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Our Community Is Thriving!



Hardworking Mischka (l-r), Adrian, and Jennifer at TCC's Seniors Holiday Program. Photo by Hinano Beekhoo. See Page 15



The recent Hindu Federation Gala 2025 honoured the late Samlal Persaud for his service and dedication to Hinduism in Canada. In photo at left above are Persaud's son Aditya (l-r), widow Ena, Beatrice Dwarka-Prasad, and Hindu Federation President Pandit Roopnauth Sharma. At right, young ladies perform at the gala. Photos by Gaurav Garg. See Page 16



Canada standing with Jamaica after Hurricane Melissa

— Canada's federal agencies, military personnel, private-sector partners, and our Caribbean diaspora communities have mounted a coordinated humanitarian response following Hurricane Melissa's destruction in Jamaica, mobilising funding, logistics, and large-scale shipments of relief supplies as the island works to restore essential services and begin long-term recovery.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Toronto – Canada has launched a multi-layered humanitarian and recovery effort in response to Hurricane Melissa's devastation in Jamaica, combining federal funding, Canadian Armed Forces support, private-sector mobilisation, and extensive diaspora engagement.

The Government of Canada initiated significant humanitarian support to Jamaica shortly after Hurricane Melissa made landfall, with Secretary of State (International Development) Randeep Sarai visiting the island on October 21–22 to assess damage, coordinate with Jamaican authorities, and outline Canada's immediate and long-term commitments.

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* last week, Sarai described Hurricane Melissa as "quite a severe storm", adding that it appeared to have been "in a category of its own".

During his time on the ground, MP Sarai was accompanied by MP Greg Fergus, Member of Parliament for Hull-Aylmer, and Canada's ambassadorial team in Jamaica.

According to Sarai, the Canadian government quickly identified critical pri-

orities, saying, "The immediate need on the ground was getting critical infrastructure and the power electrical grid back up".

He added, "Also, the focus was on getting these in place for schools to reopen, as well as getting nationals into shelters while moves were being made to figure out the construction of permanent buildings that are more resilient and on higher ground, out of the paths of danger during extreme weather."

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) later confirmed in a release that Canada has provided over \$7 million in humanitarian assistance to Jamaica, including emergency food, relief items, emergency health support, water distribution, and sanitation and hygiene assistance. Canada is also matching individual donations to the Canadian Red Cross's Hurricane Melissa Appeal up to \$1.5 million.

In its official statement, GAC noted: "Canada stands with the Jamaican people following the devastating impact of Hurricane Melissa", adding that the visit by Sarai and Fergus "underscored Canada's commitment to working alongside Jamaica to support recovery, strengthen resilience, and advance shared priorities for sustainable development".

Sarai also contextualised Canada's response within an historical continuum, stating, "We were the first to support Jamaica, and neighbouring countries in 1988 [following the devastation of Hurricane Gilbert]."

In the wake of Hurricane Melissa, he noted, "We were the first ones to immediately give \$7 million. We also helped

PAHO to get medical supplies, and to coordinate teams."

Throughout his visit, Sarai engaged Jamaican government officials, regional

See Page 7: Canadian govt



MP Randeep Sarai (centre), examines yams uprooted by Melissa with MP Greg Fergus (third from left, back row), officials, and farmers in Jamaica last month. Government of Canada photo

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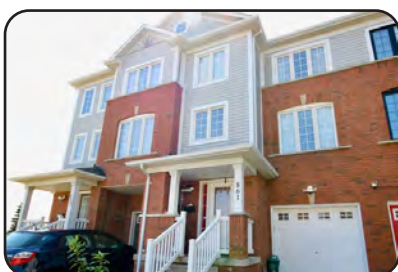
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— The Toronto Police Community Policing Liaison Conference gathered nearly 100 Community Policing Liaison Committee and Chief's Consultative Committee members on November 15 for a full day of dialogue on community safety, youth engagement, and pressing law-enforcement issues across Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods.

Deputy Chief of the Toronto Police Service, Lauren Pogue, welcomed approximately 100 CPLC members attending the conference.

The program featured a wide range of timely issues relevant to Toronto's changing public-safety landscape. Topics included the *Race Based Data Collection Strategy*; *Substance Abuse*; *Frauds and Scams*; *Missing Persons' Investigations*; and *Youth Empowerment and Intervention*.

With its theme, *Crime Analysis: An Examination of Crime Prevention & Reduction Strategies*, the conference was aimed at reaffirming the role of community consultation as an essential component of Toronto Police Service engagement, strengthening dialogue on public safety, youth issues, and collaborative problem-solving across neighbourhoods.

A portrait of a middle-aged man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a red fez and a blue zip-up jacket. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Team and former City Councillor candidate in the Willowdale area, taking part.

The day marked the annual gathering of CPLC and CCC members drawn from across the Toronto Police Service, including the Chief's Muslim Consultative Committee.

Chief Superintendent Mandeep Mann, Co-chair of the Toronto Police Muslim Consultative Committee, was "very pleased to see the presence of the MCC members", an IMO release later stated.



Jamaat Al Muminoon's fundraiser

Jamaat Al Muminoon was established over 25 years ago, and is a not-for-profit Islamic organisation that aids in the survival of the principles of Islam. The organisation aims to cultivate intellectual fitness for the social and religious life of its followers, and encourages freedom of thought and inquiry in reference to Islamic ethics, theology, philosophy, and history.

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Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City’s leaders and members at the Making Spirits Bright event. *Photos by Ramesh Ramkalawan*

Making Spirits Bright lights up Woodbine Banquet Hall

— The Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City brought together friends, families, and community partners for its annual Making Spirits Bright celebration, marking the season with generosity, philanthropy, and a festive evening at Woodbine Banquet Hall that supported charities at home and abroad

Toronto – The Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City hosted its annual Making Spirits Bright event at the Woodbine Banquet Hall and Convention Centre, gathering a full room of friends and relatives for an evening of food, music, and charitable giving.



Dhaman Kissoon addresses the packed banquet hall



Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City’s donation to PMCF



Attendees having a wonderful time at Making Spirits Bright



Section of attendees at Making Spirits Bright

The November 22 celebration unfolded at Woodbine’s lively, family-filled banquet hall where guests shared a meal featuring a mixture of West Indian and European cuisines.

As the evening progressed, the dance floor resonated to the sounds of tapping feet, with DJ Riyad and DJ Royal providing the soundtrack for a night that warmly embraced the celebratory spirit of the season.

The event’s warm atmosphere created a fitting backdrop for the club’s annual tradition of supporting charitable causes, reflecting its long-standing mission of service.

Yet again, philanthropy prove to be the heartbeat of the evening, with the Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City presenting thousands of dollars to several charitable initiatives.

In their ongoing acts of giving, the Rotary Club of Brampton Flower city awarded \$500 to Gus Cardoza for his Tanzania school initiative. Also, the sum of \$5,000 was donated to the Princess Margaret Foundation, marking the second instalment of a \$25,000 commitment.

Yet another donation of \$5,000 was pre-

sented to the William Osler Foundation, the fifth and final instalment of a separate \$25,000 commitment.

In even further acts of outreach and generosity, members also sponsored a special raffle in support of a Jamaican hurricane relief effort that raised \$3,500. A corollary food drive collected more than 1,000 pounds of non-perishable items, adding another layer of community outreach to the evening’s festivities.

The highlight of the evening were performances by Jamaican comedienne Mama Selva, whose jokes and dances entertained the large crowd. The lively performance added a joyful tone to the evening, closing the festivities with laughter and applause.

Speaking to Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City’s extensive and impactful charitable work, founding member, lawyer, and philanthropist Dhaman Kissoon echoed the sentiments of the club’s President Devon Sheriff, stating that while the club was a relatively small one, its members remain fully committed to making a difference around the world.

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Editorial

Dharmendra

There are stars whose light fades quietly, and there are those whose glow lingers long after they slip beneath the horizon. Dharmendra's passing on November 24 falls into the latter realm, an extinguishing that feels less like an ending and more like the dimming of a constellation that once guided our diasporic worlds.

For Indo-Caribbean families across Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and later in the GTA, his movies were not mere entertainment. They were a cultural compass, a bridge to an ancestral India we had never seen, but which we carry in our bones.

Born in 1935 in Nasrali, Punjab, he came from "a small village in Punjab's Ludhiana district", as producer Anand Pandit reflected, adding that his "early life in rural Punjab shaped him". The son of a farmer who witnessed Partition's ruptures, Dharmendra embodied a humility that resonated deeply with our Indo-Caribbean communities, our histories marked by displacement, punitive plantation labour in the Caribbean, and later migration to Canada.

Pandit's further observation captures the essence of Dharmendra's enduring appeal: "When audiences saw strength, warmth, dignity, and emotional honesty on screen, it was not a performance. It was who he genuinely was." That authenticity made him a fixture in the emotional architecture of our diasporic childhood.

It is arguable that he was the most favourite actor for Indo-Guyanese and Indo-Trinidadians. He became a familiar presence, a staple, in households where his films were replayed countless times, the steadfast companion through decades of social transformation.

His versatility made such devotion inevitable. After debuting in *Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere* (1960), Dharmendra went on to portray, and pioneer, a gifted actor's range of depth and gentleness. His romantic era established him as a national heart throb, even after he cemented his status as an action icon. But for many in our diaspora, it was his Veeru in *Sholay*, playful, flawed, and unforgettable, that will be eternally recalled in the years ahead.

He also redefined cinematic romance. Pandit described his partnership with Hema Malini as one marked by "grace, restraint, and a quiet poetry", a combination that elevated the emotional vocabulary of Bollywood and our diaspora.

That cinematic pairing became a moral and aesthetic anchor for our diaspora communities navigating new worlds for its sincerity; for its dignified articulation of love that felt like solid ground amid migration's uncertainties. Mumtaz, recalling their collaborations, wrote simply and tenderly, "Dharam Ji, you were and you are always with us! May you rest in peace."

His humanity extended far beyond the screen. In a 2007 interview with *Lehren Retro*, Dharmendra spoke candidly about his struggle with alcohol: "I used to drink heavily, but I have realised that it doesn't go with me... it's the worst thing." He added, "Now, when I have left drinking, I feel like I enjoy more than what I used to do."

That humanising self-awareness, coupled with the confession that he tested his resolve "on that plane to LA", revealed a man whose strength included a vulnerability we know and live, yet still thrive as a diaspora.

When news of his passing spread, Bollywood turned sombre; and that grief echoed across the Caribbean and the here in the GTA. We recalled how his films travelled with us in the second migration across the *kala pani* in suitcases as VHS tapes, to later illuminate our living rooms in Toronto, Brampton, Malton, Scarborough.

Our travelling with his movies meant Dharmendra was more than an actor; he was continuity, carrying forward the emotional and cultural threads that migration often frays; that we were keeping alive the ties that bind.

Dharmendra's light has dimmed, but the vastness of his constellation remains. We continue to watch his movies in our homes, his roles offering dignity and tenderness, his memory bridging worlds across India, the Caribbean, and Canada, with the same quiet strength that defined him.

In our mourning, we honour the cultural inheritance he gifted to us: a lifelong reminder that even across dark seas, some stars never stop shining and showing us the way.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
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Renewed Liberal era taking shape with Carney at the helm

A new leader brings a new direction. When Mark Carney took the helm of the Liberal Party in March 2025, many Liberals, and many Canadians, were uncertain about what his leadership would mean.

Although he had been an adviser to the Trudeau government, Carney's own policy instincts had never fully shaped federal doctrine.

By early 2025, Liberals faced the clear reality that Justin Trudeau's leadership had reached its natural conclusion. The sun had set on the "sunny ways" era, and the party, on the brink of electoral collapse, turned to Carney for renewal.

Under his leadership, the Liberals moved from a projected fourth-place finish to securing enough seats to continue governing. It was an extraordinary political recovery.

Even before the election, Canadians got a preview of Carney's approach. Within days of taking office, he reversed several defining Trudeau-era policies.

Most notably, he abolished the federal consumer carbon tax, a centrepiece of Trudeau's climate agenda, arguing that it had become divisive and ineffective.

While he kept the industrial carbon levy, the message was unmistakable: climate policy would remain, but its burden on everyday Canadians would ease.

On the economy, Carney shifted the government toward tax relief and fiscal discipline. He lowered the bottom personal income tax rate and temporarily removed the GST for first-time home buyers, signalling a focus on affordability and economic stimulation.

He also pledged to reduce the size of the federal bureaucracy, contrasting sharply with what he viewed as the over-expansion of the Trudeau years.

Carney's foreign and security policies reflect a similar pragmatism. He committed to meeting NATO's two percent defence spending target ahead of schedule, and emphasised economic diversification to reduce Canada's reliance on an increasingly unpredictable US.

That stood in clear contrast to the Trudeau government,



Ryan Singh

which built its identity around progressive social and environmental policies such as child care, cannabis legalisation, expanded social rights, and ambitious climate commitments.

The shift was immediate, and many voters responded. Carney refreshed the Liberal brand and reoriented government around economic stability, national resilience, and practical governance.

While still unmistakably Liberal, his government operates differently under the same red tent. The direction has changed because the moment demands it. That shift has not come without friction.

When Carney signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Alberta's Premier Danielle Smith to advance a pipeline project, backlash emerged from within the party.

Steven Guilbeault, Trudeau's former environment minister and Carney's Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, resigned from the Cabinet in protest.

But the political landscape of 2025 is not the landscape of 2015. Carney is governing in a dramatically altered context, and he is prioritising what he believes is Canada's most pressing issue: the economy.

As the environment around Canada has pivoted, so too must its government. Carney entered office during one of the most turbulent periods in modern Canadian history, and he has acted decisively to keep the country moving forward.

This government will differ from its predecessor. Policies will pivot. Some decisions will be reversed. That is the nature of responsive leadership.

Canadians demanded renewal from the Liberal Party, and the party delivered. Now, it must allow its new leader to govern in new ways.

Carney's government is reshaping Canada's trajectory, moving away from the expansive, climate-first Trudeau agenda and toward a more fiscally conservative, economically competitive, and security-focused approach, while still striving for stability in an unpredictable world.

Carney is delivering a new Liberal era, and time must be given for it to succeed.

No difficulty in the choice between GMT and mango time

At first I did not learn to tell time from the voice proclaiming GMT on the radio, the one insisting, "It is 6:00 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time", the man's voice clipped, crackling, and imperial on the BBC news broadcast.

That voice, disembodied, confident, and utterly foreign, reached us from across the Atlantic as if to remind our village our time had a surveillant master across the ocean. We listened dutifully, since that was what we were always told to do. But beneath the imported monotone, a quieter, more enriching time was always unfolding in our lives.

I do not recall a timepiece resident in our adobe hut. My grandmother kept time differently. In the evening, her clock was a struck match when the sun went down like clockwork. The cloth wick in the lamp spluttered with reluctance, until Ma coaxed it awake, the grain of match burning precariously down to its final seconds in her insistent fingertips.

Time in my time in the house was measured not in hours, minutes, and seconds, but by sensation: the acrid smell of kerosene responding with greedy combustion to the arced toss of the lit match; in the optic of smoke signals sent up to the soot-encrusted underside of the roof above the *chulha*; and in the softening of the light as evening shadows triggered the chickens into a preflight of flapping frenzies, the airy dissonance a predictable preliminary before their clumsy climb up to nighttime roosts.

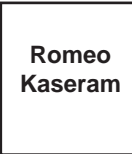
It seemed our world within did not need to be wound up by an external broadcasting British voice.

However, at school, empire's rhythms and its state apparatus of control were pushing its way into our classrooms. But our teacher was inventive and perhaps mischievous. For the lack of a clock, he cut a large circle out of corrugated cardboard, its underside stamped with faint micro-circle outlines from the condensed milk cans sweetened with our sugar, and shipped back to us across the seas.

He pencilled the hours around the edge, fixed two roughly scissored-out arrows to the centre with a "borrowed" pin from the Home Economics teacher (purloined with a wink, which was its own kind of education for our forthcoming adult years), rapidly spinning the makeshift, "This is the long hand; this is the short hand", until they rotated freely on its cardboard axis.

We chanted for hours in a chorus that grew louder, less disciplined, and wholly disconnected to the learning intent in a rapid passage of time: "One o'clock! Two o'clock! Three o'clock!"

None of us knew then to connect the momentum to the continuum of our unfolding lives; that time would one day hurl us forward at breakneck speed. For now, the cardboard clock, the spinning hands, occasionally getting stuck, stubbornly braking it its circularity of time, felt like a small rebellion. It was a way of us saying: "We will learn your numbers; but we will do it at our own pace, on our own time".



Meanwhile, we had an official school clock, its glass similarly concave like our Headmaster's stomach that gave us many hand-to-mouth belly laughs. It was tediously wound up each morning during assembly by our Headmaster, and right away it proceeded to lose minutes hourly, falling behind Greenwich, as if like us, it too was resisting foreign expectations.

But who needed GMT, when outside our classroom, nature kept its own perfect time? Mango season arrived with its slow parade of ripening, the passing of the weeks seeing deep green shades starting to blush like the Home Economics teacher, to be lit up one morning with sunlit gold.

Then came sour cherry season and sapodilla season, each bringing time to a halt as I foraged among the branches, so Ma's voice grew insistent, calling out under the emerging pinpoints of stars, "Where this child gone? It is time to light the lamp!"

Crickets season arrived when the air was humid and humming with insect calls, the thwack! thwack! of leather balls cracking off bats like drumbeats, a whole different rhythm, pitch, and timing in our emerging young lives.

These were the organic timings that mattered when we were growing up in the homelands. The "clocks" we listened to were the ones that spoke directly to our senses, reminding us that the homeland had its own tempo; one that was more fulfilling, predictable, wholesome and palatable, and more relevant than the dry news within the stasis of BBC static pushed into our lives from across the ocean.

But the time that marked us most with scars was crop season. Inexorable, as if marching to quick time, as children we sensed the approach of its heavy footsteps with dread.

When the sugarcane fields were fired, the horizon glowed orange, as though the sun itself had exploded. Flames climbed into the night sky, roaring and volcanic; and then came the detritus of its rage, black soot raining down, settling on rooftops, staining damp clothing on clotheslines, seasoning our pots of *dhal* with its malevolence, the sharp fragments of its anger breathed in, so we hacked and coughed.

Time paused in those moments; not the GMT kind when the announcer drew breath. Instead, in that pause we heard the land sighing, recalling every cut, every extraction, the swish of every blade that arced in reaping canes for sugar that sweetened distant economies, and condensed milk in foreign factories.

Here was a foretaste of an apocalyptic winter, the insistent fall of black snow clumsily parted by Ma's flapping hands as she cleared a path forward, hurrying me up to my night-time roost.

I grew up in many time zones, not ones determined by a voice across the ocean; instead, I moved within the rotation of homegrown seasons, embroidery stitched into the texture of our daily lives: in the lamp's spluttering wick, in the fruitfulness of a mango's ripening, and always the coming of winter and inevitable black snow raining sharply down in our young lives.



In photos, federal government ministers Randeep Serai and Greg Fergus with Canadian military personnel, Red Cross officials, nationals, and relief supplies in Jamaica following Hurricane Melissa. Canadian government photos



Canadian govt, private sector, community stand with Jamaica in time of loss

From Page 1

partners, farmers, health workers, and disaster response personnel, in reviewing the scale of damage in affected communities. According to GAC, Sarai “saw firsthand the collaborative impact of Canadian and Jamaican efforts”.

GAC further announced \$6.1 million in development assistance earlier last month to support long-term rebuilding, including repairs to health facilities, strengthened emergency-response systems, and food-system recovery.

Canada’s assistance is being delivered through established humanitarian partners working with Jamaican authorities and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). Additional support has come through pooled humanitarian funds such as the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the Red Cross Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), and the World Food Programme Immediate Response Account.

A key operational on-the-ground component of Canada’s response is the Canadian Armed Forces Operational Support Hub located near the Kingston airport, which became fully functional in mid-November. The hub is staffed by 77 CAF members, and plays a central logistical role in managing the flow of relief supplies into Jamaica.

According to GAC, the hub “is providing immediate logistical and humanitarian support and will also help coordinate the movement of foreign military disaster assistance teams of up to 200 personnel.”

The hub’s proximity to the airport enables rapid offloading of cargo flights, secure storage of relief goods, and support for the Jamaica government in the distribution of essential supplies.

Sarai stated that the presence of CAF members on the ground has strengthened the speed and efficiency of aid distribution.

“We set up our military of 77 soldiers to give humanitarian support and help the Jamaican forces and government in relaying aid,” he said, adding, “They were able to distribute it immediately, including Red Cross contributions that included kits to prepare for the hurricane as it approached.”

He also noted positive outcomes from earlier Canadian-funded infrastructure initiatives during his visit. Hospitals built with resilience measures supported through Canadian development programs did not suffer major structural damage during the hurricane, he stated.

According to Sarai, these facilities “did not suffer significant damage, kept their roofs, and maintained electrical supplies from generators”.

Parallel to federal and military efforts, the Caribbean diaspora in Canada has mobilised one of the GTA’s largest private humanitarian operations through Atlas Cargo, which is being led by Dr Ken Singh.

As *Indo-Caribbean World* has reported, Atlas Cargo and its affiliated companies have mounted a comprehensive, around-the-clock relief initiative that continues to process, load, and ship humanitarian goods to Jamaica via shipping containers.



Ongoing shipping activity at Atlas Cargo last week

Last week Singh described the operational philosophy guiding Atlas’ work, saying, “This is a time when humanity must rise above borders. Jamaica is in pain, and we will not slow down. Our teams are working around the clock. The value is not important – what matters is that people are hurting, and we have the ability to help. We are in this for the long haul.”

To date, Atlas Cargo has shipped more than 750,000 pounds of relief materials with an estimated value exceeding US \$500,000, all transported free of charge.

Goods sent through Atlas include medical equipment, hospital beds, surgical gloves, masks, baby formula, diapers, wipes, water, milk, non-perishable foods, rice, flour, mattresses, blankets, clothing, shoes, power tools, carpenters’ tools, construction materials, dehydrated soup, canned goods, and hygiene products.

Atlas’ staff members are working extended hours to ensure complete use of container capacity. As Singh noted, he personally supervises weekend loading to ensure that heavy items such as water, flour, and rice are placed at the bottom of containers, while lighter medical supplies and mattresses are loaded above. All available space is used to maximise each shipment.

Support for Atlas’ operation has also come from Canadian and American businesses, churches, community groups, food suppliers, medical distributors, hardware companies, and individual families contributing goods for dispatch.

According to Singh, multiple containers have already arrived in Jamaica, with more scheduled to depart in the days ahead.

Also working indefatigably to mobilise humanitarian support is Toronto-based wholesale distributor Bedessee Imports, which has been providing substantial support to Jamaica’s recovery. Last week the company was preparing approximately 20 pallets of non-perishable foods and hygiene supplies for shipment.

Also, Bedessee continues to coordinate with business and charitable organisations, among them UniTnT and TicketGateway, to strengthen its relief efforts.

Last week company President Raymond Bedessee outlined the nature of the shipments, indicating that pallets that are being prepared, and already shipped, include canned goods, soaps, hand cleaners, and other essential items.

He also highlighted the more granular involvement of wholesale customers in expanding relief distribution.

Said Bedessee, “We had a customer purchase 20 pallets of Marshall’s Sardines, which we discounted,” he said, adding, “These sardines were being further discounted in this client’s

stores for customers purchasing them as relief items for Jamaica.”

This retail-to-consumer supply chain has increased the volume of goods directed toward relief shipments, while lowering costs for participating community members who are shipping barrels to Jamaica as part of the humanitarian response.

Bedessee also encouraged direct household-level contributions through the long-standing Caribbean practice of barrel shipments, saying, “I believe one of the best way individuals can help quickly on the ground in Jamaica is to send down individual barrels,” he stated.

He added, “It will get to families faster. The barrel system is a proven one to get to individuals without all of the bureaucracy.”

Regarding the shipment of humanitarian supplies to Jamaica, it has also been noted that at the community level, grocery stores have started offering specially discounted food items for packaging in barrels, an indication that this approach continues to play a significant role in delivering immediate, targeted assistance to families across the stricken island.

The Caribbean diaspora across Canada continues to respond extensively to Jamaica’s needs following Hurricane Melissa, reinforcing Sarai’s observation that the “community has been excellent in its response to the devastation”.

Community groups, churches, social clubs, nonprofit organisations, and families are organising collection drives and are coordinating shipments in partnership with organisations like the Jamaica Canadian Association and charitable groups such as One Love Table.

These grassroots’ interventions are now complementing the large-scale shipments managed by private-sector logistics companies, reflecting continuous community input and engagement throughout the relief process, and making the response one of the largest undertakings in the GTA.

Meanwhile, Canadian companies are also joining the long-term recovery phase, with New Brunswick’s Greystone Utilities exploring opportunities to support the Jamaica Public Service company with powerline restoration and emergency response.

According to Sarai, Greystone is exploring avenues to support the Jamaica Public Service company with powerline restoration, and emergency response.

Looking ahead, Canada is continuing with prioritising resilience-building measures to support Jamaica and the wider Caribbean region as extreme weather events intensify.

As Sarai indicated, Canada is working to enable Jamaica and its neighbours “to build up resilience” to extreme weather. These initiatives include more resilient electrical grids, improved building codes, enhanced roof anchors, strengthened food security, and renewable energy development.

GAC confirmed that ongoing support will be tied to sustainable development goals and cooperation with national authorities. The \$6.1 million development package recently announced will be directed toward strengthening emergency-response infrastructure and rebuilding food systems impacted by Hurricane Melissa.



Author, auditor gathering information for book on notable, visionary Guyana business leaders

Dear Editor,

I am in the midst of gathering information for my next publication, *Notable Business Leaders of Guyana – A Biographical Dictionary*. This will be a crucial and important resource as it provides valuable insights into the visionary leadership, successes, challenges, experiences, decisions, and strategic insights of those influential business figures, offering some good lessons and inspiration for entrepreneurs and others.

Businesses have been the engine of economic growth and development throughout the world since recorded history. For example, prominent British business leaders during the Industrial Revolution included pioneers in various industries like Josiah Wedgwood in pottery, Isambard Kingdom Brunel in engineering, and Titus Salt in the wool trade. Other outstanding figures were Richard Arkwright, James Hargreaves, and James Watt, who were instrumental in creating and improving key inventions.

Notable 19th and 20th-century American business leaders include John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, Madam C.J. Walker, and several others, all of whom have left their indelible mark on businesses as whole.

Contemporary visionary leaders and the technologies they introduced now define how we work and live: Bill Gates (*Microsoft*), Steve Jobs (*Apple*), Jeff Bezos (*Amazon*), Tim Berners-Lee (*The Internet*), Larry Page (*Google*), Elon Musk (*Tesla*), Jensen Huang (*Nvidia*), and Mark Zuckerberg (*Meta*, formerly *Facebook*).

Their uncompromising vision, including a passion to change the world, a willingness to take risks, and exceptional business acumen now define society. Can you imagine a world today without such technologies we take for granted as email, *WhatsApp*, AI, *The Internet*, a smartphone, and social media? The biographies of the visionaries behind these technologies have been well-documented, and have influenced a host of other business leaders and business schools worldwide.

Closer to home, we have had our own notable business leaders starting with Josias Booker, an Englishman, who first arrived in Guyana in 1815 to work as the manager of a cotton plantation. In 1834, he, along with his two brothers George and Richard, established Booker Brothers & Company, which would grow to dominate the economy and forever change the social, economic

and ultimately the country's political landscape.

Ever since, we have had such great business leaders like Ramsay Ali, Robert Badal, E.B. Beharry, Jock Campbell, Derek Chin, P.S. D'Aguiar, Chris Fernandes, Sattaur Gafoor, Gerry Gouveia, Glen Khan, Lyla Kissoon, Toolsie Persaud, Yesu Persaud, Clifford Reis, Komal Samaroo, Brian Tiwarie, Joseph Vieira, and many others. They have all influenced and shaped the modern Guyanese economy in their own respective fields regardless of political stripe, religion, race, or belief systems.



Lal Balkaran

What is more is that they have all placed Guyana firmly on the map of the global business world. As a result, their stories relating to business need to be researched, documented, and showcased as part of the Guyanese corporate landscape. It is, therefore, worthwhile to research the lives and contributions of such influential business figures, ensuring that their achievements, business acumen, innovations, and challenges are recorded. Moreover, it helps maintain an historical record of how the industries in which they were associated evolved and changed lives including the social and economic landscape in Guyana over time.

Their career paths, achievements, struggles, what propelled them into business ventures, approaches to risks and governance, and formative influences are key to understanding business growth and development. Such a compilation will also provide a reliable knowledge and a more authoritative and curated resource for information on these business leaders, some who are iconic indeed.

A reference of this nature serves multiple purposes across education, research, policy, and professional practice. Researchers can trace the development of business practices, understand leadership styles and corporate culture across eras, analyse the socio-economic contexts in which leaders operated, and compare the impact of various leaders on their industries.

Also, students of business benefit from concrete examples of real-world leadership, understand each business leader's career, insights into decision-making in different contexts, lessons from successes and failures, strategic thinking, their respective corporate social responsibility, and inspiration through diverse career paths.

Business leaders differ widely – innovators, risk-takers, strategists, operational experts, social entrepreneurs, and more. This compilation will help readers examine personality traits, leader-

ship approaches, strategic visions, ethical choices, responses to crises, and the ability to salvage failing businesses into glorious successes in some cases.

Patterns from these biographies will form the basis of leadership development and executive training in addition to forming practical lessons for entrepreneurs. After all, documenting how leaders identified opportunities, overcame odds and negativity including resource constraints, built teams and cultures, navigated market changes, demonstrated initiatives, and handled failures and reinvention is key to a successful business.

The main criteria for inclusion will be on business creativity and innovation, notability, as well as impact on business and society as a whole, position, achievements and recognition. Also, influence on national life and significant contribution to society in general and business in particular will be considered.

Two of my recent publications *Biographical Dictionary of Guyana* and *History of Accounting & Auditing in Guyana* have a treasure trove of relevant information as a start. I will be more than pleased to hear from readers who may have any input in this worthwhile project of mine. This will be the first of its kind in the Caribbean, a feat that should make us all proud.

Lal Balkaran, Toronto, via email.

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Triveni extends community outreach with The Law & You Conference

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Brampton – As holiday celebrations heighten the risk of impaired driving across Ontario, The Law & You Conference and Triveni Mandir in Brampton are expanding community outreach by hosting an educational conference that examines the legal, financial, and personal consequences of drinking and driving.

The second part of the conference will present opportunities for aspiring law students to seek guidance from professional law practitioners participating in the event.

With parties, gatherings, and family events increasing during the holidays, impaired driving remains one of Ontario's most persistent public-safety concerns, which legal professionals Dhaman Kissoon and Ruth Odit have noted in their writing in *Indo-Caribbean World*: "The holidays are upon us, a time for various celebrations and parties, often leading to an increase in alcohol-impaired driving incidents in Ontario."

This year, the RIDE campaign, launched in 1977 to reduce alcohol-impaired drivers, is once again activated, and will be operating from November 20 until January 1, 2026.

As Kissoon and Odit have noted, "Alcohol-impaired driving continues to be a major issue in Ontario. This problem causes significant deaths and injuries on the road, continuing to be one of the leading causes of death on the streets."

Their article outlines legal thresholds: drivers may face charges at blood-alcohol concentrations of 0.08 or above, or even in the warning range between 0.05 and 0.079. Zero-tolerance rules apply to drivers under 21, novice drivers, and commercial drivers.

They further warn that "the aftermath of impaired driving can often be irrevocable", with consequences that vary depending on the driver's age, licence type, alcohol level, and any prior history.

As RIDE checkpoints expand across the province, our broader community is being encouraged to understand not only the immediate danger, but also the deeper legal repercussions that accompany impaired driving.

It is within this heightened seasonal context that The Law & You Conference and Triveni Mandir have been positioned as a community education hub. An eminent location for worship and cultural gathering, Triveni Mandir, led by Pandit Yudhishtir Dhanraj, is also growing as a site for outreach initiatives, the

latest being the social and legal challenges that families could encounter following an impaired driving charge.

By hosting the *Impaired Driving and Legal Education* segment of The Law & You Conference, Triveni has transformed into a civic classroom during one of the most high-risk periods for impaired driving, enabling families to learn about the legal system in a comfortable, familiar environment.

Situating legal literacy alongside cultural and spiritual guidance, Triveni Mandir is embedding public safety within community life. The event is free of charge, and includes lunch.

Moderated by Kissoon, the first part of the conference will be a fictional but highly plausible scenario involving Roger, a 35-year-old Permanent Resident of Canada. After consuming four beers at a New Year's Day dinner, Roger displayed slurred speech.

Despite his wife Renee offering to drive due to her concern about the icy roads and his condition, Roger became angry and insisted on taking the wheel. The vehicle lost control, severely injuring all passengers, and leading to the death of Renee's father.

Post-accident tests showed blood-alcohol readings of 145 and 140. Roger faced six serious charges, including Impaired Driving causing death and bodily harm, and Over 80 causing death and bodily harm. Apart from two speeding tickets, he had no prior record. Repercussions extended beyond criminal charges: he and Renee

separated, and civil action was initiated by family members. His insurance coverage of \$1 million was insufficient for the scale of damages, leaving him personally liable for the excess.

The fictional scenario represents a composite of real-world incidents frequently seen in the Peel region, and its instructional value lies in showing how quickly an evening of celebration can become a long-term legal and financial crisis.

In the unfolding of the fictional scenario, the expert panel will break down how Roger's case would likely proceed. The Crown prosecutor would need to move by indictment in seeking a jail penalty, given the death and serious bodily harm involved.

Sentencing considerations would include the prevalence of impaired-driving offences in the Peel Region, placing Roger's actions within a pattern of regional concern. The Crown's evidentiary and sentencing priorities will focus on accountability and deterrence. The defence perspective highlights the court would

be hearing about would be Roger making a mistake, his lack of prior record, and the possibility of deportation as a Permanent Resident upon conviction. These factors form part of the defence's efforts to argue mitigating circumstances.

The insurance specialist will examine the sharp financial consequences faced by drivers like Roger who are under-insured. Once the insurer pays out the policy limit of \$1 million, the driver becomes personally responsible for the remaining damages, often amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars or more.

A judicial viewpoint rounds out the scenario by explaining the considerations involved in sentencing, including harm to victims, community impact, and regional trends in impaired driving.

Putting it all into the bigger, provincial picture, the article by Kissoon and Odit outlines the broader legal consequences relevant to cases like Roger's. As their research notes, a first conviction for alcohol-impaired driving carries a minimum fine of \$1,000, with higher fines for elevated blood-alcohol levels. Insurance premiums can rise between 150 and 300 percent, and insurers may refuse to renew policies.

A driver's licence is automatically suspended for 90 days upon being charged, with a one-year suspension for a first conviction. Repeat offences within ten years lead to increasingly severe suspensions, including lifetime prohibitions in some cases.

Vehicles may be impounded for seven days. Civil suits often follow, especially when significant injury or death occurs. If damages exceed policy limits, both the owner and driver must retain legal representation to defend the excess claim.

Kissoon and Odit also note the immigration consequences: since Criminal Code amendments increased the maximum sentence for impaired driving above ten years, Permanent Residents and foreign nationals may face inadmissibility proceedings under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Together, these perspectives reinforce that impaired driving consequences extend far beyond criminal court. By hosting this educational conference at the start of the festive season, The Law & You Conference and Triveni Mandir are helping community members understand the interconnected legal, financial, and immigration risks associated with impaired driving.

The event encourages families and individuals to reflect before getting behind the wheel, particularly during a season when celebrations can blur judgment. The combined insights from Crown, defence, judicial, and insurance professionals offer a comprehensive picture of what can happen after a single poor decision.



Pandit Dhanraj

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NDP supporters at a political rally last week

New day dawns for SVG as NDP's Friday takes the helm

— Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is entering a new political era after the opposition New Democratic Party won a sweeping victory, ending Ralph Gonsalves' 24-year tenure. The new, emerging NDP political era signals a major shift in governance, foreign policy alignment, and regional political dynamics.

...

Kingstown – The Opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) claimed victory on November 28, ending Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves' 24 years in office following general elections in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. NDP leader, Dr Goodwin Friday, was sworn in as Prime Minister on the evening of November 28.

The elections' results showed the moderate conservative NDP winning 14 of the country's 15 constituencies, signalling a transformative shift for the eastern Caribbean archipelago. Gonsalves, who first took office in March 2001 and won five consecutive elections, had been one of the world's longest-serving democratic leaders in recent history.

His Unity Labour Party issued a brief statement on Facebook on the evening of November 27, telling supporters: "We love you, SVG, and we will keep working and advocating for you. This is not the end, it is the beginning."

On the morning of November 28, Gonsalves and the ULP formally conceded defeat, initiating preparations for an orderly transition of power.

The polls were monitored by a Caricom Electoral Observer Mission and the National Monitoring and Consultative Mechanism. Regional and international observers commended the process as free, fair, and transparent, underscoring the significance of the transition.

Prime Minister Friday, who retained his Northern Grenadines seat, pledged to prioritise economic revitalisation, job creation, and governance reform.

"This election marks a new chapter for our nation," he said in his victory address, adding, "The people have spoken, and we are fully committed to fulfilling their hopes and aspirations."

Friday, 66, is now the country's seventh prime minister since Independence in 1979. His party has previously supported creating a citizenship by investment program and advocated closer ties with China. However, the NDP's manifesto did not mention ending relations with Taiwan, despite past proposals to shift diplomatic recognition.

The nation faces considerable structural challenges. St Vincent and the Grenadines has an unemployment rate of 18 percent, a poverty rate of 26 percent, and continues to recover from the April 2021 eruption of La Soufrière volcano.

With Friday now in office, national atten-

tion will turn to his strategies for addressing economic and social pressures.

Throughout his 24 years in office, Gonsalves maintained strong ties with Taiwan, and was a staunch supporter of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel. Under his leadership, St Vincent and the Grenadines signed a free movement deal in October to facilitate travel to certain Caribbean countries without visas or work permits.

Gonsalves also played a key regional role in December 2023, helping organise an emergency meeting between the leaders of Venezuela and Guyana to address a long-standing border dispute.

In his congratulatory message, Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali wished Godwin and his party "a successful tenure in office". At the same time, Ali stated he was looking forward to working closely with the new government "to deepen the bilateral cooperation"... and to "advancing regionalism".

Said Ali: "At a time when the Caribbean faces both new opportunities and shared challenges, I am confident that our partnership will continue to grow in ways that benefit our peoples and our region."

Ali also expressed "Guyana's sincere appreciation" to Gonsalves, saying, "His long and dedicated service to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines and to Caribbean regionalism has earned him respect across our Community. His contributions to the advancement of Caricom will be long remembered".

Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness wrote on X that Gonsalves had been "a strong voice within Caricom", saying he had "consistently advocated for deeper regional cooperation and a more integrated Caribbean community".

He added, "His passion for regionalism and his unwavering belief in the value of collective action have helped to shape many important conversations across our Community."

According to the Electoral Office in Kingstown, 103,524 persons were eligible to vote, compared with 101,744 in 2020. East St George again held the largest roster of registered voters with 9,369 voters, the only constituency exceeding 9,000 people. The next largest was South Leeward with 8,927.

More than 103,000 voters were scheduled to cast ballots across 250 polling stations, with both major parties fielding candidates in all 15 constituencies. The National Liberation Movement entered the race with its leader, Dr Doris Charles, contesting South Leeward, while independent candidate Kenna Questelles contested West St George.

St Vincent Times reported the NDP had secured 14 of the 15 parliamentary seats, marking the end of what it called the party's "25 years in the political wilderness".



Ask Jay...

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TURNING SPACE INTO OPPORTUNITY

A client purchased a bungalow in Toronto, featuring an unfinished basement. She asked, "Jay, do you think making a basement suite is worth it?"

Throughout the GTA, homeowners are increasingly asking the same thing. With real estate prices climbing, creating secondary suites or laneway homes has become more than just a trend – it is a practical way to build wealth, support family, or offset the rising costs of homeownership.

I remember walking through her basement and envisioning its transformation: a private entrance, a kitchen, a living area, two bedrooms, and a full bathroom. It was a space with immense potential. That is the beauty of secondary suites – they turn underused spaces into something functional, profitable, and even life-changing.

Secondary suites, also known as in-law apartments or legal basement suites, are self-contained living spaces within a home. They must comply with local building codes, have separate entrances, and meet safety requirements. Once legalised, they can generate steady rental income, or significantly boost a property's resale value. In cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary, a well-designed suite can add tens of thousands of dollars to a home's market value.

Laneway homes are unique. Usually built at the rear of a property, they are fully independent residences that offer similar benefits but on a larger scale. They can host a tenant, an aging parent, or even a young adult just starting. I have seen families develop small, beautiful laneway homes that blend seamlessly with their property, providing flexibility and long-term financial security.

We reviewed her numbers. Legalising a basement suite is not cheap; it can cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000, depending on the extent of the necessary renovations, such as plumbing, electrical work, fire safety, ceiling height adjustments, and finishing. A suite can easily rent for \$1,500 to \$2,500 per month in Toronto, not to mention the increased resale value. Over time, rental income can help cover mortgage payments, property taxes, and maintenance costs.

In urban Canadian markets, a legal basement suite can boost your property's resale value by about 70 percent to 75 percent of the renovation cost. For example, a \$60,000 investment could increase the home's value by \$42,000 to \$45,000. Properties with legal secondary suites often sell faster and for higher prices because of the extra rental income potential. Homeowners in Ontario can expect to earn between \$18,000 and \$30,000 annually from a legal basement suite, helping to cover housing expenses. Garden suites usually rent for more.

Municipal zoning, building codes, and permits are all part of the construction process. Some cities require specific ceiling heights, egress windows, and parking arrangements. Failing to comply with these regulations can lead to fines or issues when trying to sell the property.

Legal suites enable multigenerational living, giving families the flexibility to care for aging parents or support adult children as they gain independence. I have observed grandparents move into a laneway home while their children and grandchildren stay in the main house, encouraging independence while staying close. This mix of financial security and personal convenience enhances the value of the investment.

Is it worth legalising your basement or building a laneway home? Based on my experience, the answer is generally yes – if you approach it thoughtfully. Understand the costs, follow the regulations, and plan carefully. The benefits are clear: increased property value, rental income, versatility for family living, and a sense of pride in turning underused space into something meaningful.

I think about that client, now settled with her tenant paying rent that covers her mortgage. She smiles each time she walks through her newly-renovated basement.

"It feels like my house is working for me now," she said. And that, more than anything, highlights the true value of legalising your basement: turning opportunity into reality, one square foot at a time.

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Carnival warmth, energy meet winter magic at Blue Mountain Village

— Caribbean Winterfest returns to Blue Mountain from December 5 to 7 blending cultural programming with winter-season activity as the TCC expands its reach beyond Toronto. With live performances, family workshops, and a major evening fête, the event brings Carnival traditions into one of Ontario's busiest seasonal destinations.

Toronto – Snow-covered pathways and winter lights at Blue Mountain Village will frame three days of Caribbean music, costumes, and family activities during the Toronto Caribbean Carnival's (TCC) Winterfest from December 5 to 7.

Produced by the Festival Management Committee, organisers of Toronto's signature summer event, Caribbean Winterfest will bring Carnival programming to a winter setting for the second consecutive year.

The event features a lineup of live bands, DJ sets, steelpan, calypso, and soca performances, along with costume displays, dance activities, and a holiday marketplace.

Family-friendly workshops, including children's costume-making sessions and drumming circles, will run throughout the weekend.

FMC notes that Winterfest supports its mission of carrying Carnival traditions into new regions "bringing the rhythm and spirit of Carnival to new communities across Ontario".

As Jennifer Hirlehey, Executive Chair of the Toronto Caribbean Carnival, noted in a TCC release, "The Toronto Carnival is a uniquely Canadian experience, connecting Canadians in all of their diversity. In the present geopolitical climate, the Toronto Carnival acts as a bridge to the people of the world coming together to create connection and community."

She added, "Our 2025 theme, *Take Me Home*, speaks to the love affair between our homelands and Canada. It is a place



Caribbean Winterfest will put our summer festival in Blue Mountain's winter topography. TCC photos

where people of all nations can feel at home, experience joy, and feel connected to each other. Join us in Blue Mountain and share in the love affair."

Winterfest is part of Carnival's broader effort to extend its presence beyond Toronto's summer peak and into Ontario's regional tourism landscape. By hosting programming in Blue Mountain Village, one of the province's leading winter destinations, the FMC underscores the festival's commitment to reaching wider audiences, and integrating Caribbean cultural expression into Canadian seasonal life.

Mischka Crichton, Chief Executive Officer of the Toronto Caribbean Carnival, spoke to this synergy in the TCC release, saying, "Caribbean Winterfest celebrates not only the vibrancy of Caribbean culture, but also its home in Canada – where people of all backgrounds come together to share in the rhythm, joy, and creativity that define our multicultural identity. Join us on the slopes!"

On December 6, Winterfest will continue into the evening with the DeFrost Party, held at Rusty's @ Blue at the Blue Mountain Ski Resort. The event will feature live performances by Anika Berry, Maestre and Friends Live Parang Band,

and Ossie Gurley and the Truth, along with DJ sets from Dr Jay de Soca Prince, DJ Menace, and Greenz Connection. Glow lights and holiday décor will frame the outdoor staging, bringing tropical, summery Caribbean performances into a winter environment.

This juxtaposition sunshine with snow was reflected in the words of Adrian Charles, General Manager of the Toronto Caribbean Carnival.

As Charles noted, "Together, with the continued support of our partners like Blue Mountain Village and the community, we can ensure Toronto Carnival thrives for generations to come. We're so happy to be bringing some real heat back to Blue Mountain this winter. I'm looking

forward to a festive, joyous, and most of all, safe event weekend for everyone."

The Toronto Caribbean Carnival began as a gift to Canada during the 1967 Canadian Centennial Celebration, and has commemorated Caribbean culture for more than a half-century.

With origins rooted in emancipation, the festival recognises a long tradition of Caribbean people celebrating freedom from slavery and Indentureship. Its programming embraces all cultures and symbolises unity, pride, and the expressive power of music, dance, and elaborate costumes.

Today, the FMC produces several initiatives that advance anti-racism and promote intercultural understanding. Educational collaborations include partnerships with the Toronto District School Board and Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment.

As North America's largest celebration of Caribbean culture, the Carnival contributes significantly to Canada's cultural, social, and economic landscape.

Caribbean Winterfest at Blue Mountain continues this legacy by bringing established Carnival traditions into new environments and within seasonal contexts, strengthening cultural connection while expanding regional reach.

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DECEMBER 5 - 7, 2025

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In photos, TCC's generosity, gratitude, and giving for the festive season. *Photos by Hinano Beekhoo*

TCC celebrates seniors

— The Toronto Caribbean Carnival held its Seniors Holiday Program with a festive spirit of gratitude and community care, gathering its leadership team in Scarborough to distribute 100 holiday food baskets to seniors as part of its ongoing commitment to uplift and support our Caribbean community.

...

Scarborough – The Toronto Caribbean Carnival leadership team gathered at Twilight Family Restaurant and Bar on November 30 to celebrate seniors and distribute 100 holiday food baskets as part of the organisation's Seniors Holiday Program.

The members of TCC's team, Jennifer Hirlehey, Mischka Crichton, Adrian Charles, Gail King, Cassandra Cunningham, Gabbie Goriah, the Board of Directors, and its hardworking cohort of Carnival elves, honoured seniors in a gesture that blended seasonal cheer with community appreciation.

The event marked a meaningful close to the year, reflecting TCC's dedication to engagement beyond the summer festival.

Online registration was required, with seniors eligible to sign up for one basket per household. It turned out that Twilight's pick-up site was the dawn of a celebratory time for connection and gratitude as seniors from our Caribbean community arrived to collect their holiday baskets.

In her announcement in the lead-up to the program, TCC's Executive Chair Hirlehey highlighted the team's year-long efforts to meaningfully engage our community.

As she wrote, "Our team has been working hard throughout the year to celebrate our community in meaningful ways. We are pleased to share that the Toronto Caribbean Carnival will be recognising and celebrating our seniors this year through our Seniors Holiday Program."

She added, "As part of our commitment to giving back, we will be providing 100 holiday food gift baskets to seniors in our community. Each basket will include either a turkey or a ham, along with a variety of food items to help make the season a little brighter."

The initiative reinforced the TCC's ethos of service, notably for our elders who have shaped and sustained the cultural fabric of our Caribbean diaspora here in the GTA.

Hirlehey's remarks further underscored TCC's holiday message, which grounded in gratitude, generosity, and giving, was a reflection of the core values that continue to guide its ongoing community outreach.

As she declared, "Our mandate is to uplift and promote the Caribbean community. We hope that we can play a small part in the celebration of the season with you and your loved ones. We also hope that these baskets bring joy, and a sense of community spirit to our cherished seniors."





Awards for the late Sam Persaud

— Brampton’s Triveni Mandir has launched the Lotus Scholarship in honour of the late Samlall Persaud, whose musical legacy and contributions as a community stalwart continue to shape Hindu cultural life across the GTA. The Hindu Federation also recognised Persaud at its 2025 gala with an award bearing his nickname.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report
Brampton – Triveni Mandir in Brampton has established the Lotus Scholarship to honour the musical legacy and community service of the late Samlall Persaud.

The Lotus Scholarship was established on Persaud’s love for music. Triveni Mandir’s Pandit Yudhishtir Dhanrajh told *Indo-Caribbean World* last week that after consulting with his sister, Gauri, it was decided the way to move forward was via Persaud’s love for music, and to preserve his legacy via students who are studying in a music program at the tertiary level.

Noting that Persaud was “a binding force”, Pandit Yudhishtir said his legacy as an outstanding community stalwart came in his ability to navigate the turbulence, and yet find calm and harmony among the many eddies.

“But what was stable was his love for music,” Pandit Yudhishtir declared.

As he had done during his tribute at the funeral viewing back in March, Pandit Yudhishtir recalled one of Persaud’s nicknames being “Lotus”. Explaining the symbolism of resilience, purity, and strength, he stated, “The beautiful Lotus flower can bloom in the dirtiest water. It is the perfect metaphor for Uncle Sam, who stood strong in the midst of trouble.”

Funding for the scholarship is being carried forward by Triveni



Mandir. However, Pandit Yudhishtir added the mandir was open in the future to anyone willing to subsidise or sponsor the scholarship, stating, “We are aiming to grow it, and we have many deserving candidates.” Pandit Yudhishtir also spoke to building on Persaud’s legacy of nurturing young musicians through the scholarship, stating, “One word that remains is continuity. In Samji’s time there were very few musicians, but with his contribution, music is much more accessible today. His impact was on two or three generations. He encouraged youths; he was that kind of person. Now, anyone who wants to be serious about music, know that Triveni would be there.”

He also noted the lacunae left behind with Persaud’s passing, stating, “We are definitely feeling the void. It was noticeable in the recent Hindu Heritage Gala,” he added.

What was missing this year was Persaud’s indefatigable devotion, his ability to organise and delegate, his coordination of linkages among the mandirs in the east and the west that rippled with synergies and dynamism across the GTA.

“He was the glue, the cement holding Hindus together; he was the catalyst, and his energy was missing from this year’s event,” Pandit Yudhishtir stated.

In another recognition given, the Hindu Federation honoured Persaud on November 23 at its Hindu Federation Gala 2025. Persaud was recognised for his unwavering service and dedication to Hinduism in Canada. The award was accepted by Persaud’s widow, Ena, and son Aditya.

In a statement following the gala, Pandit Sharma told *Indo-Caribbean World*, “We of the Hindu Federation wanted to express our sincere grief for the loss of our dear brother Samji. He was a pillar of strength. He believed in the objectives of the Hindu Federation, a united Hindu voice in Canada. He was a doer and a people’s person.”

Pandit Sharma added, “He was supportive of all Hindu mandirs, and took great pride in working with youths at the Devi Mandir, and in all aspects of youth initiatives. This award, named the *Lotus Award*, will be awarded annually to a person who in their daily activities exemplifies the qualities and values that Samji lived by.”

Also honoured at the gala were Lotus Funeral Home’s Director Kamal Bhardwaj, and Mississauga-Malton MPP Deepak Anand. Three outstanding students, Yogi Solanki, Kavtilya Patel, and Madhava Nara, also received scholarship awards.

Sponsors of this year’s gala were Bhardwaj, Jay Patel and Aravinda, BAPS Temple, and Veena Ram.

The event also saw a *Bharathanatyam* performance by Triveni Mandir; a *Kathak* performance by Panwar Music & Dance, and various mandirs; followed by entertainment, dinner, and an open dance floor.

Attendees, guests, and officials at the Hindu Federation 2025 gala. Photos by Gurav Garg



Beyond Expectations a chronicle of Ashook Ramsaran’s long journey

New York – Amidst an enthusiastic celebration attended by family, friends, associates, and elected officials, Ashook Ramsaran’s autobiography was launched on November 23 at the Douglaston Manor in Queens, New York.

Titled *BEYOND EXPECTATIONS: The Odyssey of a Village Boy from Guyana*, this publication is a well-organised and chronologically compiled book that chronicles the long journey of Ashook Ramsaran whose great grandparents, Poorye and Radhah, left India as Indentured labourers and arrived in then British Guiana (now Guyana) in 1853 and 1857 respectively.

The book begins with an elaborate Journey Map detailing the journeys from India to Guyana, and then to the US. It is in three parts: *The Early Years in Guyana*; *Settling in the USA*; and *Civic Engagement and the Global Diaspora*, with an extensive *Appendix* that includes family history, articles, Kolkata and other memorials, obituaries and tributes, recognition awards, US Congressional Record, and other historical documents.

The book is interspersed with selected photos in each section that provides perspectives at each stage of the journey, as well as an emotional tribute to Ramsaran’s late son Gerald, to whom the book is dedicated.

Ramsaran is the president of the Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC) and former president of the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), and holds prominent positions in several civic, academic, and healthcare institutions.

He initiated the establishment of the Kolkata Memorial in India in 2011, recognising those who left India between 1834 to 1917 as Indentured labourers to various colonies; there are also replicas of the memorial in Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Martinique. He also initiated street namings in New York in recognition of outstanding individuals and institutions.

The foreword is eloquently written by renowned Guyanese born Professor David Dabydeen, University of Cambridge in the UK. The back cover includes advance perspectives by Donald Ramotar, former President of Guyana; Letitia James, Attorney General, State of New York; and Ela Gandhi, Chairperson, Gandhi Development Trust, South Africa.

Advance perspectives are also written by Dr Alina Camacho-



Ramsaran family at the book launch, left to right, Arnold, Nadira, Gavin, Camille, Ashook, Jaden, and Rachel



Camille Ramsaran (left to right), Ashook Ramsaran, Warren Schreiber (Queens Civic Congress), NYS Senator Roxanne Persaud, US Congress Grace Meng, and Michael Scotland

Gingerich, Professor of Spanish & Latin American Studies, St John’s University, Queens, New York; and Albert R. Ramdin, Secretary General of the Organisation of American States (OAS), and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Suriname.

The launch was expertly moderated by Rhonda Binda, who is of Guyanese origin, and former Deputy Queens Borough President.

Complimentary and autographed copies were shared among the attendees who were enthusiastic about the historical significance of the book. It was also well-received by members of the Guyanese diaspora.

Excerpts from the book were read by Sylvia Ramgadoo-Marimuthu for Dr Dabydeen; and by Arnold Ramsaran for Ben Jacob, formerly at Cambridge University, presently at Rutgers University.

Also reading were former Fulbright Scholar to India, professor emerita at William Paterson University, writer Marina Budhos; and Ramsaran’s grandsons Jaden and Gavin.

US Congress Member Grace Meng was the chief guest and shared Ramsaran’s professional success, as well as his enormous contributions to his community and beyond. Meng read Ramsaran’s biography into the US Congressional Record in June 2025.

New York State Senator Roxanne Persaud, of Guyanese origin, spoke about Ramsaran’s commitment to civic engagement and presented Ramsaran with a Citation.

Dr Sudhir Parikh, Chairman & Publisher of Parikh World Wide Media, and Chairman of ITV Gold (24/7 TV Channel), spoke about Ramsaran’s many contributions to the Indian diaspora.

Guyana’s Consul General in New York, Michael Brotherson, issued a letter of congratulations to Ramsaran, which was read by Consul Nacifa Watson.

Queens District Leader Richard David congratulated Ramsaran and expects that the book will be huge success.

In the concluding remarks, Ramsaran stated that: “As I reflect on this chapter, I am aware that the journey continues – perhaps not in me, but through those I have loved, taught, and beside whom I have walked. This record speaks about

my travels, but above that, it speaks about what I have tried to hold on to along the way: family, purpose, and memory. I am hopeful that it helps someone find a sense of purpose, whoever he/she is or from where he/she originated. Then it would certainly be worth it.”

Several attendees also made remarks extolling the virtues and significance of the book. Thanks and appreciation were given by Rachel Ramsaran after sharing of the cake, *Beyond Expectations*.



Photo (right), Pandita Sattie Ramsakal (left) and Jasodra Prasad opened the program; in photos, the all-female performers during Sangeetanjali



All-women Sangeetanjali musical presentation thrill appreciative audience

Markham – The all-female musical presentation, *Sangeetanjali*, hosted by Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham on November 29, drew a full hall and earned enthusiastic acclaim from attendees.

A packed audience cheered throughout the evening as the performers delivered their renditions, filling the hall with energy and repeated calls for encores. The female artistes, showcasing a range of instrumental and vocal skills “stole the hearts of the audience” with performances that highlighted both discipline and delight.

Led by keyboardist Anisa Dhar, the ensemble featured artistes demonstrating expert command of the *tablas*, *dholak*, drum sets, and an array of percussion instruments that blended seamlessly to support the singers. The shared musicianship produced a well-balanced, resonant soundscape that anchored the evening’s celebration of women in music.

In his remarks, Adit Kumar, President of Toronto Arya Samaj, emphasised the significance of the moment, stating, “Toronto Arya Samaj is proud to present the first ever All Female band and to support local talent”.

He further reflected on the cultural centre’s founding vision,

adding, “When the Vedic Cultural Centre was built it promised to be a Centre for the Promotion of the Performing Arts and Talent, and this is yet another example of it fulfilling that promise.”

Honorary Consul Mani Singh also addressed the gathering, congratulating the artistes, and crediting TAS/VCC with “supporting and promoting local talent in a very meaningful way”.

He suggested the concert become an annual event, a recommendation the organisers have formally noted.

More than two dozen performers contributed to this one-of-a-kind presentation. The lineup featured Neetu Rambharak, The Singh Sisters, Manisha Choudhry, Nanda Ramoutar, Priya Ramoutar, Olivia Kumar, Amy Rambir, Emily Sanasie, Aruna Paul, Anisa Mahadeo, Aleesha Mahadeo, Aryana Mahadeo, Haimshani Sharma, Ramona Sylvan, Nalini Chaitan, and Darshini Sanichar, among others.

The young artistes performed with confidence and pride, receiving warm appreciation from the audience for their musical range and stage presence.

The evening’s program also included dance performances by STCC Dance Academy, adding movement and colour to an

already vibrant cultural showcase.

Sound engineers Kevin Dhar and Sudesh Siewkumar ensured the audio quality remained consistently strong throughout the event, while hosts Anantha Sriram and Natasha Prasad kept the audience engaged from start to finish.

This inaugural production was conceptualised by popular music teacher and Purohit, Pandit Dave Ramoutar, along with his family and Pandit Joe Jaglall, whose collaboration brought the all-female presentation into being. Their work set the stage for a celebratory evening that underscored both tradition and innovation in the community’s performing arts landscape.

Looking ahead, organisers announced that the next major cultural gathering will be the Holi Concert, scheduled for March 14, 2026. Further details will be shared as plans progress.

All proceeds from the show will go towards the maintenance and upkeep of the Arya Samaj Mandir/Vedic Cultural Centre. With the building now almost 30 years old, it is due for repairs. Donations can be made online at tas@torontoaryasamaj.org. Tax-deductible receipts will be issued. For more information contact Adit Kumar, **647-866-1926**, or Pt Dave Ramoutar at **416-918-4038**.

Why do we have this obsession with stuff, and do we have enough of it?

By Dhanpaul Narine

You go to the mall. Your intention is to buy one item only. You look around and see that there is a sale and shoppers are jostling for the bargains. You join the line and end up buying several items that you do not really need, but you reason you must have them.

If others can spend, so can you. You charge it to the credit card and convince yourself that will find use for the items later. You return and throw them in a corner of the house, and after a few months, you decide that you do not really have use for them. You quietly place them in the garbage bags, and are relieved to see them gone.

We live in a 'disposable' age. We have more than we need, but few items are made to last because the world has been designed to encourage 'throw-aways'.

Would you be happier if you have fewer things than you have now? Would you be happy to give up the BMWs, Pradas, Guccis, the latest gadgets, and that big house for the simple life? Must we go out of our way to get the new glossy toys to impress the neighbours?

The reality is that we live in a world of 'stuffocation'. It is a new word, and it is easy to define. You look in your wardrobe and it is packed with clothes, but you cannot find a thing to wear!

You decide to buy something new and while you are at it, you buy some other stuff that you do not really need, but you fool yourself that they are necessary.

The simple fact is that we have more stuff than we need, and what is alarming is that we want to acquire more. The pursuit of happiness for many is really the accumulation of more stuff. Conspicuous consumption continues to trend high on the economic index.

The comedian George Carlin was on point. He said, "The whole meaning of life is trying to find a place to put your stuff!"

Materialism has created so much stuff that an entire storage industry has been set up to look after it. The outlook is not promising. Given the current state of consumerism, the tendency will be for us to continue to accumulate stuff, to buy things that we do not need, and to put them away with negative emotions.

The problem is that when you think you have got rid of stuff, you find that it has returned, sometimes looking different.

The *Center on Everyday Lives* states that, "We are living in the most materially rich society in global history with light years more possessions per average family than any preceding society."

The *Center* also points out that we are at a point of material saturation, and that we are suffering from a clutter crisis.

We are constantly bombarded with powerful images. For example, we see people with expensive gold watches, carrying numerous shopping bags, and with the latest designer outfits. They jet to different resorts, and spend as if money is falling from the trees; some of them even burn dollar bills to give the impression of happiness. But behind these manifestations of crass opulence lie depression, loneliness, and unhappiness.

As we look to find some balance in our lives, we cannot help confronting the million-dollar question: Why do we have this obsession with stuff, and do we have enough of it? Will there be a point in our lives when we will be content with what we have?

The answers to these questions are complex, as they relate to both psychological and social impulses.

Psychologists argue that people buy things with positive emotions. There is the belief that the purchase of new stuff will lead to happiness. There are those that think a new car, a house, or appliances will make life comfortable, and bring a feeling of security, and these in turn will cause one to be happy.



Shoppers looking for bargains in a crowded mall

When we really want an object, a message is sent to the pleasure centre of the brain, and creates the feeling that we must have it, and that the acquisition will help solve our problems.

There is the view that acquisition gives a short boost to 'materialistic people', and that positive emotions are temporary. The argument here is that the tendency to want is natural since resources are limited, and there is competition in scarce environments. In addition, constant want keeps us in a state of alertness and readiness that is connected to our evolutionary make-up.

A number of studies has shown that the materialist craze or buying stuff does not lead to happiness. Indeed, we tend to become unhappy when we place the emphasis on material things.

A study from Tufts University concludes, "People who are highly focused on materialistic values have lower personal well-being and psychological health than those who believe that materialistic pursuits are relatively unimportant."

In another study published in the journal, *Motivation and Emotion*, it is shown that when people become more materialistic their sense of purpose decreases.

As with most subjects, there are differing opinions. One view says that we should not be too concerned about material acquisition since it is all part of the hierarchy of needs, and that there will come a time when we will achieve a natural balance.

However, this does not sit well with environmentalists and philosophers, who argue that clutter will lead to *affluenza*. In other words, mass consumption leads to mass depression.

How then can we put all that stuff in a special place and live a clutter-free life? The first and perhaps the most important way is to value experience above objects. When a child performs at a school recital the experience is unforgettable and priceless. It is talked about for a long time, and that performance can influence others to do better as well.

If you buy stuff just for the sake of doing so, and you throw them out in a few months, then it can have a tremendous impact on our limited resources.

Many people believe that materialism creates unhappiness. If we accept the premise that a mind that wanders is unhappy, then around half of humanity is in a state of unhappiness.

It is in this context then that 'experiences' make sense over 'material objects'. For instance, it is suggested by one writer that "You can wait for a delicious meal at a nice restaurant, or look forward to a nice vacation and this feels more satisfying than waiting for your pre-ordered iPhone to arrive. Or when the two-day shipping on Amazon Prime doesn't arrive."

The conclusion here is that positive experiences are uplifting, and they make people happier, while material possession will either become obsolete or wilt.

A bad experience can become a good story, but an experiential purchase is fleeting. People tend to become more generous when they think of good experiences as opposed to when they make purchases for stuff.

The economy is planned to encourage aggressive consumption as this is fed by easy access to credit. The banks are known to send credit cards in the mail, and offer different incentives to increase spending.

Is it too late to slow consumerism? This is a difficult question for a number of reasons. There is aggressive marketing in the media that makes consumption all too easy.

There is a report that in 2025, 80 percent of adults will be carrying a smart phone in their pockets. This may be great news to the manufacturers, but the impact of this technology on

society is worrying.

If the majority of the world's population is connected, then what time would be left for the simple pleasures of life? The argument in many boardrooms is that businesses are driven by profits and quality time is secondary.

One should not expect much help from the political establishment either. Politicians are more concerned with fundraising and campaigning, than with implementing workable social and economic policies that are aimed at reducing clutter.

There has to be a balance between consumerism and all that stuff in our lives, and a return to old-fashioned values. The idea is to live simple by using less.

A number of observers have made a case for avoiding 'stuffocation'. They argue that one should declutter regularly. There should be a list of items that are necessary, and others that have to be disposed. Above all, one should exercise discipline when it comes to tossing stuff out.

The argument is that minimalism can be an asset. It is about redefining priorities and sticking to what is necessary. But do these go far enough to lead to greater happiness?

It is suggested that there must be an internal transformation to fight off the effects of 'stuffocation'. This means that the mind must be decluttered. The person needs to practice gratitude for all that has been given. Being thankful for what has been provided by Providence can help to reduce the desire for more material things.

It can lead to shopping with caution, and to the realisation that overconsumption has environmental effects. The idea is to keep one's thinking simple and clear, and to use only what is necessary. That could be the basis for happiness.


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Persad-Bissessar defends US radar in Tobago over growing concerns

— Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has defended the installation of a US-supplied radar system in Tobago, insisting it strengthens national security and poses no threat to Venezuela, while critics, including former minister Dr Amery Browne and retired Lt Cmdr Norman Dindial, question the government's transparency and operational rationale.

Port-of-Spain – Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has said there is no need for concern over the US military-installed radar system in Tobago, asserting it will improve the safety of both islands.

Persad-Bissessar told media the radar had sparked “controversy” and criticisms from “several quarters, including the Opposition”, but insisted Trinidad and Tobago was not being used as a US base for any military action against Venezuela. She said the US already possesses significant military resources in the region.

“The US owns thousands of satellites, they own the GPS system, they have almost 20 percent of their navy in the Caribbean with the most sophisticated military communications technology in existence. They don't need to put a radar in our country to use for any military purpose. They could monitor the entire Caribbean from the *USS Gerald Ford* aircraft carrier. Sensible people understand these facts,” she said.

She also noted she met late last month with General Dan Caine, chairman of the US' Joint Chiefs of Staff, in Port-of-Spain, describing him as “the highest-ranking military officer and the principal military adviser to US President Donald Trump”.

Following the meeting, she said discussions focused on “tackling narco-trafficking and regional security – not Venezuela”.

Persad-Bissessar added the radar was previously requested from the US government: “Months ago I made the request to the local US Embassy for a US-supplied radar as a temporary solution for our poor surveillance capabilities. A system will also be installed at a site in Trinidad until a permanent replacement for our ineffective existing radar system can be installed.”

Persad-Bissessar emphasised that Tobago had “nothing to fear” from the radar's installation.

“Tobago's air and sea territory are the most secure they have ever been and the people of Tobago are the safest they have ever been. I am ultimately responsible for their safety and security, and will ensure they never have a bloody year like 2024,” she said.

She linked the island's 26 murders in 2024 to “fights for drug turf,” stating, “A number of Trinidadian criminals went to Tobago and sought to create havoc with gang violence and drug trafficking.”

She further claimed the “previous PNM government did

Tobago man arrested over social media threat to CPO

— Chief Personnel Officer Darryl Dindial has described a social-media death threat made against him as “uncomfortable”, while thanking the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for swiftly identifying and charging the suspect. The case has renewed attention to online conduct during Trinidad and Tobago's ongoing State of Emergency.

Port-of-Spain – Chief Personnel Officer Darryl Dindial last week said a recent threat to his life made on social media had been “uncomfortable”, as he thanked the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for its quick response.

According to a police media release, 49-year-old Tobago handyman Jason Wright was arrested and charged last week for making a statement prejudicial to public safety. Wright pleaded guilty, expressed remorse, and was ordered to perform community service.

The issue arose after Wright commented on a *TikTok* video referring to Dindial, writing, “He is a PNM, he will not pay that money at no time ... people need to fix him good ... take his life people.”

A report was filed by Dindial, and Tobago police arrested Wright at his home, where he admitted to making the comment.

Wright, known online as ‘Buju B’, appeared before Magistrate Gill at the Scarborough Magistrates’ 2nd Court charged with making a statement prejudicial to safety under Section 241 of the Emergency Powers Regulations.

Police said Dindial received a *WhatsApp* message on November 24 linking to a *TikTok* video containing a public service announcement. Under the post, a user later identified as Wright had written what investigators deemed a threatening message.

Dindial told investigators he feared for his life and for his family's safety, and filed a report the same day.

A team led by ASP Piggott and Inspector Mohammed visited Wright's home, where he admitted posting the message and expressed remorse. He was arrested, and three cellphones were



Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar greets chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Caine during his visit to the Diplomatic Centre in Port of Spain last month

nothing to help [THA Chief Secretary Farley Augustine] because they believed by allowing crime to flourish in Tobago it would damage him at the polls,” adding, “There has never been a Chief Secretary who loves the people of Tobago as much as Farley.”

Retired Lt Cmdr Norman Dindial, now the political leader of the National Transformation Alliance, had previously stated that Trinidad and Tobago already possesses a “fully functional and effective marine radar system”, and argued the US system installed in Tobago is “battlefield-grade technology designed for war, not counter-narcotics”.

In response, Persad-Bissessar said, “This person claims that he was in charge of the radar system that we are replacing and claimed that it works properly. Well he should also explain why for the past ten years there was a proliferation of drugs, guns, and human trafficking into Trinidad and Tobago. We had record drug trafficking, murders, and violence for ten years because of people and equipment that failed at their jobs.”

Persad-Bissessar also addressed concerns regarding US aircraft and marines previously observed in Tobago. She had said earlier that US marines were assisting with the runway at the new ANR Robinson International Airport, but last week confirmed a radar system was being installed. She said the information was withheld to avoid alerting criminal networks.

“In situations involving classified security issues, the priority must be protecting our country and our people, and that

seized before Acting Corporal Moses laid the charge.

The court ordered Wright to perform 240 hours of community service. If he fails to comply, he will have to pay a TT\$3,000 fine or serve six months' simple imprisonment.

Following the court ruling, Dindial said threats, even on social media, were “uncomfortable” for him. He said he was satisfied with the TTPS response and urged greater responsibility among online users.

“I'm just happy the TTPS was able to deal with the matter quickly,” Dindial said.

He added, “We need to have responsible remarks because people see these things and they think that they are real. It is unfortunate that these things occur. It could have been avoided if more responsible remarks were made on the matter.”

Dindial also noted that his office frequently attracts criticism from social-media users who view him as obstructive, particularly regarding wage negotiations. He stressed his role requires balancing government affordability with labour expectations.

“At the end of the day, there must be a balance ... it must be a situation where whatever is offered must be afforded and sustained, so it is a highly responsible position that requires one to be able to navigate between economics at the political level as instructions, and understanding what's happening on the ground with labour and building that bridge.”

Police action in response to online posts has occurred elsewhere during the ongoing State of Emergency. Last month, Diego Martin resident Olive Green-Jack, 44, was detained after making comments deemed to encourage violence against Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Green-Jack was detained for posts featuring an image of the Prime Minister's Philippine home and a call to the Venezuelan government to target the residence.

The SoE order stated that Green-Jack “made and published public posts and/or comments on social media addressed to the Venezuelan government in an attempt to influence public opinion in a manner likely to be prejudicial to public safety”.

limits what I can say. Even when I cannot comment publicly, the government is engaged, informed, and acting within the responsibilities entrusted to it,” she said.

Additionally, “I will not disclose sensitive information about matters under classification, regardless of political pressure or commentary. I don't think it's wise to broadcast to local and transnational criminal networks our national security and intelligence gathering plans.”

Former Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs Dr Amery Browne criticised Persad-Bissessar's handling of the radar's installation. In a *Facebook* post, Browne questioned her decision to withhold information “amid tensions in the region”, stating the radar's presence “was not being explained to the population”, and that “no one had voted for it”.

He pointed to the system's reported specifications, saying it is “believed to be an AN/TPS-80 G/ATOR system”.

This system is described by its manufacturer, Northrop Grumman, as “a long range, high-performance pulse Doppler radar that can provide 360-degree air surveillance, air defence and counterfire (neutralising enemy weapons) target acquisition”.

Browne compared the Tobago installation with Grenada's response to a similar US request, stating, “When the former minister of Grenada was approached for placement of a US military radar system on his island, he informed the people of Grenada, and subsequently took the issue to the Parliament.”

He added, “When Kamla Persad-Bissessar was approached for placement of a US military radar system in Tobago, she lied to the people (falsely claiming Venezuela did not arise in her discussions with the chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and that the C-17 Globetrotters were here to pave roads), totally ignored Chief Secretary Farley Augustine, had the systems immediately installed, and then activated her mumbo jumbo about having a surprise element against ‘the cartels’, aka the government of our largest neighbour.”

Browne also warned of the strategic implications of positioning such a system near civilian infrastructure.

“Why is our new airport being used in this manner? In the case of Grenada, their government initiated an analysis and took the position that, ‘The Maurice Bishop International Airport is a civilian airport, and, therefore, it is not equipped to treat with military-type operations.’”

He further stated, “At some stage the media will remind PM Kamla that in the modern age no such radar systems are installed without additional military hardware nearby, such as electronic warfare systems and anti-drone capacities. No one is explaining this and no one voted for that.”



Ralph Gonsalves

Moonilal speaks on Gonsalves' loss

Port-of-Spain – Energy Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal last week said the defeat of Ralph Gonsalves in the St Vincent and the Grenadines general elections was linked to his criticisms of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar's support for US military deployment in the southern Caribbean.

Moonilal made the statement during debate on a private motion in the House of Representatives on November 28. Gonsalves' United Labour Party lost the November 27 election 14–1 to the New Democratic Party, with Gonsalves the lone ULP candidate to retain a seat.

Moonilal told Parliament, “[Gonsalves] paid the ultimate political price of being devastated,” adding, “The outgoing prime minister, unless I am mistaken, I think he got one seat ... his own.”

Moonilal said Persad-Bissessar's support for US deployment reflected “her courage, and the boldness and the strength to take action against narco-traffickers in the region”, further declaring, “We are proud within the Caribbean to have taken that leadership.”

He said some of the negative commentary on Trinidad and Tobago's foreign policy, particularly regarding US-Venezuela tensions, “emanated from the former prime minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines”.

He added, “The people punish him for referring to Trinidad and Tobago in that way.”



Darryl Dindial

How Mera Joota Hai Japanese finds the centre in Hollywood's Deadpool

— In the Hollywood movie *Deadpool* (2016), a fleeting taxi scene accompanied by the Bollywood hit song, *Mera Joota Hai Japanese*, becomes far more than a humorous aside. Instead, it migrates into the movie carrying the long movement of postcolonial identity, overturning Hollywood's exoticised and unsettling gaze in an act of usurpation that reveals how migrant traces quietly alter the narratives they enter.

...

By Romeo Kaseram
An Ongoing LJI Feature Series

There is a moment in the Hollywood movie *Deadpool* right after the opening credits that is so slight that most viewers let it pass like a vehicle quickly entering and exiting the blind spot on the passenger's side.

Glimpsed out of the corner of the eye, right after the opening credits, a taxi is easing through city traffic, with its anti-hero superhero protagonist Wade Wilson, aka the superhero Deadpool, bantering with his usual swaggering wit, and taxi driver Dopinder (Karan Soni) smiling with a gentle awkwardness that seems both earnest and wary.

But beneath *Deadpool*'s comedic riffs, and barely rising above the hum of the engine, a melody familiar to our diaspora is backgrounding his banter. It is *Mera Joota Hai Japanese*, Mukesh's unmistakable voice travelling forward from another century, from another continent; in fact, from another world entirely.

Mera Joota Hai Japanese enters the scene not merely as a catchy, earworm tune; neither does it inhabit the taxi as an exotic flourish. Instead, it appears to be discontented with its containment as western elevator music; right away it begins pushing against the margin, aware of its greater depth as a soft pulse of history, the iconic melody unable to subdue its antecedent recall of a time when India, a vast and emerging nation, was assembling itself after the turbulence of empire.

The song's ancestry, ascendancy, and accompaniment are far more than its subdued role in the movie's crafting as part of the opening *mis en scène*. Instead, *Mera Joota Hai Japanese* begins asserting an immanence true to its nationalist upbringing as a refrain that has migrated through time, memory, and diaspora, to arrive in the most unlikely of places in the cinematic opening scenes of a Hollywood superhero blockbuster.

And so, as *Mera Joota Hai Japanese* plays in the background, a shift begins to reshape the dialogue between Deadpool and Dopinder; almost imperceptibly at first, but then with a slow and certain insistence, the song quietly begins to reconfigure the exchange in the interior of the taxi cab.

Mera Joota Hai Japanese was never meant to be small fry in a big sea. In *Shree 420* (1955), the song sweeps across its scenic route like an unfurled flag, a joyful anthem of a young Indian nation learning to stand upright after the long, exhaustive shadow of colonial rule.

Raj Kapoor's Raju, skipping forward in the movie in his Japanese shoes, English trousers, Russian cap, but with his Indian heart intact, walks through Bombay with the buoyancy of one who has come to understand that identity can be assembled from fragments, yet not lose its centre.

Well known for her work in Indian cinema, the Indian scholar and Windsor University lecturer Jyotika Viridi captures this essentiality, writing in *Nationalism, Film and Music*: "Raju plays a flute as he struts Chaplin style, his (English) pants hitched up, his Russian cap askew and his Indian heart unabashedly singing with joy."

Each garment Raju wears is a thread in a larger political fabric woven in the mid-century heat of India's decolonisation: the Japanese shoes are in step with anti-imperial alliances; the English trousers pull up memories in the foregrounding of Indian cotton and the defiance of Mahatma Gandhi's *Swadeshi* movement; the Russian cap tilts toward Nehruvian socialism; and the heart, always positioned at the centre, firmly beating to its Indian rhythmic roots.

The song's refrain, insistent, full-throated, and repeated, becomes an affirmation of cultural assembling; that one can wear the world on the outside, yet retain one's own identity within. It is hybridity without dilution, modernity without loss; and a kind of assertive, jubilant nationalism that insists on being heard across the din of history.

As Viridi writes, "The repeated rendition of the song's refrain, a mantra if you will, is the defining statement of the song. It is a statement filled with the pleasure of a quietly stated essentialism – the song can (in the language of postmodernism) be read as a celebration of hybridity; of the value of reflexivity, but I would suggest that this does not do the song justice. It is certainly



Above, Raj Kapoor with his *Jahaji* bundle as he performs Mukesh's *Mera Joota Hai Japanese* in *Shree 420*; below, Ryan Reynolds (Deadpool) and Karan Soni (Dopinder) in the Hollywood movie *Deadpool*



hybrid, but it is primarily a song about the process of cultural assembling along lines of the newly imagined nation-state."

Thus, when this anthem appears as an accompaniment alongside Dopinder in the movie, it brings with it more than background melody; instead, it arrives with an entire postcolonial cosmology.

According to a report cited in the *Hindustan Times*, *Deadpool*'s director Tim Miller first encountered the song not in India, not in a heritage archive, but in a pub in New Zealand, where the tune caught his ear and wormed its way in as a sonic curiosity. Struck by its charm, and perhaps hearing it inside his head for many days afterwards, he eventually shared it with Reynolds and the crew. They, too, were swept away by its buoyancy.

And here, we encounter what Edward Said would describe in the spirit of his seminal text, *Orientalism*, as the selective optic of the Western gaze: the East perceived through fragments that exoticise, delight, intrigue, or amuse, detached from the political histories that shaped them. Said was a Palestinian-American scholar, literary critic, and an activist.

In its rendering in *Deadpool*, Hollywood embraces *Mera Joota Hai Japanese* as a flamboyant accessory, a kind of sonic trinket, perceiving it primarily through its catchy refrain rather than its deep roots in India's postcolonial nation-building.

But here runs a quiet undercurrent of irony. What Hollywood treats as an ornament often arrives carrying the full weight of its original meaning. Culture migrates with memory intact; the garment may be superficially draped on, but all the same, it arrives with all of its embroidery, right down to its fibres remembering the loom.

And so, the song enters *Deadpool* with a gravitational pull its filmmakers never quite anticipated, bringing with it a history that begins to reconfigure the seemingly simple comic scene unfolding between the anti-hero character Deadpool, and the immigrant taxi driver, Dopinder.

Hollywood has long viewed the immigrant figure through what a Saidesque interpretation might call a narrowing lens, an optic calibrated to streamline complexity into minimalistic, manageable silhouettes for western viewers.

In this optic, the immigrant appears not as a fully fleshed-out human subject, but as an assemblage of superficial, recognisable, and stereotypical patterns: the polite cab driver, the soft-spoken, competent aide, the bearer of an accent that functions, at times for humour, as narrative shorthand rather than lived inheritance.

Dopinder is introduced inside these boundaries: earnest, kind, awkward, pre-packaged with the Indian accent, carrying a sweetness that Hollywood often bestows on characters perceived as "safe" in being the 'Other' securely wrapped inside their foreignness.

His taxi becomes the limited architecture of his cinematic existence, a place where he is visible yet unable to move beyond service, listening more than speaking, driving more than directing.

In contrast, *Deadpool* arrives in the taxi scene already fluent in the language of cultural dominance: urbane in tone, quick in wit, assured in selfhood. Despite wearing a mask and a superhero's costume, his identity still occupies the centre of the narrative's gravitational field; meanwhile, Dopinder orbits as a servant, alienated to being a working pair of hands on the wheel, and a foot on the gas pedal.

The disposition of power between them is further recalibrated when *Deadpool* climbs from the back of the cab into the front passenger seat, fully occupying centre stage, pushing Dopinder further out in orbit at the margin.

Further interplay of power is noted in the director's cinematographic blocking that privileges *Deadpool* at the centre of the unfolding exchange; along with his centrality in the dialogue and scene composition, other cinematic cues affirming stature, privilege, and dominance tell us who is in charge through embedding that is inside the very grammar of the movie.

And yet, this structure of privilege is not immutable. As *Mera Joota Hai Japanese* works its way into the unfolding narrative, it introduces another optic, another pulse, another possibility. It relocates Dopinder, even if briefly, from stereotype to subjecthood, from flattened role to a subtle, dimensional presence.

Suddenly, inside the cab, the air begins to take on an unforeseen palpability. When *Mera Joota Hai Japanese* begins its slow drift into the cab, the scene reveals what Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher, might call the play of the *supplement*, the element added to the margin that unexpectedly destabilises the centre. The music appears as background, yet it carries an authority that reconfigures the foreground.

It migrates inward. In the Derridean inversion, the decorative begins to speak; the peripheral acquires gravity; and the margin reveals what the centre hides from itself.

And so, *Mera Joota Hai Japanese*, carrying India's postcolonial joy and its refusal to be culturally diminished, subtly begins competing with the garrulous *Deadpool*'s manufactured persona. His superhero costume, stitched, scorched, and meant to hide his scarred body, is suddenly mirrored against Raju's garments, which assembled on the outside, still could not overpower the centre that was India's emergence from the scars of colonialism into global modernity.

Deadpool's identity, cobbled together through trauma and performance, appears less stable beside the effortless coherence of Raju's hybrid nationalism. What begins to take place is *Mera Joota Hai Japanese* begins exposing, without accusation, the superficiality of how Hollywood positioned Dopinder, and then inserted the song as an ornament, rather than an inheritance.

But culture is unruly; it does not stay ornamental. Meaning migrates; traces, the lingering imprint that continues to shape meaning, insist on revealing themselves; and the background rebels with quiet insurgency.

Taxis have long been the second rental room for the migrant – part workplace, part refuge, part liminal vessel ferrying both passengers and personal dreams. In the geography of diaspora, such spaces become small theatres of longing and selfhood.

Within Dopinder's cab, *Mera Joota Hai Japanese*'s presence becomes more than music. Instead, it becomes the heartbeat of the room; it becomes memory made briefly audible; and it becomes a small assertion of selfhood that was allowed to drift into Hollywood's narrative bloodstream.

Mera Joota Hai Japanese does what lingering migrant traces often do: it announces its presence softly but firmly, as if reminding the world that it has journeyed far, yet remains centred and unbroken. It turns the cab into a chamber where history pools quietly.

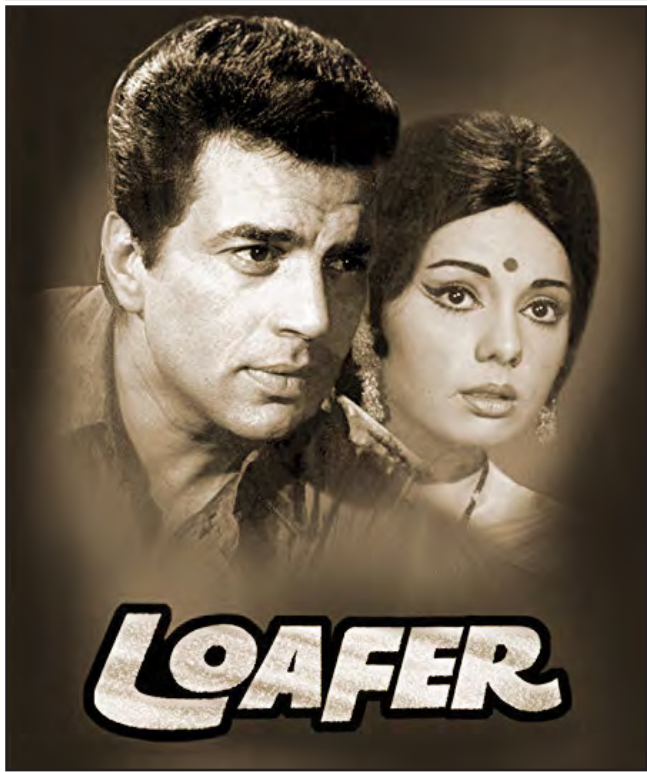
So *Deadpool* continues speaking, dominating the narrative, cracking jokes, and enjoying the camera's focus as the centre of attention; but in the background, *Mera Joota Hai Japanese* is reminding us that a deeper presence, perhaps an Indian elephant dressed in India's national colours, has entered and is now occupying the room.

For our readers across the GTA, especially from Indo-Caribbean and South Asian lineages, the moment in this upturning of meaning carries a particular warmth, a kind of acoustic nostalgia; perhaps a vindication.

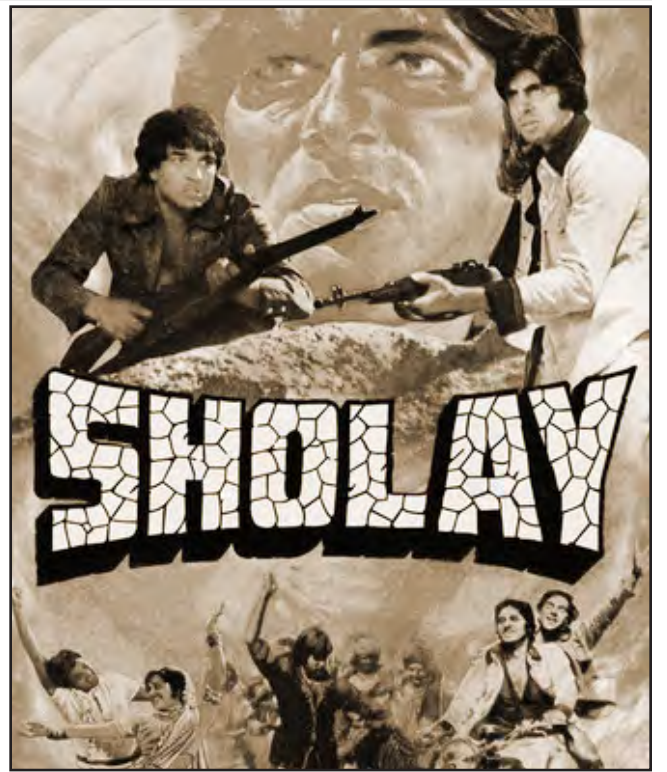
Our Indo-Caribbean identity, shaped through indentureship, Creolisation, and subsequent migrations to Canada, is rhizomal: lateral, adaptive, always branching, but always connected and returning.

Our Indo-Caribbean story is itself one of movement from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana,

Turn to Page 21: Iconic Bollywood refrain



Dharmendra (above) and in Loafer (left) and Sholay



Dharmendra's iconic light shone across oceans into our diasporic homes

— Dharmendra's passing on November 24 has stirred a sorrow that stretches far beyond India, touching our diaspora homes across the Caribbean and the GTA, places where his movies once warmed family rooms and kept us tethered to ancestral memory. His absence feels like a familiar constellation that has now suddenly dimmed.

...

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Tribute: Dharmendra (1935-2025)

Bollywood is in mourning, and so too are our distant communities that once migrated with his films across the *kala pani* in suitcases and in our hearts. Dharmendra, who passed away on November 24 at the age of 89, leaves behind not only a monumental cinematic legacy, but a quiet, enduring companionship in our diaspora households, where his art became a bridge linking us to India.

For countless Indo-Caribbean families in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and later across the GTA, his passing is being felt as a deep, personal loss. The star who once lit up our village cinema halls, and later in the snowy glow of our homes here in Canada, has now left a silence behind that stretches across continents.

Born Dharmendra Kewal Krishan Deol on December 8, 1935, in Nasrali, Punjab, he emerged from the kind of rural simplicity that formed the backbone of so many of our immigrant stories. He is survived by his first wife, Prakash Kaur, and their children Sunny Deol, Bobby Deol, Ajeta, and Vijayta, as well as by his second wife, Hema Malini, and their daughters Esha and Ahana Deol.

He would have turned 90 on December 8. His final weeks were marked by fluctuating health: a hospital stay at Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital, a tentative return home, and eventual passing, moments that now feel heavier knowing how close we were to celebrating a milestone birthday that will now pass without his presence.

Following his passing, producer Anand Pandit captured the essence of Dharmendra's origins with tender clarity, saying, "Dharmendraji was born in Nasrali, a small village in Punjab's Ludhiana district, and his early life in rural Punjab shaped him."

Small village and rural life helped mould him into a man who never forgot his humble origins, and who carried the humility of a farmer's son into an industry that can so easily erode it.

Pandit also reflected further, stating, "When audiences saw strength, warmth, dignity, and emotional honesty on screen, it was not a performance. It was who he genuinely was."

For our diaspora, especially those among us who were raised by parents who themselves came from villages, sugar estates, and small towns in the Caribbean, this authenticity felt familiar; almost familial in its linkage. For us, it means that Dharmendra

stood as a reminder of what our elders once were, before our migration abroad altered these trajectories.

Dharmendra's debut in *Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere* (1960) was the first petal of a career that blossomed across six decades. Films like *Bandini* and *Anupama* revealed, as Pandit noted, "a depth and gentleness rarely seen in mainstream cinema at the time". Those performances resonated with our diaspora audiences that saw in him a masculinity tender enough to mirror the hardworking men they knew as husbands, fathers, and sons.

Phool Aur Patthar (1966), *Anupama* (1966), *Aaye Din Bahar Ke*, and *Mere Humdam Mere Dost* (1968) were not simply films for entertainment in our Caribbean households; they were emotional landmarks. His voice, his expressions, his graceful screen presence became part of the soundtrack of immigrant childhoods.

Mumtaz mourned his passing with poignant, deeply-felt words, stating, "Dharam Ji, you were and you are always with us! May you rest in peace."

Their collaborations in *Kaajal*, *Aadmi Aur Insaan*, *Mere Humdam Mere Dost*, *Jheel Ke Us Paar*, and *Loafer*, were cherished by our families who gathered around black and white TVs on quiet evenings, or were packed in carloads at open-air, drive-in cinemas in the Caribbean.

Then came the magic pairing with Hema Malini, whom Pandit remembered with reverence, saying, "The chemistry between Dharmendraji and Hema Maliniji remains one of the most memorable partnerships in Indian cinema... It had grace, restraint, and a quiet poetry to it."

For diaspora families navigating new worlds, this sincerity in love felt a natural grounding and a reminder of gentler, more enriching emotional landscapes.

Pandit also noted Dharmendra's staggering and prolific consistency, stating, "In 1973, he delivered eight consecutive hits, and in 1987, seven."

From *Mera Gaon Mera Desh* to *Dharam Veer* and *Ram Balram*, Dharmendra gave our Caribbean and Canadian audiences heroes who reminded us of courage, loyalty, and heart. But it is perhaps *Veeru* from *Sholay*, playful, flawed, and full of life that lives most vividly in our diaspora's memory.

In later years, he returned to screens in *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* (2023) and *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* (2024), and his final film, *Ikkis*, will release on Christmas Day this year, a bittersweet farewell for audiences who watched him across a lifetime.

Dharmendra's 2007 interview with *Lehren Retro* revealed a vulnerability rarely seen in stars of his era. True to his humility and himself, Dharmendra revealed, "I used to drink heavily, but I have realised that it doesn't go with me... it's the worst thing. Today, I wish I had not touched alcohol."

sounds of the surf across the *kala pani*, the humming of an ancestral archive, a tune that has travelled through our own histories, reshaped yet recognisable, forwarding memory the way a seed carries its original tree.

Mera Joota Hai Japanese reminds us as Indo-Caribbean listeners of the long arc of cultural survival: not rigid, not frozen, but continually assembling itself, continually migrating, continually holding its centre across changing landscapes.

Thus in the Hollywood hit movie, *Deadpool*, a short, humorous interlude becomes a soft rearrangement of cinematic space. The song enters as background, yet it brings with it traces in the long shadow of India's postcolonial aspirations, the subtle

These were not mere confessions; they were gifts of honesty to audiences who loved him.

As he reflected poignantly, "Now, when I have left drinking, I feel like I enjoy more than what I used to do."

It was a turning point that came mid-air, during a trip across the world: "I took it as a test for myself on that plane to LA... And God helps those who help themselves," he had revealed.

Such candidness that humanised him beyond the silver-screen made him not only admired, but profoundly loved.

On November 25, the Deol family residence became a site of collective grief as Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Aamir Khan, Hrithik Roshan, and Rakesh Roshan arrived to pay respects.

Karan Johar articulated the loss that now echoes globally, declaring, "It is an end of an ERA... a massive mega star... he is and will always be a *bona fide* Legend of Indian Cinema."

He continued, "Today there is a gaping hole in our industry... there will always be the one and only DHARAMJI... the heavens are blessed today..."

Johar's words capture a truth: no other star filled space the way Dharmendra did, on screen or in the heart.

For our Indo-Caribbean diaspora, Dharmendra was the quiet, constant companion who arrived with migration and stayed long after we unpacked our suitcases.

In Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, the songs in his movies resonated during Diwali, Eid, Phagwah, and Christmas, drifting onto the streets from radios through open Demerara windows. In kitchens, our aunties debated which Dharmendra pairing was more enjoyable between Mumtaz or Hema Malini as they grated *chulha*-roasted coconut for *chokha*.

When our families migrated again, this time to Toronto, Brampton, Malton, Scarborough, we brought with us VHS cassettes with his films in our suitcases, the glow of his face in Canadian living rooms bringing generations together, bridging old worlds to the new ones that were emerging in the GTA.

That light flickers differently today, now that he has passed. The familiarity remains, but the certainty that he will appear again in something new is gone.

In the circular ache of our diaspora mourning, we grieve not only for a star that no longer lights, remembering him the eras of our own ancestry and our lives that he illuminated.

In his lifetime, Dharmendra expanded what a leading man could be, tender yet strong, humble yet iconic, grounded yet larger than life. He became the emotional compass for audiences navigating distance, nostalgia, and belonging.

His legacy lives in the movies that still light up our diaspora homes; perhaps in the Blue-ray discs now resident in dusty cupboards; but certainly, in a constellation of memories in those among us who watched his artistry from faraway shores.

Iconic Bollywood refrain takes centre stage in superhit Hollywood movie

From Page 20

Suriname, and elsewhere in the region; it is about movement from rural cane fields to port cities; from *Caribbean Airlines* landing at Pearson International Airport to Toronto suburbs as Scarborough, Markham, and Woodbridge.

Also, from Bhojpuri songs to chutney and soca; from Ramleela grounds in central Trinidad to winter mandirs in Brampton; and from memory to reinvention.

Thus, when Bollywood's iconic refrain surfaces in a Hollywood taxi in the superhit *Deadpool*, it carries with it echoes that resonate within our Indo-Caribbean diasporic hearts. It is not simply an Indian song; it carries with it the

critique of Said's optic, the Derridean gesture of the margin tipping the centre, and the rhizomic knowledge of Indo-Caribbean identity that recognises itself anywhere the trace appears.

Deadpool keeps talking, but the director, and the scene, loses control; no longer fully in charge, the music migrates into corollary meaning as Dopinder, the migrant figure, quietly acquires the dimensionality accompanying *Mera Joota Hai Japanese*.

And so, a postcolonial anthem from 1955 found its way into 21st century Hollywood, bringing with it a proud history that momentarily overthrows *Deadpool*'s narrative, rewriting the room so Dopinder migrates away from orbiting, acquiring depth, dimensionality, and a way forward for all of us.

Cricket world mourns death of England’s iconic batter Robin Smith

Robin Arnold Smith: (September 1, 1963 – December 1, 2025): A batter of fearless conviction, a teammate of uncommon warmth, and a human being whose courage radiated far beyond the crease.

...
In the passing of Robin Arnold Smith, one of England’s most courageous batters and a beloved figure across generations of cricketers, the game mourns a man whose fierce square cut, defiant smile, and generous spirit shaped an era and touched countless lives.

Robin Smith, known affectionately throughout cricket as ‘The Judge’ for the thick, wiry hair that resembled a magistrate’s wig, died unexpectedly at his home in South Perth on December 1 at the age of 62. His family confirmed the news in a statement that spoke with both love and candour.

“It is with the deepest and most profound sense of sadness and loss that we must announce the passing of Robin Arnold Smith, beloved father of Harrison and Margaux and cherished brother of Christopher. Robin died unexpectedly at his South Perth apartment on Monday 1 December. The cause of his death is at present unknown.”

For all his achievements on the field, Smith will be remembered just as fiercely for his warmth, humour, and the easy camaraderie that made newcomers feel instantly at home. As former England teammate Mark Ramprakash recalled, “On my England debut in 1991 I was 21, and I’ll never forget how kind he was in welcoming me into the dressing room, the warmth of his personality. He was someone who enjoyed life. Life was not a rehearsal for him, he went out and lived it.”

Born in Durban, South Africa, Smith grew up in a household that pulsed with cricketing ambition. His father built a bespoke practice net in the family garden, a crucible in which Smith honed the front-foot technique that would later unsettle the quickest bowlers in the world. Legends Barry Richards and Mike Procter, neighbours and practice partners, reinforced a schooling that was as rigorous as it was formative.

Hampshire’s long-standing ties to Richards opened the door for Robin and his older brother, Chris, to migrate to England in the early 1980s. Chris would go on to represent England as well, but anticipation surrounded Robin’s debut more intensely.

When he walked out at Headingley in 1988 against a West Indies attack led by Curtly Ambrose, Malcolm Marshall, and Courtney Walsh, England believed a new force had arrived.

Smith played 62 Tests for England between 1988 and 1996, scoring 4,236 runs at an average of 43.67, a mark exceeded only by David Gower and Graham Thorpe among peers of his era. His nine centuries included three against the West Indies, the team that so often brought out his fiercest resolve.

His hallmark stroke, the front-foot square cut struck with a ferocity unmatched in world cricket, went on to become both identity and signature. It defined his most unforgettable performances, notably in Jamaica in 1990, when he was instrumental in England’s victory during a storied Caribbean tour.



Robin Smith

Then there were his knocks at Lord’s and The Oval in 1991, with twin centuries against the most formidable fast-bowling attack of the era. In 1994, he performed with the bat in Antigua, scoring a majestic 175, struck in the same match where Brian Lara amassed his then-record 375.

In the limited-overs game, Smith produced one of England’s greatest white-ball innings – 167 not out from 163 balls against Australia at Edgbaston in 1993, a national record that stood for 23 years.

ECB Chair Richard Thompson said of him, “Robin Smith was a player who stood toe to toe with some of the quickest bowlers in the world, meeting spells of hostile fast bowling with a defiant smile and an incredible resilience. He did so in a way that gave England fans enormous pride, and no shortage of entertainment.”

Even his perceived vulnerability against spin, which was most evident during Shane Warne’s breakthrough Ashes tour in 1993, did little to diminish his legacy. In an irony with a different spin that spoke to Smith’s generous nature, he and Warne later forged a lifelong friendship, one that helped persuade Warne to sign with Hampshire late in his career.

By the time Smith retired from first-class cricket, he had compiled more than 26,000 runs, including 61 centuries, and had become one of Hampshire’s most beloved sons.

As club CEO Rod Bransgrove put it, “Robin embodied the spirit of Hampshire. The Judge connected with everyone he came into contact with. He was one of the most popular players ever to play the game we all love.”

Long after his final Test in 1996, a match against South Africa in Cape Town, Smith’s influence endured. Whether at Hampshire, with England’s dressing-room culture, or within the broader cricket community, he radiated warmth and accessibility.

He was particularly admired for mentoring younger players.

Only two weeks before his passing, Smith met with the England Lions squad at Lilac Hill in Perth after an invitation from Andrew Flintoff, spending more than an hour sharing stories of his own career, offering guidance, and reinforcing the virtues of courage in the face of fast bowling.

Such encounters were typical of Smith: informal, generous, and driven by a desire to give back to a game that shaped him.

Tributes following Smith’s death consistently circled back to the same themes of humour, humanity, courage, and camaraderie.

Ramprakash’s reflection captured these elements vividly.

“There’s his cricket, the way he played as a batsman, which was to be hugely admired... And then there’s the person, who was more admirable still,” he recalled.

Former teammate Kevan James echoed that sentiment, saying, “He was a super player, particularly of fast bowling in an era where the West Indies had all these fast bowlers. He was one of the few England batters who stood up to them and basically gave as good as he got.”

The memories that endured in the tributes recalled a man who shrugged off bruises as occupational hazards with the bat, greeted ferocity with a grin, and made his teammates feel that they belonged.

Smith’s post-cricket life was marked by battles with alcoholism and mental health challenges, which he addressed candidly in his 2019 autobiography, *The Judge: More Than Just a Game*. His openness helped broaden public understanding of the pressures elite athletes face long after their careers end.

In their statement, Smith’s family urged against speculation and asked for compassion, saying, “Since his retirement from the game in 2004 his battles with alcohol and mental health have been well-documented, but these should not form the basis of speculation... This is an immensely difficult period for us all whilst we try to come to terms with our bereavement, and we would therefore much appreciate consideration for our privacy.”

His willingness to confront his own struggles publicly stands as part of his legacy, not a defining feature, but a testament to honesty and resilience.

Robin Smith belongs to a select lineage of cricketers remembered not merely for statistics, but for presence, for the way they made the game feel. His batting was an act of defiance in an era dominated by pace. His personality was an act of generosity in dressing rooms that often swallowed tenderness whole.

He played cricket the way he lived life: full-heartedly, courageously, and with joy that spilled beyond the boundary.

His legacy stretches across continents, generations, and formats, from South African beginnings to English heroics, from Hampshire folklore to friendships that extended across the cricketing world.

In the words of Richard Thompson, “We’re desperately sad to learn of his passing, and the thoughts of all of us in cricket are with his friends, family, and loved ones.”

South African coach triggers storm in India with insensitive remark

— South Africa’s dominant position in the Guwahati Test was overshadowed on Day 4 after head coach Shukri Conrad triggered a storm by saying his team wanted to make India “grovel”, a remark that reopened a painful historical fault line.

...
Day 4 of the second Test in Guwahati ended with South Africa firmly in control on the field but facing intense scrutiny off it, after head coach Shukri Conrad used the word “grovel” to describe his side’s intent in forcing India into a long, punishing day in the field.

South Africa batted more than 80 overs in their second innings before declaring with a commanding 548-run lead. The call proved tactically sound, as India lost two wickets before stumps, requiring 522 runs on Day 5 to chase down the target. South Africa went on to victory by 408 runs for their first series win in India in 25 years, bowled out India for 140.

Conrad explained the declaration within a wider strategy, saying the visitors “wanted India to spend as much time on their feet out in the field. We wanted them to really grovel, to steal a phrase, bat them completely out the game and then say to them well come and survive on the last day and an hour this evening”.

But the word “grovel”, rooted in the definition “to creep with the face to the ground”, revived its long association with racial undertones, and one of cricket’s most infamous historical controversies.

In 1976, during England’s home series against West Indies, then-captain Tony Greig had told the *BBC* that he intended to make West Indies “grovel”.

He further said, “I’m not really sure they’re as good as every-



Shukri Conrad

one thinks,” and added, “These guys, if they get on top they are magnificent cricketers. But if they’re down, they grovel, and I intend, with the help of [Brian Close], and a few others, to make them grovel.”

Greig’s comments triggered outrage across the Caribbean. Clive Lloyd noted at the time that “the word ‘grovel’ is one guaranteed to raise the blood pressure of any Black man,” adding, “The fact that they were used by a white South African made it even worse. We were angry, and West Indians everywhere were angry. We resolved to show him and everyone else that the days for grovelling were over.” West Indies went on to win the series 3-0.

Against that historical backdrop, Conrad’s usage renewed sensitivities, prompting sharp reaction from former players. Sunil Gavaskar urged greater awareness of the history between

India and South Africa, noting the depth of Indian support for South African cricket since the end of apartheid isolation.

Gavaskar highlighted India’s longstanding role, saying, “We need to look back at South Africa’s re-entry into international cricket. It was the Indian Cricket Board that proposed South Africa’s re-admission after more than 20 years of isolation, and their first international match on return was played in India.”

He also pointed to present-day ties through the SA20 league, remarking, “When you consider the current landscape of South African cricket, especially the SA20, five out of the six franchises (all six) are Indian-owned. These owners are significantly supporting South African players – not just the international stars who are well taken care of, but the fringe players as well – giving them opportunities to build strong careers.”

While describing the comment as “ill-advised”, Gavaskar said, “I hope that in his next media interaction, he addresses it. I don’t think an apology is necessary. I personally don’t believe in apologies. But acknowledging it and making up for it would be accepted by everyone... Given the strong connection between Indian and South African cricket over the last 30 years, I think he can simply clarify that he got a bit carried away.”

South African fast-bowling great Dale Steyn took an unequivocal stance as well, distancing himself from Conrad’s choice of words.

Said Steyn, “I’m not on that boat. I don’t like that. I almost don’t even want to make a comment about it. There are certain things you just don’t say. There is stigma attached to it. It just wasn’t necessary. South Africa were in such a dominant position – saying nothing is enough. I’m just not on that boat.”

West Indies coach, skipper optimistic heading into New Zealand Test series

— With confidence high after competitive outings in the T20I and ODI series, West Indies entered the opening Test in New Zealand believing they can disrupt three decades of home dominance, as head coach Daren Sammy and captain Roston Chase urged their side to seize early momentum.

West Indies began their three-match Test series in New Zealand on Monday buoyed by encouraging white-ball performances and a renewed sense of purpose, with head coach Daren Sammy and Test captain Roston Chase challenging the ninth-ranked side to break a 30-year drought in Kiwi conditions.

Having pushed New Zealand deep in both the T20I and ODI series, Sammy said last week that the team arrived for the Tests “brimming with confidence”, even as history presents a substantial hurdle.

West Indies last won a Test series against New Zealand in the Caribbean in 2012, and have not won a Test match in New Zealand since 1987, when the three-match series ended 1-1. Their last Test series win in New Zealand came more than 30 years ago.

Sammy said he was encouraged by the mindset within the squad leading into the first Test. Reflecting on the white-ball matches, he



Darren Sammy

noted, “In the [T20I and ODI] series, we created so many opportunities to win. When I look at the seven games that were played, we were in contention to win five of them, but we let it slip away, but credit must go to New Zealand on how they’ve made home a fortress.”

Carrying those lessons into the red-ball arena, he added, “I was quite impressed with the positives that we had coming out of that series, and now we’re in the Test match arena.



Roston Chase

We haven’t won here since 1995 – that’s 30 years – so we have a challenge on our hands.”

Sammy said West Indies were intent on ending the year strongly and upsetting New Zealand in the three-match series, noting that their last Test against India had showcased encouraging resilience.

He explained, “First, in order to win, you must be able to compete, and we have to compete. I’m just watching the Ashes and the Test match went two days, so you know it’s not only West Indies. Then I watched a Test match in South Africa with India, and I don’t think it went into the third day either. We came from India, and we pushed them into a fifth day in a Test match, something that has not been done in a while in India.”

Sammy emphasised that performance would hinge on clarity and execution, saying, “We might not have the numbers behind us coming into New Zealand, but I think the mindset that we have here and what we’re trying to create here is good, and it boils down to execution... One thing we’ve shown over here is that we challenge them. In the T20I series, in the ODI series, I don’t think the results reflected on how we played.”

Test captain Roston Chase echoed that charge, urging players to carry their white-ball competitiveness into the longer format.

Speaking to the media earlier in the week, Chase said the team’s 3-1 T20I series defeat included several matches where they felt they had genuine chances to win.

“Ideally when you come to any series the goal is to win, but the same way how the ODIs and T20s went where they had good, exciting cricket, that’s the main goal, for us to play some good cricket and make the Kiwis work as hard as possible. But we’re still looking for that win, obviously. If we can get the upper hand from early and try to put them under pressure from the first game, I think that would be great,” he said.

Chase added that the team was motivated to correct errors from the T20Is, noting, “... We won a game in the T20s, and we were very elated and then throughout the series we felt like we could have actually won the series, so we want to come and make up for our mistakes here. It would mean a lot. We haven’t won here in very long, so as I said, to be on the good side of history sometimes is a great feeling so I would love for us to get a W.”

He said morale was strong as West Indies attempt to overturn the odds against the fifth-ranked Kiwis.

“There’s good energy in the camp. A lot of the guys were in those [ODI and T20] teams as well, so it’s just to feed that energy onto the new guys and giving them that belief and confidence that it can be done. It feels good to know that we’ve played some good cricket, and the guys have confidence coming into the series,” he stated.

Their prospects were boosted by the return of veteran pacer Kemar Roach, especially with Alzarri Joseph and Shamar Joseph unavailable through injury.

Chase described Roach’s presence as invaluable, saying, “To have Kemar back is a great feeling for us. He’s a legend of the game, a modern-day legend for us. He has close to 300 Test wickets and you have to be some quality to get to those numbers. He’s a senior guy; he’s a leader and not just a guy that comes and does his thing and goes back to his room. He’s a guy that really leads the bowling attack and encourages and supports the younger guys to come and bowl the cricket ball for long periods.”

Knight takes lead as GM at London Spirit

— Heather Knight’s decision to forego next year’s Hundred to become London Spirit’s first Women’s General Manager marks a significant shift in her career trajectory, even as the former England captain maintains her commitment to international cricket.

Former England captain Heather Knight has stepped away from playing in the 2026 edition of The Hundred to take up a pioneering leadership role with London Spirit, signalling a gradual widening of her off-field responsibilities while remaining contracted and active for England and Somerset.

Knight has been appointed London Spirit’s first Women’s General Manager, a role that places her alongside coaching staff on match days, offering technical guidance and providing strategic support from the dugout.

She will work in close partnership with Mo Bobat, London Spirit’s Director of Cricket, in a move that suggests she may be preparing for a long-term transition into sports administration after the 2026 T20 World Cup on home soil.

“I’m delighted to take up this new role with London Spirit. I have absolutely loved my time at the franchise, as a player and also as a coach in last year’s edition of The Hundred,” Knight said, reflecting on the opportunity.

Her ECB central contract runs for another year, covering a 2026 calendar in which England will host the T20 World Cup and stage a historic Women’s Test match at Lord’s against India in July.

Knight indicated her commitment to contributing on both fronts, saying, “I am still very much committed to and passionate about playing for England and Somerset, but this is a huge development opportunity for me.”

Knight added that the position provides a rare chance for professional growth, noting, “It gives me the chance to learn from one of the best minds in the global game, in Mo, and broaden my experiences outside of my playing career. I am so excited for everything to come, on and off the field, in 2026.”

The appointment represents a natural extension of her responsibilities with the franchise.

Knight captained London Spirit for the first four editions of The Hundred, leading them to the 2024 title. During the 2025 season, she served as a team mentor and coach while recovering from a serious hamstring injury.

Knight’s broader playing journey has stood at the centre of England’s recent women’s cricket era. She lost the England captaincy in March after a nine-year tenure that concluded with a winless Ashes tour at the start of 2025.

She later tore her hamstring tendon from the bone while batting against West Indies in May, ruling her out for much of the home summer.

However, she returned strongly, finishing as England’s leading run-scorer at the World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, scoring 228 runs at 48.00 with a strike rate of 85.71 as England reached the semi-finals.

Her growing interest in leadership and governance has been long foreshadowed. In 2023, Knight completed her Masters of Leadership in Sport at the Institute of Sports Humanities, co-founded by former England men’s selector Ed Smith. Her dissertation examined the tension between traditional international cricket structures and the rapid expansion of women’s domestic franchise leagues.

Bobat welcomed her appointment, calling Knight “an asset in every sense of the word”. He emphasised her suitability for the role, saying, “Heather’s deep understanding of the women’s game, and of what is required to perform at the highest level make her the ideal person to be our first Women’s General Manager.”

He further noted, “She knows what it takes to win The Hundred and the franchise will benefit from having one of the game’s leading current players in such a key role. I’m looking forward to working closely with Heather, and excited at the prospect of her forming a trusted partnership with our Women’s Head Coach.”

Also, “It’s also great to be able to support Heather with her long-term ambitions and future career transition. I know how passionate she remains about playing for England and her unwavering commitment to representing her country.”



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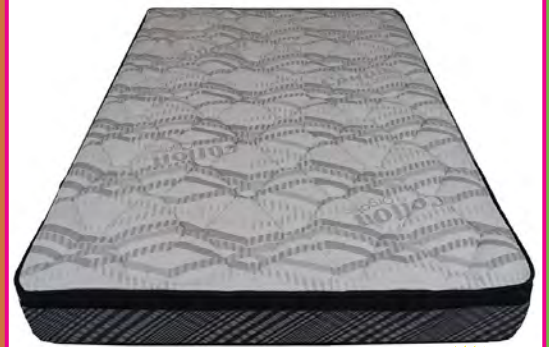
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