a saline pouch hanging on a hook, dripping a solution into his arm. The baby pointed under the bed, where Stan discovered a locked metallic box. "Where's the key?" He searched Ted's eyes for answers, but the baby just shrugged. "Does Tom have it?" The baby nodded.

Stan suspected that he was being drugged. He alternated glances between the phone and his body's heaving chest, gasping for air. While his physical form was lying on the bed, his spirit was not anchored to it. But in spirit form, he was unable to move solid objects, even though he felt all the sensations and emotions of a living person, because he was still half-alive. Ted could not help either, since he was a full spirit.

"Where is Tom?" He stared at Ted, who shrugged. Using every ounce of effort, Stan fought the effects of the drug that he suspected was causing a slow death accentuated by memory loss throughout his ordeal to finality. He wished to see Debra and instantly found himself in the hospital, where Debra was surrounded by police officers. She was animated as she told them to hurry.

Stan wished to see Tom and found himself in a police interrogation room. An investigator pointed to a doctor's degree in psychiatry and called it fake, which Tom vehemently denied.

Stan had one last wish before he returned to the cottage in the woods to await the cops.

He wished to visit Ted at his final resting place. He was shocked to find himself standing in the bedroom and staring at a spot under the bed.

The police and medics arrived and resuscitated Stan.

Stan pieced the story together. Jealousy for taking attention away from him, Tom's twisted mind had urged him to smother his baby brother and blame it on 'sudden infant death syndrome'.

Life insurance policies with forged signatures were about to be cashed to keep Tom in an overspending, luxurious Playboy lifestyle as a bogus doctor, using a fake degree that helped him access the poison that almost killed his parents.

Kamil Ali





Dindial at Twilight on April 11; in photos, guests having a good time. Photos by Hinano Beekho

Chutney Queen Dindial ignites crowd at Twilight

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Scarborough – The rhythms pulsed, rolled, and rose when *Pong It* took over the Twilight Restaurant on April 11, transforming the emerging Spring evening into a full-bodied, warm celebration of Indo-Caribbean sound, memory, and movement.

At the centre was Rashika Dindial, who took to the stage bearing the standard of legacy and reinvention. The evening's event, presented by A2K Promotions under the guidance of Kris Boodan, alongside the hosting team at Twilight Restaurant, maintained a wholesome balance between family-friendly warmth and high-voltage entertainment.

And when DJ Shiva took command of the dance floor, the atmosphere found its groove with a layering of classics, crowd favourites, and rhythmic bridges that kept the feet on the floor in time with the upper body swaying to the pulsing rhythms.

Dindial's performance was more than musical, rising into the rarefied air that is the archival, ancestral, and the lively. A leading figure in Trinidad and Tobago's chutney soca tradition, she has long stood at the crossroads of inheritance and innovation.

As the daughter of the late Basdeo 'Lapoo' Dindial, a revered classical singer, her early foundation was set within the intricate cadences of Indian music. Yet her pivot to chutney was deliberate, almost strategic with how she began reaching outward to audiences who wanted not just to listen, but to move, to celebrate, and to belong.

That instinct for Dindial to connect was in full flight on the evening of April 11. Her signature vocals cut cleanly through the room, carrying lyrics that leaned not on the usual tropes of revelry, but on something deeper and wholesome, in domestic rituals, cultural memory, and in the quiet poetry of everyday Indo-Caribbean life.

In an industry often driven by spectacle and the celebration of inebriation, Dindial's commitment to "wholesome" storytelling felt both refreshing and quietly radical.

Recent years have seen her resurgence gather pace, cresting most notably with her 2026 hit *Pound D Damadole*. The track is rooted in the simple, almost meditative act of crushing roasted tomatoes in the kitchen, and which became a cultural phenomenon, earning her first place in the Traditional category and second in the Chutney Soca Monarch competition in Trinidad and Tobago.

Such acclaim is a reminder that the smallest gestures in the preparation of spices, the rhythm of a pestle in the making of tomato *chokha*, can carry wider echoes of identity and belonging.

Dindial's significance stretches beyond contemporary success. Her 2009 anthem *Maticoor Night* remains a staple at Indo-Caribbean weddings, its rhythms woven into the fabric of familial celebrations across generations.

More recently, her collaborations with organisations such as Caribbean Hindustani signal a deeper mission in legacy and cultural preservation. Through song, she has helped revive and sustain traditions like *Godna*, a form of folk tattooing now at risk of fading into memory.

At *Pong It*, Dindial's mission found an enthusiastic audience. Families gathered, generations overlapped, and somewhere between rhythm and ancestry, the past and present began holding hands and keeping the rhythm.

More than an entertaining evening, the event was a reminder that culture, when carried in voice and rhythm, when roasted, crushed and seasoned with delectable spices, does not simply survive but adapts, expands, and on nights like on April 11, takes to the dance floor with peppery energy.

With files by Hinano Beekho



TT demands Caricom transparency in Barnett reappointment row

— Trinidad and Tobago has suspended participation in Caricom meetings and rejected the reappointment of Secretary-General Dr Carla Barnett, escalating a regional governance dispute centred on transparency, communication breakdowns, and competing accounts of a February retreat where the decision was taken.

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago has declined to participate in meetings of the Caribbean Community (Caricom), and will not recognise the reappointment of Secretary-General Carla Barnett beyond her current term, as tensions deepen over what the government describes as a flawed and opaque process.

The position, outlined in correspondence from Foreign and Caricom Affairs Minister Sean Sobers, has been reinforced by Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who has publicly intensified calls for transparency and accountability within the regional bloc.

At the centre of the dispute is a Heads of Government retreat held on February 26 in St Kitts and Nevis, during which Caricom leaders agreed to reappoint Barnett for a second five-year term. Trinidad and Tobago contends that the process leading to that decision was neither transparent nor inclusive, while Caricom maintains that all procedures were properly followed, and that member states were duly informed.

In a strongly worded letter dated April 9 to Caricom Chairman Terrance Drew, Sobers rejected claims that Trinidad and Tobago failed to participate in the retreat due to logistical or personal issues, instead asserting that the country had been effectively excluded from the process.

“Trinidad and Tobago maintains the position that the matter of the reappointment of the Secretary-General is of grave importance and should be openly and transparently discussed by all Heads of Government, not a select few, at an appropriately scheduled meeting with a pellucid agenda,” Sobers wrote.

He added that the government “declines to attend any meeting proposed until Trinidad and Tobago is furnished with the relevant information requested in previous missives”.

The letter further stated that while Trinidad and Tobago recognises Barnett’s authority for the remainder of her current



Kamla Persad-Bissessar



Sean Sobers



Carla Barnett

2021–2026 term, it “does not recognise Ms Barnett’s reappointment for another term, as the process undertaken was surreptitious, corrupted, and flawed”.

Sobers argued that the decision-making process contravened established governance norms under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, particularly provisions allowing Heads of Government to appoint representatives to attend meetings on their behalf.

He maintained that Trinidad and Tobago had requested documentation on the reappointment process as early as March 25, with follow-up correspondence on March 31, but had not received adequate responses.

While emphasising that Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to Caricom and has no intention of withdrawing from the regional body, Sobers framed the dispute as one rooted in transparency, procedural integrity, and adherence to established governance practices.

The issue has since escalated into the public domain, with Persad-Bissessar raising fresh concerns in a Facebook post that questioned Caricom’s communication priorities in the lead-up to the February retreat.

“According to Caricom’s own documents... between January 19 and February 26 (39 days), eight messages were sent to T&T regarding the soon-to-be legendary Caricom shirt, but zero messages were sent regarding any agenda item to reappoint GS

Barnett,” she stated.

She added, “Clearly, the shirt was of utmost significance, but the reappointment of the Secretary-General was not.”

Persad-Bissessar also highlighted a WhatsApp message sent on the morning of the retreat indicating that the session would be restricted to Heads of Government only, raising questions about whether Trinidad and Tobago’s delegation had been deliberately excluded.

Quoting the message, she noted: “Good morning, Foreign Ministers. Chairman PM Drew has indicated that today will be a Heads-only retreat... Ministers should therefore remain for the Community Council Meeting...”

Persad-Bissessar questioned why this communication had not been addressed by Caricom officials, and suggested that Sobers may have been disinclined.

She called for the release of key documents, including minutes of the retreat, Barnett’s performance appraisal, and records from the 2021 appointment process, arguing that the absence of such documentation undermines regional integration and accountability.

“At best, Minister Sobers was disinclined because he had no fancy Caricom shirt; at worst, he was disinclined to deliberately facilitate Ms Barnett’s surreptitious reappointment,” she said.

However, Caricom has strongly disputed Trinidad and Tobago’s claims, providing its own account of events leading up to the February meeting.

In a statement following a special emergency meeting of Heads of Government, which was held without participation from Trinidad and Tobago, the organisation said all member states had been properly informed of the conference agenda, programme of work, and the structure of discussions, including which items would be addressed in plenary, caucus, or Heads-only retreat sessions.

According to Caricom, Persad-Bissessar departed St Kitts and Nevis on the evening of February 25, one day before the retreat. The organisation said Sobers had contacted the Secretary-General via WhatsApp at 10:33 p.m. that evening to inquire whether he should attend in her absence and was advised that he could do so.

However, Caricom stated that Sobers indicated he might not be able to attend due to discomfort with the water-taxi journey required to reach the venue, and did not subsequently confirm his participation.

The organisation further noted that a follow-up message acknowledged that the Chairman would understand if Sobers chose not to attend under those circumstances. It maintained that the retreat proceeded with Heads of Government in attendance, and that Barnett’s reappointment was agreed under Article 24 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, which places such decisions within the remit of the Conference.

Caricom also said that Barnett was not present during deliberations, and that efforts were made to contact Persad-Bissessar by phone and email before the decision was publicly announced, though those attempts were unsuccessful.

The organisation has indicated that a detailed timeline of correspondence leading up to the February conference will be made available, as part of efforts to address concerns raised by Trinidad and Tobago.

The competing accounts have underscored a widening rift over both substance and process, with each side disputing not only the facts of the February retreat, but also the broader principles governing decision-making within the regional bloc.

Sobers has pointed to what he described as inconsistencies in communication, including the absence of formal documentation notifying member states about the reappointment process, and the omission of the matter from the official Summary of Confirmed Decisions circulated in early March.

He also questioned the timing of the discussion, noting that Barnett’s current term does not expire until August, and that a scheduled Heads of Government meeting in July could have provided an opportunity for full deliberation.

For its part, Caricom has defended its procedures, emphasising that matters related to the Secretariat’s operations and governance are routinely addressed under broader agenda headings, and that the February retreat provided an appropriate forum for such discussions.

However, despite the escalating regional rhetoric, both sides have signalled a willingness to continue engagement. Trinidad and Tobago has indicated that it will resume participation in Caricom meetings once the requested documentation is provided, while the regional body’s leaders have expressed readiness to clarify the process and address outstanding concerns.

Documenting a life reclaimed and rewritten

From Page 17

PhD at the age of 68.

This reconfiguration of time, education not as youthful passage, but as lifelong pursuit, becomes one of the quiet radicalisms of her life.

Returning to Trinidad in 1966, Bobb-Smith stepped into roles that would shape the intellectual infrastructure of the nation. She became the country’s first medical librarian, establishing systems of knowledge organisation and access. She played a principal role in initiating the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards.

Across library science, corporate administration, and public relations, her work traced a consistent arc: the building of structures through which knowledge could circulate, stabilise, and empower.

And yet, even as she built institutions, she continued to build herself. Her doctoral thesis, later published as *I Know Who I Am*, drew on interviews with 50 Caribbean women in Canada. It was a transformation of personal inquiry into collective testimony; identity, in her hands, was never singular, but was dialogic, layered, and shared.

This orientation toward dialogue would define her teaching. At institutions, among them the University of Toronto, Ryerson University, the University of the West Indies, and COSTAATT, she developed an interactive, reflective pedagogy, one that positioned students not as passive recipients, but as active participants in meaning-making. She describes herself as a “change agent”, a fitting phrase where she does not simply transmit knowledge, but invites transformation.

If reflection shaped her intellectual life, it also sustained her physical one. Diagnosed with cancer multiple times, she has refused to allow illness to define the contours of her days; she loves her work, she insists, and she loves her life. The body may falter, but the mind, spirit, and curiosity continue to grow.

It is perhaps inevitable, then, that writing would become her culminating act. Encouraged by a student, she began her memoir at the age of 90. *But Whose Child Are You?* is as Brereton notes, “not at all a conventional memoir”. It does not proceed neatly from childhood to adulthood in a linear, chronological order. Instead, it moves with intersectionality among time periods, countries, weaving into themes. It is structured not as

a timeline, but as a series of reflections, inquiries, and returns.

This form mirrors the life it contains. Memory is not linear; identity is not sequential. The self is assembled, revisited, and always revised.

For Bobb-Smith, storytelling is not merely recollection but a method. It is how moral and social questions are explored, how experience is translated into understanding. Young people, she suggests, are drawn to “experiential learning”, to stories that illuminate how lives are lived and how choices are made. Her memoir offers precisely that: not instruction, but illustration.

The launch of her book in late March, with its fusion of literature, music, and performance, makes this philosophy visible. Calypso legend Mighty Sparrow’s *Yvonne*, the kinetic energy of Shadow’s *Dingolay*, the emotional resonance of Vandross were not corollary to the main event, and certainly were not embellishments. They were extensions of the text, embodiments of its themes. Culture is not background; for her, it is medium.

And so we arrive, finally, to the question that titles her memoir: *Whose Child Are You?*

It is, on one level, a question rooted in lineage, in legitimacy, in the social demand to be placed. But in Bobb-Smith’s telling, and in the life that she is living, it becomes something else.

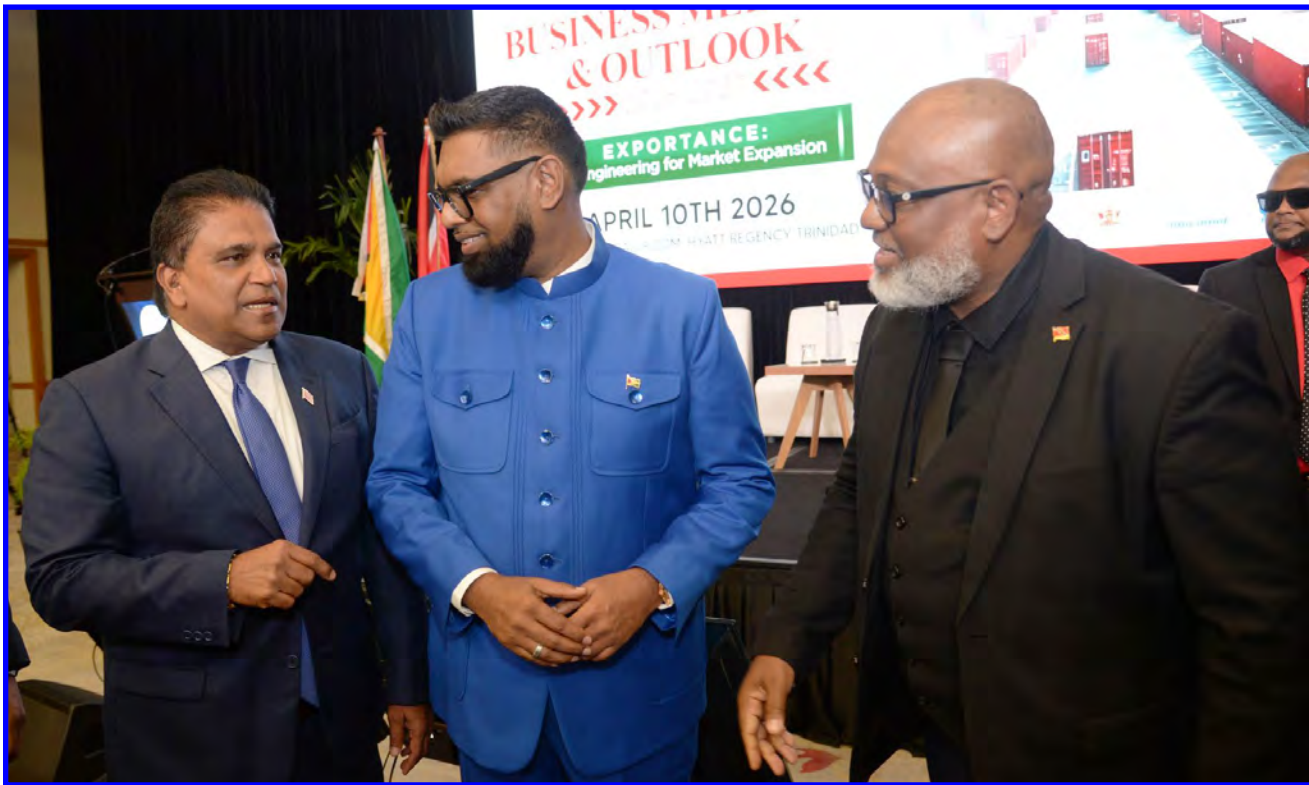
It opens up the question of authorship. Define yourself, she advises, noting, “If you believe you can be a queen, then act like one and do not accept standards beneath you”. She further affirms – do not take water when you were promised lime juice. Do not accept the diminished version of what is offered.

In the closing reflections of her life and her book, she articulates a belonging that is neither narrow nor imposed: a commitment to an “indigenous self”, rooted in the “vibrancy of my community-generated culture”, and yet open to “a healthy affinity with Canada”.

It is a statement that resists binaries: home and away, past and present, self and other. It is, instead, an affirmation of continuity.

From “nobody” to narrator, from abandonment to authorship, from question to answer, Yvonne Bobb-Smith has spent a lifetime assembling a self: one not given, neither imposed nor granted, but self-forged.

And at 95, still dancing, still thinking, still asking, she offers that question back to us – not as a demand, but as an invitation: “Whose child are you?”



Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali (centre) with Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs Dr Roodal Moonilal (left), and Minister in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries Ernesto Kesar during the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce event on April 10 in Port-of-Spain

Guyana sees refinery plan with TT govt partnership

— Guyana's President Irfaan Ali has proposed refining Guyanese crude in Trinidad and Tobago while calling for urgent 72-hour talks to fast-track a broader economic partnership, signalling a decisive push toward regional energy integration and systemic reform across the Caribbean.

Port-of-Spain – Guyana's President Irfaan Ali has unveiled an ambitious regional energy and economic strategy, proposing that Guyanese crude be refined in Trinidad and Tobago while calling for urgent, high-level talks to accelerate integration between the two nations.

At the time he was in Port-of-Spain, where he delivered the feature address at the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce's Annual Business Meeting and Outlook 2026-2027 on April 10.

The address, delivered at the Hyatt Regency in Port-of-Spain, focused on strengthening energy collaboration between the two nations. In his address, Ali confirmed he intends to engage directly with the Trinidad and Tobago government on a plan that would see Guyana's light sweet crude processed through Trinidad's idle refining capacity, transforming dormant industrial assets into a regional economic engine.

"I will be meeting with the government," he said when asked about potential refinery collaboration.

The proposal marks a strategic shift away from an export-only model, as Guyana seeks to monetise its rapidly expanding oil production within Caricom, insulating the region from global price volatility and supply chain disruptions.

Central to this blueprint is the reactivation of Trinidad and Tobago's refinery infrastructure, leveraging proximity and existing downstream capacity to generate value-added exports, rather than relying solely on raw crude shipments.

Ali framed the initiative as part of a broader push toward regional energy integration, linking upstream resources in the Guyana-Suriname Basin with Trinidad's established processing and industrial base.

He said such a cross-border architecture could position the region as a competitive global energy corridor, but warned that the window of opportunity is narrowing.

Ali also emphasised that execution must be driven by a disciplined and agile private sector, supported by governments willing to remove barriers and facilitate rapid collaboration.

Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar later indicated she would travel to Guyana soon on an official visit, possibly signalling early diplomatic momentum behind the proposed partnership.

In a pointed appeal for urgency, Ali called for a dedicated 72-hour engagement between the governments of both countries to resolve longstanding bottlenecks and chart a clear path forward.

"If we care about partnership, if we care about building consortiums. We care about building a joint economic front between Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, then we must care about fixing the problem and let's get in that room, lock our-

selves up for 72 hours and fix the damn problem," he said with emphasis.

Beyond energy, Ali stressed the importance of economic diversification as both countries seek to future-proof their economies. He pointed to Guyana's pending export of soya beans, and contrasted it with Trinidad and Tobago's globally recognised Trinitario cocoa, noting that both sectors could benefit from deeper collaboration.

"You're rated anywhere you go. But how are we building that brand? How are you investing to upskill that brand? How are you investing in the genetics to maintain the brand? Where are we identified as a new area for development to take this brand – it is reorienting the entire system. You see, one of the problems in the region is that we have not created enough systemic opportunities," Ali said.

However, Ali also highlighted structural inefficiencies that continue to hinder regional integration, pointing to bureaucratic and logistical challenges that undermine trade and mobility across the Caribbean.

"We want to build Caribbean Airlines. We want Caribbean Airlines to have the massive market share. You go to Qatar or anywhere you're in transit, when you come out, you go through a specific door, and you wait to be connected to your next flight. You're coming from Guyana. You clear the security, you're transiting the next country. You get to Trinidad and Tobago you have to walk and go back through the entire security. Go back through immigration, come back to the entire system. What mess is that?" he said.

Ali noted that his administration has begun addressing similar inefficiencies that

Guyana through data-driven reforms, including the implementation of real-time monitoring systems to track immigration processing times and identify operational gaps.

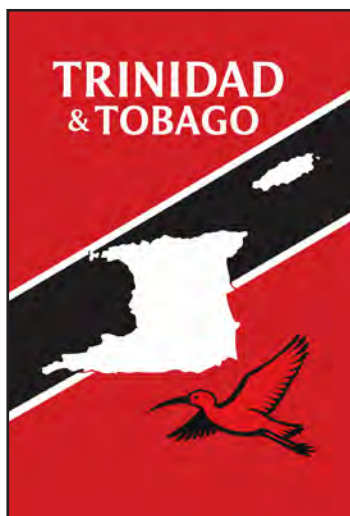
"We have to fix this problem. We have to fix our borders. We're trying. I mean, I don't know how many of you went back recently, but many of you call me and say, 'Thank You,' because I have a dashboard, and I can tell you every single day how many people came through immigration, the average time it took to clear them, the average time it took for each officer to clear it up, so I know where the inefficiency is. We can tell," he said.

He added that entrenched red tape continues to stifle the region's economic potential despite the wealth generated by its oil and gas industries.

"We can't come and say we want to manage the gas plant but then you can't bring two containers of limes into Trinidad today. It doesn't work; let us be honest. It cannot work, and we must end this nonsense now. It is complete nonsense. It is mind-blowing that we cannot sit in a room together as government and private sector fix these problems," Ali said.

Ali also acknowledged the structural weaknesses that have historically challenged refining efforts in the region, but maintained that the scale of Guyana's upstream growth now creates a viable foundation for renewed downstream integration.

"There is the potential for refining oil from land; they should allow it to be what they call the refining tragedy. It's happening now," he outlined.



Businesses told survive 2026 amid ongoing economic pain

Port-of-Spain – President of the Greater San Fernando Chamber of Commerce Kiran Singh has urged businesses to survive 2026 and make it to the end of the year while pointing to expected gains from new gas developments in 2027 as a potential turning point for the economy.

"Our members are excited about the projected increase in gas supply in the coming years and its vital role in stimulating economic recovery. Developments such as the Dragon and Manatee fields and other regional gas initiatives by Shell and other international energy corporations are essential to economic recovery," he said.

His comments came amid ongoing concern over business closures in the country. As the local media have been reporting, several businesses have closed branches or adjusted their operations amid a contracting economy.

Singh said while those gains remain on the horizon, businesses must endure current pressures.

"The responsibility of the private sector is to survive 2026, knowing that next year we will start to benefit from the monetisation of said gas fields," said Singh.

He noted businesses continue to operate in a challenging environment shaped by online competition, reduced consumer spending, and limited foreign exchange availability.

"The shortage of foreign exchange continues to severely impact import-dependent businesses, limiting their ability to restock inventory and maintain operations. Additionally, increases in taxes and regulatory burdens have compounded these difficulties, particularly for sectors such as retail, hospitality, and manufacturing," he said.

He called for targeted support measures in improved access to foreign exchange for SMEs, fiscal relief for sectors such as ecotourism, and reforms to ease doing business.

"The Minister of Finance can use the upcoming mid-year review to devise fiscal measures to address these concerns. The SME sector should have more equitable access to foreign exchange. There is a need for targeted fiscal relief in the ecotourism sector, particularly for small and medium enterprises, including temporary tax adjustments or incentives to encourage business continuity and investment," he said.

He added, "While macroeconomic recovery plans are important, there must also be a strong focus on short-term support mechanisms to prevent further business closures. The chamber emphasises the need for collaboration between the government, the private sector, and other stakeholders to develop practical, timely solutions. Economic recovery must be inclusive and responsive to the realities on the ground."

Meanwhile, President of the Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce Baldath Maharaj believes the Finance Minister is managing a complex economic transition rather than a single issue.

"It is not a matter of simply fixing a single issue, but of managing a delicate recovery in a post-pandemic world where global supply chains and energy markets remain volatile. We also have to bear in mind that we only earn approximately 70 percent of the [foreign exchange] that we use," said Maharaj.

He noted that while traditional businesses were closing, new enterprises are emerging, often in the digital space.

"However, these new openings often represent a shift toward the digital economy. The challenge for the State is that these new, smaller entities do not yet have the tax base or employment capacity of the larger, older firms that are reducing their operations," said Maharaj.

He said the government is attempting to balance fiscal stability with private sector adjustment.

"From the chamber's perspective, we see a business community that is eager to grow but is currently hampered by the same global inflationary pressures and currency constraints that the ministry itself must manage," he said.

Maharaj believes policy responses must be carefully calibrated.

"We acknowledge that the minister is operating within these tight boundaries. To ease the burden, the focus must be on non-cash interventions, streamlining the bureaucracy that makes both opening and closing a business so time-consuming. If we can reduce the time and cost it takes for a new business to become fully compliant and operational, we can accelerate the rate at which these new openings begin to meaningfully contribute to the GDP," he said.



Kiran Singh

Asha Bhosle's songs will always echo across our diaspora, memory, and time

— Asha Bhosle, the legendary playback singer whose voice travelled across eight decades and more than 12,000 songs, died on April 12 in Mumbai at 92. Her death marks the end of an era in Indian music and a voice that resonated across continents, generations, and our diaspora.

There are voices that belong to an industry, voices that belong to a nation, and then there are voices that are rarer, more enduring, and which belong to memory itself.

Asha Bhosle, whose astonishing career spanned more than eight decades and thousands of recordings, was one such voice: at once intimate and expansive, rooted and roaming, shaped in the studios of Mumbai yet carried across oceans into the homes, hearts, and histories of our global diaspora.

Her death on April 12 at the age of 92, confirmed by her son Anand Bhosle following a brief hospitalisation for cardiac arrest and complications, closes a chapter in the history of Indian cinema.

But to speak of closure is, in Asha's case, to misunderstand the nature of her legacy. For even as the industry mourns one of its most prolific and versatile artists, her voice, at once flirtatious, playful, melancholic, and daring, continues to reverberate in the spaces it has long inhabited: from cinema halls to wedding tents, from vinyl to cassette, from radio waves to digital streams, and from Bombay to Brampton, Georgetown to Guelph, Port-of-Spain to Pickering.

For more than eight decades, Asha's voice was threaded through the fabric of Indian cinema, helping to define the emotional grammar of Bollywood's song-and-dance tradition.

For actors, playback singing relies not merely on vocal precision, but on the creation of a persona. Asha's genius lay in her ability to inhabit and expand that persona. Where her elder sister, Lata Mangeshkar, embodied a kind of ethereal, desexualised purity, Bhosle offered something altogether more modern: a voice that was, as critics noted, "flirtatious and rhythmically adventurous", capable of conveying desire, mischief, heartbreak, and rebellion with equal ease.

That distinction mattered, not only within the industry but far beyond it. For our diasporic communities navigating our own hybrid identities, Asha's voice mirrored a lived reality: one that moved between tradition and reinvention, between inherited forms and improvised expression. Her songs became, in this sense, a kind of portable culture, carried across seas, unpacked in new geographies, and woven into the rituals of everyday life.

But to define Asha solely by her association with cabaret numbers or Western-influenced songs is to miss the extraordinary breadth of her artistry. Over the course of her career, she moved seamlessly across genres, recording devotional music, folk songs, pop, and ghazals.

Her voice could be sensuous and smoky in one moment, crystalline and devotional in the next. As the *BBC* noted, she "moved effortlessly from romantic ballads to energetic numbers", her versatility ensuring that she remained the preferred voice of composers across generations.

Her repertoire reads like a catalogue of modern Indian musical history: from the intoxicating, narcotic strains of *Dum Maro Dum* to the seductive urgency of *Piya Tu Ab Toh Aaja*, from the elegance of *Umrao Jaan* to the exuberance of *Teesri Manzil* and *Caravan*. These were more than just songs, elevated into moments that were anchored in film but untethered in memory, and replayed across decades in contexts far removed from their cinematic origins.

Yet the path to such mastery was neither immediate nor assured. Born Asha Mangeshkar on September 8, 1933, in Sangli, Maharashtra, she entered a world already steeped in music.

Her father, Deenanath Mangeshkar, was a respected classical musician and theatre actor. His death when she was nine plunged the family into financial hardship, forcing Asha and her siblings into early careers. She recorded her first song in 1943, still a child, stepping into an industry that would both challenge and define her.

In those early years, Asha often found herself overshadowed by her sister's meteoric rise. Assigned to secondary songs and lower-budget productions, she worked on the margins of an industry that had yet to recognise her distinctiveness.

But, as one account notes, "these constraints became the crucible of her originality". Denied the central stage in her early life, she later went on to reshape these limiting edges.

Her personal life, too, bore the marks of struggle and resilience. At 16, she eloped with Ganpatrao Bhosle, a marriage that would later be described as tumultuous and controlling.

Isolated from her family and navigating the demands of motherhood, she eventually left the relationship in 1960 as a single mother of three. These experiences of constraint, endurance, and reinvention echoed in her music, lending her voice a depth that could not be manufactured in the studio.

The turning point in her career came through her collaborations with composer O.P. Nayyar, whose sensuous, rhythm-



Across cabaret and *ghazal*, rebellion and romance, intimacy and spectacle, Asha Bhosle's songs form not just a body of work, but a diasporic soundscape.

It is a soundscape that has travelled from Bombay to Brampton, Georgetown to Guelph, Port-of-Spain to Pickering, carried not just by technology, but by memory.

Within that vast and resonant archive, certain songs have come to anchor feeling itself. We have the playful modernity of *Aaiye Meherbaan* and the breathless urgency of *Piya Tu Ab Toh Aaja*, where her voice reshaped the possibilities of the female presence on screen.

Then there is the defiant drone in *Dum Maro Dum*, a number that signalled a cultural shift, reverberating far beyond the cinema into the lived experiences of a generation that was challenging the order of things.

And then, the quiet, enduring tenderness of *Chura Liya Hai Tumne Jo Dil Ko* and *Do Lafzon Ki Hai Dil Ki Kahani*, songs that settled into the emotional fabric of love, longing, and remembrance.

Elsewhere, in compositions such as *In Aankhon Ki Masti* and *Mera Kuch Saaman*, Bhosle revealed a depth that moved toward stillness, with her voice no longer urging or teasing, but reflecting, inhabiting poetry with a measured grace. These were songs that asked to be listened to differently, often in solitude, where their resonance could unfold slowly.

Yet her reach and range did not end there. Through global touchpoints like *Brimful of Asha*, and later collaborations that carried her voice into new musical terrains, she affirmed a truth long known across the diaspora: that her music belonged everywhere it was heard, and everywhere it was remembered.

In our kitchens and our cars, at weddings and in wakes, in solitude and celebration, her voice continues to echo not only as nostalgia, but also as presence. Across generations, her songs have not simply endured, but have been returned to, reinterpreted, and relived, forming a living archive of emotion that remains, unmistakably, her own.

driven compositions found a natural complement in Asha's huskier tone. Songs like *Aaiye Meherbaan* and *Yeh Hai Reshmi Zulfon Ka Andhera* signalled a shift in her career, and alongside this pivot, the sonic possibilities available in Bollywood music.

If Nayyar provided the breakthrough, it was her partnership with R.D. Burman that transformed her into a phenomenon. Burman's experimental approach in drawing from jazz, rock, and Latin influences, required a voice that could navigate complexity without losing emotional immediacy.

In Asha, he found such a collaborator and more in her ability and remarkable flexibility. Together, they produced some of the most iconic songs in Indian cinema, crafting a soundscape that would define an era.

Reflecting on this partnership, Asha would later say: "It is only Panoram who has uncovered my range as a singer... I was

totally unaware of the fact that I could sing with such suppleness of throat".

Their artistic collaboration, which later became a personal union with their marriage in 1980, stands as one of the most celebrated partnerships in Bollywood history.

Even as musical tastes evolved, Asha remained not just relevant but essential. In her 60s and beyond, she continued to lend her voice to a new generation of actors and composers, working with figures such as A. R. Rahman. Her willingness to experiment extended beyond national borders. She collaborated with international artists, among them Boy George and Michael Stipe, and even recorded a track with Brett Lee, a testament to her enduring range, flexibility, curiosity, and openness.

Her cultural reach was perhaps most memorably acknowledged in the 1997 hit *Brimful of Asha* by the British band *Cornershop*, a song that celebrated her omnipresence in South Asian musical life, and, by extension, in diasporic memory.

As Tjinder Singh, the band's frontman, later observed, few artists had been "loved in so many languages and dialects", capturing the astonishing breadth of her appeal.

For those of us in the Caribbean and in our broader diaspora, that appeal was deeply personal. Asha's songs were not confined to cinema, but became part of our social fabric. Her voice was lifted up at weddings, hummed in kitchens, broadcast on radio programmes that stitched together our communities separated by geography but united by sound. Her voice accompanied celebrations, softened grief, and marked the passage of time, embedding itself in the sensory memory of our generations.

In public appearances, Asha cultivated a persona as vibrant as her music. Known for her embellished silk saris, bold *bindis*, and expressive presence, she stood in visual and temperamental contrast to her sister's austerity. Those who met her often remarked on her vivacity.

"Any meeting with Asha has to be a talk show," her biographer wrote, noting her irrepressible energy and humour. She embraced attention, absorbed criticism, and carried herself with a confidence that reflected her artistic independence.

Her later years were marked not by retreat but by reinvention. At 90, she performed a live concert in Dubai, remarking, "At 90, standing for three hours on stage and singing is a blessing".

She launched an online talent show, created a *YouTube* channel, and continued to engage with audiences in new formats, guided by a philosophy she articulated simply: "For me, music is my breath".

That sense of continuity found a poignant expression in her final artistic collaboration with the British virtual band *Gorillaz* on their 2026 album *The Mountain*. The track *The Shadowy Light*, shaped by themes of grief and mortality, paired her voice with imagery of a boatman guiding a soul across unknown waters.

It is difficult to imagine a more fitting coda: a voice that had traversed genres and geographies now turning, in its final note, toward the universal passage that awaits us all.

Her achievements were recognised with numerous honours, including the *Dadasaheb Phalke Award*, the *Padma Vibhushan*, and a *Guinness World Record* for the most studio recordings by any artist. Yet these accolades, significant as they are, capture only part of her legacy.

As India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi observed following her April 12 passing, her "extraordinary musical journey... enriched our cultural heritage and touched countless hearts across the world."

The responses to her death reflected that reach, with tributes pouring in from across the spectrum of public life.

Hema Malini described her passing as a "huge loss... for the whole of India." Shah Rukh Khan called her voice "one of the pillars of Indian cinema".

Sachin Tendulkar spoke of a "deeply sad day for India and for music lovers across the world", thanking her for "filling our lives with warmth, grace, and unforgettable music". And A.R. Rahman offered perhaps the most succinct summation: "She lives forever with her voice and aura".

If there is a unifying thread woven in these tributes, it is the recognition that Asha's voice exceeds the boundaries of time and place. It is at once archival and immediate, historic and present. It belongs to those who first heard it in the golden age of Bollywood, and to those who now encounter it in digital playlists.

Asha's voice belongs to India, certainly; but also in our countless diasporic communities, for whom her songs formed part of our cultural inheritance carried across seas and generations.

Her legacy cannot be measured solely in recordings, awards, or even influence. It resides in something less quantifiable but more enduring: the ability of a voice to inhabit lives not its own, to travel where bodies cannot, and to remain long after she has left us, as a companion to our memory and identity.

Her voice, once heard, is never entirely absent, but will linger in melody, in memory, in the quiet spaces between words, always uplifted in songs we remember and cherish.

Ramayana teaser unveils grand vision, sparks mixed early reactions

— The first teaser of *Ramayana* has been released, unveiling a high-budget, two-part cinematic adaptation led by Ranbir Kapoor and directed by Nitesh Tiwari, with global ambitions, a landmark music collaboration, and mixed early audience reactions.

The first teaser of *Ramayana*, starring Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama, was released on April 2, marking the official start of promotions for what is being positioned as one of the most ambitious film projects in Indian cinema.

Titled *Rama*, the teaser debuted during the celebration of *Hanuman Jayanti*, and offers a first look at the film's scale, tone, and principal characters. Running just over two minutes, it introduces Rama as a symbol of duty, righteousness, and heroism, while hinting at the expansive mythological world the filmmakers aim to build.

Directed by Nitesh Tiwari and produced by Namit Malhotra, *Ramayana* has been in development for several years, and is planned as a two-part epic adaptation of the ancient Indian text *Ramayana*. The first instalment is scheduled for release during Diwali 2026, with the second part expected in Diwali 2027.

The film features a large ensemble cast, including Sai Pallavi as Sita, Yash as Ravana, Sunny Deol as Hanuman, and Ravi Dubey as Lakshman.

Speaking to *NDTV*, Tiwari said, "There was nobody better than Ranbir Kapoor to portray all these things and manage the expectations of a billion people."

A major highlight of the production is its international music collaboration. The soundtrack is being composed by A.R. Rahman and Hans Zimmer, marking Zimmer's debut in Indian cinema. In an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter India*, Rahman described the challenge of scoring such a culturally significant story, noting the need to balance famil-

arity with innovation for global audiences.

The film's visual effects are being handled by DNEG, the Oscar-winning studio behind films such as *Inception*, *Interstellar*, and *Dune*. A significant portion of the production timeline has been allocated to post-production work, particularly VFX, to construct the film's mythological universe.

Producer Malhotra said the project has been in the making for six to seven years and emphasised its scale, stating, "The budget will be around \$500 million for both parts combined, which is over Rs 4,000 crore."

He added that the goal is to create "the largest film in the world" while maintaining efficiency in production.

The teaser itself focuses largely on Kapoor's portrayal of Rama, with visuals ranging from moments of coronation to exile in the forests of Panchavati. It carries the tagline, "Our hero, Our protector," underscoring the character's moral and spiritual positioning.

Early reactions to the teaser have been mixed. While many viewers praised the film's scale, performances, and ambition, others raised concerns about the visual effects, suggesting they could have been more refined, or culturally rooted despite the reported budget.

However, industry figures responded positively. Actor Dipika Chikhlia, known for portraying Sita in Ramanand Sagar's television adaptation *Ramayan*, described the teaser as "very grand" and "very beautiful".

Filmmaker Siddharth Anand called it "spectacular," praising Kapoor's performance, while Karan Johar highlighted the actor's "divine reverence and piousness" in the role.

Actor Vivek Oberoi reflected on the cultural significance, describing it as "a story of love, a lesson in sacrifice, and a legacy of righteousness", while Allu Sirish noted that a new generation would experience the epic through the film.

At the same time, some audience members



Ranbir Kapoor plays Rama

expressed disappointment online, with criticism directed at certain visual elements, while others described the teaser as promising, but in need of refinement.

Despite the polarised reactions, the teaser represents only an initial glimpse into a project of considerable scale and ambition. With a high-profile cast, global creative collabora-

tions, and substantial investment in visual effects and storytelling, *Ramayana* remains one of the most closely watched productions in Indian cinema.

With the film moving closer to its scheduled release, further promotional material is expected to provide a clearer sense of its execution and reception among global audiences.

Fans divided on Bhooth Bangla trailer

— The trailer for *Bhooth Bangla*, directed by Priyadarshan and starring Akshay Kumar, has sparked both nostalgia and criticism ahead of its release this week, while producer Ekta Kapoor revealed a rare gesture of integrity by the actor from an earlier collaboration.

The trailer for *Bhooth Bangla*, directed by Priyadarshan and starring Akshay Kumar, was released earlier this month, building anticipation for the film's theatrical release this week. The project marks a reunion between the director and actor, whose past collaborations have produced several popular Hindi comedies.

At the trailer launch event, producer Ekta Kapoor shared an anecdote highlighting Kumar's professional integrity, recalling an incident from an earlier film that did not perform well commercially.

"I have wanted to work with Akshay sir for many years now. One thing many people don't know is that he's the only actor who called me up... our first film didn't do well. He gave me a cheque and said this is money back for you... you've lost money," Kapoor said.

She added that the gesture left a lasting impression on her, declaring, "I was in shock. Nobody does it. Nobody has done it in 31 years of my career. And to give it so casually... I said, 'No'. Please do another film with me. I'll earn a lot more from that. That film finally happened."

Kapoor did not name the earlier project, though Kumar and Kapoor previously collaborated on *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai Dobaara!*

Bhooth Bangla is produced by Akshay

Kumar, Ekta Kapoor, and Shobha Kapoor. The film features an ensemble cast including Paresh Rawal, Rajpal Yadav, Tabu, and Wamiqa Gabbi.

It also reunites Kumar and Priyadarshan, who have previously worked together on several well-known titles, including *Hera Pheri*, *Garam Masala*, *Bhagam Bhag*, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*, *De Dana Dan*, and *Khatta Meetha*.

Following the trailer's release, audience reactions have been mixed. While some viewers expressed enthusiasm at seeing Kumar return to a familiar comedic space, others raised concerns about the film's reliance on nostalgia.

Several users on X (formerly *Twitter*) criticised the reuse of dialogues and perceived similarities to earlier films. One user wrote, "At least make something original. It's the same old *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* script, with the same dialogues from earlier films..."

Another commented, "Is it movie or meme template?", while a third stated, "This looks like a copy-paste of *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* with dialogues mashed up from Priyadarshan's old movies. An attempt to create laughter by nostalgia, cinema may fall flat."

Some viewers also questioned the visual quality of the trailer.

"Didn't feel like a Priyadarshan movie," one post read, while another added, "All previous Akki-Priyan combo films had genuine effort... but *Bhooth Bangla* looks like a cheap knock-off... DISAPPOINTING. Only Akshay Kumar's efforts look genuine."

Others pointed specifically to the film's visual effects, with one user noting, "The teaser was a bit better than the trailer... VFX needs improvement."



Akshay Kumar

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Pitch for purpose: Cricket pushes boundaries in seeking cancer cure

— *Cricket to Conquer Cancer returns to Mississauga's Celebration Square on May 30, uniting sport, community, and purpose in a vibrant street cricket fundraiser. Building on last year's success, the event continues to channel our diaspora's passion for cricket into meaningful support for cancer research, care, and innovation.*

On a late May morning, as the light settles gently over Mississauga's Celebration Square, a small ritual will unfold that is as old as the game itself. A coin will rise into the air, turning once, twice, before gravity takes hold and it falls back toward the pitch. For a fleeting moment, the space between sky and ground will hold its breath. When it lands, the arc of a new day will begin.

Yet what gathers beneath that moment will extend far beyond the familiar rhythms of cricket. It will be a convergence of community, memory, and shared purpose, all brought together under the banner of the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation's Cricket to Conquer Cancer tournament, which is taking place on May 30.

What has emerged in just a short time is more than an event. It is a day that carries with it layers of meaning, unfolding gradually, like an innings between stalwart openers that is being built with patience and care.

Cricket has long travelled with our Caribbean and South Asian diaspora, crossing oceans in quiet, unassuming ways. It lives in gestures and recollections, in the way a bat is held, in the instinctive call of "Yes!" or "No!" as we run between wickets, in the cadence of stories of great knocks retold over years. It is present in neighbourhood parks across the Greater Toronto Area, where matches begin without ceremony and end only when light or time insists. Indeed, there is a familiarity to it, a sense that the game belongs wherever it is played.

That familiarity remains at Celebration Square, but now it is taking on a different register. The boundaries are temporary, marked not by permanence but by intention; and the pitch is improvised, as it so often has been. And yet, the purpose that gathers around it reshapes the experience in subtle but important ways.

It is here where cricket becomes a meeting point.

The Cricket to Conquer Cancer tournament returns in 2026 following its debut year that revealed the depth of its potential. In 2025, more than 500 participants came together across 40 teams, supported by 160 volunteers and a crowd that filled the square with movement and sound. By day's end, approximately \$1.16 million had been raised in support of cancer research, care, and education.

Those figures speak to scale, but they also hint at something less easily measured, which is the willingness of a community to come together around a shared objective.

That willingness continues to shape the ambitions of this year's event. Organisers anticipate participation from a similar number of teams, with a fundraising goal set at \$1 million. Each team, whether formed within a workplace or among friends and family, contributes not only to the activity on the field, but to a broader effort unfolding beyond it.

The growth remains steady, deliberate, and an expansion built on what has already been set in motion.

At the centre of that effort lies a reality that is both widely known and deeply felt. In Canada, two in five individuals are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. It is a statistic that sits quietly within public discourse, yet its presence is unmistakable in the experiences of those who encounter it more directly.

The work supported by the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation responds to that reality through a focus on three interconnected areas: early detection, innovative treatments, and comprehensive support.

Early detection continues to redefine what is possible in cancer care. Advances in screening and diagnostic technologies have made it increasingly feasible to identify cancer at its earliest stages, where treatment outcomes are often significantly improved. Research in this field aims to refine these methods further, reducing the incidence of late-stage diagnoses, and in some cases, preventing the disease from taking hold altogether.

Alongside this, innovative treatments are reshaping the therapeutic landscape. Developments in targeted therapies, immunotherapy, and precision medicine are opening new avenues for care, approaches that are tailored more closely to the needs of individual patients.

These advances are complemented by improvements in surgical techniques, and the integration of emerging technologies, offering the potential for treatments that are both more effective and less invasive.

Meanwhile, comprehensive support recognises that the impact of cancer extends beyond the physical. Emotional and psychological well-being, as well as the needs of families and caregivers, form an essential part of the care continuum.



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.

Efforts in this area seek to ensure that those affected are supported not only through treatment, but through the broader experience that surrounds it.

It is within this framework that the significance of the Cricket to Cure Cancer tournament begins to take shape.

The format of Cricket to Conquer Cancer reflects a similar emphasis on inclusivity and participation. Designed as a high-energy T5 street cricket competition, the matches are structured to ensure constant engagement.

Each team fields eight players at a time: a bowler, a wicket-keeper, and six fielders. With five overs per side, the pace of play is brisk, allowing for multiple matches to unfold across the day. Batters retire after reaching 15 runs, creating opportunities for others to step forward, while bowl-outs provide a dramatic resolution to tied games.

There are playful adaptations as well. Designated targets positioned across the field offer bonus runs when struck, adding an element of unpredictability. In a departure from traditional formats, hitting sixes are discouraged – balls that clear the boundary without bouncing result in a penalty, keeping the action grounded and continuous.

These features echo the informal variations of cricket that have long been part of our everyday play, where improvisation and accessibility define the experience. They also ensure that participation remains open, regardless of background or level of experience. The result is a format that feels both familiar and new.

The day will unfold in layers across Mississauga's

Celebration Square. There will be the immediate action: the bowler's approach, the crack of the bat, the quick exchange between runners pushing for an extra run.

There will be moments of celebration and near misses, of laughter shared at the boundary, of quiet encouragement offered between teammates.

At the same time, there will be a different kind of movement taking place. Conversations will continue between overs. Spectators will drift between matches, drawn by the energy of the crowd. Teams will gather, disperse, and regroup, each carrying with them a sense of participation that extends beyond the game itself.

It is within these interactions that the event begins to take on a broader dimension. The funds generated through the tournament flow into a research ecosystem that operates at the forefront of cancer care.

In its 2025 *Cricket Impact Report*, the foundation detailed how community contributions supported its highest priority initiatives, advancing work in early detection, accelerating the development of new therapies, and expanding models of patient care.

Reflecting on that impact, Dr Miyo Yamashita, President and CEO of the foundation, described the role of participants in shaping these outcomes.

"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 noted, emphasising the connection between community engagement and clinical progress.

She further highlighted the broader implications of that support, from enabling breakthroughs in early detection to advancing tailored treatments and strengthening the systems that support patients and their families.

Such developments, while often unfolding over extended periods, are grounded in contributions that begin in moments like those that take off from the pitches at Celebration Square.

For those who take part, whether as players, organisers, or supporters, the experience carries its own rhythm.

Teams formed within workplaces bring with them a sense of collective purpose that extends beyond the office. The act of preparing for the tournament, in coordinating schedules, organising fundraising efforts, practising together, becomes part of a shared narrative.

Community teams, often composed of friends, relatives, and neighbours, reflect a different dynamic. They draw on existing relationships, building on connections that have developed over time. In both cases, the lines between participation and contribution begin to blur.

The day itself becomes a point of convergence, where these different strands come together.

As the afternoon unfolds, the tempo will shift. Matches will quicken, outcomes will narrow, and the energy across the square will build. The calls from the field will carry further, echoing across the open space. Spectators will gather more closely, drawn into the unfolding contests.

Yet even as the competitive element intensifies, the underlying purpose remains constant. Each run, each wicket, each moment of play contributes, in its own way, to a larger objective, one that is not defined by the result of any single match. It is this quiet continuity that gives the day its distinctive character.

By the time the final matches conclude and Celebration Square begins to empty, the traces of the event will linger. The temporary pitches will be dismantled. The boundaries will disappear, and Celebration Square will return to its usual rhythm.

But the impact of what has taken place will continue elsewhere: in laboratories, in clinics, in the lives of those whose care is shaped by the work being supported.

Of course, there is a certain symmetry to this. Cricket, after all, has always been a game of accumulation. Progress is measured incrementally, built through partnerships and sustained effort over time. The same can be said of the research and care that the tournament helps to advance.

Neither is defined by a single moment, yet both depend on the contributions, the running between the wickets, the coordination and the partnerships, that make those moments possible.

And so, as the day settles into memory, what remains is not only the record of what was played, but the understanding of what was made possible through a gathering that brought together sport and science. Through a space where culture and care intersected, and in an occasion shaped as much by participation as by intention.

In the arc of that first coin toss, and in the many moments that follow, something quietly enduring takes form. Cricket continues, as it always has for us in the diaspora. But here, for a day in May, it carries with it the weight and the possibility, a humanitarian embedding of something more that is healing, and sincerely profound.

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ESTATE PLANNING WORKSHOP AGENDA

- 1 Foundations of Estate Planning 
- 2 Key Estate Planning Documents 
- 3 Protecting Loved Ones 
- 4 Minimizing Costs & Delays 
- 5 Tax-Efficient Planning 
- 6 Digital Assets 
- 7 Business Succession Planning 
- 8 Legal Updates & Trends 
- 9 Common Mistakes & Solutions 
- 10 Q&A / Case Studies
• Discuss real-life scenarios
• Open floor for participant questions 
- 12 Wrap-Up & Next Steps 

TO REGISTER, GO TO:

 <https://thebrij.com/workshops>

OR CALL:

 **416-418-2745**
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The Brij to your next home.

HAWLEY CHATWAL & COMPANY LLP
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS