



**Canadian
SUPERBILT
SHUTTERS
& BLINDS**



**We Sell Only The Best Brands
Motorized Roller Blinds & Shutters**

HunterDouglas



MAXMAR
WINDOW FASHIONS

ALTEX

John Persaud, CEO C: (416) 239 - 2863 B: (416) 201 - 0109

sales@superbilt.com canadiansuperbiltshutters.com

KEEPING ALIVE THE TIES THAT BIND

NOW IN OUR 42nd YEAR: 1983 - 2025

INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

Vol. 42 • No 10 • January 22, 2025 • Tel: 905-738-5005 • 312 Brownridge Dr. Thornhill, ON L4J 5X1 • indocaribbeanworld.com • indocaribbeanworld@gmail.com

Veda Lall
HOMES



**Most
Productive
Agent In
Canada!**

*With over 20
years of combined
experience, we will
help you to achieve
your dream of
home ownership!*

**Call
Veda
Today!**

**Veda Lall
Broker**

**416.
419.2140**

vedalallhomes.ca



Our Community Is Thriving!



The voices of women in our diaspora were present at this year's PBD, among them (left to right) Jamaican businesswoman Shullette Cox; India's 'Rocket Woman' – scientist and aerospace engineer – Ritu Karidhal Srivastava; and Trinidad and Tobago's Pandita Indrani Rampersad



President Draupadi Murmu presents the award to SVN's Swami Aksharananda. External Affairs Minister Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar is at left

Diaspora celebrates PBD in Odisha

The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, earlier this month, and united thousands of global delegates under the theme *Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat*. Highlights included presentation of the *Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award* to Guyana's Saraswati Vidya Niketan, and to Trinidad and Tobago's President Christine Kangaloo. See story on Page 11.

Guyana govt presents record \$1.4T budget 2025

— Guyana's 2025 budget is a record (G) \$1.382 trillion vision for growth, with direct benefits for families, workers, and vulnerable groups. From cash grants for newborns to major tax breaks and investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure, this historic fiscal package promises to transform lives while driving sustainable development.

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Georgetown – The government of Guyana's 2025 budget ushered in a transformative moment in this nation's history when it was delivered on January 17 in Georgetown, its unprecedented (G) \$1.382 trillion fiscal package designed to elevate the lives of citizens while fostering long-term, sustainable growth.

Presented by Senior Minister of Finance Dr Ashni Singh under the theme *A Secure, Prosperous, and Sustainable Guyana*, the budget prioritises benefits for families, workers, and vulnerable communities, while laying the groundwork for a diversified and resilient economy.

"This budget is about creating opportunities for every single Guyanese family – not just to meet their basic needs but to achieve personal wealth and prosperity," Dr Singh said during his five-hour presentation to the National Assembly in the 91st sitting of Parliament in Georgetown.

Reaction to the budget in the diaspora here in the GTA was immediate and positive, with Honorary Consul Mani

Singh at the Consulate General in Toronto stating it was "a testament to our nation's commitment to building a secure, prosperous, and sustainable future for all Guyanese, both at home and abroad".

He added, "With an unprecedented fiscal package of (G) \$1.382 trillion, this budget addresses critical priorities that resonate deeply with the aspirations of all of our people, even as it underscores Guyana's emergence as a global leader."

Honorary Consul Singh noted that while the budget measures were "transformative for our Guyanese population back home, at the same time it has created a surge in pride for us abroad".

He said, "As a diaspora, we remain keenly connected to the welfare of family and friends in Guyana, and the government's emphasis in Budget 2025 on direct benefits to our people reflects a profound responsiveness to their needs. We are also excited by the response in the budget that supports families, such as the one-off cash grant for newborns and the enhanced *Because We Care* initiative, which highlights the Guyana government's dedication to nurturing the next generation."

He also declared the focus on education was a "particularly significant" move that aligned "with our collective hope for a brighter generational future through world-class opportunities that would open up for our youths. For diaspora members supporting young relatives back home, these

See Page 9: Budget



Dr Ashni Singh



Mani Singh

LIFE INSURANCE



Paul Ram,
Life & Investment Broker

MONEY FREEDOM INC.

AGE	\$100,000 M/F	\$250,000 M/F
30	10.00/09.09	13.73/11.70
35	11.00/09.90	15.30/13.05
40	12.78/11.70	19.13/16.43
45	16.02/13.59	25.88/19.80
50	22.05/17.73	36.88/26.65
55	27.27/20.43	56.03/40.95
60	39.69/28.62	88.65/61.43
65	62.28/43.20	142.20/94.50

Also offered: *Non Medical & Mortgage Insurance *No Load Funds *No Penalty RESP *Critical Illness *Universal Life *Dental & Drug Plans *Disability. (E&O)
Companies represented: Assumption, BMO, Canada, Empire, Equitable, Foresters, Industrial Alliance, Manulife, RBC.

Instant quote online: www.moneyfreedom.ca
Tel: 416.414.2204



ALI'S ROTI

* Eat In or Take Out * We also Cater
Specialising in West Indian Dishes - Trinidad Style Cooking

1446 Queen St. W. Toronto
(1/2 Block East of Lansdowne,
North side, W. of Dufferin)

Only HALAL Meat Served

Tel: 416-532-7701

Now two generations
serving our community

JAY BRIJPAUL
416-418-BRIJ [2745]

ANJIE BRIJPAUL
416-745-2300



\$799,000

Location! Location! Location!

Impressive bungalow, one of Hamilton's most sought after neighbourhoods! You will not believe sheer size of premium lot! Recently upgraded with stamped-concrete driveway & flagstone porch, beautiful home boasts spacious dining room, 2 fireplaces, & finished basement with side entrance, wet bar, bedroom & washroom!



\$899,999

Your Dream Home Awaits!

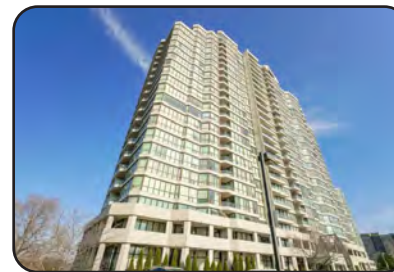
Perfect blend of comfort, sophistication & modern living in this maintained, updated home. Has 3+1 spacious bdrms, 3 luxurious bathrms for growing families & array of modern upgrades. Backyard is an oasis with underground wiring & certified outlets for a peaceful retreat to relax or host gatherings!



\$539,900

Luxury Midtown Condo Penthouse!

Elevated living in luxury midtown penthouse condo! Breathtaking south view, 9-foot ceilings, convenience – just 3 mins to DVP, steps to 24-hour TTC. Master suite has spa-like 4-piece ensuite, building has outdoor pool, tennis court, 24-hour library, party room, round-the-clock security, spacious locker. Indulge in style & convenience like never before!



\$639,900

Refined Living Awaits!

Luxury, opulence, modern living await in a renovated suite. Italian marble floors, black laminate cabinetry, heat-resistant granite countertops in kitchen & top-of-the-line LG appliances mix elegance & functionality. Walk-in closet, custom organisers in main bedroom. By Humber River & a sprawling park, a prime location that is perfect for nature lovers and families alike.



\$869,900

Bright and Spacious!

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



\$990,000

Charmingly Delightful!

Spacious semi-detached bungalow in serene community! Beautiful home nestled in quiet neighbourhood - the perfect blend of comfort, convenience, & community spirit. 2 roomy bedrooms ideal for relaxation & privacy, 3 well-appointed baths, large fin. basement & lovely green-spaced backyard.



\$1,049,900

Double-Sided Coin!

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



\$1,150,000

Smooth, Smart, and Rambling!

Impressive home with lovely polilight around the external flashings. Note the covered porch, leaded-glass double door, & video doorbell. A symphony in each room, and plenty of room for all the chefs in the large kitchen. Features a private family room, & built-in bar to entertain. A pleasure to treasure!

TheBrij.com

3,500+ HOMES

* Sales mean both buyer and seller transactions from 1990 to 2016, Team Sales combined.

Jay Brijpaul, Broker, FRI

Direct: 416-418-2745 (BRIJ)
Office: 416-745-2300 ext 5292
96 Rexdale Blvd., Toronto M9W 1N7

RE/MAX

West Realty Inc. Brokerage
Independently Owned and Operated



Anjie Brijpaul, MA
Broker

Office 416.745.2300
Fax 416-745-1952

anjiebrijpaul@gmail.com



Chandra Arya

Arya declares Liberal leadership candidacy

Ottawa – Chandra Arya, Member of Parliament for Nepean since 2015, has officially declared his candidacy for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. This announcement comes following the January 6 resignation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as party leader and Prime Minister of Canada.

In a campaign pledge shared online, Arya outlined his vision for the future, stating, “I am running to be the next Prime Minister of Canada to lead a small, more efficient government to rebuild our nation and secure prosperity for future generations.”

Acknowledging the challenges facing the country, Arya emphasised the need for decisive leadership.

“We are facing significant structural problems that haven’t been seen for generations, and solving them will require tough choices. I have always worked hard for what is best for Canadians, and for the sake of our children and grandchildren, we must make bold decisions that are absolutely necessary. If elected as the next Leader of the Liberal Party, I offer my knowledge and expertise to do so,” he declared.

Arya also pointed to the struggles being experienced by many Canadians, particularly the younger generations, while stressing the urgency of political action.

“Canada deserves leadership that isn’t afraid to make big decisions. Decisions that rebuild our economy, restore hope, create equal opportunities for all Canadians, and secure pros-

perity for our children and grandchildren. Bold political decisions are not optional – they are necessary,” he affirmed.

Arya encouraged Canadians to join him in his leadership journey, stating, “I’m stepping forward to take on this responsibility and lead Canada as its next Prime Minister. Join me in this journey. Let’s rebuild, revitalise, and secure the future. For all Canadians, for generations to come.”

Arya was elected to represent Nepean in the House of Commons of Canada in the 2015 federal election, and was re-elected in the 2019 and 2021 elections. In that time, he served as a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade.

He also made history as the first MP to speak in Kannada, his mother tongue, in the House of Commons in 2022.

Before entering politics, Arya held a range of roles, including business executive, engineer, industrial development consultant, entrepreneur, investment banker, and investment advisor. His diverse professional background forms a cornerstone of his campaign, emphasising practical solutions and economic revitalisation.

To support Arya’s leadership bid, **Canadians must register as members of the Liberal Party** by January 27. The leadership election is scheduled for March 9. Canadian citizens and permanent residents 14 years and older are eligible to join the Liberal Party and to participate in the vote.

Chatterjee joins CGCC as Honorary Canadian Co-Chair

Toronto – The Canada-Guyana Chamber of Commerce has announced the appointment of Her Excellency Lillian Chatterjee, former Canadian High Commissioner to Guyana, as the Chamber’s Honorary Canadian Co-Chair, effective January 1, 2025.

Chatterjee’s extensive career in diplomacy and public service uniquely positions her to strengthen the CGCC’s mission in promoting trade and investment between Canada and Guyana.

She served as Canada’s High Commissioner to Guyana, Ambassador to Suriname, and Caricom Ambassador from 2017 to 2020. Following this tenure, she then served from 2021 to 2024 as Canada’s High Commissioner to Barbados and six other Caribbean nations, including Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

“We are absolutely thrilled to welcome Chatterjee to the Chamber. Her deep knowledge of Guyana and the Caribbean, coupled with her distinguished career in Canadian public service, will be invaluable in helping us advance our mission to promote trade, investment, and strengthen the relationships between Canada and Guyana,” said Patricia Bacchus, Chair of the Canada-Guyana Chamber of Commerce.

Chatterjee began her career in journalism before transitioning to public service, where she held significant roles at the House of Commons of Canada and with international NGOs.



Lillian Chatterjee

In 2003, she joined the Canadian International Development Agency as Director General, and later took on senior executive positions at Global Affairs Canada.

Her academic achievements include an undergraduate degree in Journalism and a Master’s degree in International Affairs.

“I look forward to promoting bilateral trade and foreign direct investment between Canada and Guyana. We have been collaborating for centuries and have mutually benefited from the contributions of Canadians and Guyanese to both our countries,” Chatterjee stated.

Her appointment underscores the Chamber’s dedication to driving impactful collaboration and economic growth.

“Chatterjee’s appointment reflects the Chamber’s commitment to leveraging exceptional expertise to facilitate meaningful collaboration and growth. Her leadership will enhance the Chamber’s ability to connect businesses in the region, create opportunities, and further strengthen economic partnerships,”

said Winston Kassim, the CGCC’s Co-Chair.

The CGCC is a non-partisan organisation committed to promoting and facilitating investment and trade between Guyana, Canada, and other countries.

Chatterjee’s role as its Honorary Canadian Co-Chair signals a continued emphasis on strengthening synergies, and creating new opportunities for collaboration between Canada and Guyana.

Daljeet & Tabuchi DENTISTRY

Dr. Nar Daljeet
Dr. Nikhil Daljeet
Dr. Sudong Ji
Dr. James Liang
Dr. Sara Safar

We Accept **CDCP**

Canadian Dental Care Plan

Book Now
416-492-3077

Family Dentistry
Over 40 years of experience providing caring, gentle dental care for all ages.

Emergencies
Contact us anytime - emergencies and last minute appointments always welcome.

Dental Implants
See us to replace any of your missing teeth - implants, bridges or dentures!

Orthodontics
Our board certified orthodontist specializes in braces and invisalign.

daljeet@tddental.ca
2942 Finch Ave E., #4
tddental.ca

Canada

Book Giveaway For Supernatural

Enter for a chance to win one of five copies of "Supernatural - Volume 1" - A compilation of thirty-two tales from the popular newspaper series, "Supernatural". Collect your own personal autographed copy of Volume 1 and be the first to know when Volume 2 will become available. Good Luck!!!

Kam Ali

Please leave your email address at:
www.kamilali.ca/contact

VEDIC BOOKS

- Complete set of the Vedas
- The Upanishads
- Bhagavad Gita
- Ramayan
- Philosophy of Vedas
- Vedic Thoughts
- Vedic Vision - Sanskar Vidhi
- Quest - The Vedic Answers
- Vedic Marriage Ceremony
- Introduction to the Commentary on the Vedas
- Life & Teachings of Swami Dayanand
- Light of Truth
- Wisdom of the Rishies
- Gems of Vedic Wisdom
- Anand Gayatri Katha
- Daily Prayer
- Vedic Philosophy
- Whose Wealth?
- Mahabharata
- ... and many more

Call AVM Bookstore
416-805-2685 or 905-824-2685

RB PARALEGAL AND NOTARY SERVICES

Small Claims | Landlord & Tenant Board | Notary Services

Rita Boodram, B.S.W. (Hons), Paralegal, Commissioner of Oaths & Notary Public

BOOK YOUR FREE 15-MINUTE CONSULTATION BY VISITING:
<https://calendly.com/rbparalegalandnotaryservices>
OR CONTACT US AT:
TEL: 647-745-8308
EMAIL: ritaboodram@rbparalegal.com
Visit Our Website at: <https://bit.ly/RB-PARALEGAL-NOTARY-SERVICES>



**AJAX | BRAMPTON
CREMATORIUM**
& VISITATION CENTRE
Compassion | Care | Convenience

**As the experts in funerals we can offer many options
that fit your traditions, wishes & budget**

Lock in funeral costs and protect against inflation and price increases.
Make decisions now and protect your family from the emotional
burdens of planning a funeral.



Ample Parking



State-of-the-art Facilities



Puneet Aujla
Chief Executive Officer

**Burlington Crematorium & Visitation Centre
Coming Soon...**

BRAMPTON
Crematorium & Visitation Centre



905-458-2222

30 Bramwin Court,
Brampton, ON L6T 5G2

AJAX
Crematorium & Visitation Centre



289-372-3300

384 Finley Avenue,
Ajax, ON L1S 2E3

Frequently Asked Questions

66

Why Choose Brampton or Ajax Crematorium & Visitation Centre?

- Serving families since 2012 with expert guidance for all faiths and traditions.
- State-of-the-art facilities, on-site crematoriums, and reception services.
- Assistance with CPP benefits and government paperwork.



66

What If I Travel Frequently?

- A one-time travel protection plan covers all transportation costs if you're 100km or more from home, including for a partner or dependent.



66

Why Pre-Arrange Your Funeral?

- Reduces stress and financial burden on loved ones.
- Locks in today's prices to avoid future inflation.
- Ensures your wishes are honored.

66

Can I Transfer My Pre-Arranged Funeral to You?

- Yes! Contact Brampton (905-458-2222) or Ajax (289-372-3300) for seamless assistance.

66

Do You Offer Repatriation Services?

- To the Caribbean: Full management of permits, flights, and documentation.
- From the Caribbean: Coordination with local authorities and return to Canada.

66

What Sets Us Apart?

- Cultural Understanding: Honoring traditions.
- Comprehensive Facilities: On-site crematoriums and spacious receptions.
- Affordable & Transparent: Flexible options since 2012.
- Community Trust: Compassionate care for over a decade.





Mayor Patrick Brown and MP Safqat Ali display the commemorative certificate
Deen receives prestigious IEEE award

— Dr Jamal Deen's enduring legacy lies not only in his vast contributions to research and education but also in his commitment to making cutting-edge knowledge accessible to under-served communities worldwide. As the recipient of the inaugural IEEE EDS Simon M. Sze Education Award, he continues to inspire the next generation of engineers and scientists, underscoring his role as a global leader in academia and innovation.

Canadian-Guyanese scholar Dr Jamal Deen, a Distinguished University Professor at McMaster University, has added yet another accolade to his illustrious career. He has become the inaugural recipient of the 2024 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Electron Devices Society (EDS) Simon M. Sze Education Award.

This prestigious honour, announced at the 2024 International Electron Devices Meeting (IEDM) on December 9, 2024 in San Francisco, recognises distinguished contributions to education in the field of electron devices. It is the highest education accolade bestowed by the Society.

The award's rigorous selection criteria include teaching accolades, student evaluations, curriculum and course development, and demonstrated effectiveness as an educator. Nominees are judged on their impact as mentors, their ability to produce recognised contributors to electron devices, and their innovative educational initiatives, spanning undergraduate, graduate, industrial, and government programs.

Deen's selection was underscored by his citation: "For impactful leadership and global dissemination of biosensor education in underprivileged regions."

The IEEE, the world's largest technical professional organisation, aims to advance technology for humanity's benefit. Its influence spans highly cited publications, conferences, technology standards, and professional and educational initiatives.

Deen's teaching philosophy prioritises active learning, creativity, and critical thinking, fostering an inclusive environment where students from all backgrounds feel valued and are empowered to excel. Known for his ability to engage students across all levels of education, Deen's courses, which include advanced topics like microelectronics and sensor technology, blend intellectual rigor with practical skills. This combination ensures that students are well-prepared to thrive in rapidly evolving engineering disciplines.

His extraordinary dedication to education has earned him numerous accolades, includ-

ing the IEEE Canada Ham Education Medal, the McMaster President's Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision, and the MSU Macademics' Lifetime Achievement Award. This last honour, McMaster University's highest teaching award, was voted on by students, reflecting his enduring impact on their academic and personal growth.

As a Distinguished Lecturer of the IEEE Electron Device Society for over two decades, Deen has shared his expertise with a global audience, influencing countless students and professionals worldwide.

His achievements extend to his recognition as a Distinguished University Professor, the highest academic title in Canada, awarded for his exceptional and sustained contributions to scholarship, teaching, and mentoring. In addition, he has been honoured with five honorary doctorate degrees for his ground-breaking research, educational accomplishments, and exemplary professionalism.

Deen's research interests span nanoelectronics, optoelectronics, nanotechnology, data analytics, and their applications to health and environmental sciences. His ground-breaking work in these fields has led to his election as a Fellow or Academician of 13 national academies and professional societies, including The Royal Society of Canada, which is the highest honour for Canadian scholars; the Chinese Academy of Sciences; and the World Academy of Sciences. These memberships

underscore the global recognition of his contributions to science and technology.

A Fellow of IEEE, The American Physical Society, and The Electrochemical Society, Deen has received numerous accolades throughout his career. Notably, he was appointed to the Order of Canada, the nation's highest civilian honour, recognizing his extraordinary impact on science, education, and society. From 2015 to 2017, he served as the elected President of the Academy of Science, Royal Society of Canada, and he currently serves as the inaugural elected Vice President (North) of The World Academy of Sciences, representing developed countries.

Beyond his academic and research achievements, Deen's work emphasises inclusivity and accessibility. His commitment to disseminating biosensor education in underprivileged regions, recognized in his Simon M. Sze Education Award citation, demonstrates his dedication to using knowledge as a tool for global empowerment. By prioritizing education and innovation in underserved communities, Deen exemplifies the transformative power of science and engineering.

With files by Adit Kumar.



Jamal Deen



Brampton's Mayor Brown (second from left) displays the prestigious King Charles III Coronation Medal, which was presented by Brampton Centre MP Shafqat Ali (left) and Brampton South MP Sonia Sidhu; at right is former MP for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Gurbax Singh Malhi
Coronation medal for Brampton Mayor Brown

Brampton's Mayor Patrick Brown became the city's first recipient of the prestigious King Charles III Coronation Medal. The award, presented by Brampton Centre MP Shafqat Ali and Brampton South MP Sonia Sidhu on January 13, recognises Brown's enduring commitment to public service and the community he serves.

"It's a humbling and profound honour," Brown remarked during the ceremony, adding, "This recognition reflects my unwavering dedication to public service and my commitment to the people of Brampton and Canada."

He extended thanks to MP Shafqat Ali, and acknowledged the collaborative efforts of all Brampton Members of Parliament in advanc-

ing the city's interests.

The King Charles III Coronation Medal, a product of the Royal Canadian Mint, was introduced on May 6, 2024, marking the first anniversary of King Charles III's coronation.

The medal celebrates individuals whose contributions have made a significant impact on their communities or on Canada as a whole. This year, 30,000 Canadians will receive the honour, with 4,000 medals reserved for members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Elegantly crafted in nickel-silver and lacquered to maintain its brilliance, the medal symbolises both achievement and service, and serves as recognition of those who embody the spirit of public dedication.

KISSOON Law Office

NEW LOCATION
Suite 304 1 Greensboro Drive
Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 1C8
(Near 401 & Kipling Avenue)

Dhaman Kissoon's
Areas of Practice:

- CRIMINAL LAW
- IMMIGRATION LAW

Lawyers available for referrals
Family Law, Real Estate
Law, Corporate Commercial
Law, Personal Injury Law,
Civil Litigation

Tel: 416-234-1446
Fax: 416-234-0154
Email: dkissoon@bellnet.ca
Website: www.kissoon.ca

Editorial

Resilience amid crisis

Our Caribbean homelands sit at a crossroads in the ongoing climate crisis, embodying a stark paradox. Despite its minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, the region is disproportionately vulnerable to the devastating impacts of climate change. Between 2001 and 2020, the frequency of climate-related disasters surged by an alarming 85 percent, exacting an average annual economic toll of 2.13 percent of regional GDP. These figures represent not only financial losses but also the erosion of livelihoods and social stability for some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

Globally, the situation is no less dire. Between 2000 and 2019, extreme weather events resulted in a staggering \$2.8 trillion in economic damages, or \$16.3 million lost every hour. Hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, floods, and wildfires are now ongoing calamities.

Without substantial intervention, projections suggest that a rise in global temperatures of 3.2 degrees Celsius by 2050 could shrink the world economy by up to 18 percent. For regions already grappling with economic precarity, such as the ASEAN bloc, losses could reach a catastrophic 37.4 percent.

Yet, there is a glimmer of hope: if global mitigation efforts align with the Paris Agreement, economic losses could be limited to just four percent, underscoring the transformative power of coordinated action.

Our Caribbean homelands, while acutely vulnerable, is not without agency. Governments back home are implementing bold strategies to adapt to this grim reality. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Mia Mottley, Barbados is spearheading some of the most ambitious initiatives.

This nation's 'Roofs to Reefs' program addresses climate resilience holistically, channeling public investment into hurricane-resistant housing, sustainable land use, improved freshwater storage, and coral reef restoration. Barbados has also committed to transitioning entirely to renewable energy by 2030.

Jamaica has also risen to the challenge, and is the first Caribbean nation to submit an updated climate action plan in 2020. Its plan prioritises emissions reductions in energy and land use while addressing water insecurity through UN-backed programs. It is also diversifying its tourism sector, incorporating agritourism and ecotourism as sustainable alternatives to traditional tourism models that often strain local ecosystems.

Meanwhile, Dominica has charted its own course, aiming to become the world's first climate-resilient nation. Recognising its vulnerability to hurricanes and other extreme weather events, the island has invested in hurricane-proof housing and renewable energy, particularly geothermal projects.

These national efforts reflect our Caribbean's dual reality contained with a paradox as a region on the frontlines of the climate crisis, yet one that is also uniquely positioned to innovate and lead. Our homelands are fertile grounds for sustainable development, hosting nearly ten percent of the world's coral reefs and significant shares of global fish and coral species. Adoption of blue and circular economy models, where marine resources are utilised sustainably, and waste is minimised through reuse, offers a transformative path forward.

However, the challenges ahead remain immense. Rising sea levels, intensifying storms and hurricanes, and escalating economic losses underscore the urgent need for greater international support. The global community must not only honour its commitments under the Paris Agreement but also provide the financial and technical assistance necessary to empower our vulnerable homelands. The costs of inaction in GDP losses, biodiversity depletion, and human suffering are getting too close for our comfort.

As the world grapples with the mounting realities of climate change, our Caribbean's response offers a blueprint for resilience and adaptation. While the path ahead is fraught with uncertainty, proactive measures in Barbados, Jamaica, and Dominica are clearing a path. With sustained effort and global solidarity, we can start weathering the storms that are certain to emerge in oncoming hurricane seasons.

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

Trudeau's resignation sparks Liberal party reset

On January 6, a wintry day in Ottawa, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered a message that shocked no one. He announced that he would resign as prime minister of Canada and as Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada when the party selects a new leader.

After nine years of serving as Canada's 23rd prime minister and close to 12 years as the leader of the Liberals, it was evident that Trudeau's time was up. His announcement was delivered after an extremely tremulous period during his tenure.

Plummeting public opinion polls demonstrated the growing unpopularity of Trudeau with Canadians. Capped with a revolt by a significant number of caucus members, and the eleventh hour resignation of his Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland on the day of an important economic statement, Trudeau's path forward was limited.

It is not atypical that after a lengthy period in office that many political leaders, some of whom were initially elected with great fanfare, conclude their time in office with a streak of unpopularity.

The hope within the Liberals is that a new leader will reinvigorate their base supporters, and bring back enough Canadians to recoup their low standing in polls.

After Trudeau's announcement, the executive and staff at in the Liberal party convened to plan the process and logistics to replace him. However, with a set election date of October 20, 2025, and a declaration by all Opposition parties to vote down the government, there is a limited window ahead for the Liberals.

A new leader will be announced on March 9, 2025, and the House of Commons will return from prorogation on March 24, 2025. In that short period, the new Liberal leader will have a challenging job ahead.

Although the Liberals are trending low in the polls, the leadership campaign to replace Trudeau will have significant implications.

First and foremost, the winner of the Liberal leadership race will become the 24th prime minister of Canada. The honour of serving as Canada's head of government will immediately be bestowed upon this individual.

Beyond this, the desire by Liberals to replace Trudeau is an attempt to perform well in the upcoming election. And depending on the performance of the next leader, this may be possible.

Currently, the Conservative Party led by Pierre Poilievre



Ryan Singh

is set to win a majority government. However, that was when Trudeau was leading the Liberals. Can a new face at the head of the Liberals change the outcome of the next election?

A new leader could potentially leverage the return of the House of Commons to strike a deal with one of the Opposition parties (likely the NDP) to extend the life of the government.

And even if a new leader might not be able to fully rescue the Liberals from significant unpopularity, could they recoup the brand just enough to hold off Poilievre from winning a majority government?

The resignation of the prime minister ahead of an election is always a seismic event in politics and can change the course of the party.

In October 2012, Dalton McGuinty, Ontario's 24th Premier, made an unexpected announcement that he would resign as Premier and leader of the Ontario Liberal Party. This came with growing unpopularity, and the government being reduced to a minority in the 2011 election. McGuinty's party then elected Kathleen Wynne as a replacement.

In the following election, Wynne led the Liberals to a majority government win. Ontario's first female premier was able to repair her party's brand enough to serve for another four years.

However, replacing leaders is not always a remedy to correct public sentiment about their governance.

In 1984, John Turner became Canada's 17th prime minister, taking over the leadership of the Liberals from Pierre Trudeau. Turner led the Liberals into the 1984 election, but lost 95 electoral seats and the Progressive Conservatives formed a majority government under the leadership of Brian Mulroney.

Kim Campbell replaced Mulroney as the leader of the Progressive Conservatives in 1993. She became Canada's 19th Prime Minister, and the first woman to serve in the role. At the time of the election, the party held 156 seats in the House of Commons. Under her leadership, they won only two seats in that election.

History is not on the side of the next leader of the Liberals. However, a new prime minister can shift the course ahead.

The forthcoming Liberal leader, Canada's next prime minister, has monumental tasks ahead, including the outcomes of the Trump presidency.

However, the most significant task that she/he will be remembered for is the outcome of the 2025 election.

Popcorn and butter days make the reel not feel real

Now that I am looking down the tunnel to see the flickering lights of my young adult movie going days, there was that time when it was also a cerebral adventure to enter the cavernous depths of what felt like an endless walkway in the world's biggest mall, navigate labyrinths of escalators and neon-lit halls, and follow trails of popcorn that led to the massive polished steel and glass doors of the movie theatre.

To enter the multiplex was to encounter animated, life-size robotic figures attempting to engage passersby who were well into the discomfort of the uncanny valley. Walking along the carpet meant occasionally lifting up like spores the unsettling undertones of staleness from the spilled soft drinks staining the carpet, this soon to be overwhelmed by an overzealous, oleaginous aroma of butter thickening the air.

And just beyond the muffled sounds of movie-action gunfire deep in the bowels of the theatre, was a real-time accompaniment of popping corn coming from a phalanx of concession stands, which cornered like villains in a movie, had their backs against the wall.

Entering the complex was less like walking into a cinema; it was more like entering a shrine, one littered with offerings of popcorn tossed in reverence on the ground, and dedicated to an insatiable, loud, and quite demanding god called consumerism.

Standing in line for a snack meant constantly shifting one's centre of gravity to make way for patrons balancing gigantic cups of soft drinks in both hands, hugging buckets of popcorn as large as bathtubs with the aid of a downward chin, their pockets filled with shovelfuls of candy that were leaving a more colourful trail behind on the carpet.

And so I stood in my shoes, stuck to the floor with someone's discarded wad of gum, and wondered. When did we start measuring our foods in litres, kilograms, shovelfuls, and using bathtubs for food containers? Also, when did I fall asleep like Rip Van Winkle, only to awaken to a world where bite-sized portions could now only be had from a half-asleep Costco employee behind a makeshift demonstration booth?

The impatient clearing of a throat behind in the lineup knocked me out of my reverie. I stumbled forward with the realisation that somehow, somewhere, we developed a fault line, a rupture from when I was growing up as a boy.

The small size for a cup and paper bucket left me under-

standing that the rapidly squirted drink, and the millions of popped corn hurtling down a chute, had alienated us, reducing us to stomachs to be filled, bladders to constantly attend to; and similarly, a wallet to be drained.

Back in a simpler time growing up back home, a trip to a movie was an event, not an industry. My grandmother's voice interrupted me in the backyard digging with a stick for pirate's treasure.

"But where this child gone? Come wash your foot. Your uncle carrying you to the theatre."

Here was no multiplex. A vast building scabbed with peeling paint, large gaps had been punched in its walls where lazy fans spun to recirculate the warm, humid air. And there, occupying the entire length and width of the back wall was the screen, far from the silver advertised on the billboard outside, and stained yellow in patches with age.

For snacks, I carried a small fortune in a brown paper bag. A small roll with parsimonious, almost translucent slices of cheese, peppery fried channa in two small cones rolled in brown shop paper, and a wad of sticky, sugar coconut confection. My uncle, with unusual generosity, added a tiny bottle of soft drink, from which he took a first and quite voluminous sip.

We descended into the "pit", the cheap section, where comfort on wooden benches was not an option, and where strangers constantly interrupted my enjoyment of the movie, begging for "two-three channa please", until the paper cones were crumpled with finality and tossed onto the rough, concrete floor.

Looking back, my few visits to the cinema were also lessons in restraint. I learned to savour the little that was given, and with demanding hands reaching out of the dark, to preserve what I had. Contrasted with today's cinematic experience with its luxuries and volume, it means abundance is a default setting.

But something feels off; and it is not only about visiting modern-day movie houses. Leaving a movie with the speaker system ringing in the ears, and after-images flashing behind the eyeballs, there is a feeling of having lost something tangible – a simplicity that has vanished from my remembrance of times past, and which today has been traded for spectacle.

Maybe it is in the further widening of the rupture, where the empty space has been filled with a rapture that is as saccharine as the soft drinks served at the movies that are too sweet, and in the cloy of too much enriching butter coating the popcorn.

Perhaps we should ask whether we are satisfied; or too full.



Romeo Kaseram

'Seven Curry' and its different flavours in post-colonial debates

Dear Editor,

As is usual with almost any discussion in Guyana, the debate over 'Seven Curry' has less to do with gastronomy than with politics.

Frankly, as one who has been writing about the historical peripheralisation of Indian culture in Guyana – including its gustatory aspects – ever since my foray to the capital city, or 'Town' to write my Advanced Level examinations at Indians Trust College over 50 years ago, when my lunch of 'roti-and-aloo-choka wrap' was derided by some non-

Indians, I was quite proud of Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali when he rolls out 'Seven Curry' at official State functions.

At long last not only were the beloved Indian Guyanese foods out of the closet, but also the only way to enjoy them by *sanaying* (mixing with fingers) to ensure the complex, complementary flavours titillating one's tastebuds.

All left now is to *chatay* (to lick) the fingers to show appreciation to the hosts for their "finger-licking" feast!

The discussion raises several issues in relation to Ali's comments on 'Seven Curry', which, according to one interlocutor, "have caused significant distress within the Indo-Guyanese Hindu community".

The first issue was Ali's claim that "ghee was unavailable to Hindus, implying they cooked their food primarily with water", which "[lacks] historical accuracy". I address this issue because it relates to the larger question of identity in a hegemonised, post-colonial, multicultural society.

It would appear there remains residual embarrassment in dealing with the conditions under which we left India and arrived in Guyana. Regarding the former, when Indentureship began, India had been devastated economically and socially after a century of British depredations.



India's President Narendra Modi is served a Seven Curry meal during his visit to Guyana last November



The areas from which most of us originated, the then Bengal Presidency and United Presidency, were earliest and most pilaged. Famines had become endemic, and even peasants with small plots of land were desperately poor, and chose migration to survive. At best, their food was mere subsistence.

As George A. Grierson wrote in *District of Gaya* (1893), from where my great-grandfather came in 1888, "Ghee was and remain an expensive item that would have been used sparingly by them. Food of an oleaginous kind (such as ghi, milk, oil) is almost wanting amongst the poorer classes. That it is necessary is shown by the universal craving exhibited for it. The richer the man, the more oily food he uses. The day-labourer's use of oil is very small indeed, while the substantial cultivator or thriving artisan uses it and milk with his daily food to a greater extent".

When the Indentured labourers left for British Guiana – 95 percent North India via Calcutta; five percent Southerners via Madras – the shippers concocted a diet as cheap as possible, yet genuflecting to their tastes.

As recorded by researcher Ashutosh Kumar in *Feeding the Girmitiya: Food and Drink on Indentured Ships to the Sugar Colonies*, on their months'-long journey, the daily allowances

for each adult were as follows: "Rice, 20 oz; Daal (mixture) 6 oz for rice eater; 4 oz for flour eater; Flour, 16 oz; Oils/Ghee, 1 oz for rice eater and flour eater; potatoes; Mustard oil, 8 drm; Garlic, ½ drm; Mustard seed (sarso), ½ drm; Chillies, ½ drm; Black pepper, 1½ drm; Coriander seed, 2 drm; Turmeric, 4 drm; Tamarind, 8 drm; Salt, 8 drm. Pumpkins or Yams, 1 oz; Potatoes, 2 oz-5 oz, and a live sheep weekly."

With the small quantity of oil/ghee supplied, the tradition of the poor peasants' technique of *chaunkaying* or sautéing the onions and spices in the small quantity of oil/ghee, and then adding the vegetables or meat along with water to 'boil down', was adopted.

When they landed in Guyana, for one year, they were all – Hindus, Muslims, Tamils – allocated the same amount of "rations", the cost of which was deducted from their wages. They protested this imposition because they wanted to Budget their purchases and gradually the stricture was removed towards the end of Indentureship.

To save money (wages for men were 24 cents daily and 16 cents for women throughout Indentureship) they pinched their pennies and ate even more abstemiously. By the time they could afford better, their tastes were set on the simple spices and cooking techniques into the present, whether singly or as components of 'Seven Curry', and which still reminded them across the world of 'home'.

Serving several dishes on leaves – Lotus in Guyana, Sohari in Trinidad – invokes the Indian nutritionally balanced *Thaali*. Mauritius has a Tamil interpretation of *Sept-Cari: Seven Curry*, and which is served on banana leaves.

Ravi Dev, Guyana, via email.



Chartered Professional Accountants

At RR, CPA, Professional Corporation, we bring accuracy, honesty, and years of experience to everything we do. We make sure your financial operations run smoothly and are in line with all tax rules, both locally and internationally.

Partners

1. Christopher Raghunauth, MBA, CPA, LPA, CFE, FCCA (UK), CPA (CO, FL)
2. Richard Raghunath, CPA, LPA
3. Rehanna Raghunauth, B Com, CPA



At RR, CPA, Professional Corporation, we focus on making accounting simple, clear, and reliable for you. As a Chartered Professional Accounting firm, we specialize in providing expert services with an emphasis on audit and US tax matters. Our team is here to offer you the support and guidance you need, including:

1. Audit Services for Not-for-Profit Organizations

We help nonprofits maintain financial transparency, earn donor trust, and stay compliant with regulations.

2. Audit Services for Small & Medium Enterprises

Our audits give SM Es valuable insights into their finances, ensuring they stay compliant and make informed decisions.

3. Bookkeeping & Tax Filing for Corporations and Individuals

We handle your bookkeeping and tax filing, reducing errors and helping you save on taxes.

4. US Tax Expertise

Our team is knowledgeable in US tax laws and can guide you through the complexities of cross-border taxes, making sure you're compliant and well-informed

OFFICE 1 – 5109 Steeles Ave. W., Suite 204, Toronto, ON, M9L 2Y8

OFFICE 2 – 951 Wilson Ave, Suite 16B, Toronto, ON, M3K 2A 7

T: 416-745-5500

F: 866-588-5501

E: amisha@rrcpa.ca

S: www.rrcpa.ca

Guyana produces record-breaking rice crop in 2024

Dear Editor,

Guyana has made history with its agricultural achievements in 2024, producing a staggering 725,282 tonnes of rice, the highest in this nation's history.

This record-breaking milestone not only reflects the dedication of the country's farmers, but also highlights the transformative impact of the government's initiatives aimed at bolstering the agricultural sector.

This remarkable feat represents a steady climb in rice production over recent years. From 569,789 tonnes in 2021 to 610,595 tonnes in 2022, and 653,706 tonnes in 2023, the industry has shown consistent growth. However, 2024's achievement is particularly noteworthy as it cements Guyana's place as a leading rice producer in the region.

Several key factors contributed to this historic accomplishment. One major driver is the introduction of high-yielding rice varieties, which has significantly increased productivity. Since 2020, four new varieties have been developed, each capable of producing between seven to nine tonnes per hectare. The latest variety, GRDB 18, was launched in October 2024, offering even greater potential for farmers.

Additionally, improvements in infrastructure and seed-paddy production facilities have played a vital role. Facilities in regions such as Burma, Mahaica/Mahaicony Abary in Region Five, and Black Bush Polder, and Number 56 Village in Region Six have enhanced their capacity, collectively producing over 152 bags of paddy annually.

The economic benefits of this record-breaking production are immense. In 2024, Guyana exported 425,490 metric tonnes of rice and its by-products to 30 countries, generating approximately (US) \$254 million in revenue. This not only boosts the national economy, but also strengthens Guyana's reputation as a reliable player in the global rice market.

The government's unwavering support for the agricultural sector has been pivotal to its success. With a budgetary allocation of \$97.6 billion in 2024 for the Ministry of Agriculture, the government has made significant investments to enhance efficiency, promote sustainable practices and improve management in the rice industry. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to ensure food security, while driving economic growth.

This milestone is a testament to the hard work and resilience of Guyana's farmers, who have embraced innovation and adapted to modern agricultural practices. It also highlights the effectiveness of strategic planning and investment by the government.

As Guyana continues to build on this success, the future looks promising. With ongoing innovation, infrastructural improvements and support for the agricultural sector, the nation is poised to sustain its growth and further solidify its position as a leader in rice production.

This achievement not only brings economic benefits, but also serves as a source of national pride, demonstrating the strength and potential of Guyana's agricultural sector on the global stage.

Fawaz Harry, Guyana, via email.



Harvesting rice in Guyana



Outgoing US Ambassador Candace Bond receives the Hummingbird Medal (Gold) from Trinidad and Tobago's President Christine Kangaloo

Questions over US Ambassador Bond's award

Dear Editor,

I am writing regarding the government of Trinidad and Tobago's conferral of the Hummingbird Medal (Gold) to outgoing US Ambassador Candace Bond for her contributions to bilateral and diplomatic relations during her two-year tenure in Trinidad and Tobago.

While Ambassador Bond's efforts are commendable, this decision once again raises important questions about the criteria and timing of such national honours.

And given the impromptu event, one might have expected that recent national hero Joshua Regrello, who is seeking to establish a world record for playing the pan for the longest time, over 31 hours straight, should have been included. That would have made more sense to the population at large.

The Hummingbird Medal is traditionally awarded for "loyal and devoted service beneficial to Trinidad and Tobago". Ambassador Bond's notable contributions to diplomacy and cultural exchange are undeniable, but her relatively short tenure seems at odds with the concept of sustained service implied by the criteria.

Moreover, this recognition comes months after the 55th national awards ceremony, which was held on September 24, 2024, honouring 65 citizens for their significant contributions to our nation.

Presenting Ambassador Bond's award at a separate event might understandably be seen as an afterthought, and even disrespectful, raising concerns about the consistency of the awards process.

Adding to this context, recent controversies surrounding national awards have already sparked public debate.

For example, the recognition of former Acting Commissioners of Police James Philbert and Stephen Williams drew sharp criticism from some quarters, underscoring the need for clear and transparent criteria for national awards to ensure public trust in the process.

In light of these issues, it is essential to reflect on whether the conferral of these awards aligns with the principles of fairness and consistency.

Does Ambassador Bond's relatively brief tenure and recent recognition set a new precedent for honouring diplomatic figures? And how do we safeguard the integrity of our national awards in the face of growing public scepticism?

This is not to diminish Ambassador Bond's impact in any way, but to encourage reflection on how we uphold the principles of fairness, consistency, and national pride in the awarding process, all aimed at upholding the prestige and meaning of our national honours.

Tim Teemal, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

PM Rowley's endorsement of new successor 'a glaring political misstep'

Dear Editor,

Prime Minister Keith Rowley's endorsement of Stuart Young as his successor is not just one of the most questionable political moves in recent history, it also signals a political misstep that could have disastrous consequences for Trinidad and Tobago's future.

The harsh reality is that Young lacks the skills, experience, charisma and vision required to lead a diverse nation grappling with complex economic, social, and political challenges.

Here are three compelling reasons why Young is unequivocally unfit to serve as the next prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

1. Lack of experience: Stuart Young's political career, while serviceable in ministerial roles, falls woefully short of the experience and gravitas required for a prime minister. Overseeing ministries such as National Security, Communications, and Energy is a far cry from the multifaceted responsibilities of steering an entire nation.

Young has yet to demonstrate a clear ability to craft comprehensive policies or adeptly navigate the intricacies of international diplomacy – skills that are non-negotiable for any prime minister.

His tenure has been defined more by unwavering loyalty to Keith Rowley than by any meaningful governance or notable achievements, leaving little evidence that he is equipped to take on the nation's highest office.

2. Disconnection from the grassroots: A prime minister must possess the ability to genuinely connect with citizens from all walks of life, particularly the working class and vul-

nerable populations.

Young's privileged background and technocratic approach to governance have consistently demonstrated a stark disconnect from the realities faced by ordinary Trinbagonians.

Is Young even capable of demonstrating empathetic or compassionate leadership? Our country will never forget during his disastrous tenure as Minister of National Security, when he made the unconscionable decision to prevent thousands of our citizens from returning home during the global Covid-19 pandemic.

These nationals of Trinidad and Tobago – some stranded without food, shelter, or finances – were effectively abandoned by their own government, and left to face indefinite uncertainty in foreign lands.

While our nationals suffered, Young's failure to secure the nation's borders allowed an unchecked influx of thousands of illegal Venezuelan migrants, exacerbating an already strained healthcare and social system.

This glaring contradiction in Young's policies – forsaking his own people while failing to protect the nation's borders – reflects a pattern of mismanagement and neglect.

It raises serious questions about his ability to lead on any level, much less as prime minister.

3. Lack of charisma and leadership appeal: Leadership demands vision, charisma, and the ability to inspire unity – qualities Young demonstrably lacks. His demeanour and communication fall far short of the standard required of a prime minister tasked with leading a diverse and dynamic populace.

Recently, Young faced widespread criticism for making

offensive comments during a parliamentary sitting. House Speaker Bridgid Annisette-George condemned his behaviour as "despicable", and described his remarks as "derogatory", highlighting their misogynistic and homophobic nature.

In her scathing rebuke, the Speaker stated: "As a woman, I am naturally led to condemn statements which seek to indecently portray another woman, statements which trivialise criminal activities that exploit women, or statements which impute improper conduct on the part of other members."

Such conduct underscores a troubling level of immaturity and poor judgment. How can someone who engages in such behaviour be expected to inspire confidence, unify a nation, and lead Trinidad and Tobago toward progress?

Young's actions and attitude are not just unbecoming of a leader – they are a stark warning of the risks his leadership would pose to the country's future.

Rowley's endorsement of Young is a glaring misstep that raises serious concerns about his judgment and the PNM's trajectory. Is this an act of deliberate political calculation, or does it reveal a leader increasingly out of touch with the realities facing the electorate – or worse, indifferent to them?

By backing Young, a figure who lacks the skills, charisma, experience, and vision necessary to lead Trinidad and Tobago through its challenges, Rowley risks alienating the very base the PNM depends on for electoral success.

In these turbulent times, our nation cannot afford weak leadership or misplaced loyalties. Trinidad and Tobago demands a leader who can rise above political cronyism and prioritise the people.

Sadly, Young represents the exact opposite – a choice that endangers not just the PNM's future, but the nation's as well.

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



Keith Rowley

Budget 'ensures sharing of benefits of growth'

From Page 1

measures are a source of reassurance and inspiration."

Honorary Consul Singh also noted from a broader perspective, that the budget's transformative investments in infrastructure, energy, and economic diversification signals the government's long-term vision for sustainable development.

"More and more we are seeing our government capitalising on its position as a key player in the global energy market, and it is heartening to see in this budget that deliberate efforts are being made to reinvest oil revenues into sectors such as agriculture, mining, and manufacturing, in moves that will build economic resilience and create opportunities beyond oil."

Also, he noted that it "sends a remarkable signal that Guyana's journey toward inclusive growth and sustainability is well on the way".

He concluded, "Even as it is fostering pride in our homeland's achievements under our government, it is also strengthening the bonds between Guyanese nationals at home and abroad. And, at the same time, it has rippled abroad as an invitation for our diaspora to remain actively engaged and contributing to our homeland's continued progress and prosperity."

Also here in the GTA, the *One Guyana Forum* extended its congratulations to Dr Singh for his government's "marathon presentation of the largest budget in history".

"This milestone achievement demonstrates your collective commitment to the government's responsible and responsive management of the nation's growing economy. Your prudent stewardship has ensured that the benefits of economic growth are shared equitably among all Guyanese, while also making strategic investments in the country's future," the *OGF* declared in a statement on January 17.

It added, "The 2025 Budget's focus on tax reform, community development, and strategic investments in key sectors is truly commendable. Your efforts to engage with the people of Guyana and incorporate their feedback into the budgetary process are a testament to your dedication to inclusive governance."

As delivered by Dr Singh, the 2025 budget introduces several ground-breaking measures aimed at improving the quality of life for Guyanese families. Leading these initiatives is a one-off \$100,000 cash grant, a 'baby bonus' initiative, that positions Guyana alongside nations such as Singapore and France in supporting families with newborn citizens.

"In the interest of providing support to our youngest citizens, our newborn babies, we will provide a one-off cash grant of \$100,000 for every single newborn baby born in Guyana to a Guyanese mother," Dr Singh announced.

Parents will also benefit from continued tax relief. The government is allowing one parent to claim \$10,000 monthly as non-taxable income for each child, a measure expected to return over \$1 billion annually to families. Additionally, the *Because We Care* cash grant has been increased to \$50,000 per child, along with a \$5,000 uniform allowance, providing significant financial relief.

Senior citizens will see their pensions rise from \$36,000 to \$41,000 per month, putting an additional \$4.5 billion into the hands of over 76,000 pensioners. Public assistance for vulnerable groups has also been increased from \$19,000 to \$22,000 monthly.

To ease the financial burden on workers, the income tax threshold has been raised from \$100,000 to \$130,000 monthly, exempting 22,000 workers from paying income tax and adding \$8.5 billion in disposable income. Pay-as-You-Earn taxes have also been reduced from 28 percent to 25 percent, and new

exemptions have been introduced to reward overtime and secondary jobs.

Dr Singh explained, "Persons who earn overtime for work beyond their normal working hours, the first \$50,000 monthly of their overtime would be non-taxable. This measure is designed to ensure workers are rewarded for their productivity and effort."

These changes are expected to return \$3.6 billion to taxpayers, and benefit over 100,000 individuals.

Recognising the impact of global economic pressures, the government has allocated \$9 billion for cost-of-living relief. A \$10,000 universal healthcare voucher will finance basic health tests, benefiting an estimated 500,000 people.

Freight costs will remain reduced for another year, and the zero percent excise tax on fuel will be maintained, saving the treasury \$90 billion.

Transformative infrastructure projects are another hallmark in the 2025 budget, with \$209.3 billion allocated to roads and bridges. Major projects include the New Demerara River Crossing and regional highway expansions, which aim to boost connectivity and economic activity.

In the energy sector, \$88 billion will be spent to reduce electricity costs and improve reliability. Investments of \$73.2

billion in drainage and irrigation systems and \$8.2 billion in coastal defense will protect vulnerable communities from climate risks.

Guyana's economic growth continues to be robust, with a projected 10.6 percent GDP growth rate in 2025, making it the third-fastest-growing economy globally. The non-oil economy is expected to expand by 13.8 percent, driven by strong performance in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and services.

The agriculture sector remains a key contributor, with rice production increasing by 9.3 percent in 2024 to 725,282 metric tonnes, thanks to better yields and expanded acreage. Livestock production surged by 24.6 percent, while crops such as vegetables, fruits, and spices saw a 10.9 percent increase.

The mining and quarrying sector is expected to grow by ten percent in 2025. Gold production is projected to rise by 17.2 percent, while bauxite will see a remarkable 70.1 percent increase.

The oil and gas sector, Guyana's economic powerhouse, is set to produce 786,000 barrels per day by the fourth quarter of 2025. This is expected to generate (US) \$2.2 billion in profit oil and (US) \$340.6 million in royalties. Additionally, Guyana's Natural Resource Fund will contribute \$512.4 billion to finance national development projects.

Education remains a priority, with \$175 billion allocated to advance free, world-class education. Healthcare spending will increase to \$143.2 billion, improving access and infrastructure. Housing programs are set to receive \$112.6 billion, supporting the government's vision of universal homeownership.

Significant funds have been earmarked for community development, including \$7.2 billion for Amerindian and hinterland initiatives, \$8 billion for sports programs, and \$3.6 billion to preserve Guyana's cultural heritage.

Dr Singh emphasised the budget's transformative impact, stating, "Budget 2025 continues to build and enhance the framework that incentivises production and productivity, while ensuring that effort is recognised and rewarded."

With its ambitious initiatives and focus on equitable growth, the 2025 budget positions Guyana as a global model for sustainable development.

As Dr Singh stated, "This budget ensures that the benefits of growth are widely shared, leaving no one behind."



Ashni Singh

Following are some of the spending priorities in the Guyana's Budget 2025

Transformative Infrastructure Roads and Bridges – The government has earmarked a massive \$209.3 billion to expand the road network and construct key bridges across the country.

Drainage and Irrigation – The government has allocated \$73.2 billion to upgrade and expand the national drainage and irrigation network to address flooding.

...

Improved Essential Services Education – \$175 billion has been allocated to continue advancing Guyana's goal of providing free world-class education for all.

Health – \$143.2 billion will go towards expanding and improving the public healthcare system.

Housing – \$112.6 billion has been set aside to fulfil the government's vision of homeownership for every Guyanese family.

Human Services – \$58.5 billion will fund critical social service initiatives.

...

Community Empowerment Amerindian and Hinterland Development – \$7.2 billion will enhance the wellbeing of Indigenous communities.

Sports Development – \$8 billion has been allocated to create opportunities for athletes and support sports programs across the country.

Culture and Arts – \$3.6 billion will promote and preserve Guyana's cultural heritage.

BUDGET 2025
AMOUNTS TO
\$1.382 TRILLION

- 20.6 PERCENT LARGER THAN BUDGET 2024
- THE LARGEST BUDGET EVER
- FULLY FINANCED WITH NO NEW TAXES

#Budget2025GY January 17, 2025

BUDGET 2025 HIGHLIGHTS
HEALTH
\$143.2 BILLION
for dramatic expansion and improvement in the coverage of the public health care system

#Budget2025GY MCF January 17, 2025

BUDGET 2025 HIGHLIGHTS
EDUCATION
\$175 BILLION
to advance Government's vision of free world class education for all Guyanese

#Budget2025GY MCF January 17, 2025

BUDGET 2025 HIGHLIGHTS
REVIEW OF 2024 **MACROECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS**

REAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)

- Overall real GDP grew by **43.6 percent** in 2024
- The non-oil economy expanded by **13.1 percent** in 2024

#Budget2025GY MCF January 17, 2025

BUDGET 2025 HIGHLIGHTS
HUMAN SERVICES
\$58.5 BILLION
to pursue initiatives in the social services

#Budget2025GY MCF January 17, 2025

Guyana's 2025 budget a blueprint for growth, transformation

With general elections on the horizon, Guyana's 2025 National Budget unveiled on January 17 by Finance Minister Dr Ashni Singh, can be viewed as a landmark policy framework aimed at leveraging the country's burgeoning oil wealth to fuel its development.

With an historic allocation of (G) \$1.382 trillion – a 20.6 percent increase over the previous year – the budget emphasises social welfare, infrastructure, and economic diversification.

The budget comes on the heels of remarkable economic performance in 2024, during which Guyana's economy grew by 43.6 percent, driven by a 57.7 percent expansion in the oil sector and 13.1 percent growth in non-oil sectors.

For 2025, the economy is projected to grow by 10.6 percent, with non-oil sectors expected to expand by 13.8 percent. These projections highlight the government's strategic focus on economic diversification, ensuring that the benefits of the oil boom translate into sustainable, inclusive growth.

One of the most impactful aspects of the budget is its emphasis on tax relief. The income tax threshold has been raised from \$100,000 to \$130,000 per month, effectively removing 22,000 individuals from the tax net and returning \$8.5 billion to taxpayers.

Additionally, the personal income tax rate has been reduced from 28 percent to 25 percent, benefiting over 100,000 taxpayers and injecting \$3.6 billion into the economy.

These measures aim to increase disposable income, boost consumer spending, and reduce the financial burden on middle- and low-income earners. While the government foregoes approximately \$12.1 billion in revenue, the expected economic multiplier effects make this a strategic investment in the nation's economic health.

The 2025 budget allocates significant resources to social welfare programs, addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable populations.

Key initiatives include:

- **Old Age Pension Increase:** Pension payments have been increased from \$36,000 to \$41,000 per month, benefiting over 75,000 elderly citizens. This measure reflects the government's commitment to improving the quality of life for seniors.
- **"Because We Care" Cash Grant:** The grant for schoolchildren has been raised from \$40,000 to \$50,000, directly benefiting over 200,000 students and their families.
- **Newborn Cash Grant:** A one-time \$100,000 cash grant for every newborn has been introduced, offering immediate financial support to young families.

These initiatives collectively amount to over \$50 billion in direct cash transfers, providing a lifeline to those most in need while stimulating local economies through increased spending power.

An historic \$112.6 billion has been allocated for housing and urban development, reflecting the government's ambition to tackle housing shortages and improve living conditions. The budget targets the distribution of 25,000 house lots and the construction of 1,000 affordable homes, advancing the goal of providing 50,000 house lots by 2025.

Additionally, urban infrastructure will receive significant upgrades, including roads, drainage systems, and utilities. This investment not only addresses pressing housing needs but also creates thousands of jobs in the construction and related sectors.

Infrastructure development takes centre stage in the budget, with over \$150 billion earmarked for transformative projects.

Key initiatives include:

- **Transportation Networks:** The completion of major highways to improve connect-

tivity between rural and urban areas.

- **Deep-Water Port:** Construction of Guyana's first deep-water port to enhance trade logistics and position the country as a regional hub. The Deep-Water Port project is being constructed at Seawell Village, Corentyne to the tune of (US) \$80 million. CGX's subsidiary, Grand Canal Industrial Estates Inc, has been engaged in civil works related to the construction of the facility.
- **Public Facilities:** Building new hospitals, schools, and community centres to expand access to essential services. The government plans to build hospital facilities at Lima in Region Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam), De Kinderen in Region Three (Essequibo Islands-West Demerara), Diamond and Enmore in Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica), Bath Settlement in Region Five (Mahaica-Berbice) and Skeldon in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne).
- **Renewable Energy Projects:** Modernising the power grid and investing in renewable energy sources to ensure sustainable energy supply. To address the challenges in Guyana's energy sector, the government has earmarked a staggering \$88 billion in the 2025 budget to significantly improve the reliability, affordability and accessibility of electricity across the country. The centrepiece of the government's "energy transformation plan" is the \$2 billion Gas-to-Energy project, which is scheduled for completion in 2025.

These capital-intensive projects aim to reduce transportation costs, improve access to services, and support Guyana's long-term economic competitiveness. Recognising the challenges posed by inflation, the government has allocated \$9 billion to targeted cost-of-living interventions. These include subsidies for basic goods, price control mechanisms for essential commodities, and direct cash transfers to low-income households. Such measures aim to stabilise domestic markets and ensure food security for the most vulnerable. Education and healthcare receive significant boosts in the 2025 budget, with combined allocations exceeding \$80 billion.

Key investments include:

- **Education:** \$50 billion has been earmarked for the education sector, supporting the construction of new schools, teacher training programs, and the rollout of e-learning initiatives.
- **Healthcare:** \$30 billion will fund the construction of modern hospitals, procurement of advanced medical equipment, and training of healthcare professionals. These investments address critical gaps in public services, laying the foundation for a healthier, more educated population. A total of \$3.6 billion has been allocated for youth and cultural initiatives, reflecting the government's recognition of the importance of investing in human capital and national identity.

Highlights include:

- Establishing recording studios and creative hubs to support the arts.
- Developing a state-of-the-art national museum.
- Forming a Youth Advisory Council to empower young leaders.

These initiatives aim to foster creativity, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement among Guyana's youth.

While the development of the agriculture sector will remain a priority, the budget has allocated \$13.3 billion to the struggling sugar industry to "rekindle hope" in the sector.

The 2025 budget is undoubtedly ambitious, but its success hinges on effective implementation and fiscal discipline. This will involve addressing key risks, which include:



Dwarka Lakhan



Guyana's Finance Minister Dr Ashni Singh

- **Execution Risks:** Large-scale infrastructure projects require efficient management and oversight to avoid delays and cost overruns.
 - **Inflationary Pressures:** Increased spending could exacerbate inflation if not carefully managed.
 - **Revenue Diversification:** Although oil revenues provide a substantial fiscal cushion, dependence on this volatile sector poses risks. Continued efforts to diversify the economy are crucial.
- On the other hand, the budget presents significant opportunities to transform Guyana into a regional leader. Strategic investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare can enhance productivity, attract foreign investment, and improve the standard of living for all citizens.

people. By prioritising social welfare, infrastructure, and economic diversification, the government has laid the foundation for sustainable, inclusive growth.

However, the effective execution of these initiatives will be critical to realising the nation's long-term potential. As Guyana continues its journey as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, the 2025 budget serves as a blueprint for transformation, aiming to uplift the lives of its citizens, and secure a prosperous future for generations to come.

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

Mani Singh

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

"The King of the Jungle"

Residential & Commercial Real Estate Specialists



Mani Singh
Sales Representative

647-274-4172

Email: manisinghhomes@gmail.com

- ★ It's the Experience that Counts!!
- ★ Members of RE/MAX Hall of Fame!
- ★ Winner of the RE/MAX Lifetime Achievement Award!
- ★ Father & Son Professional Real Estate Team
- ★ When Experience and Professionalism matter to you



www.manisinghhomes.com



Tej Singh
Sales Representative



RE/MAX[®]

West Realty Inc., Brokerage

Bus: 416-745-2300 • ReMax West Realty • 96 Rexdale Blvd., Toronto, ON M9W 1N7

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY FOR OVER 35 YEARS!

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrates heritage, connection, and achievement

— A testament to the enduring relationship between India and its diaspora, the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention was a celebration of shared achievements while setting a vision for future collaboration and growth.

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

The 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention, held from January 8-10 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, brought together thousands of delegates from across the globe to celebrate the contributions of the Indian diaspora.

Organised by the government of India in collaboration with the State government of Odisha, this biennial event served as a vital platform for engagement, collaboration, and the strengthening of ties between India and its diaspora.

The theme for this year's convention, *Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat*, underscored the pivotal role of the Indian diaspora in India's journey toward becoming a developed nation.

The convention began with panel discussions and conferences featuring representatives from diverse regions, including the Caribbean nations of Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Jamaica. Highlighting the engagement of regional women's voices, Trinidad and Tobago's Pandita Indrani Rampersad and Jamaica's Shullette Cox participated in a women's panel discussion, while Trinidad and Tobago's Mikela Panday represented youths at the conference.

One of the most celebrated moments of the PBD is presentation of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA), the highest honour conferred by India on non-nationals.

The PBSA recognises Non-Resident Indians, Persons of Indian Origin, or institutions established by them, for exceptional achievements both in India and abroad.

Among the awardees this year was Guyana's Saraswati Vidya Niketan, an eminent educational institution renowned for its academic excellence and spiritual enrichment.

In its citation, the PBSA acknowledged SVN's remarkable contributions to community work, particularly in education, and its unwavering commitment to uplifting the underserved and underprivileged in Guyana.

Founded by Swami Aksharananda, SVN has become a beacon of academic and moral excellence, consistently achieving top results at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination.



Some of the women delegates at the PBD

The award to SVN was presented by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu to Swami Aksharananda, further cementing the institution's place as a trailblazer in Guyana.

Another highlight of the convention was the keynote address delivered by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which followed the address of Her Excellency Christine Kangaloo, President of Trinidad and Tobago, who was the Chief Guest of the PBD.

Kangaloo was unable to attend in person due to restrictions from Trinidad and Tobago's ongoing State of Emergency, and instead addressed the convention virtually.

In her heartfelt message, Kangaloo expressed deep pride and humility at being selected as the Chief Guest, and for being a recipient of the PBSA.

"I am deeply humbled at having been selected as your Chief Guest and for the honour of being bestowed the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award this year," she said.

She further acknowledged her place among past honorees from Trinidad and Tobago, including former Prime Ministers Basdeo Panday and Kamla Persad-Bissessar; government ministers Winston Dookeran and Dr Lenny Saith; Justice Frank Seepersad; and the National Council of Indian Culture.

"I am also humbled to join other Caribbean citizens who have also been bestowed this honour, including Sir Shridath Ramphal; the Honourable Bharat Jagdeo; Yesu Persaud; Kenneth Benjamin; Ramdien Sardjoe; and Guna Sekhar Muppuri – to name only a few," she added.

Kangaloo highlighted the significant contributions of the Indian diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago, noting, "The descendants of Indian immigrants form nearly 42 percent of the total population of Trinidad and Tobago – the largest numerical presence of persons of Indian descent anywhere in the Caribbean – and constitute an integral part of the economic, political and social fabric of the country."

She also reflected on the 180-year-long relationship between India and Trinidad and Tobago, sharing that the ties between the two nations "are stronger today than they have ever been."

Among other things, Modi's keynote address that followed was a call to action for the Indian diaspora to preserve and celebrate their heritage while contributing to global progress and India's development.

"The history of the Indian diaspora spread across the world, their journey to various countries, and their stories of raising the flag of India in those lands is an important part of India's heritage," Modi stated, emphasising the importance of documenting and preserving the legacy of the Girmitya community.

He proposed creating a database of the Girmitya community, explaining, "We should identify which villages and cities in India they came from, where they went and settled, and also recognise those places."

Modi also called for showcasing their stories widely, saying, "What kind of life they led, how they turned challenges into opportunities – this can be portrayed through films or documentaries."

Encouraging scholarly engagement, Modi proposed that, "A study on the Girmitya legacy could be conducted, and research could be carried out. Universities could establish chairs for this, and we could organise the World Girmitya Conference at regular intervals."

Modi also urged the diaspora to engage in environmental action, recalling a tree-planting initiative alongside President Dr Irfaan Ali during his State visit to Guyana.

"Wherever you are, I urge you to plant a tree or a sapling in the name of your mother," he said, framing this as both a personal and collective contribution to the planet.

Finally, Modi emphasised the need to strengthen emotional and cultural bonds between India and its diaspora.

"Such efforts should also be made with the diaspora in different countries," he stated, calling for initiatives that connect people through shared heritage and mutual respect.

SHIPPING WEEKLY TO:
ANTIGUA, ARUBA,
BARBADOS, DOMINICA,
GRENADA, GUYANA, JAMAICA,
ST. LUCIA, ST. VINCENT,
AND TRINIDAD



R&S Cargo Express Inc.
Air Land Or Sea We Deliver For Less
2715 Rena Road, Mississauga, Ontario, L4T 3K1





JUMBO BARRELS NOW AVAILABLE!



SPECIALS TO GUYANA

SHIP EARLY FOR MASH, PHAGWA & EASTER

PLEASE CALL FOR PRICES & SPECIAL RATES

WE SHIP FOR LESS

CHECK THE OTHERS AND COMPARE



Shipping all personal and household items to your destination in 6 weeks or less!



VISITING GUYANA SOON? FOR AN ENJOYABLE STAY FURNISHED 2-BEDROOM SUITE ALL AMENITIES INCLUDED LOT 128 NEW ROAD, VREED-EN-HOOP WEST COAST DEMERARA GUYANA CONTACT: 416-738-8078



905-677-6400

rscargoexpress.ca rscargoexpressinc@yahoo.ca





Suriname's President Santokhi (left) with Barbados' PM Mottley

Mottley receives Suriname's national award

Paramaribo – Barbados Prime Minister, Mia Mottley, has received one of Suriname's highest national awards for her exceptional contribution to the relationship between the two countries, her leadership within the Caribbean Community and her commitment to the region.

President Chandrikapersad Santokhi bestowed the *Grand Cordon in the Order of the Palm*, one of Suriname's highest honours, on the visiting Barbadian leader, during a ceremony at the Presidential Palace.

Santokhi praised Mottley for her visionary leadership, unwavering dedication, and steadfast adherence to the principles of the Caribbean Community since taking office in 2018.

He noted that she is the first female leader of the ruling Barbados Labour Party and prime minister of her country, and added her term in office has been marked by significant initiatives that have advanced Barbados and strengthened regional ties.

Santokhi also said that under her leadership, Barbados has transformed into a Republic that demonstrates her commitment to sovereignty and self-determination.

He called her leadership in this historic constitutional change a "beacon of progress and inspiration", adding that her commitment to regional integration is also evident in her role as head of government within Caricom with responsibility for the Caricom Single Market and Economy that allows for the free movement of goods, skills, labour and services

Jamaica's IC head warns Justice Minister Chuck

Kingston – Retired Justice Seymour Panton, chairman of Jamaica's Integrity Commission (IC), last week sharply criticised Justice Minister Delroy Chuck for advising parliamentarians to disregard a key provision of the Integrity Commission Act requiring them to disclose information about their spouses' earnings to the anti-corruption body.

Panton issued a stern warning, stating that Chuck's suggestion for lawmakers to breach the law "may well be itself an offence".

Questioning the implications of such advice, Panton asked, "What sort of example is he setting for public officers?"

Panton highlighted that the Integrity Commission Act, which was enacted with the approval of parliamentarians, including Chuck, mandates specific declarations from public officials. He also reminded them that non-compliance is punishable by fines or imprisonment.

Expressing his dissatisfaction, Panton stated, "I am very disappointed that he is confirming a view that he is not serious about good governance. After all, it is not difficult to see that it is very easy to hide income and assets in the names of relatives."

across the region.

Santokhi said further that Mottley's efforts have been crucial in promoting economic cooperation, free movement, and shared prosperity in the region, and that the relationship between Suriname and Barbados has significantly improved under her leadership.

In July 2022, both countries signed an agreement for a strategic dialogue and cooperation platform, paving the way for more intensive collaboration in various areas, such as agriculture, trade, and tourism.

According to Santokhi, this agreement is proof of Mottley's commitment to unity and development within Caricom.

In addition to her regional commitment, Mottley is also a strong international advocate, particularly in the area of climate change, with Santokhi pointing out that this urgent problem disproportionately affects small island states.

He said her passionate calls for climate action have resonated globally and led to her receiving the *Champions of the Earth Award* in 2021, the highest environmental accolade of the United Nations.

He added that the award to Mottley not only recognises her achievements but also the shared values and aspirations that connect Suriname and Barbados.

He praised her "visionary leadership, unwavering commitment to regional integration, and passionate advocacy for sustainable development", which, according to him, "embody the spirit of resilience and unity that defines the Caribbean".

Panton ended his statement with a call to action, urging all parliamentarians and public officers to comply with the law: "I urge all parliamentarians and public officers to do the right thing. That is obey the law!"

The controversy stems from comments Chuck made during an Integrity Commission Oversight Committee meeting where he questioned the commission's requests for information about the salaries of parliamentarians' spouses, and, in some cases, their children.

"Why is the Integrity Commission asking members to indicate the salaries of their spouse or sometimes of their children?" Chuck asked, adding, "I don't know if this is something that is appropriate because I have advised the relevant members, let them know your spouse is not prepared to divulge their salary."

Chuck also suggested that the joint select committee currently reviewing the Integrity Commission law should clarify "what limits can be put in terms of investigations".

The exchange fueled public debate about the balance between transparency in governance and privacy, with the IC emphasising the importance of adhering to anti-corruption measures enshrined in law.



Ask Jay...

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

MAXIMISE YOUR TAX-FREE FIRST HOME SAVINGS ACCOUNT

First-time home buyers can enjoy tax advantages with a First Home Savings Account (FHSA). To qualify as a first-time buyer, you must not own a home. If your principal residence is in your spouse's name, the house becomes a matrimonial home, and you cannot open an FHSA account.

The FHSA allows first-time buyers to invest up to \$8,000 annually, with a lifetime cap of \$40,000. Like an RRSP, this contribution reduces taxable income, and, like a TSFA, withdrawals for down payments are tax-free.

If you are in a higher tax bracket, opening an FHSA and making your contribution before the end of the year is essential to save on taxes. It is best to open your FHSA account as soon as possible to start the clock on tax savings. You can carry forward your unused contribution, up to \$8,000, to the following year, but only contributions made within a calendar year will qualify for that year's tax refund.

FHSA is a good choice, even if you are unsure about buying a home soon because it offers the combined benefits of up-front tax savings and tax-free growth. You can transfer any unused portion of your FHSA to your RRSP, which will not affect your RRSP contribution limit. A couple can open separate FHSA accounts to take advantage of the up-front tax savings and tax-free growth, and they can both contribute towards buying a home even though one person is on the mortgage. To qualify for this advantage, they must satisfy CRA's guidelines for homeownership.

You can also choose how to invest the funds in your FHSA. If you plan to buy a home within the next two years, select a low-risk, high-interest savings account like a GIC. You can also make money with little risk by investing in an Exchange-traded fund (ETF) in Canadian bank stocks or a broad-based index fund, like the Dow Jones Industrial Average, or by asking a financial advisor for assistance.

When you buy your home, you must close the account by the year-end of the following year you withdrew. The funds must be used strictly to purchase your principal residence, not an investment property. CRA criteria is that you must live in the home within one year of purchase.

You can transfer RRSP funds into your FHSA but cannot claim an additional tax deduction. This is an innovative strategy for moving funds where the individual has little RRSP room or big pensions. An FHSA is a smart way to save since you can get an immediate tax break and grow your wealth without paying taxes. You can transfer the funds into an RRSP without taxation if you do not buy a home.

To qualify for an FHSA, you must be 18 or older, to a maximum of 71 years old, as of December 31 in the year you opened the account. You must also be a Canadian resident and qualify as a first-time buyer. You can open an account at your local bank or credit union. You must provide your social insurance number, date of birth, and supporting documents to justify your eligibility for an FHSA. Consider adding a beneficiary to your account. It is essential to file your FHSA contributions with your income tax.

Buying a home and raising a family in the GTA is becoming increasingly difficult. FHSA, RRSP, and TFSA contributions allow you to save quickly for a downpayment. You can transfer up to \$40,000, tax-free, from your RRSP to your FHSA, or use your FHSA and borrow up to \$60,000 from your RRSP towards buying your first home.

It is wise to open your FHSA as soon as possible and save aggressively. Do not wait to save enough for your dream house. Buy an entry-level home and work your way up.

LAW OFFICE

GENERAL PRACTICE

Chet Sharma

B.A., B.S.W. (Hons), LL.B

Barrister, Solicitor & Notary Public

• Immigration Law

• Criminal Law

• Divorce & Family Law

• Notarisations, Affidavits

• Power of Attorney, Wills

OFFICE

416-285-1550

Emergency:

416-284-9191

By Appointment Only

150 Lawson Road, Toronto, ON M1C 2J4





MUNGOL SINGH
BARRISTER SOLICITOR & NOTARY PUBLIC

ROMA S. MUNGOL (SINGH)
LL.B. - LONDON ENGLAND
(SOLICITOR OF THE SUPREME COURT
OF ENGLAND AND WALES)

SPECIALTY: FAMILY LAW
OTHER: CRIMINAL LAW | REAL ESTATE LAW | WILLS & ESTATES LAW

40 WESTMORE DRIVE, SUITE 202
ETOBICOKE, ON M9V 4C2

(416) 745-SING (7464)
FAX: (416) 745-1464
ROMA@MUNGOLSINGH.CA



Play more. Stress less.

Switch your home and auto insurance today to enjoy one-on-one personalized service and coverage uniquely tailored to you.

Get in touch today.



Sherry A. Harrikssoon
Insurance Agency Inc.
Sherry Harrikssoon, Agent
13311 Yonge St Unit 103
Richmond Hill ON
905-773-9782



1920949CN

Desjardins, Desjardins Insurance and related trademarks are trademarks of the Fédération des caisses Desjardins du Québec, used under licence.



RESHMA AUDHO
PHOTOGRAPHER



Tel: 647-237-9816
email: rdaudho@hotmail.com
www.tintaleephotography.com



 /tintaleephotography  @tintaleephotography



LOTUS

Funeral and Cremation Centre Inc.

YOUR COMMUNITY FACILITY OWNED AND OPERATED BY KAMAL BHARDWAJ, ONTARIO LICENCED SOUTH ASIAN FUNERAL DIRECTOR. WE ARE PROFESSIONAL, RESPECTFUL AND CARING.

Tel: 647-547-8188

info@lotusfuneralandcremation.com
www.lotusfuneralandcremation.com

Seating capacity for 500. Adaptable rooms for smaller funerals. Can accommodate larger gatherings.

121 City View Drive, Toronto, Ontario M9W 5A8

Conveniently located to serve Toronto and areas west of the City including Etobicoke, Brampton, Bramalea and Mississauga. Cremations are done on the premises without leaving the building. Large gatherings can view start of cremations. Media available to broadcast proceedings.



Pre-arrangement plans available. Free executor support for Canada Pension Plan and Survivor Benefits. In-home services offered if desired.



The Chatak Matak Invasion took place on January 18 at the Mirage Convention Centre in Etobicoke. The highly-entertaining and energising event was well attended, and saw a stellar array of performers taking to the stage. Among the stars glittering that evening were Sunil Ramsunder, Shivam Rajaram, Ki & the Band, Miss Renuka, Terry Gajraj, and Omardath Maraj. Among the guests were Acting Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette from the Trinidad and Tobago Consulate General in Toronto, and Brampton's Mayor Patrick Brown. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo.





Hakeem Jeffries



Kamala Harris



Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

IDC marks 96 birthday of Dr Martin Luther King Jr

— As the world marked Dr Martin Luther King Jr's 96 birth anniversary on January 15, the Indian Diaspora Council noted in its tribute that his legacy continues to serve as a powerful reminder of the progress made and the ongoing journey toward justice and equality for all.

...

New York – The Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC) joined organisations and individuals worldwide in commemorating the 96th birth anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. on January 15, 2025.

Recognised as one of history's most influential advocates for civil rights and social justice, Dr King Jr.'s teachings and legacy were honoured as vital and increasingly relevant in addressing modern struggles for equality, voting rights, and social justice.

"Dr Martin Luther King Jr. believed that peaceful refusal to obey unjust law was the best way to bring about social change," stated the IDC in a press release.

"His adherence to Gandhian non-violence teachings for peaceful protests to achieve freedom and social justice have inspired many to protest in peaceful ways against oppression, colonial rule, subjugation, and violent discrimination in many countries," the statement added.

Dr King Jr.'s extraordinary life was a testament to his vision for equality and justice. Born on January 15, 1929, he became a central figure in the American Civil Rights Movement, leading campaigns that brought about transformative legal and social changes.

From his leadership in the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the passage of the 1965 Civil Rights Act, Dr King Jr.'s work laid the foundation for a more just society.

The IDC underscored key moments in his life, noting: "At age 33, he was pressing the case of civil rights with President John Kennedy. At age 34, he galvanised the nation with his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech."

It added, "At age 35, he won the Nobel Peace Prize. At age 39, he was assassinated, but he left a legacy of hope and inspiration that continues today to confront the ugly vestiges of racial discrimination especially during turbulent and alarming times."

The IDC, a global non-profit organisation headquartered in Queens, New York, and established in 1997, emphasised the lasting importance of King's guiding principles in today's socio-political landscape.

"The guiding principles, teachings, and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. have become vital and more relevant with the continuing struggles in 2025, as advocacy for voting rights, social justice, and racial equality in the US have become more prominent in recent years," the organisation noted.

Celebrating recent strides in representation, the IDC acknowledged significant milestones, including US Vice President Kamala Harris' position as the Democratic Party nominee in the 2024 presidential election, and Hakeem Jeffries' election as Minority Leader in the US House of Representatives.

"These are outstanding examples of recent racial progress," the IDC remarked, while emphasising the need for continued efforts to dismantle remaining barriers.

The IDC also cited Vice President Kamala Harris's tribute to King Jr.'s legacy. As she stated, "This day we celebrate [Dr King Jr.'s], his birthday, January 15, and every day, and the spirit with which he did what he did. For lifting up whole communities of people who must be seen and heard, and who deserve all the dignity that God gave them to be able to live a life that is productive, and a life where they have a quality of life where they know how important they are, and how powerful they are."

Reflecting on King Jr.'s enduring message, the IDC also noted his words: "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now", highlighting the universal resonance of his ideals and their relevance to diverse communities.

Under the leadership of its President Ashook Ramsaran, the IDC has grown its global presence, establishing chapters and affiliates across multiple countries. The organisation's mission is to "embrace, engage, and enhance the shared heri-

tage, aspirations, and interests of persons of Indian origin worldwide". IDC's commitment to fostering connections and cultural heritage aligns with its broader goal of advancing equality and justice.

In commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the IDC not only honoured his contributions to the American Civil Rights Movement, but also reaffirmed the global applicability of his vision.

"The life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. provide inspiration, challenges, and reminders of the possibilities for good, as well as the role and responsibility of everyone to be supportive of advancing social justice in even small ways. We owe Dr Martin Luther King Jr. a debt of gratitude," the IDC concluded.

CELEBRATING
BLACK HISTORY MONTH



OUR 2025
SYMPOSIUM

ELDER HEALTH: Navigating the Health Care System to Long Term Care and Beyond

Saturday February 8th, 2025 | 10AM to 2PM

Keynote Speakers:



Dianna Klisanin
Guiding communities with
personalized planning support.



Jenifer Oteng
Dedicated healthcare professional
with over 18 years of nursing experience.



Loretta Karikari
Supporting caregivers with tools
for resilience and emotional well-being.



Explore elder care challenges, transitions, caregiver support, and end-of-life planning. Gain tools to advocate, plan, and care with compassion.

Location:

Paul Palleschi Recreation Centre,
30 Loafers Lake Lane
Brampton, Ontario

OR: Virtually
on ZOOM.



CLICK TO
REGISTER

ORGANIZED BY:
THE WALNUT FOUNDATION

Register for free at:
thewalnutfoundation.com/black-history-month-symposium

www.thewalnutfoundation.com

Elton Dharry keeps rising to stardom

By Dhanpaul Narine

Elton Dharry made history in December 2024. He defeated Colombian Randy Ramirez in the second round of a six-round Bantamweight contest. The fight took place at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall, in Georgetown, Guyana. This victory opens the door for a world title fight in 2025, possibly in Guyana. The story of Elton Dharry is fascinating and is sure to inspire many to greater heights.

When we met 15 years ago, he was a champion in the making. He had the fire in his eyes and the determination to reach to the top. In the succeeding years, one heard about his prowess in the ring and the struggles against the odds to get a break. Life was never easy, but he was in no mood to give up. He brought the boxer's grit outside the ring, and with a stiff chin, he kept moving on to better things.

Elton Dharry has had one of the most challenging rises to boxing stardom. He was born in the rural countryside in Leguan, in Guyana. The island of Leguan is in the Essequibo River. Elton grew up in the Richmond Hill area, and says that at one time, Leguan had the best beaches in Guyana. Elton's dad was Everton and his mom was Enid Dharry. Elton is the fourth of six children. When he was 13, the family made a momentous decision. They moved from Leguan to New York City to pursue the American Dream.

What was the initial impression like? The family landed in chilly weather and had to adjust quickly to life in the big city. They settled in Brooklyn and Elton said it was a different world. He was 13 and had to go back to school. The school was IS 171, and math was his favourite subject. Elton graduated and went to Franklin K. Lane High School. He took part in a number of sports that included handball, soccer, and martial arts. It was here also that his interest in boxing started. He said that the state of his neighbourhood drove him to the sport. There was a lot of 'drama,' and it was good to know how to defend oneself.

In addition, members of his family were boxing fans. The television opened up new avenues to the sport, and ESPN classics allowed him to appreciate the history of boxing. "I watched Jack Johnson all the way to the current boxers at the time. Many people don't know that Joe Walcott, a world welterweight champion, was born in British Guiana in 1873. He was champion from 1901 to 1906," Elton stated.

How did Elton get active in boxing? He was taken by his older brother Irving to a gym in Manhattan. It was a tough schedule to combine school with boxing because the commute was long. But Elton was determined, and the fact

that he was able to mix with famous names was worth it.

For example, at the gym he met Rawle Frank, a former Guyanese champion. As his progress continued, Elton went over to Gleason's gym. This was the place where the top boxers honed their skills. As it happens, Elton is one of the longest members at Gleason's, and he even took a picture with Mike Tyson.

Elton set goals for himself. He wanted to be great professional fighter. He acquired a trainer. An exhibition fight was arranged. It was competitive, and Elton showed dazzling boxing skills.

His big break came when he was paired with a Mexican fighter. Elton knocked him out in the second round. He was now moving up the ranks, earning the *New York Golden Gloves*, a place in the New York Metros, and he worked his way to the US Nationals. He represented Guyana in the 2004 Olympics. He lost on points to a fighter from Puerto Rico, but the experience was invaluable.

It was not long before he became a professional. It took place on December 26, 2004. It was a big clash with a fellow Guyanese, but Elton knocked him out. He returned to the US, and after an injury, he went to the West Coast. He spent a few years in Los Angeles and continued his career. After much experience, he was back in New York, and he took on a competitive fight.

He won a string of fights, and he was now fighting for the world title in Australia in 2019. Elton is currently listed among the top fighters in the Super Flyweight Division, and he thanks the Guyanese authorities for their support.

The next step is for him to fight again for the world championship. In 2024, he won the WBA Super Flyweight Gold title in Guyana, defeating Dexter Marques. He is close to another crack at the world championship and this could happen soon, probably in Guyana. It would be for the WBA Flyweight Championship.

It would be great if Elton could do an exhibition fight in 'Little Guyana' in New York so the community could see his skills. He is a rank fighter, and the world is at his feet. Elton thanks his family for their support and his teachers and fans.

Apart from boxing, he likes cricket. His favourite cricketers are Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Carl Hooper, and Brian Lara. His advice to the youngsters is to do the right thing and keep moving.

Elton Dharry has made his country and his community proud. He is friendly and approachable, and whatever happens in the ring, he can rest assured that he is the people's champion. We wish him and his family all the best in the future.



Dharry is lifted by his trainer



Dharry displays one of his belts



Dharry in full flight during his bout with Randy Ramirez



Dharry kneels after defeating Randy Ramirez



The Caribbean Children Foundation (TCCF)
Even Angels Need Guardians

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15th, 2025

Be My Valentine



WOODBINE BANQUET HALL
30 Vice Regent Blvd, Etobicoke
(Hwy27, South Of Rexdale Blvd)
Doors Open @ 5:30 pm • Dinner 8:00 pm

Tickets \$65.00
• Roses for the Ladies • Cash Bar • Formal Attire

FOR TICKETS AND INFO CONTACT: • Jay: 416-418-2745 • Ojha: 905-672-2287 • Vic: 647-280-6712
• Jankie: 905-303-5817 • Kumar: 416-498-9962 • Ray: 416-278-9302
• Amit: 647-703-1283 • Donna: 416-741-4970 • Deeka: 416-281-5525

tccfangels.com

Indra Persad Milowe weaves joy, resilience, connection into her art

— Through mastery of her compositions, Indra Persad Milowe has created an oeuvre that bridges cultures and celebrates life. Imbued with the essence of festivals, folklore, and personal narratives, her work is a vibrant jharokha itself, communicating with viewers and inviting them to see the world through her eyes. From her homeland of Trinidad and Tobago, the US, and far corners of the globe, her artistry speaks to us about the shared beauty of humanity and the stories that connect us all.

The artistry of Indra Persad Milowe is a window, itself a vibrant *jharokha* communicating a view into the soul of her heritage, her journeys, and the festivals of life. Born in Trinidad and Tobago, Milowe's creations are as layered as her life: an intricate tapestry of cultural roots, personal evolution, and global influence.

Her work, celebrated worldwide, merges the meticulous craft of fibre art with the evocative narratives of folklore and tradition, embodying the rhythmic vibrancy of her homeland.

Whether through the shimmering mirrors and bells adorning her needlework piece of art she calls *Celebration*, or the vivid acrylic paintings inspired by her grandmother's kitchen, Milowe's art is both an homage and a bridge, a celebration of the past and an offering to the present.

With her life's path winding through continents and careers, from nursing to artistry, she channels the richness of her experiences into work that connects, captivates, and celebrates.

At the heart of Milowe's artistry is the *jharokha*, a traditional Indian architectural feature once used by kings to address their people, and now reimagined as an element of decorative beauty.

Historically, the *jharokha* was a stone window projecting from the upper stories of palaces or forts, supported by ornate brackets and adorned with perforated screens (*jali*). It allowed rulers to engage with their subjects, offering a space for communication and ritual known as *jharokha darshan*. This practice, adopted by the Mughal emperors, became a symbol of both authority and connection.

Today, Milowe transforms this historical motif into a modern expression of celebration, her work breathing life into its decorative and cultural significance. Her piece, *Celebration*, exemplifies this transformation: needlework on burlap, adorned

with bells and mirrors, reflecting the joyous use of *jharokhas* in festivals and holidays.

Milowe's journey into art began in the lush landscapes of her youth, inspired by her Trinidad and Tobago roots, and shaped by a profound early influence: her high school art teacher, Helga Mohammed.

"Art is not just a painting hanging up on a wall, art is in every aspect of your daily life," Milowe recalls Mohammed had written on the chalkboard during class one day. For her young, formative mind, this statement was epiphanic and life-changing, one that Milowe carries today as her guiding light, a principle shaping every brushstroke and thread of her creative journey.

Thus encouraged to explore the natural world and her inner vision, Milowe's talents blossomed early. At 15, her delicate depiction of orchids on a branch captured the ephemeral beauty of nature; at 16, a still life of fruits displayed her growing mastery of composition and detail.

But life's path, like Milowe's art, is rarely linear. Drawn to caregiving, she pursued nursing, a career that spanned England, Malta, Trinidad and Tobago, and the US. Her work with British Nurses Overseas, specialising in ophthalmic and psychiatric medicine, enriched her understanding of humanity, resilience, and care.

For decades, nursing was her canvas; yet her heart continued to sketch visions of colour and life. In April 2019, after a lifetime of service in medicine, Milowe retired and returned to her first love: art.

The transition from nurse to artist was not merely a change of profession but a homecoming. Milowe's

first piece, inspired by her grandmother's kitchen, evoked the warmth of family and the aromatic memories of cultural traditions. This work became the cornerstone of her collection, *Festivals and Folklore of Trinidad, West Indies*.

Rooted in the personal yet resonating universally, her art tells stories of joy, resilience, and connection. With her ever-present sketchpad, she plans each piece meticulously, refining her vision until it manifests as vibrant acrylics on canvas or intricate fibre art.

Milowe's dedication to her craft has taken her onto the international stage. Her travels, imbued with artistic purpose, have inspired collections such as *Beautiful Ubud, Bali* and *My Journey to Morocco*. As an artist-in-residence in Ubud, she



Indra Persad Milowe



Milowe's fibre art

immersed herself in local ceremonies and festivals, enriching her repertoire with the textures and traditions of Bali. Similarly, her residency at Mauser Eco House in Costa Rica culminated in the creation of a six-foot mural, *Lutchmie*.

These experiences reflect not only her artistic skill but also her commitment to fostering cultural exchange and storytelling.

Her work has graced prestigious venues, from the Rotunda Gallery in the Red House, Port-of-Spain in Trinidad, to Art Impact International in Washington, DC. At the Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA 2023), her presence highlighted her role as a cultural ambassador, bringing the folklore and vibrancy of Trinidad and Tobago to global audiences.

In Salem, Massachusetts, Milowe's murals and public art earned her two grants from the Public Art Commission, further cementing her reputation as a transformative artist.

Milowe's art is born of careful thought and a relentless drive to achieve excellence. She continues to refine each work not toward perfection, but toward resonance, aiming to evoke emotion and connection with her audience.

As early as I can remember, the family reunion party always happened on January 6, the day of Epiphany, when, according to some scriptures, Christ was manifested to the Gentiles.

The significance of the day was not lost on the occasion when family and friends gathered to celebrate the reunion, not only of those who walked the earth but also in remembrance of those who had already passed into the other world. This tradition, I learned as I grew up, dated back at least 100 years throughout the generations.

Once everyone arrived, the event commenced with each guest taking a few purple roses from a basket on their way to file past and lay a petal at the base of blown-up framed photos of each deceased family member. The pictures and the accompanying legacies written below individual images describing their contribution to the family and the world always gave me mixed emotions. While I was proud to be a part of their bloodline, I felt humbled by the big shoes that I would have to fill if I desired to follow in their footsteps.

Without knowing why, this year my usual enthusiasm to connect with my ancestors abandoned me, and left me sitting alone with my handful of roses at the back row of chairs laid out for the solemn ceremony that followed the visit to the lineup of ancestors.

After the laying of the petals, everyone returned to take a seat in preparation for the prayer, led by the oldest living relative to pay tribute to our dearly departed, and a wish for prosperity and good health to our present and future generations.

With the ceremonial formalities over, the congregation broke up into individuals seeking each other's company to mingle and reminisce with smiles and laughter all around. The open bar offered finger foods and drinks for every age group. Again, strangely, I shrunk away from contact with anyone. For the first time in my life, I remained seated in obscurity to observe the festivities as a withdrawn spectator, instead of full participation with my usual delight.



The Supernatural The Family Reunion

This year, instead of the usual DJ music, a buzz of excitement emanated from the crowd when a lady dressed in a gypsy outfit, complete with a head-tie and large drop-earrings climbed onto the stage.

After draping a white tablecloth over her makeshift table with three folding chairs around it, she placed a crystal ball, a portrait of a palm, and a deck of tarot cards with an atom drawn on their backs, in front of her.

While the fortune teller sat on her chair and shuffled her tarot cards with a smile, her young female assistant, dressed in a similar outfit, mingled with the guests to get them interested and ready to participate in crystal ball gazing, palm readings, and tarot card readings.

She started with the children who asked their parents for silver coins to place in the palm of Madam Schuler, the mysterious psychic.

Daisy, the spiritualist's assistant, lined the children up off stage for them to walk onto the platform one at a time and take a seat across from the seer when she indicated. She sat on the third chair on the side of the table with a large bag on the floor beside her. Once seated, Madam Schuler waved her hand over the three objects in front of her, giving each child the option to select their preferred method of fortune telling.

After each spiritual reading, Daisy pushed her hand into the bag without looking at it, and pulled out an object that she gifted to each child, smiling at their delight for receiving the prize they longed for and cherished the most. The crowd went silent. Parents could not believe their eyes. The little silver coins were insignificant compared to the value of each gift for which their children had expressed desires, but they thought the cost was too prohibitive.

After the children formed groups to play with their toys

and each other, it was the adults' turn to pay a visit to Madam Schuler and select their respective methods of psychic connection. Each person took a seat and either pointed to an object on the table, or extended their arm for a palm reading. Facial expressions of either glee or disappointment at the revelations delivered by Madam Schuler contrasted with the permanent smiles on the faces of the soothsayer and her assistant.

My heart skipped a beat when my cousin asked to get in touch with her deceased mother who had recently died of cancer. Tears streamed down Janice's face as she gazed at Madam Schuler who mouthed the words my dad's sister used to communicate from the afterlife with her only child. Goosebumps covered my body when I realised that I could see the outline of my transparent aunt and hear her voice echo around my parents' string-lighted backyard.

Others, emboldened by Janice's interaction with her mom followed her example. Again, I could see and hear the outline and voice of each deceased communicator.

My heavy heart sank to my feet and bewilderment washed over me when my mom leaned her head on my dad's chest, her body jerking violently from uncontrollable sobs. My dad put his arm around my mom and tried to hide his trembling lips, shaking body, and streaming tears pouring onto her head.

The commotion drew everyone's attention to my parents and interrupted Madam Schuler in the middle of reading our neighbour's palm. For the first time since they arrived, the smiles disappeared from the faces of the oracle and her assistant.

"Andrew!" Madam Schuler shouted at me. "Don't let go!" She glanced at my parents. "You will drag your mom with you and your dad will suffer alone with his stroke for another ten years!"

I awoke on a hospital bed in palliative care, surrounded by loved ones sobbing into tissues.

Dr Schuler and her assistant, Nurse Daisy smiled and tiptoed out the door.

Kamil Ali



'Fearful police' taken out of context - Rowley

Port-of-Spain – Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley last week reiterated his controversial statements about fearful police officers hiding from criminals in police stations while insisting his words were taken out of context and misunderstood. In seeking to clarify, Rowley said he never intended to offend the dedicated officers who risk their lives to protect law-abiding citizens.

As was reported earlier by the Trinidad and Tobago media, Rowley had said: "It has come to my attention, in some districts, in some instances, police officers, whose job it is to protect us and secure us, in some districts at night, are so afraid of the criminals that they close the police station door, turn off the light, and be inside there hoping that the criminals don't come at them."

He added, "That happens, it is not supposed to happen... And the criminals come in front the police station... when citizens identifying themselves as law-breakers choose their place of attack to be in front of a major police station inside the city and to carry out an attack using the most sophisticated killing weapons, it tells you that they have no regard for law enforcement in our society, and that they benefit from the fact that the law is as protective of them as they are not protective of us."

Following his statement, Commissioner of Police Erla Harewood-Christopher said, "Recent comments made in the national Parliament have generated public commentary related to the operational readiness and courage of police officers in the discharge of their duty."

She added, "I wish to reassure the public of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service's dedication and unwavering commitment to performing its policing functions."

Harewood-Christopher also noted that police stations were mandated to remain operational full-time, 24 hours each day, seven days per week.

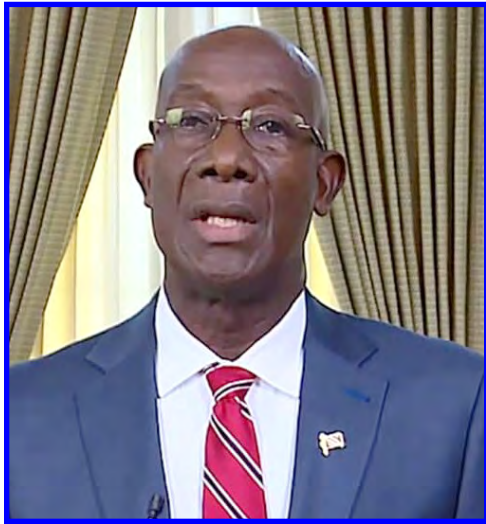
Rowley's remarks also drew a stern rebuke from Police Service Social and Welfare Association president, ASP Gideon Dickson, and former Police Service Commission chairman Dr Ramesh Deosaran.

Both expressed shock and alarm, calling the comments reckless and an affront to the morale of officers. Former acting police commissioner Stephen Williams also criticised Rowley

for making such statements publicly as head of the National Security Council.

However, Rowley later hit back at the "overblown criticisms", asserting they were taken out of context and misunderstood.

He also clarified that his comments highlighted a few instances of criminal brazenness toward police officers at police stations, which he described as factual rather than general criticism of the TTPS.



Keith Rowley

"The overblown criticisms are not focused on what I actually said. One, it was a statement of fact in relation to a few instances of policing. Are they denying that?" Rowley responded via *WhatsApp*.

He added, "Two, I was not so much criticising police officers as I was pointing out the accelerated brazenness of the criminals who are not prepared to respect the police, or even the police at the stations. What is there to criticise?"

Rowley expressed frustration that his consistent support for law enforcement has been overlooked by critics who have focused disproportionately on this specific statement.

"I, on many occasions, have raised and identified how we should appreciate the bravery of policemen and women who stand between us and the criminals by putting their lives on the line on a daily and nightly basis in defence of the law-abiding citizens who depend on them to protect us. How many times have I said that? I didn't see any of the mouths supporting or acknowledging what I said on many previous occasions," he claimed.

In response to Rowley's justification for his remarks, Williams said while the Prime Minister may not have intended to offend the TTPS, his comments were nonetheless damaging.

"I'm saying even if it is truthful, my concern had to do with the revelation of such information in the public domain. It doesn't add anything to improving our situation. The information placed in the public domain doesn't help us in any way as it relates to the police service's morale," Williams declared.

Additionally, "It doesn't help in any way in relation to addressing the criminal element. It, in fact, encourages the criminal because it gives them a feeling that, 'Wait nah, we have the police on the run. They hiding from us'"



Terrence Deyalsingh

TT records 40K cancer cases

Port-of-Spain – Over 40,000 cases of cancer have been recorded in Trinidad and Tobago between 2003 and 2020, according to the Health Ministry's latest cancer registry report.

Speaking at a Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration last week, Dr Maria Clapperton, Director of the Non-Communicable Diseases Unit, disclosed that 97.9 percent of cases occurred in individuals over 25 years old, with men and women almost equally affected.

Also, health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh highlighted ongoing efforts to combat the disease, including expanded screening programs, enhanced diagnostic facilities, and the establishment of the Cancer Centre of Trinidad and Tobago-South.

Amid calls for improved emergency response and public education, regional health authorities are also advancing infrastructure projects to support early detection and treatment of cancer, alongside initiatives to promote preventative care.

The updated cancer registry report, which spans data from 2003 to 2020, highlights critical trends in the country's cancer burden. Of the 43,380 cases recorded, individuals aged 60 to 74 represented the most impacted demographic, accounting for 39 percent of diagnoses.

The data further revealed an ethnic distribution, with 36.2 percent of cases among Afro-Trinidadians, and 23 percent among Indo-Trinidadians. Prostate, colorectal, and lung cancers were identified as the leading cancers in men, while breast, uterine, and colorectal cancers were the most prevalent in women.

In response to these findings, Deyalsingh detailed several initiatives aimed at addressing the growing challenge. He underscored the ministry's progress in public education, the expansion of screening for prostate and lung cancers, and significant investments in oncology training through eight scholarships awarded in 2024.

Diagnostic capabilities are also set to improve with the installation of an MRI and CT scanner at the San Fernando General Hospital by 2025, enhancing the hospital's ability to detect and manage cancer cases effectively.

Dr Brian Armour, CEO of the South West Regional Health Authority (SWRHA), highlighted the recent launch of the Cancer Centre of Trinidad and Tobago-South at the former Augustus Long Hospital. The facility, which began operations in December 2024, is already transferring cancer care services from SFGH, and plans to include a 15-bed palliative care unit to cater to terminally ill patients.

Similarly, the North Central Regional Health Authority (NCRHA) is bolstering its cancer care services with the acquisition of a body plethysmograph, a non-invasive lung function testing device that aids in the precise diagnosis of lung cancer.

Independent Senator Paul Richards has raised concerns about the capacity of emergency departments at public hospitals to handle the rising healthcare demands, citing long response times.

In response, NCRHA CEO Davlin Thomas acknowledged the strain on resources, but pointed to ongoing infrastructure upgrades. Refurbishments at the Chaguanas District Health Facility have resulted in a new premium emergency department, with similar enhancements underway at the Arima District Health Facility. These upgrades aim to reduce the patient load at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex (EWMSC) and improve access to care.

Thomas also highlighted the importance of preventative measures through wellness clubs designed to encourage healthier lifestyle choices. These initiatives, combined with expanded diagnostic and treatment capabilities, are seen as vital in reducing the cancer burden and supporting early intervention strategies.

Deyalsingh also reaffirmed his government's commitment to strengthening healthcare infrastructure and services, noting that the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago has been tasked with constructing a new health facility in Chaguanas.



TTPS officers and army personnel on patrol in Port-of-Spain

Comment 'compromises police credibility' - Persad-Bissessar

Port-of-Spain – Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar has described Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley's comments about 'fearful police' to be "an insult and slur on the hard-working officers of the police service".

She said, "This is typical of Keith Rowley... to make insulting and disrespectful statements which are almost always damaging and dangerous in every debate or platform speech he engages in, and then come after to deny his own words."

Calling his latest comments a "bait and switch technique", she accused Rowley of taking advantage of his parliamentary privilege.

"This is the height of irresponsibility, especially since it stands to compromise the credibility and strength of the police service, the security of all citizens and our international reputation by emboldening criminals. He and his colleagues should give up their police protection details if they believe our officers are afraid. Rowley is the coward of the country, not our officers."

However, Minister in the Ministry of National Security with responsibility for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Keith

Scotland, said Rowley's comments were misunderstood. At the same time, he reaffirmed the State's confidence in and support of the TTPS.

Said Scotland, "We remain committed to the job and doing it together. And I ask the police officers to judge us by our actions and the resources placed in the police force. And we'll continue to do that and they will have, unequivocally, the unwavering support that is there for them."

He also emphasised that the government remains committed to doing everything it can to support law enforcement.

Also responding to Rowley's statement, Deputy Police Commissioner Operations Junior Benjamin gave the assurance that all police facilities are open on a 24-hour basis.

Asked to comment on Rowley's assertion, and whether he was aware of such occurrences, Benjamin said, "That should not be a problem. It should be a problem of the past. I have informed all my senior officers and commanders that we are on heightened alert and it came down from the Commissioner that all stations will be open from now on."

Govt confirms water availability not an issue with response to tragic fire

Port-of-Spain – Minister of National Security Fitzgerald Hinds last week reinforced the government’s position that water availability was not a factor in the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service’s response to the fire that tragically claimed the lives of D’Abadie/O’Meara MP Lisa Morris-Julian, her son Jesiah, 6, and daughter Xianne, 25, on December 16.

Hinds confirmed receiving the final report on the incident from former chief fire officer Roosevelt Bruce on January 10.

Bruce and his team were responsible for probing the TTFS response to the incident. Hinds announced the three-man committee on December 20.

The committee’s mandate included a thorough review of the Fire Service’s response time, the availability of water resources and an assessment of the arrival and departure logs, to ensure timely and adequate action was taken.

The investigation also aimed to address public concerns over conflicting reports about the cause of the fire and the response.

While he would not go into the major details of the report, saying it was still under review by the National Security Council, Hinds confirmed, “I can say confidently that water was not the issue in this tragedy.”

While acknowledging that water challenges have existed in Trinidad and Tobago in the past, Hinds assured, “The Ministry of Public Utilities has made significant strides in addressing water issues nationwide. In this



Lisa Morris-Julian died tragically with two of her children on December 16

instance, however, water availability did not hinder the Fire Service’s response.”

Morris-Julian and her children died from smoke inhalation. The investigation has ruled out foul play.

Hinds confirmed that the Fire Service had been attending another fire at Manuel Congo at the time of the incident, which delayed their response.

He also assured the public that the government is committed to addressing the shortcomings identified in the report.

“This tragedy has caused immense sorrow



A firefighter douses the destroyed house following the tragic fire

and public disquiet,” he said.

He added, “We owe it to the people of Trinidad and Tobago to uncover the facts and address the deficiencies in our emergency response systems.”

Speaking with the media following Hinds’ statements, acting Chief Fire Officer Andy

Hutchinson clarified that while water was not an issue, hydrant pressure was low.

He said, “We had sufficient water to fight the fire. The low hydrant pressure was something we noted and reported. However, this did not impact our ability to respond effectively.”

Hutchinson explained that this was highlighted in the Fire Service’s media release and supported by operational logs from the Arima Fire Station, which is a short distance away from the Farfan Street, Arima home of Morris-Julian.

Fire Officers Association president Keon Guy reiterated the long-standing concerns about inadequate resources within the TTFS.

“The Fire Service has been under-resourced for years, and this has impacted our ability to effectively carry out our duties,” Guy said.

He emphasised that while the officers at the scene were able to overcome water-related challenges, the real issue lay in the inadequacies of fire protection in Arima and other areas.

“The lack of adequate fire protection in Arima was a significant contributing factor to this tragedy,” Guy said.

Guy also criticised the government for waiting until a tragedy of this magnitude to act.

“It is unfortunate that it took the deaths of MP Morris-Julian and her children for the Minister of National Security to launch an inquiry and conduct a thorough analysis of the Fire Service,” he said.

Jones P. Madiera remembered as a philosopher, leader

Port-of-Spain – Veteran journalist and media professional Madeira passed away on January 10 at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, Mt. Hope, at the age of 80, after battling a series of serious medical conditions.

His funeral, held at the Santa Rosa Roman Catholic Church in Arima, was attended by a notable cross-section of family, friends, former colleagues, and public figures, reflecting his impactful life and career.

At the send-off, attendees shared heartfelt testimonies of a man remembered as much for his wisdom and composure as for his journalistic accomplishments.

Among those attending were Chief Justice Ivor Archie, Arima Mayor Balliram Maharaj and former Arima mayor Ashton Ford, former communications minister Maxie Cuffie, former education minister Anthony Garcia, former government senator Christine Sahadeo, and former media colleagues Sunity Maharaj, Dominic Kalipersad, Tony Fraser, Andy Johnson, John Victor, Gideon Hanoomansingh, and Sandra Maharaj.

Madiera was described by son Justin as “the man, the legend and my father” during the eulogy. Among his other qualities, Justin described his father as a philosopher and a leader.

Said Justin: “Daddy no doubt was a wise man; he always had some philosophy that fit any situation to a T. Some of his most famous were: ‘Always leave room for disappointment’, and ‘Nothing is yours until it’s in your hands, and even then, you have to hold on to it.’ And of course, when it related to work and career choices, he said: ‘Sometimes you don’t get to pick something – it picks you.’”

He added, “The best philosophy of all was: ‘You can never be ready for anything in this life, only prepared.’”

Speaking about Madiera as a leader, Justin told mourners, “The kind of leader my father was is strange to describe. In his life with us he was never the kind of person who led from the front. He was very calculated and patient, something I never really understood.”

He added, “He would often wait to see how something would go before actually asserting his control. Most times his presence was enough to propel proper action or behaviour from those around him in any situation.”



Jones P. Madiera

Journalist Andy Johnson described Madeira as a legend, adding, “Sometimes we did not agree on things. I thought he was too careful too often, and so on, but he was somebody who had balance.”

Johnson added, “When I look back, I was much younger than he, so I was more gung-ho. But what I came to know of him when we worked together was that he was somebody who had balance, and could look at different sides to an issue, and he had composure. He never blew his top in public.”

Johnson recalled Madeira staying calm among a Trinidad and Tobago Television news crew when a PNM crowd in Arima started hurling items at the instigation of then Prime Minister George Chambers.

Former television broadcaster John Victor said the media had lost an icon, and recalled his leadership in 1990 during the attempted coup d’etat.

Veteran journalist Tony Fraser recalled Madeira’s humble start in journalism as a cub reporter covering arrivals and departures at Piarco International Airport.

Fraser recalled Madiera’s biggest story ever had been during the transit of former Guyanese president Dr Cheddi Jagan after being removed from office by the US and UK intelligence services, the CIA and MI5.

“Dr Jagan had told him he was going to Moscow, Russia,” Fraser told mourners.

INDO-CARIBBEAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION

FETE GALA

music by *DJ Navin* featuring **TERRY GAJRAJ** and **NATASHA SUNDAR**
granddaughter of Sundar Popo

hosted by Shivani and Bombay Lemonade

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW

75% SOLD OUT

DRESS THEME: FEEL THE LOVE

Saturday, February 8, 2025 ~ Door Open at 5:30 p.m.
 Grand Cinnamon Banquet & Convention ~ 3895 McNicoll Ave, Scarborough

REGULAR PRICE ~ \$75 per ticket or \$700 for a table of 10
 WEEK OF EVENT ~ \$85 per ticket or \$800 for a table of 10/ DOOR PRICE- \$95

BUY AT INDOCARIBCDN.COM

Cinematic *Bahu Begum* a gripping tale of star-crossed lovers

— In the opulent yet crumbling world of *Bahu Begum* (1967), emotions run high and fate teeters on the edge of melodrama. In this cinematic gem and a quintessential Muslim social, a gripping narrative unfolds of star-crossed lovers, misheard promises, and tangled alliances. Here secrets simmer and misunderstandings spiral, and its main players find themselves navigating the fragile intersections of love, duty, betrayal, and societal expectations.

Bahu Begum, a classic from 1967, could easily carry the alternate title *How to Ruin Lives by Jumping to Conclusions*, or, perhaps more aptly, *Never Trust a Corrupt Mamu*. The movie is a Muslim social, a genre in Hindi cinema that focuses on the depiction of Islamic culture and traditions in India. Muslim socials flourished in the 1950s and 1960s, and lasted till the early 1980s.

Bahu Begum remains highly recommended for being one of Meena Kumari's late-career, heavily melancholic roles; also, for its promise of timeless melodies, its glowing reviews, and Johnny Walker's signature humour. The following is a short journey into the plot and resulting complication, leaving the final outcome for you to continue by watching the movie in its entirety.

The movie opens with the monsoon song *Pad Gaye Jhoole Sawan Rut Aayi Re*, a lilting number that introduces the three women who are central to the drama: Zeenat Jahan Begum (Meena Kumari), her spirited friend Bilquees (Zeb Rehman), and her old nursemaid, Kariman Bua (Leela Misra).

We get an early hint into the family's fallen fortunes. Even as Kariman Bua scolds Zeenat and Bilquees for cavorting in the rain, we note the plaster outside the house is peeling, and it is quite sparse on the inside.

Also, more evidence of their fallen status is noted when Zeenat teasingly admonishes Kariman Bua after the old woman asks if she should make *khichdi*. Zeenat says, "*Bua, khichdi nahin, pulao kaha karo. Aakhir kuchh toh nawabi ki shaan tapakna chaahiye khaane se*" – ["Bua, don't say *khichdi*; say *pulao*. Let some of the grandeur of our being *nawabs* drip from what you say"].

The once-regal *haveli* where they live, with its conspicuous absence of grandeur, mirrors the dwindling state of Nawab Sultan Miyan (D.K. Sapru), Zeenat's genteel but impoverished father. In a feeble attempt to sustain their dignity with income, the Nawab has rented half the *haveli* to Achhan (Johnny Walker), a perpetually broke tenant who has not paid a single rupee in months.

However, Achhan's unprofitable tenancy comes with a silver lining: it provides a covert meeting ground for Zeenat and her love, Yusuf (Pradeep Kumar), who is Achhan's best friend.

As the movie progresses, their love story unfolds with covert glances and secret rendezvous. Yusuf, growing impatient with these stolen moments, pleads with Zeenat to marry him. She suggests he take the traditional route by approaching her father for her hand.

We then see the slimy underside to Yusuf's Mamu, Mir Qurban Ali (played by Balam), in the fulsomeness of his slithering as a proverbial snake in the grass. Mamu, conveniently in charge of Yusuf's inheritance until he marries, has been comfortably siphoning off his nephew's fortune for years.

Yusuf, naïve and trusting, sees no reason to doubt his uncle's intentions. He enlists Achhan to approach him with a marriage proposal for Zeenat. Mamu, oozing with fake benevolence, promises to handle the matter with care. However, behind his acquiescence is a nefarious plan to ensure Yusuf remains a bachelor, and in so doing, greedily hold on to the young man's wealth.

And so, the stage is set for a whirlwind of emotions, manipulations, and the unraveling of plans, all underscored by *Bahu Begum's* melodious songs, and its richly layered aesthetics of a bygone era inside a Muslim social.

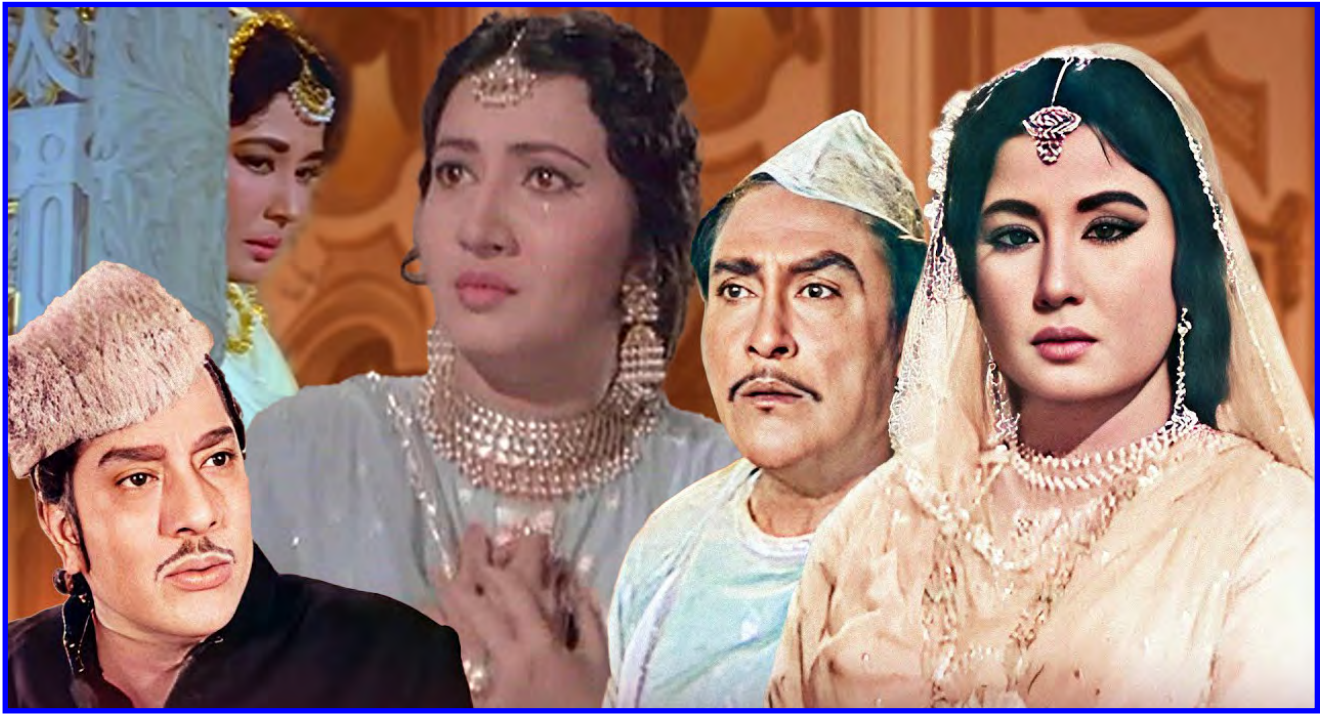
Our unfolding story then pivots into a subplot with its focus on another household. We now meet Nawab Sikandar Mirza (Ashok Kumar) and his younger sister, Suraiya (played by Naaz). Suraiya has one fervent wish: she longs for a *Bhabhi* – a sister-in-law to fill the maternal void left after their mother passed away.

But her brother, much older and blissfully indifferent to matters of the heart, has thus far failed to fulfill this simple wish. Resigned to her brother's bachelorhood, Suraiya has found contentment with visits to the jewellery store.

But then fate intervenes. On that day, Sikandar Mirza, nudged by a rare pang of sibling duty, visits the jeweller's shop to buy Suraiya a gift. Here the intersections of fate come into confluence, and so it is that Zeenat, who longing for the bygone days of affordability and opulence, arrives with Bilquees to day-dream at the same store.

Zeenat's *burqa* is modestly lifted, revealing her face, and as fate has it, she is sitting where she is barely visible through a crack between the store's curtains.

Sikandar Mirza, seated outside, catches a fleeting glimpse of the beautiful Zeenat, enough to instantly captivate him. Zeenat, noticing his gaze, turns away quickly, but our perceptive Nawab



is quickly smitten by Cupid's arrow.

Determined to locate Zeenat, Sikandar Mirza sends off an acquaintance in pursuit. Despite briefly losing sight of Zeenat and Bilquees, the pursuer stumbles upon Achhan's home, where Zeenat's father is present. The connection is made, and the enamoured Sikandar Mirza becomes filled with marital determination.

He wastes no time. News spreads swiftly in his circle that he intends to propose to Nawab Sultan Miyan's daughter. Right afterwards, we see an impressive delegation arriving at Zeenat's home, bearing rich gifts and Sikandar Mirza's proposal.

Nawab Sultan Miyan is astonished and deeply flattered by this offer from one of Lucknow's wealthiest and most revered aristocrats, and accepts the offer without hesitation. A marriage proposal of such stature is not to be refused. Right away preparations for the wedding are set into motion, and will take place in a week.

However, movies like these never run smoothly; instead they surge with a turbulence that is a twisting and knotting of fate. In the case of *Bahu Begum*, we are presented with stark reminders of the dangers that lie in making assumptions, and how webs of misadventure can be spun from innuendos that are borne out of half-heard conversations.

Our first misadventure involves Yusuf. During a visit with Achhan, he overhears a snippet of conversation through a curtained doorway. In this half-heard conversation, Zeenat's father is speaking with Kariman Bua about the remarkable proposal that has come for his daughter from a suitor so wealthy and well-respected that it feels unreal.

Yusuf, ever self-confident and oblivious to nuance, and keeping true to these flaws in his personality, assumes the conversation is about him. Overcome with joy, he rushes to thank Mamu for his efforts in arranging the match.

Mamu is ever the opportunist, and graciously accepts Yusuf's misplaced gratitude. But true to his wily trait, he has his own plans to keep spending Yusuf's inheritance.

Under the guise of a business matter, and wanting Yusuf out of the way, he convinces his relative to travel to Allahabad to personally collect (Rs) 10,000 from a business associate. Understandably, Yusuf is reluctant to leave with his "wedding" so imminent. He protests, pointing out that he already has plenty of money.

But the serpentine Mamu, feigning generosity, reveals that he wishes to give Yusuf an extravagant gift for the wedding. Caught in the steely gaze of the cunning Manu, Yusuf agrees with notable reluctance.

Meanwhile, back in the *haveli*, Zeenat is greeted by an unexpected sight: her bed piled high with exquisite jewelry and fine clothing. Bewildered, she turns to Kariman Bua for answers. The old nursemaid, with a mix of joy and matter-of-factness, reveals that Zeenat's wedding has been fixed.

A tangled skein of misheard exchanges, assumptions, and accidental eavesdropping leads Zeenat to be convinced her groom-to-be is none other than the love-of-her-life Yusuf. Elation climbs on the wings of Zeenat's soaring heart, the irony itself heart-rending as we look on helplessly at her upliftment through what she believes to be the happiest twist of fate in her life.

But even as fate ties us in knots in one scene, it unravels its binding threads in another take. In the days that follow, the tangled threads of deception and misapprehension soon begin to unravel.

Achhan, through a fortuitous twist, discovers the grim truth: Mamu has been lying all along, and Zeenat's match has not been fixed with Yusuf, but instead with Sikandar Mirza.

Alarmed, Achhan rushes to prevent the impending disaster.

But Mamu, ever the schemer, enlists his accomplice Shagufta (Indira Bansal) to frame Achhan for stealing her necklace. The nefarious plotting is successful, and Achhan is promptly thrown into jail. Zeenat's fate now begins to spiral downwards with the incoming ill-wind.

On the evening of the fateful wedding, Sikandar Mirza arrives with a grand wedding party, a munificent *baaraat*. It is a spectacle of splendour and tradition as the happy processing makes its way to Zeenat's doorstep.

With the group gathered in the courtyard and the wedding preparations on the way, Zeenat sits in her room with Bilquees, totally unaware of the fate ahead. However, Bilquees is curious and suspicious, and ventures out to catch a glimpse of the groom. She sees Sikandar Mirza, and with a sinking heart rushes back to Zeenat with devastating news: the groom is not Yusuf.

Zeenat reels from the shock, and is on the verge of collapsing. But there is still time. The *nikaah* is yet to begin; there is time yet before the witnesses and the *vakil* arrive to seek her consent.

Desperate at the unfolding disaster, Zeenat clings to the hope that Yusuf will save her, and so she escapes, heading for the *dargah*, the sanctuary where she has met Yusuf every Thursday. She believes he will be there, and will rescue her from the unfolding nightmare.

When Bilquees fails to dissuade Zeenat from leaving, she constructs a deception. Hastily arranging pillows beneath the bridal *dupatta* on Zeenat's bed, she creates the simulation of a resting bride. When Kariman Bua and other inquisitive guests approach, Bilquees informs them that Zeenat is feeling unwell and needs to rest.

Meanwhile, at the *dargah*, a frantic Zeenat is unable to locate Yusuf, who as we know is caught in Mamu's deceitful web and has been sent to Allahabad. Desperately searching for her love, Zeenat passes out in the *dargah*, and is carried to safety by a group of women.

Meanwhile, back in her bedroom at the *haveli*, the masquerade of a sleeping bride is falling apart.

Placed in a difficult situation, Nawab Sikandar Mirza must now guard his honour and his standing in society. It must not be known that his prospective bride, far from never coming to his house, was not even present for the wedding ceremony.

Similarly, Zeenat finds herself in a quagmire when she awakens at the *dargah*. She has let her father down and broken her promise. At the same time, she is married, but was not present for the wedding. And along with these internal conflicts, her heart is aching for the absent Yusuf.

Bahu Begum is a touching and melancholic narrative by Jan Nisar Akhtar. A fast-paced and engrossing story, it has many unexpected twists and turns. However, alongside the melancholy are rapturous episodes of humour. While there is no comedic subplot, Johnny Walker's inimitable style and delivery with his onscreen shenanigans insert refreshing touches of light-heartedness into the drama.

And of course, the music and songs are uplifting, courtesy Sahir Ludhianvi and Roshan. Among them are *Hum Intezaar Kareng*, *Duniya Kare Sawaal Toh Hum Kya Jawaab Dein*, *Pad Gaye Jhoole Saawan Rut Aayi Too*, and *Nikle Thhe Kahaan Jaane Ke Liye*.

Overall, it is quite a good film, with fine acting by its main players, and even in the smaller parts, one notable being the role by Lalita Pawar, who appears briefly in the second half of the movie.

Bahu Begum is well worth the popcorn – all of its 167 minutes, particularly if you savour tasteful melancholy, enjoy small sips of Johnny Walker, and edifying societal commentary, for which Muslim socials were notable back in the day.



Sister Soha Ali Khan at the hospital



Children Ibrahim and Sara arrive



Ibrahim visits his father at Lilavati



Karisma Kapoor visits Saif

Saif Ali Khan recovering after brutal attack

Mumbai – In a horrifying incident that sent shockwaves across India and the Bollywood fraternity, actor Saif Ali Khan was stabbed six times during a burglary attempt at his Bandra residence in Mumbai during the early morning hours on January 16.

The attack left the renowned actor recovering from surgery while raising urgent questions about security in one of Mumbai's most upscale neighbourhoods.

According to a statement from the Mumbai Police, the events unfolded around 2:30 am when an unidentified assailant broke into Saif's home in the Satguru Sharan building, where he lives with his wife, actress Kareena Kapoor Khan, and their two young sons, Taimur and Jeh.

The intruder reportedly engaged in a heated argument with a member of the household staff, prompting Saif to intervene. In the ensuing altercation, the actor sustained six injuries, two of which were severe, including one perilously close to his spine.

The attacker fled the building immediately after the assault. Senior police officials, including a team from the Mumbai crime branch, have since launched parallel investigations into the attack.

The First Information Report obtained by *The Times of India* provided chilling details of the incident. The attack reportedly began when the intruder, described by a 56-year-old nurse, Eliyama Philip, as a slim man in his late thirties armed with a stick and blade, broke into the bedroom where Saif's son Jeh was sleeping. The man demanded Rs 1 crore, and upon refusal then assaulted Philip, injuring her wrists and hands.

The commotion alerted another nanny, Junu, who raised an alarm, drawing Saif and Kareena to the scene. In a bid to protect his family, Saif confronted the intruder but was brutally attacked in the process.

Another staff member, Geeta, was also injured while trying to intervene. The assailant escaped via the building's fire escape.

Dixit Gedam, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone 9, confirmed that preliminary findings suggest an attempted burglary. "We are making every effort to arrest the accused as soon as possible. Once... in custody, we will disclose further details," Gedam stated.

Following the attack, Saif was rushed by his staff to Lilavati Hospital in an auto-rickshaw. Later, the driver, Rana, told the media a distressed woman had come sprinting toward him, shouting desperately, "Rickshaw! Rickshaw! Roko, roko, roko (Stop, stop, stop)!"

Moments later, he was transporting a bloodstained passenger in what appeared to be a critical emergency.

The driver, unaware of his passenger's identity, recounted his initial apprehension.

"I didn't know he was Saif Ali Khan. It was an emergency, and even I was nervous about who this passenger was. I was worried that I might get into trouble. That's why I was so uneasy."

The passenger, wearing a white shirt soaked in blood, was accompanied by a young child and another man. Despite his shock, Rana focused on getting them to safety. When he asked

where to go, the injured man said: "Take me to Lilavati."

At the hospital, a guard and hospital staff were quickly assembled to assist the passenger. It was then that the injured man revealed his identity, saying, "I am Saif Ali Khan."

Dr Niraj Uttamani, the hospital's Chief Operating Officer, provided an account of Saif's injuries.

According to Uttamani, the actor sustained two minor injuries, two intermediate injuries, and two deep wounds, including one to his thoracic spine. Surgery was performed to remove the knife and repair leaking spinal fluid. Additional injuries to his left hand and the right side of his neck were addressed by the hospital's plastic surgery team.

Uttamani assured the media that the actor was out of danger following the procedure. The doctor's report was later confirmed by a statement released by Saif's team.

"Saif Ali Khan has come out of surgery and is out of danger. He is currently in recovery, and the doctors are monitoring his progress. All family members are safe, and the police are investigating the incident," the statement read.

The attack sent ripples through the entertainment industry, with fans and fellow celebrities expressing concerns and sending prayers for Saif's recovery.

His wife, Kareena Kapoor Khan, visibly distraught, remained by her husband's



Saif Ali Khan with Kareena Kapoor

side at the hospital.

Saif, known for his roles in iconic films such as *Omkara*, and *Love Aaj Kal*, has long been regarded as a cornerstone of Indian cinema. While not as publicly lauded as his contemporaries Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, and Aamir Khan, Saif's versatility and repertoire have firmly established him as a celebrated figure in Bollywood.

The attack has also cast a spotlight on residential security, even in Mumbai's affluent neighbourhoods. It raised questions about the safety of high-profile individuals, and the measures in place to protect them from such violent incidents.

Saif's illustrious career and lineage add layers to the narrative of his iconic status. He is the Nawab of Pataudi, and son of cricket legend Mansoor Ali Khan and actress Sharmila Tagore.

According to the *Economic Times*, Saif has a net worth of (US) \$150 million or over Rs 1,200 crore. This makes him one of the richest stars in Bollywood, behind names like Shah Rukh Khan, Juhi Chawla, Hrithik Roshan, Salman Khan, Aamir Khan, Akshay Kumar, and Vivek Oberoi.

The crown jewel in Saif's wealth is the lush Pataudi Palace, his home in Haryana, and the ancestral seat of his house. Estimated to be priced at Rs 800 crore, it is one of the most expensive private residences of India and is spread over ten acres.

In an interview with *Mid-Day*, Saif said, "People have a certain fixed notion. For that matter, even [with] Pataudi [palace], when my father died, it got rented to Neemrana Hotels. Aman [Nath] and Francis [Wacziarg] used to run [the hotel]. Francis passed away. He said that if I wanted [Pataudi] back, I could let him know. I said: 'I want it back.' They held a conference, and said, 'Okay, you have to give us lots of money!' Which I then consequently earned."



Urvashi Rautela

Urvashi apologises to Saif

The discourse around empathy and compassion took a regrettable hit last week when Bollywood actress Urvashi Rautela faced widespread backlash for comments made after Saif Ali Khan's harrowing stabbing incident.

While expressing condemnation of the attack, Urvashi diverted focus to flaunt her diamond-studded Rolex watch and other luxury gifts, a move that many found profoundly tone-deaf.

In response to the widespread criticism, Urvashi later issued an apology to Saif, stating she was unaware of the true severity of his situation at the time of her comments.

In an interview with ANI, Urvashi was asked about the attack. Talking about Saif being stabbed at his Mumbai house, Urvashi said, "It is very unfortunate. Now *Daaku Maharaaj* has crossed Rs 105 crore at the box office, and my mother gifted me this diamond-studded Rolex, while my father gifted me this mini watch on my finger, but we don't feel confident wearing it outside openly. There is this insecurity that anybody can attack us. Whatever happened was very unfortunate."

Her comments caused a stir on social media with users coming forward to call her out. One commentator said, "Urvashi just seems out of touch, seriously delusional kind." Another said, "So she just advertised to potential robbers that she has this really expensive watch."

Late last week, Urvashi responded to the backlash with an apology on *Instagram*, saying at the time she did not understand the seriousness of Saif's injuries. She wrote, "Dear Saif Ali Khan sir, I hope this message finds you in strength. I am writing with a deep sense of regret and heartfelt apology. Until now, I was completely unaware of the intensity of the situation you are facing. I feel ashamed that I allowed myself to be consumed by the excitement surrounding *Daaku Maharaaj* and the gifts I was receiving, instead of pausing to acknowledge and understand what you are going through."

She added, "Please accept my sincerest apologies for being so ignorant and insensitive. Now that I know the gravity of your case, I am deeply moved and want to extend my unwavering support. Your grace, dignity, and resilience during such a challenging time are truly admirable, and I have nothing but immense respect for your strength."

Expressing "deep regret", Urvashi added, "If there is any way I can be of help or support, please do not hesitate to let me know. Once again, I am truly sorry, sir, for my earlier indifference. I promise to do better and to always prioritise compassion and understanding in the future."



Jay Shah



Ebony Rainford-Brent



Ravi Shastri

Pitch divided on possible 2-tier Test move

— The field is being set for what may be a rigorous debate over a proposed two-tier Test system. Supporters of the tier model are saying it as a way to rejuvenate the game by pitting the best against the best, but its critics are warning that smaller nations could be marginalised, and that the inclusive spirit of cricket could become fractured.

...

The cricketing world is abuzz with debate over the potential introduction of a two-tier Test system in the World Test Championship. The proposal, reportedly set for discussion by key cricketing authorities later this month, has sparked a clash of opinions.

While some view it as a necessary step to preserve the relevance of Test cricket in a changing landscape, others see it as a divisive move that threatens the sport's integrity.

A report earlier this month by the *Melbourne Age* revealed that ICC Chair Jay Shah will meet Cricket Australia's Mike Baird and the England and Wales Cricket Board boss Richard Thompson to discuss the plan.

The proposal would divide teams into two tiers: India, Australia, England, South Africa, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and New Zealand in tier one, with West Indies, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Ireland, and Zimbabwe forming tier two. The changes could take effect after the current Future Tours Programme ends in 2027.

Critics of the plan argue the move would marginalise smaller cricketing nations, with former England fast bowler Steven Finn denouncing the move as "greedy", while warning it could "sully the game".

Speaking to *BBC Radio 5 Live*, Finn said, "Monetising something that is so pure like Test cricket feels like it is sully the game. It just doesn't sit right with me."

Former West Indies captain Sir Clive Lloyd, who led his team to World Cup victories in 1975 and 1979, was equally critical.

"It will be terrible for all those countries who work so hard to get to Test-match status and now they'll be playing among themselves in a lower section," said Sir Clive.

He emphasised the importance of playing against stronger teams to improve their game, adding, "The better system would be to give the teams the same amount of money so they can get the tools to improve."

Sir Clive's concerns are underscored by the West Indies' struggles in recent years. Once the dominant force in cricket,

the West Indies last won a Test series against a tier-one team in 2022. Their historic draw against Australia in Brisbane in 2024 brought hope but highlighted the challenges smaller nations face.

Ebony Rainford-Brent, a former England batter, also voiced her opposition.

"If we just see more and more of the big guns going against each other, great, I'm sure it would be entertaining, but what does it mean for the game?" she asked on *5 Live*.

She stressed the importance of maintaining a global game, saying, "I wouldn't sacrifice having a global game just to keep everyone revved up 24/7."

Meanwhile, supporters of the two-tier system, argue that it is vital for the survival of Test cricket.

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri, speaking on *SEN Radio*, said, "The best playing the best is needed for Test cricket to survive."

He pointed to marquee series like India versus Australia as examples of what makes Test cricket thrive.

"When the best teams play, the toughest and best format of the game is still alive and thriving," he said.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan echoed these sentiments, proposing a structured approach to reinvigorate Test cricket. Writing in *The Telegraph*, Vaughan stated, "I believe it [Test cricket] is a four-day product with a set number of overs each day enforced, three matches minimum per series and two divisions of six, including promotion and relegation."

He added, "I have been saying for a long time this is the way to keep Test cricket relevant by ensuring the best play the best as often as possible and we get fewer mismatches."

The ECB's recent introduction of multi-year central contracts reflects growing concerns about player retention amid the rise of lucrative franchise leagues. The *Melbourne Age* report suggested that the two-tier plan is part of efforts by India, Australia, and England to combat the increasing influence of franchise cricket and private investment in the sport.

Ireland's experience as a recent addition to Test cricket highlights the challenges of competing with teams that are proposed to be in the first tier.

Since gaining Test status in 2017, Ireland has played nine matches, securing two wins against Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, but have struggled against the teams that are proposed to be in tier one.

BCCI names Rohit Sharma captain of India's ODI team

Mumbai – Even as he continues to battle with poor form, India's senior batsman Rohit Sharma has been named India's ODI captain. The move was confirmed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India last Friday.

Rohit made the announcement on January 18 alongside chief selector Ajit Agarkar at the Wankhede Stadium, where the squads for the Champions Trophy and the ODI series against England were announced.

The three ODIs against England will serve as India's final preparation in the format before starting their Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh in Dubai on February 20.

There was much speculation about Rohit's future in international cricket after he stood down from India's XI in the fifth and final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy earlier this month in Sydney. He later clarified that the decision should not be misconstrued as a retirement.

In the three-Test series at home against New Zealand, Rohit managed to score just 91 runs in six innings with an abysmal average of 15.16. His slump worsened during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia afterwards, with his bat finding just 31 runs in three Tests (in five innings) at an average of 6.20.

To regain his form, Rohit Sharma joined the Mumbai squad

for training sessions ahead of the second phase of the Ranji Trophy.

After concluding his T20I career on a high note with a T20 World Cup victory in Barbados last year, Rohit now has the opportunity to guide India to an ODI world title at the Champions Trophy. India will play all three of their league matches in Dubai, which is also set to host one of the semi-finals and potentially the final, should India progress that far.



Rohit Sharma

Meanwhile, afflicted with a back injury that prevented him from bowling for a major part in the fifth and final Test at Sydney, ace fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah is unlikely to be a part of the 15-man squad for the global tournament.

However, the selectors may decide to take a chance with him to see if he can recover before the knockouts of the event.

Playing all their matches in the eight-team Champions Trophy under a hybrid model in Dubai, India will launch their campaign against Bangladesh on February 20. They then take on arch-rivals Pakistan on February 23, and New Zealand in their final league match on March 2.

The ODIs against England are scheduled for February 6, February 9, and February 12.



Cricket to Conquer Cancer: Building a bridge to hope

Toronto – Cricket has always been more than just a game for our community – it is a bridge that connects people, cultures, and nations. Across oceans and generations, it unites us with its rhythm, its drama, and its spirit of togetherness. Come May 31, cricket in Canada will become a bridge to something even greater: hope.

Cricket to Conquer Cancer is calling on cricket lovers across the country to come together and build a pathway to a brighter future. This inaugural event, benefitting The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, is more than just Canada's largest street cricket fund-raiser. It is a way for us all to cross over into a new realm of possibility, where the power of community fuels ground-breaking cancer research.

On May 31, the streets will come alive with the sounds of laughter, cheers, and the unmistakable knock of a bat striking a ball. Over 100 teams will step onto the pitch, each one a vital pillar in our shared mission to raise \$1 million for world-class cancer research.

However, we are not building bridge in a single day. It begins the moment your team signs up. Every dollar raised becomes a stepping stone, taking us closer to a future where cancer is no longer a barrier to life and love.

The tournament's T5 format guarantees action-packed matches, with just five overs per side keeping the energy high and the excitement flowing. Teams of six to eight players will compete not just for runs, but for a chance to leave an indelible mark. Those who excel in fund-raising can recruit celebrity talent, including international and national cricket stars, turning an already unforgettable day into a moment of legend.

Yet this bridge is not just about cricket; it is also about connection. It is about linking arms across communities, pooling our resources, and channeling our shared love of the game into a force for good.

Every drive with the bat, each run scored, and every dollar donated take us one step closer to better treatment, breakthroughs, and a cure for cancer. At the heart of it all is The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, ranked among the top five cancer research centres in the world, where life-saving innovations are born and hope thrives.

For our Caribbean community, this event is a powerful opportunity to celebrate our love of cricket while standing together for a cause that touches every one of us.

It is a chance to showcase our unity, passion, and commitment to building something extraordinary: a bridge between sport and science, joy and healing, today and tomorrow.

And we can do so one run and one dollar at a time. Step into the crease and join our team. Visit [Cricket to Conquer Cancer](https://Cricket2Conquer.ca) to register your team, and be part of this transformative journey. Together, we will stand up and bat to conquer cancer, and in so doing, create hope for generations to come.

THE PRINCESS MARGARET
CRICKET
TO CONQUER CANCER

Play in
Canada's
First-Ever
Street Cricket
Fundraiser

May 31, 2025

Learn More at Cricket2Conquer.ca

Afghanistan's cricket role ignites global conversation on women's rights

— With the Champions Trophy around the corner, the ICC faces mounting pressure to address the growing global outcry over Afghanistan's place in international cricket. At the heart of the outcry is a larger conversation about cricket's power to effect change where human rights violations persist.

The controversy over Afghanistan's participation in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy has ignited a global conversation about human rights, women's cricket, and the role of sport in advocating for social change.

As Afghanistan prepares to compete on the international stage, cricketing nations, campaigners, and players are grappling with the ethical dilemma of competing against a country where women's rights have been systematically dismantled under Taliban rule.

Voices from across the cricketing world have called on the International Cricket Council to take decisive action. England and South Africa, both set to face Afghanistan in group-stage matches, have found themselves at the centre of this storm.

Earlier this month, South Africa's Sports Minister, Gayton McKenzie, joined the growing call for a boycott, urging Cricket South Africa to reconsider their fixture against Afghanistan



Gayton McKenzie

in Karachi on February 21.

"Cricket South Africa, the federations of other countries and the ICC will have to think carefully about the message the sport of cricket wishes to send the world, and especially the women in sports," McKenzie said.

He added, "It is not for me as the sports minister to make the final decision on whether South Africa should honour cricketing fixtures against Afghanistan. If it was my decision, then it certainly would not happen. As a man who comes from a race that was not allowed equal



Heather Knight

access to sporting opportunities during apartheid, it would be hypocritical and immoral to look the other way today when the same is being done towards women anywhere in the world."

The England and Wales Cricket Board has also voiced its concerns. ECB chief executive Richard Gould, in a letter to the ICC, called on cricket's governing body to show leadership in addressing "the gender apartheid facing the 14 million women in Afghanistan".

Gould argued for alternative measures,

such as cutting a "meaningful proportion" of the ICC's funding to the Afghanistan Cricket Board until women's cricket is reinstated, and urged the ICC to fund the exiled Afghanistan women's team in Australia.

"What is taking place in Afghanistan is the worst violation of women's rights anywhere on earth," Gould wrote, adding, "If we do not take the actions that are within our power to take – whilst recognising that much is not in our power – we are all complicit and have failed the privilege that comes with holding a global leadership position in our sport."

Calls for action have extended beyond administrative bodies to the players themselves. England captain Heather Knight has drawn attention to the plight of Afghanistan's women cricketers, most of whom fled the country following the Taliban's return to power. Of the 25 contracted players, 22 are now based in Australia, where they have continued to play despite immense challenges.

"It's a really good thing that people are talking about it and it's in the news again, because honestly I think it's been forgotten a lot," Knight said ahead of the England's Ashes Test.

She also highlighted the January 30 match involving the exiled Afghanistan women's XI and the Cricket Without Borders Charity XI at Melbourne's Junction Oval as a critical opportunity to amplify their stories.

"Let's get that voice out there, that those women are playing cricket. That can be a really positive message from a heartbreaking situation," she declared.

Knight's sentiments echo those of campaigners, including former British cabinet minister Peter Hain, who has urged CSA to take a stand against Afghanistan's ban on women's cricket.

Meanwhile, the Australian Cricket Board has faced accusations of hypocrisy after postponing a bilateral T20 series against Afghanistan last March, citing human rights concerns, but later competing against them in the ODI World Cup and T20 World Cup.

Jemimah Rodrigues hits historic, milestone first ton

— Jemimah Rodrigues' maiden international century has crystallised her immense promise as a batter capable of scripting match-winning centuries, even as her achievement stands as a testament to her character, commitment, and is a personal milestone.

Jemimah Rodrigues' cricketing journey has been a tale of grit, resilience, and a fair share of turbulence. Touted as a prodigious talent when she debuted in 2018, her path to consistency in international cricket has been anything but smooth, the cricketing website, *Cricbuzz* reported last week.

Yet, on a historic day in Rajkot, Rodrigues silenced the doubters with her maiden international century, a painstakingly earned 100 that helped India post their highest-ever ODI total of 370/5 and secure a crushing 116-run win over Ireland.

Reflecting on the achievement, Rodrigues' joy was palpable: "... It feels great. It was a long-awaited one but I am so happy I could do it for the team today."

Her innings was a masterclass in pacing, patience, and perseverance – qualities honed during a career marked by being shuffled across batting positions and even temporarily dropped from the team.

Under the current team management, Rodrigues has found a steady role in the middle order, a move that has begun to pay dividends. It was fitting, therefore, that her maiden ton came in this position, as she anchored the innings after India lost both openers, Smriti Mandhana and Pratika Rawal, to successive deliveries.

India's opening pair had been spectacular earlier in the innings, with Mandhana and Rawal sharing a scintillating 156-run stand – the fastest 150-plus stand by an Indian pair in ODIs.

Both scored half-centuries, providing the perfect platform for the middle order. Rodrigues acknowledged their vital contributions, saying, "... Of course, if your openers give you that kind of a start... it is always much more easier for us to handle the middle overs

and take it well, but [following] two back-to-back wickets, Harleen and I had to just give ourselves some time because I think Ireland bowlers were also on top at that time."

She added, "...I think one thing about 50 over matches... we can take a little bit of time and that is what we did. We calculated it well, we said till the 40th over we will just play risk-free cricket, and we know we can always make up for it."

Rodrigues' innings was not just about reaching her personal milestone but also about adapting to the match situation. She admitted that while the thought of a century crept in during her 80s, her focus remained on building partnerships and keeping the scoreboard ticking.

"I honestly did not think of it till I think I was around in my 80s, but again I just tried to keep small-small targets and just kept achieving it... I was happy I could do that," she noted.

The century was a culmination of Rodrigues' ability to bounce back from setbacks, a skill she attributes to her emotional resilience. Known for openly exhibiting her emotions, after scoring just nine in the opening game of the series, she was visibly frustrated, but she used that frustration to fuel her determination.

"I was very angry at myself but at the same time I needed to be positive towards myself because that works for me... I tried to get back to what I used to do then and today I tried to apply it and it came off well."

India's total of 370/5 set a daunting target for Ireland, and the crowd in Rajkot played its part, creating an atmosphere charged with energy.

Rodrigues relished the support, stating, "Honestly, their energy is at a different level... hats off to them and it was so nice to see Saurashtra Cricket supporting schools to come and watch the game, because you never know if we as a team can inspire even one person from there, it is a big win for us."

Despite the glory of her milestone, Rodrigues remains focused on team improvement. "...It feels good, but there are a lot of places we can still improve as a team because we always look



Jemimah Rodrigues

to keep improving... so next game, hope so, 400," she said with a hopeful smile.

While Smriti Mandhana and Pratika Rawal's partnership deserves praise, the day undoubtedly belonged to Jemimah Rodrigues. Her journey from a teenager with immense promise to a batter capable of scripting match-winning centuries is a testament to her character and commitment. With her maiden ton, Rodrigues not only marked a personal milestone but also inspired hope for a bright future in Indian cricket.

CELEBRATING
GUYANA'S
55th
REPUBLIC ANNIVERSARY

THE ALLIANCE OF GUYANESE CANADIAN ORGANIZATIONS
 INVITES YOU TO OUR
Mashramani / Republic Ball
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2025
COST ♦ \$80
COCKTAILS – 6:30pm ♦ DINNER – 7:30-9:00pm
Formal Attire ♦ Cash Bar
DJ Solid Gold
Sts. Peter & Paul Banquet Hall
231 Milner Rd., Scarborough
(401 & Markham Rd. N)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION & TICKETS:
John O'Dell • 416-275-5483 / Ingrid King • 416-993-9266
Cheryl Vogleson • 416-529-6754 / Yvonne Adams • 416-838-4191
Waveney Forsythe • 416-268-2183 / Joy Simon • 416-566-3734

JANUARY BLOWOUT SALE!!!

Reg.: \$1499
Now: **\$999**

QUEEN SIZE
Choice of Colours



Canadian Made Solid Pine Platform Bed

Choice of Colour, Fabric, and Style
Visit In Store



Canadian Made Solid Bedroom Set



QUEEN SIZE
MATTRESSES
FROM: \$199 + UP

Accessories

Up to
50%
OFF



Includes: Table + 6 Chairs
Reg.: \$6999 Now: **\$2899**



7 Pcs Italian Dining Set

Includes: Sofa, Loveseat, Chair
Reg.: \$2999 Now: **\$1599**



3 Pcs Fabric Recliner Sofa Set

Choice of Colour, Fabric, and Style
Visit In Store



Canadian Made Solid Wood Dining Set

Choice of Colour and Style
Visit In Store



Canadian Made Solid Wood Coffee Table

Reg.: \$499 Now: **\$289**



Modern Wood Coffee Table

Reg.: \$5999 Now: **\$3899**



3 Pcs Traditional Sofa Set

Choice of Colour
Reg.: \$1899 Now: **\$1299**



Canadian Made Storage Bed

Accessories & Rugs

Up to
50%
OFF



KING SIZE
Reg.: \$4399 Now: **\$2199**
Available in 2 Colours



6 Pcs Modern Bedroom Set

Financing Available • 12 months • No Interest • No Payment



**2575 STEELES AVE E, UNIT #14-17
BRAMPTON ON L6T 5T1**

TEL: 905-790-0560 • FAX: 905-790-3702

customerservicestephensfurniture@hotmail.com • www.stephensfurnitureltd.com

While
Supplies
Last

