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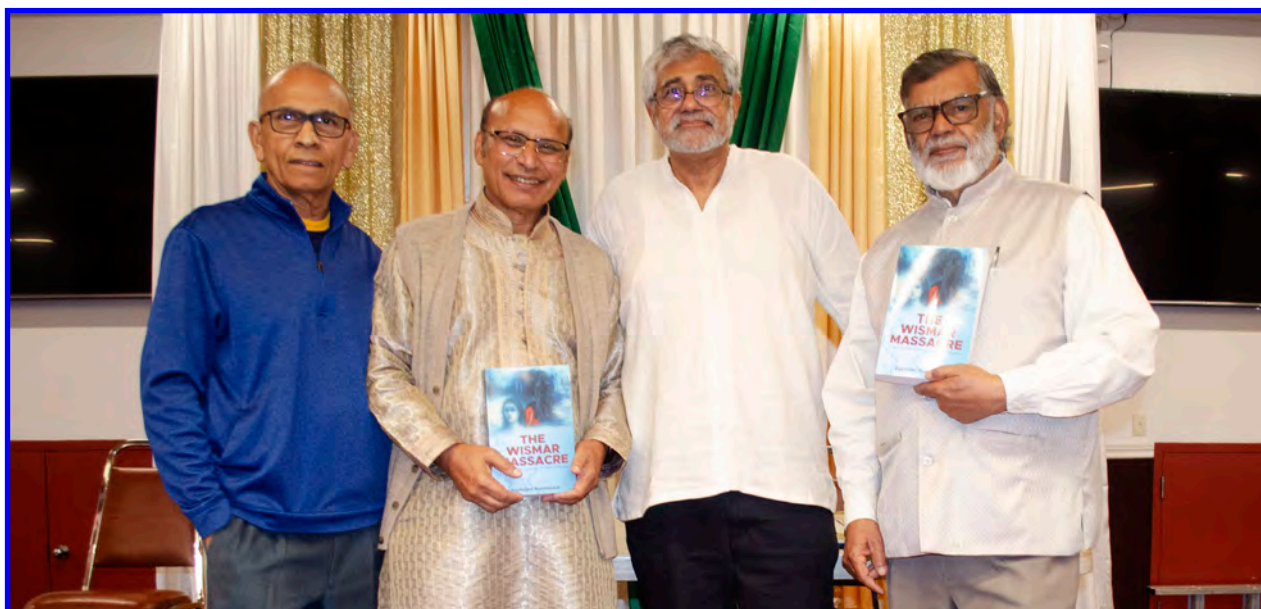
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Our TT diaspora bid farewell to Deputy Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette on May 29. In photo, Consul General Simone Young extends best wishes on her posting to Miami – Story on Page 20. *Photo by Hinano Beekhoo*



Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus celebrated Indian Arrival Day on May 31, featuring guest speaker, Dr Nalini Mohabir (second, right). In photo, (left to right), are June Straker, Jennifer Hirlehey, Lisa Charles, and at right, Juliette Bideshi – More on Page 21. *Photo by Hinano Beekhoo*



Attending the launch at the Vedic Cultural Centre of Dr Baytoram Ramharack's (second from right) *Wismar Massacre* were (left to right) Deodat Ramkissoon, Adit Kumar, and Ramnarine Sahadeo

Diaspora confronts Wismar's buried memories

For decades, memories of the Wismar Massacre survived quietly within Indo-Guyanese families – in pauses, whispers, and stories left half-told. But at the Vedic Cultural Centre on May 24, those silences found a voice as historian Dr Baytoram Ramharack launched a new book revisiting the violence, displacement, and enduring trauma of May 1964.

...

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Markham – What unfolded on the afternoon of May 24 inside the resonant hall at the Vedic Cultural Centre was not

merely a book launch, nor solely an historical lecture, but something heavier, older, and profoundly haunting, a communal return to memory, mourning, and muted inheritance.

For several hours, members of our diaspora sat in attentive stillness as Ramharack moved carefully through the intertwined landscapes of Indentureship, Independence, exile, and silence, tracing how one of the most traumatic episodes in Guyanese history continued to ripple quietly across generations, geographies, and grief.

"May is a special, very special month," Ramharack told
See Page 14: New book

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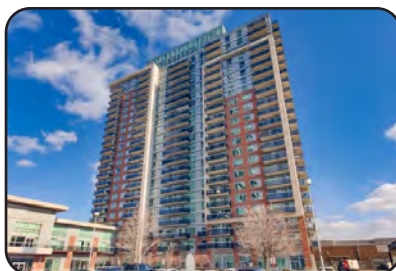
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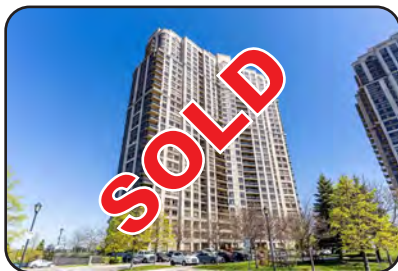
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Community leaders, sponsors, and supporters in Ottawa for the introduction of Bill S-248

Canadian Heritage Month Bill gains national momentum

— Our Caribbean community is moving closer to receiving formal national recognition with the introduction of federal legislation seeking to designate July as Caribbean Heritage Month. Community leaders say the proposed legislation reflects the longstanding contributions, cultural presence, and enduring nation-building role of Caribbean Canadians across the country.

Ottawa – Canada’s Caribbean community is celebrating the introduction of federal legislation seeking to formally designate July as Caribbean Heritage Month (CHM), marking what supporters describe as a significant step toward long-awaited national recognition for one of the country’s most vibrant and influential diasporas.

Bill S-248, the Caribbean Heritage Month Act, was introduced in the Senate by the Senator Paulette Senior, and has already received public backing from an unofficial coalition of leading Caribbean organisations across Canada.

Supporters of the bill say the legislation represents more than symbolic recognition. They argue it acknowledges centuries of Caribbean presence in Canada, while affirming the community’s contributions to the country’s cultural, economic, political, and social development.

Canada’s Caribbean connection dates back to the late 18th century, with migration from the region continuing steadily over generations. According to the 2016 Census, approximately 750,000 Canadians identified as having Caribbean origins. Community advocates estimate that figure has now surpassed one million people nationwide.

Today, Caribbean communities form an important part of the social fabric of major Canadian cities, including Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Vancouver.

Historical data has also shown periods of rapid demographic growth within the Caribbean-Canadian population. Between 1996 and 2001, Canada’s overall population grew by four per cent, while the Caribbean-Canadian population increased by 11 per cent.

Ryan Singh, Chair and founder of the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association, described the proposed legislation as overdue recognition for a community whose roots in Canada stretch back centuries.

“Appropriate recognition of the Caribbean diaspora, which has been part of Canada for several centuries and continues to contribute to the country’s multicultural mosaic, is long overdue,” Singh said.

He added, “The diversity of the Caribbean has strengthened Canada’s own diversity. Caribbean Canadians deserve to be acknowledged for their lasting impact. We are here, and we should be seen, heard, and recognised.”

Singh added that the proposed legislation carries significance not only for Caribbean Canadians, but for the broader Canadian identity itself.

“This bill is not only important to Caribbean Canadians, it is significant to Canada’s nationhood,” he said.

Supporters of the legislation point to the Caribbean community’s extensive footprint across Canadian life, from entrepreneurship, academia, public service, and politics, to sports, music, literature, cuisine, and cultural celebrations.

Among the most visible examples is the Toronto Caribbean Carnival, regarded as the largest Caribbean cultural celebration outside the Caribbean region itself and one of Canada’s largest annual cultural festivals.

Jennifer Hirlehey, Executive Chair of the Festival Management Committee, said the scale and impact of Caribbean cultural



Senator Paulette Senior (left) with ICCA’s Ryan Singh expression in Canada warrant formal national recognition.

“Each year, hundreds of thousands of people come together to celebrate and enjoy Caribbean culture in Toronto at the Toronto Caribbean Carnival – our economic impact and culture are deserving of recognition,” Hirlehey said.

She added that Caribbean Heritage Month would provide an important opportunity to deepen cultural understanding while celebrating the openness and inclusivity that define Caribbean traditions.

“Caribbean culture is vibrant, lively, and inclusive. It represents the best of Canada,” Hirlehey said.

“That is why Caribbean Heritage Month is so important; we will use this opportunity to share the joy and passion of our people with everyone,” she stated.

Advocates also note that the proposed legislation arrives amid strengthening diplomatic and economic ties between Canada and the Caribbean region.

In October 2023, Canada hosted the first Canada-Caricom Summit in Ottawa under the theme Strategic Partners for a Resilient Future. The summit brought together then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Caribbean Community (Caricom) leaders to advance discussions on trade, investment, sustainable development, and multilateral cooperation.

Community leaders say those state-level partnerships mirror the longstanding familial, cultural, and economic ties maintained by Caribbean Canadians whose identities and relationships continue to bridge both regions.

Before becoming law, Bill S-248 must complete several stages of the federal legislative process, including second reading, committee review, and third reading in the Senate.

If passed by the Senate, the bill would move to the House of Commons, where MP Michael Coteau (Scarborough-Woburn), has committed to sponsoring the legislation.

The bill would then undergo a similar parliamentary process in the House of Commons before potentially receiving Royal Assent.

Despite the remaining legislative hurdles, supporters of the initiative say they remain optimistic that parliamentarians from all parties will support the measure and formally recognise the enduring legacy and contributions of Caribbean Canadians to the country’s evolving multicultural story.

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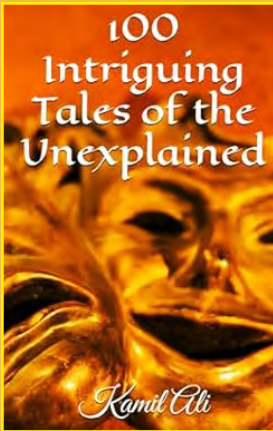
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Preventing home break-and-enters

Break & Enter Prevention Residential 'Break-Ins' are Typically 'Crimes of Opportunity'

While it is common for victims to feel a sense of violation, burglars generally have little, if any, personal knowledge of the people who live there. You can minimise your risk by practicing the personal safety and crime prevention strategies outlined below.

Always Let Them Know If Someone is at Home

Since most residential break and enters happen during the daytime when the homeowner is not home, it is important to realise that there is little chance of you encountering a burglar, provided you do not do anything to hide the fact that you are home if someone knocks on your door.

It is, therefore, important that you respond to all door knocks by speaking through a locked door unless you recognise the person. This includes training your children to safely respond to the door knock by having them let you know that someone is there, or speaking through a locked door advising the person that you are busy.

If someone acts suspiciously – this includes asking for someone who doesn't live there – call the Police.

Home Safety Starts With You Detection in Your Neighborhood

- Keep your ears and eyes open for suspicious vehicles and people around your home
- Do not confront possible suspects
- Record the license plate numbers and description of suspicious vehicles
- Record detailed descriptions of occupants of suspicious vehicles
- Report your concerns and observations immediately to the Police

Reducing Your Risk

- Mark your property with a unique identifier. This may discourage theft of valuables and will provide an easy way to identify stolen property
- Record the contents of your home or cottage (including serial number) on paper or make a video recording and download it to a safe and easily retrieved place that is unlikely to be lost or stolen
- Consider installing a home security system
- Do not announce your absence on an answering machine or through social media (for example, Facebook)
- Check identification of sales and service people. Use the phone number in the phone book or on the website, not a number the person at the door provides
- Don't hide keys in secret places; instead

leave a duplicate with a friend or trusted neighbour

If a Crime Has Occurred

- Emergency Services (911) should be called if there is a crime in progress, or an immediate threat to the safety of people or property
- If you arrive at your home and suspect there has been a break-in, do NOT enter – the criminal may still be inside
- Go immediately to a neighbour and call the Police.
- Do NOT touch anything or clean up until the Police have inspected for evidence.
- Note the license number of any suspicious vehicle

Protecting Your Home

- Make sure exterior doors are solid core wood or metal
- Install a good quality deadbolt lock on the door and a minimum four-hole security strike plate on your door frame. Use screws that are a minimum two inches in length, and longer where possible, so that they penetrate the main (unseen) structure that supports the door frame
- Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available bars or locks, or put a wooden dowel or broom handle in the door track. Burglars look for sliding glass doors because they are the easiest to open
- Keep garage and tool shed locked. Don't give a burglar the resources to break into your home
- Remove all obstructions in your yard that could conceal a burglar breaking into your house
- Limit access to out-of-reach windows, lower roofs, second story windows and balconies; lock up ladders and other objects that can be used as platforms whenever possible; watch for large, overhanging tree limbs that may provide a means of access
- Ask a trusted neighbour to use your driveway or parking space when leaving the house for extended periods
- If you are away, make sure that your residence looks like it is occupied. Have the sidewalks shoveled, mail collected, grass cut, and so on; set the lights to come on and off at different intervals
- Make "would-be" thieves visible: install motion lights, or leave an exterior light on to illuminate entrances and rear yards

To report a crime anonymously, call **Crime Stoppers** at: 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) or online at www.222tips.com.
In an Emergency: call **911**. To report a crime to the Toronto Police that is not an emergency call **416-808-2222**.

Shield program receives boost for youth safety

Toronto – The Ontario government is investing up to \$195,000 in a Scarborough-based program designed to help protect vulnerable youth from human trafficking, providing counselling, legal assistance, housing support, and educational programming aimed at preventing victimisation before it occurs.

Announcing the funding last month, Scarborough Centre MPP David Smith said

"The investment reflects the province's commitment to equipping young people with the support and resources needed to build safer futures."

"We are giving young people the confidence, support, and tools they need to build safer and stronger futures for themselves and the communities around them," Smith said.

He added, "Through this \$195,000 provincial investment in Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services, a Scarborough-based organisation, provided through the Office of the Honourable Doug Downey, Attorney General of Ontario, our government is continuing to demonstrate its commitment, under the leadership of Premier Ford, to improving community safety and supporting prevention-based initiatives that make a real difference in the lives of Scarborough residents and families."

The funding is being delivered through Ontario's Civil Remedies Grant Program, and will support *The Shield Program*, an intervention pilot initiative operated by Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services.

The program focuses on girls between the ages of 10 and 18, including those from

racialised, Indigenous, newcomer, and LGBTQ2SD+ communities who may be vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation.

Participants will have access to counselling services, legal and housing supports, and educational sessions designed to raise awareness of activities, circumstances, and online environments that can place young people at risk.

The announcement forms part of Ontario's

broader 2026-2028 Civil Remedies Grant Program, through which the province is allocating \$5 million in cash and proceeds seized from criminal activity to support 27 law enforcement agencies, Indigenous organisations, and community groups across Ontario.

Attorney General Doug Downey said the initiative demonstrates how proceeds from criminal activity can be redirected to strengthen public safety and support victims.

"Our government is protecting Ontario by using every available tool, including civil forfeiture, to help police and community partners confront and dismantle criminal networks that prey on our communities," Downey said.

He added, "Crime should never pay, and these seized funds will help communities support victims of crime and break the cycle of offending."

The Civil Remedies Grant Program is funded exclusively through assets seized and sold under Ontario's Civil and Administrative Forfeiture Program.

These assets have included vehicles, luxury handbags, jewellery, cash, and real estate linked to criminal activity.



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Editorial

A tale of two books

Our Indo-Caribbean diaspora has become remarkably adept at preserving our visible expressions of culture, our most recent being Indian Arrival celebrations across the GTA. We celebrate Ramleela, Diwali, Eid in events that reaffirm who we are and where we came from. We preserve recipes, rituals, and remembrances. We pass them lovingly from one generation to the next.

These efforts matter deeply. Yet the recent publication of books by Dr Primnath Gooptar and Dr Baytoram Ramharack reminds us that cultural survival requires something more than celebration alone. It requires reading, reflection, and recall. It requires a willingness to move beyond inheritance and toward understanding.

Festivals preserve culture for a weekend; but books preserve it for generations.

Gooptar's *Indentured Survivors of the British Empire Vol. 1: The Arkathiya Crossings* asks us to reconsider a part of our history that has often remained beyond our line of sight. For generations, our Indo-Caribbean historical inquiry has understandably focused upon those who crossed the *kala pani*. Gooptar turns our gaze in another direction, toward the villages left standing after departure, the waiting mothers, the families who watched the horizon long after the ships had vanished from view.

His work reminds us that migration was never solely about movement; that is was also about absence, uncertainty, and longing.

Ramharack's *Wismar Massacre: A Case of Ethnic Cleansing of Indians in Guyana* performs a different but equally important act of recovery. His scholarship revisits one of the most traumatic episodes in Guyanese history, an event that survived for decades less as public history than as family memory.

Although these books examine different subjects and different moments, they are united by a common purpose. One explores the silences created by migration; the other explores the silences created by violence. One recovers absence; the other recovers erasure. Yet both are engaged in the same labour: rescuing memory from disappearance.

Both authors' labour carries an important lesson for our diaspora. As our communities mature, they face a choice. They can become communities that merely celebrate our heritage, or communities that study it. The strongest communities elevate both.

The danger of relying solely upon symbolic expressions of culture is that identity can gradually become detached from understanding. We may know the songs without knowing the stories that produced them. We may inherit the rituals without fully appreciating the journeys, sacrifices, and struggles that gave them meaning.

Reading helps bridge that divide. Books such as Gooptar's and Ramharack's invite us to ask deeper questions about migration, memory, resilience, displacement, and belonging. They encourage us to see ourselves not simply as participants in a culture, but as custodians of a history. They remind us that our past is not a museum exhibit to be admired from a distance, but a living conversation that demands our deeper participation.

Our ancestors crossed oceans; our grandparents built communities. Now, our generation must build knowledge.

That means supporting our scholars, researchers, and record-keepers who document our stories. It means purchasing their books, discussing them, introducing them within our cultural organisations, and encouraging our younger generations to engage with them.

We need readers, researchers, and record-keepers. We need memory, meaning, and moral inheritance. We need generations, geographies, and genealogies connected through knowledge.

For archives do not sustain themselves automatically; and neither do communities. Both survive because each generation chooses what is worth carrying forward.

These two important works call upon us to read more deeply, think more critically, and engage more fully with the histories that continue to shape our lives. If migration carried our ancestors across oceans, knowledge may well be what carries us, their descendants, into the future.

Ongoing journeys: Calcutta, Caribbean, canefields, Canada

Following is an extract from the feature address delivered at the Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus Association's celebration of Indian Arrival Day on May 31 in Scarborough.

What is Arrival Day?

I would like to thank the Trinidad and Tobago 50+ Association and *Indo-Caribbean World* for inviting me to speak. I've been given firm instructions: "No cane fields". I understand this as a desire for our community to be seen in a multidimensional context, to not only speak of suffering, fractures and losses, but also of gains.



Nalini Mohabir

Indentureship is a complicated history, because without a doubt the system of indentureship refers to miserable circumstances that required ingenuity and togetherness to survive, but after years of poverty it produced doctors, lawyers, scientists, civil servants and others whose achievements have led us to where we are today - carrying the hopes of a potentially better life.

A counter point: my father recently told me how he slept on a leaped mud floor yet his back never hurt the way it does now on a mattress. He was telling me there are lessons to be learned from *lepaying* that I shouldn't leave behind.

As for my mother, she was the first in her family to leave Trinidad. All the family came up from Siparia to the docks of Port-of-Spain to see her board a boat. I wonder: what did the generations to leave home and venture across oceans carry in their suitcase? In Toronto, I have seen cast-iron tawas and heavy masala grinding stones, shipped north to their new homes. However, the tangible is not all that we carried with us. We also carry perseverance.

V.S. Naipaul (1975), our Nobel prize-winning writer, reminds us that not so distant colonial attitudes once viewed all non-Europeans as a "non-descript brownish mass" of "work machines" stripped of personality. Some of our parents may have received their education in the cane fields or estate factory, steeped in agriculture, accounting, technology, or other skills not easily translated in Canada. As another one of writers, Samuel Selvon remarks: Remember when you came to Canada, it was a developing country. And so we too contributed, in multiple ways.

Others of you might have attended convent school or received overseas scholarships. In Canada, almost all of us now have access to education, which helps us gain an appreciation of history and the written word. To chart these leaps in space and time, it is not asking too much to be recognised beyond the cane fields.

Maybe your grandparents worked in the cocoa, sugar, or

coconut industries. I am not trying to dwell in the fields, but I want to stress that these fields are industry, they require people who are industrious and resilient. Take the trade unionist, Sahidan Ramroop who couldn't read or write, but was an inspirational orator.

As our former PM, the late Basdeo Panday told me, Ramroop spoke the language of the cane fields. He recalled a particularly long strike by sugar workers seeking a living wage. Hunger began to set in. And Ramroop said: "We shall fight this fight, hunger or no hunger. And if I have nothing to eat," she pulled out some grass, "we shall eat this."

Panday had a soft spot for her, perhaps because his own mother was also illiterate. His parents were peasant farmers, and he went on to be an actor, a lawyer, a labour rights activist, and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, instituting Arrival Day as an official public holiday in 1995 (the 150th anniversary of Indian arrival in Trinidad). As scholars note, this marked Indian Arrival as a legitimate celebration for the nation, a nation inclusive of all the groups that contributed to it, a nation with multiple inheritances.

This brings me to another gift that Arrival Day offers us: harmony in living together. Coming from Trinidad, we inherit a living sense of philosophy (to be flexible, innovative, resourceful), a quality not confined to a small place, but comes from an island open to the world, with visions that are local as well as global.

A particular gift of Trinis, especially those from South, is an ability to talk to anyone, to get along anywhere. Trinidad is known as perhaps the most cosmopolitan island in the Caribbean. This callaloo of overlapping cultures and food made Trinidad multicultural before Canada, even though multiculturalism is the idealised image of Canada. Our very existence depends on being with one another, working within, through and across cultural differences.

Yet in Canada, multiculturalism still depends on a politics of recognition. I am often asked, where am I from; where am I really from, but how can you be Caribbean when you look Indian (and so on). In musing over similar questions, the Trinidadian writer Shani Mootoo (1993) asks just how far back do we have to go to feel rooted - to some "Indian Cro-Magnon" man?

Well in 2007, I did go back. I visited India for the first time, and encountered my first celebration of Arrival Day, not in Trinidad, but in Bansi, Uttar Pradesh, complete with steel pan, sponsored by the Trinidad High Commission.

Arrival Day is a symbol of unity in a confident, multicultural society; a strength we can take with us wherever we go.

Threads, memories, and the rhythm of our belonging

Following is an extract from an address delivered at the Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus Association's celebration of Indian Arrival Day on May 31.

I start by drawing your attention to the warm glow of friendship in this room. A 30-year old organisation means most of us have known each other for many years; decades, perhaps. We have forged many friendships; we can finish each other's sentences.

I want to tell you too that looking at any gathering of Trinis, and to extend that a little, any group of Caribbean people, is like looking at a piece of fabric. Each thread in the weave is in itself a story inside the fabric's many stories: different experiences; different histories; plenty room for conversations. And here we are woven together, all together in one room.

But I want to tug at a different thread in the fabric; I want to talk briefly about physics.

I am reminded about a remarkable scientific insight developed by a Japanese physicist named Yoshiki Kuramoto. He studied groups of metronomes, those small instruments musicians use to keep time. It goes *tick-tock, tick-tock*; all the time. Imagine the top of a table with a set of metronomes; some going fast; the others not so fast.

At first there is plenty disorder with all the metronomes going at different speeds. But something extraordinary begins to take shape. They begin to influence one another through the platform they're sitting on. Slow at first; subtly; barely perceptible.

And then, all these different metronomes begin moving together, keeping at the beat. Their different rhythms become a shared rhythm. Different motions become a shared movement. Difference gives way not to uniformity, but to harmony.

Each time I think about the Kuramoto experiment, I think of Trinidad and Tobago itself as a tabletop with many metronomes. Few nations on this earth have brought together so many histories; so many peoples; and so many traditions, within such a small space.

We are the descendants of many different peoples, each carrying different memories; languages; customs: our own rhythms. Yet somehow, across generations, a shared rhythm emerged - not perfect; not without its challenges, but all the same, real.

You hear it in our music; it flavours our foods; it's in our festivals: Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago; and our own, Toronto Carnival.

Indian Arrival Day is part of that resonance; part of that journey. It began arriving in Trinidad in 1845, but it does not end there. Over time, that thread too became part of the national weave. It was added to national memory; our ancestral contribution became part of national identity.

Today, many different communities gather to celebrate Indian Arrival Day, not because the story belongs only to one group, but because it enriches us all.

Now that is synchronisation! It is not the erasure of difference; instead, it is the embrace of difference. Not many metronomes becoming one metronome, but many different metronomes learning how to move together.

And when I look out and see your faces, I see the same rhythm that makes the Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus Association resonate.

We carry different life experiences, different careers; different challenges; different perspectives. Some of us come here seeking companionship; purpose; connection. But after a while, something happens. Memories are shared; friendships form; stories are exchanged, and we begin finishing each other's sentences.

The rhythm begins to change. Individual lives become part of a collective life. Individual voices become part of a community voice. Individual journeys become part of a larger journey.

And in here, perhaps, is the deepest lesson of Indian Arrival Day. Our ancestors endured because they discovered the power of collective rhythm. Separation was transformed into solidarity; diversity was woven into strength; uncertainty became possibility. Today, their legacy is more than just arrival; today, it resonates with belonging.

Today, I am proud to say to you, as we celebrate Indian Arrival Day, yes, we're celebrating where we came from. But more importantly, we are celebrating what we have built together: a community; a shared future. But like the metronomes, each of us remains unique; each of us carries a thread of our own story, our own memories; our own beat.

But then we are listening to one another, learning from one another, and caring for one another.

And in this, something beautiful is happening: separate rhythms are converging; the platform we're on begins resonating. And from all of us, together, a cadenced, even *tick-tock, tick-tock* harmony is emerging; one far greater, more resonant, and more unifying than any one of us could create on our own. Thank you, and Happy Indian Arrival Day.



Romeo Kaseram

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Surrounded by generations of love, laughter, and cherished memories, Rajdei Narain Singh celebrated her remarkable 90th birthday at Canada Sevashram Sangha on May 17. Joined by her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, family, friends, and well-wishers, the beloved matriarch was honoured for a lifetime of devotion, wisdom, and kindness. Offering blessings and heartfelt congratulations, Swami Bhajanandaji described her as a beacon of love and wisdom whose legacy continues to inspire all who know her. As family members gathered to mark this special milestone, they wished her a birthday as sweet and special as the love she has so generously shared throughout the years. Happy 90th Birthday, Granny! Photos by Ramesh Ramkalawan



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States of Emergency rule brings calm, but leaves problems unresolved

Dear Editor,

Governments across the Caribbean increasingly deploy States of Emergency (SoEs) as aggressive 'circuit breakers' to freeze escalating gang warfare and runaway gun violence.

These emergency declarations temporarily strip away standard legal guards, granting security forces sweeping powers to enforce curfews, conduct warrant-less searches, and detain suspected gang members indefinitely without formal charges.

Rather than imposing nationwide lockdowns, States typically weaponise these measures within hyper-localised crime hotspots, flooding volatile neighbourhoods with joint police and military units to break gang leadership and block retaliatory strikes.

While regional constitutions permit immediate, temporary executive declarations to control sudden crises, any prolonged extension demands strict legislative oversight and contentious parliamentary debate.

While SOEs routinely trigger an immediate, localised drop in violence by removing high-profile targets from the streets, their security benefits are notoriously fleeting. Rather than dismantling organised crime, these aggressive

operations merely disperse it, displacing gang activity into unprotected zones or forcing syndicates to briefly lower their profiles.

Human rights advocates heavily criticise this approach, noting that SoEs frequently catalyse police brutality, systemic civil liberty violations, and the discriminatory targeting of vulnerable youth in marginalised communities.

Empirical data confirms that emergency declarations are superficial fixes rather than sustainable solutions. Once the emergency status expires, violent crime inevitably surges back to baseline levels if the underlying socio-economic catalysts namely, systemic poverty, a lack of economic mobility, and fractured educational institutions, remain completely unaddressed.

Across the Caribbean, governments increasingly rely on emergency powers to mask systemic policing failures. Belize City frequently deploys hyper-localised SOEs to abruptly freeze retaliatory gang violence – a tactic officials praise as a vital circuit breaker, but critics dismiss as a superficial bandage.

Taking a more aggressive approach, Trinidad and Tobago responds to spikes in homicides



with militarised, country-wide anti-gang SoEs that strip away civil liberties through suspended bail and prolonged detention without charge.

Meanwhile, Jamaica has normalised a cycle of recurring States of Public Emergency (SoPEs) to suppress transnational trafficking and gang warfare. Collectively, these heavy-handed measures have ignited a fierce regional debate over the dangerous erosion of fundamental constitutional rights for the sake of temporary security.

The claims made by the governments of Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica regarding lower homicide rates due to SOEs are highly misleading. In reality, these measures represent a classic pyrrhic victory, as the superficial drop in violent crime is driven by external variables rather than sustainable governance.

First, the statistical decline began during the stringent restrictions and curfews of the Covid-19 pandemic, establishing a lower base-

line that never actually normalised back to pre-pandemic levels.

Second, this reduction was heavily accelerated by outward migration, specifically because numerous high-ranking and notorious gang members successfully secured asylum in the US, which artificially relieved localised social pressures.

Most critically, these heavy-handed policies inflict deep psychological trauma and systemic harm on everyday citizens. Far from a sign of strength, resorting to an SoE is an admission of governmental incompetence – a confession that the state cannot manage gang violence through the standard rule of law.

Normalising these dictatorial mechanisms undercuts democratic foundations, proving that once a society relies on emergency powers to police its citizens, it has quietly traded its democracy for a dictatorship.

Brian Ellis Plummer, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



The national flag is waved during Independence celebrations last month
Guyana's 60th anniversary a time for reflection

Dear Editor,

Guyana proudly celebrated its 60th Independence Anniversary on May 26. It was an important time for us as citizens to reflect on how far our nation has come, and the remarkable transformation currently taking place across the country.

Independence is not only a celebration of our freedom, but also an opportunity to appreciate leadership, national development, and the collective efforts being made to improve the lives of all Guyanese.

Over the past few years, the government led by the People's Progressive Party/Civic has embarked on major development initiatives that are reshaping Guyana's future. Under the leadership of President Irfaan Ali and the PPP/C government, the country has witnessed rapid infrastructure growth, including the construction of new roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, housing schemes, and expanded opportunities within the oil and gas sector.

These developments are creating jobs, stimulating economic growth, and improving the standard of living for thousands of citizens.

The government's investments in education, healthcare, agriculture, security, and public services demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that development reaches every region and every community.

Many Guyanese are now benefiting from cash grants, increased salaries, training opportunities, and improved access to technology

and social support programs. These efforts show a clear intention to build a stronger and more inclusive society.

Additionally, Ali has outlined ambitious future plans for Guyana that continue to inspire confidence among citizens.

These plans include further modernisation of the country's infrastructure, the expansion of renewable energy projects, increased local content opportunities, the development of world-class healthcare facilities, improved public transportation systems, and continued diversification of the economy beyond oil and gas.

The vision presented by the President reflects a desire to make Guyana one of the leading and most developed nations in the Caribbean and South America.

With our celebration of 60 years of Independence, we must also remember that national progress requires unity, patriotism, and collective responsibility. Regardless of political differences, all Guyanese should support initiatives that contribute positively to the nation's growth and prosperity.

Our country possesses enormous potential, and with proper leadership, wise management of resources, and national unity, the future of Guyana can be brighter than ever before.

Guyana at 60 represents resilience, progress, and hope. Let us continue working together to build a nation that future generations will be proud to inherit.

Quincy Anderson, Guyana, via email.



Irfaan Ali



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Guyana govt courts diaspora investment through new national bond

— President Dr Irfaan Ali has announced that the Government of Guyana will soon launch a special diaspora bond, creating a new pathway for overseas-based Guyanese to directly invest in the country's rapidly expanding development agenda. The initiative, unveiled on May 26, is being positioned as a major effort to deepen economic ties between Guyana and its global diaspora, while providing opportunities for overseas Guyanese to participate in national projects ranging from infrastructure and housing to energy development.

For many members of our Guyanese diaspora, the announcement that the Guyana government will soon launch a special diaspora bond represents a tangible response to a question increasingly being asked at diaspora engagements: "How can overseas Guyanese become active participants in the homeland's transformation?"

President Dr Irfaan Ali has repeatedly pointed to a growing shift in the conversations taking place with Guyanese living abroad. During a recent diaspora engagement at the Pearson Convention Centre here in Brampton, he revealed that his government had received nearly 600 emails ahead of the event, many of them focused not on longstanding concerns about security or instability, but on investment opportunities, home ownership, and economic participation.

"We received close to 600 emails," Ali disclosed. Of those, he said, 420 contained encouraging messages and expressions of support for Guyana's development, while 159 focused on major policy and development issues.

According to Ali, business investment, finance and economic development emerged as the leading area of interest among diaspora respondents.

"Guess what is the top issue today? How can we invest? How can we be part of the development? How can we own a home? How can we be part of the building out of Guyana?" Ali told the audience.

He noted that investment-related concerns accounted for approximately 20 percent of the substantive inquiries received, while housing, land and property issues represented another 16.4 percent.

He said the findings reflected a significant change from previous decades, when security concerns often dominated discussions with overseas Guyanese.

"I've been coming to diaspora engagement for decades, and the top issue used to be security. Today, it is the last issue on the minds of those persons. That tells you that the story of Guyana is one that is positive and one that is transformative," he stated.

The proposed diaspora bond appears designed to channel that growing interest into a formal investment vehicle.

Last week in Georgetown, Ali declared, "I want to announce that the Government of Guyana will launch a special bond, a diaspora bond, to raise funds from the diaspora for investment in public infrastructure projects in Guyana. So, within one week, we'll be launching the diaspora bond."

He added: "So, members of the diaspora, here is your opportunity to make your contribution and to be part of the massive transformation taking place in our country."

While government officials have not yet released details regarding the size of the bond, anticipated returns, eligibility requirements or specific projects to be financed, the announcement comes as Guyana pursues billions of dollars in investments across transportation, healthcare, housing, energy, and digital infrastructure.

The move also aligns with broader efforts by

the administration to attract greater diaspora participation in major national projects.

Earlier last month, while speaking during an armchair discussion at the Baker Institute for Public Policy in Houston, Texas, Ali said the government was actively exploring ways to unlock financing from overseas Guyanese and create attractive investment opportunities for them.

"Our diaspora is in a special and unique position," he said, adding, "But now I think [we have to look at] how do we unlock their financing? How do we create opportunities for their investments?"

He noted that several projects of national importance were being developed that could offer strong returns for investors.

Among those opportunities are two major energy-related ventures linked to Guyana's expanding Gas-to-Energy programme: the Guyana Ammonia and Urea Plant Inc. project, estimated at US \$300 million, and the Guyana Gas Bottling and Logistics Company Inc., valued at approximately US \$40 million.

When issuing preliminary expressions of interest for both projects, the government indicated that preference would be given to Guyanese investors, including members of the diaspora, reflecting a policy aimed at ensuring nationals at home and abroad have a stake in the country's development.

According to the invitation documents, investors could assume a government-guaranteed annual return of ten percent, although final investment structures are still being developed.

Ali has also encouraged overseas Guyanese to explore opportunities in the country's housing sector, particularly through the planned Silica City development along the Soesdyke-Linden Highway.

"We are building a new city. That city is called Silica City," he told diaspora members in Brampton.

Describing the project as a sustainable, future-oriented urban centre, Ali said the government intends for a significant portion of the development to serve the needs of overseas Guyanese.

"And we want at least 25 percent of this city to be dedicated to meeting the needs of the diaspora," he explained.

Located approximately 40 kilometres from Georgetown and near the Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Silica City is envisioned as a climate-resilient urban community integrating smart technology, environmental sustainability, and modern infrastructure. Government plans call for approximately 15,000 homes to be built over the next two decades.

For overseas Guyanese considering a return, a second home, or a long-term investment in the country, Ali said the development offers an opportunity for them to participate directly in Guyana's future.

"I want you to see what the city will look like so that those of you who want to own your vacation home, own your second home, or invest in your home in Guyana can be part of Silica City," he said, declaring, "Here is your opportunity."

With the proposed diaspora bond, together with expanding investment opportunities in housing, infrastructure and energy, the signals are clear on what may be a new phase in Guyana's relationship with its overseas citizens.

It appears to be one that is increasingly being defined not only by remittances and family connections, but by ownership, investment and participation in the homeland's next chapter of development.



President Ali addresses the audience in Brampton last month



Guyana govt officials, guests, dignitaries, and the diaspora at the Brampton event



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Diaspora celebrates history, heritage, homecoming

— Hundreds gathered at Markham's Vedic Cultural Centre to commemorate 188 years since the arrival of Indians to the Caribbean, transforming history into a living, participatory experience that celebrated resilience, creativity, leadership, and the enduring contributions of Indo-Caribbean communities in Canada and beyond.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Markham – Rain clouds and unsettled skies did little to deter the hundreds who gathered at the Vedic Cultural Centre (VCC) on May 23 for the 28th Annual Commemoration of the Arrival of Indians to the Western World, an event that transformed our ancestral history from a date on the calendar into a living conversation about identity, resilience, and belonging.

Held during South Asian Heritage Month, the commemoration marked the 188th anniversary of the arrival of Indians to the Caribbean, and brought together federal and community leaders, educators, artists, entrepreneurs, health advocates, and families for a day dedicated to preserving and sharing the stories of Indo-Caribbean people in Canada and across the diaspora.

Organised by the Toronto Arya Samaj at the Vedic Cultural Centre (TAS-VCC) in partnership with the Canadian Caribbean Indian Cultural Collective (CCICC), this year's observance was themed, *From Indentureship to Citizenship: Telling the Stories of Indo-Caribbean Resilience, Creativity, and Leadership*.

The theme threaded its way through every aspect of the programme, from historical exhibitions and storytelling sessions to entrepreneurship presentations and cultural demonstrations.

The day began with a VIP reception and guided heritage experience featuring historical artifacts, memorabilia, migration narratives, and presentations chronicling the journeys of Indo-Caribbean communities over nearly two centuries. Visitors moved through exhibits that encouraged them not merely to observe history but to engage with it, creating opportunities for reflection, discussion, and discovery across generations.

Among the activities were traditional drumming sessions led by musician Devin Ramoutar, storytelling presentations by Sabrina Chetram, and discussions on entrepreneurship and wealth creation presented by Dr Natasha Bridgmohan of *The BridgGroup of Companies*.

Together, the programme reflected the many dimensions of Indo-Caribbean life – cultural, educational, entrepreneurial,

and civic.

Welcoming attendees, TAS-VCC President Indeera Prashad emphasised the importance of ensuring that Canadians understand the experiences and contributions of Indo-Caribbean communities.

As she noted, the shared objective of TAS-VCC and CCICC was to ensure that the broader public understands who “we are as a people”.

By preserving our stories and celebrating our shared experiences, “we strengthen our community and ensure future generations understand the sacrifices, resilience, and contributions that shaped our journey”, Prashad said.

Federal Energy and Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson, bringing greetings on behalf of Prime Minister Mark Carney, reflected on his own connection to the Caribbean through time spent working in Trinidad. He recalled fond memories of the people, culture, and cuisine, noting that “doubles” remained among his favourite foods.

Special guests also included Dr Deepali Dewan, Dan Mishra Curator of Global South Asia at the Royal Ontario Museum; Ron Lynn, Chair of the York Region District School Board; and Joe Li, Regional Councillor for the City of Markham, who delivered greetings on behalf of Mayor Frank Scarpitti.

A major attraction throughout the day was the heritage exhibition organised by the Heritage and Cultural Committee (HCC). The displays featured ship records, models, household artifacts, agricultural tools, cooking exhibits, cultural memorabilia, and family heirlooms, some dating back approximately 150 years.

Following the event, HCC Chair Varun Kumar said many attendees were particularly impressed by the historical artifacts on display.

“These traditional artifacts feature some 150-year-old items cherished by families here in the GTA,” Kumar said.

Kumar, who also serves as Chair of the Canadian Caribbean Indian Cultural Collective, said the organisation's work extends beyond historical preservation.

The CCICC, he noted, develops programmes designed “not only to preserve history, but to transform history into community engagement, education, confidence, and connection”.

The exhibition also provided context for the experiences of our Indentured ancestors and their descendants who journeyed

See Page 11: VCC event



MP Tim Hodgson (third, right), Peter Deboran (centre) and Varun Kumar examine a logie artifact. In photos on both pages, guests and attendees at the event



VCC event examines migration, adaptation, identity

From Page 10

to the Caribbean between 1838 and 1917.

Through documents, tools, photographs, and cultural artifacts, visitors were invited to examine the broader histories of Indentureship, colonialism, migration, and adaptation that continue to shape our Indo-Caribbean identities today.

One of the featured presentations was delivered by Peter Deboran, Coordinating Director of the CCICC, who explored the historical circumstances that contributed to the displacement of Indian communities during the colonial period.

“What was once the richest country in the world became one of the poorest in a matter of generations, as colonial policies systematically weakened traditional industries, extracted immense wealth, and contributed to widespread poverty and instability,” Deboran told the audience.

He added that the resulting hardship and lack of opportunity left many vulnerable to exploitation, creating conditions that helped fuel the system of human extraction through Indentureship.

The commemoration also served as the launch platform for *Landfall*, a commemorative magazine featuring emerging and established Indo-Caribbean creatives. Through essays, artwork, photography, and storytelling, the publication highlights contemporary expressions of Indo-Caribbean identity across North America and the Caribbean.

Beyond the historical displays, the event showcased the vitality of the present-day community through a bustling cultural marketplace. Entrepreneurs, artists, educators, health advocates, and cultural organisations transformed the exhibition space into a celebration of creativity, enterprise, and service.

Health education also featured prominently. Cardiologist Dr Vivian Rambihar provided information on cardiovascular disease within South Asian communities and introduced *Reclaiming Our Hearts* by Dr Sonia Anand, while Patricia Rambali shared resources focused on cancer prevention, screening, and wellness. Their participation connected discussions of heritage and migration with contemporary conversations around health equity and community well-being.

While history formed the foundation of the 188th Anniversary Commemoration of the Arrival of Indians to the Caribbean, the cultural marketplace and entertainment programme demonstrated how that heritage continues to evolve through entrepreneurship, creativity, education, and community engagement.

Throughout the day, attendees explored exhibits and busi-

nesses representing a cross-section of Indo-Caribbean achievement. Entrepreneur Nalini Mahadeo of *Sassy Sheekh* showcased handcrafted jewellery and women-led entrepreneurship, while *Masti Comics* creator Masood Ali introduced visitors to comic-book worlds inspired by Trinidadian and Indo-Caribbean culture.

Siddheshwar's Emporium highlighted traditional and contemporary South Asian fashion, and *Rubicon Exotic* provided complimentary tropical beverages to hundreds of attendees in support of the event's community-building mission.

Community development was also featured through initiatives such as *Beyond 40 Hours – Community Impact Workshop*, led by Shusmita Sharma-Tiwari, and *S.H.E. West Indian*, which promotes Caribbean storytelling, representation, and cultural connection.

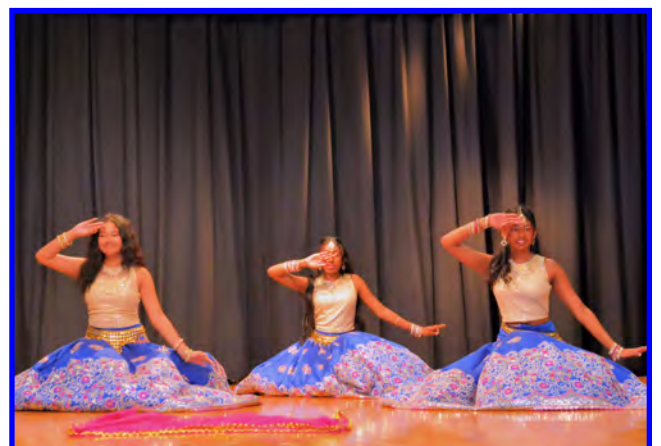
Among the event's sponsors and exhibitors was *The BridgGroup of Companies*, presenting sponsor of the commemoration, alongside entrepreneurs and professionals including author Sabrina Chetram, lawyer and realtor Cheddi Bassoo, tax and estate planner Sarah Balram of *Flip My Life*, mortgage broker Nav Uppal of *Fides Mortgages*, and musician-educator Devin Ramoutar, who led an interactive workshop introducing attendees to the *dholak* and *dhantal* traditions of Indo-Caribbean music.

The evening cultural showcase brought additional energy to the celebration. Hosted by Varun Kumar and Nadia Bhagwandin, the programme featured performances by *Royal Tassa Crew*, *Footsteps Dance School*, *STCC Dance Academy*, singer Ashton G, singer Bri Belmontes, and a fashion presentation by Netu Lal.

Together, the performers celebrated the richness and diversity of Indo-Caribbean heritage while providing a platform for both emerging and established talent.

Food also played a central role in the gathering. Amar and Cindy of *Island Blend* served authentic Indo-Caribbean cuisine, while Shereen's *Guyanese Bakery and Roti*, *Norman Sue Bakery*, *Naraines Bakery*, and *Mona's Roti* contributed to the hospitality that helped transform the commemoration into a welcoming community experience.

Organisers noted that the success of the event reflected the contributions of volunteers, sponsors, exhibitors, performers, vendors, and attendees whose collective efforts helped bring Indo-Caribbean history, culture, and identity to life for a new generation.





Barbados' PM Mottley and Guyana' President Ali with their ID cards

Guyana, Barbados deepen regional ties

— Nationals of Guyana and Barbados will soon be able to travel between the two countries using only digital identification cards from July 1, under a landmark regional initiative that leaders say will deepen Caribbean integration while laying the groundwork for expanded investment, financial connectivity, and digital public services.

...

Georgetown – Nationals of Guyana and Barbados will soon be able to leave their passports at home when travelling between the two countries, as both governments prepare to officially launch a new digital identification travel system on July 1.

The announcement was made on May 26 during a joint press conference at the National Stadium in Providence, where Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali and Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley outlined a broader vision for regional integration built around digital technology, freer movement, and expanded economic participation.

"As from July 1, you can forget your passport at home and travel with your digital ID card to Barbados, and the same from Barbados to Guyana," Ali announced.

The new arrangement will allow eligible citizens holding electronic national identification cards to travel between the two countries without presenting traditional passports. The technology is already operational, with the July implementation date providing airlines additional time to adapt their systems.

A day earlier, on May 25, Mottley became the first Barbadian to enter Guyana using the new digital identification system, passing through the country's upgraded immigration infrastructure without a passport.

Officials from both countries described the initiative as a major step forward in transforming long-standing Caricom integration goals into practical benefits for citizens.

"This initiative represents another significant step forward in regional cooperation, South-South collaboration, and people-centred governance," Mottley said.

She added, "As our two nations celebrate 60 years of Independence, it is appropriate that we take this collective step. This form of practical integration allows Caribbean people to experience tangible benefits in their daily lives. It will genuinely translate Caribbean integration into a lived reality."

The digital travel system operates through International Civil Aviation Organisation-compliant electronic identification cards linked to automated border processing technology. Travellers are verified through biometric authentication and facial recognition systems that enable them to move through electronic gates without the need for traditional passport stamping and manual immigration checks.

Ali said the initiative emerged following consultations involving government officials, regional stakeholders and the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (Caricom IMPACS), describing it as a major advance in regional digital integration and border modernisation.

Beyond travel, both leaders revealed that discussions are progressing on a new cross-border investment mechanism known as the Trident Arrow Investment Fund.

According to Mottley, the proposed fund is intended to allow ordinary Barbadians and Guyanese to collectively invest in major infrastructure and long-term development projects.

"The second one we want to work on is the Trident Arrow Investment Fund, an investment fund that we want to be able to create that will be open to ordinary Bajans and ordinary Guyanese to invest in critical infrastructure and long-term, medium-to-long-term investment projects," she said.

Mottley explained that the initiative could support projects in areas such as utilities, technology and agro-processing while providing citizens with a greater stake in regional economic development.

"It allows ordinary people who could not do it on their own, but who, as part and parcel of a collective group, can make it happen," she said.

Ali said Guyana and Barbados are simultaneously advancing discussions aimed at digitally linking their financial systems to create new opportunities for commerce, investment, and business development.

"We are now advancing talks on how we would digitally connect our financial systems in a stronger way, creating financial opportunities, business opportunities, commerce opportunities for both citizens of Barbados and Guyana," he stated.

He also pointed to future healthcare applications, noting that the digital identification platform could eventually allow medical professionals in either country to securely access a traveller's medical records when required.

"God forbids that you get sick in one of the countries; eventually the card, when used in a medical facility, will be able to pull up all your medical records and allow doctor in that jurisdiction to have access to your medical records," Ali explained.

At the centre of the border modernisation initiative is Trinidad and Tobago-based Novo Technology, which has deployed Guyana's new border management system across ports of entry, including the installation of automated electronic gates and biometric verification technology.

Novo chairman Glen Ramdhani said the project reflects Guyana's wider commitment to technological transformation.

"Novo is very proud to be part of this initiative and to facilitate this milestone for Guyana," Ramdhani said.

The digital travel arrangement forms part of a broader programme that officials say positions Guyana among a small group of countries experimenting with fully integrated digital border ecosystems.

However, for both leaders the significance of the initiative extends beyond technology.

They framed the developments as part of a wider effort to modernise Caricom integration through easier movement, stronger economic ties, and more direct participation by citizens in regional development.



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
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PLANTING ROOTS, GROWING DREAMS: A FAMILY'S JOURNEY FROM IMMIGRANTS TO ENTREPRENEURS

How One Family's Unity and Sacrifice Turned Hope into a Legacy of Success in Canada

"If I have an almond, I choose to plant it rather than eat it. With patience and care, that tree will one day bear thousands of almonds."

A family made the courageous decision to leave their homeland and start anew in Canada. The family consisted of a loving mother, a hardworking father, and three children. They leaned on one another for strength and hope as they faced the uncertainty of their migration to Canada.

Upon arrival, they settled into a modest apartment. The family knew that success in their new country would require sacrifice and unity. Determined to build a future together, the father and three children worked tirelessly. Each held down two jobs, often rising before dawn and returning late at night.

Meanwhile, their mother became the heart of their home. She tended to chores, prepared homemade meals, and ensured that when her loved ones returned from long shifts, they could gather around the table and feel cared for. Their home operated like a harmonious hive, with every member playing their part in pursuit of a brighter tomorrow.

Each week, the siblings and their father brought home their pay cheques and handed them to their mother, trusting her wisdom and care. She skillfully managed their finances, creating a strict budget, giving everyone a modest allowance, and searching for bargains to stretch every dollar. Her discipline and love turned their combined effort into real progress. By the end of the year, thanks to her careful stewardship and the family's unwavering teamwork, they had saved enough to purchase their very own home.

The family continued their tradition of cooperation, pooling their earnings and focusing on paying down the mortgage together. In just a few years, they paid off their first home, and soon after, they bought a second. This cycle of unity and diligence continued until each sibling proudly owned a home of their own, each one fully paid off – a testament to their collective resolve and enduring spirit.

With their homes as a foundation, the family took a bold next step. They remortgaged their properties and used the equity to buy their first Tim Horton's franchise. This leap of faith created opportunities not only for themselves but also for their community, offering jobs and sharing their spirit of perseverance with others.

Years passed, and the seeds of their hard work blossomed. The family grew their ventures, acquiring nine other Tim Horton's franchises, several gas stations, and other thriving businesses. The siblings, their spouses, and their children all worked side by side, keeping the family spirit alive in every enterprise. Even those who had achieved great wealth could still be found behind the counter, serving coffee with a smile, never forgetting where their journey began.

Reflecting on their inspiring journey, one of the family members offered a simple yet profound metaphor: "If I have an almond, I choose to plant it rather than eat it. With patience and care, that tree will one day bear thousands of almonds." Their story stands as a gentle reminder that lasting success is born not from seeking instant rewards, but from nurturing seeds of hope, working together, and believing in the promise of tomorrow.

As a realtor, I have watched countless newcomers arrive in Canada with very little and transform their lives within a single generation. No matter their background, the pattern is clear: they work hard, save carefully, and invest in real estate. Bit by bit, their efforts grow into lasting security and comfort for their families.

You don't have to follow every step this family took to find your own success. What matters is starting small: save what you can, make a plan, and try to buy a home – even a modest one. Focus on paying it off, and if you can, team up with people who share your goals. With patience and determination, each step brings you closer to a brighter future.

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The Indelible Red Stain
By Dr Mohan Ragbeer

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

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



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In photos, guests attending the launch of Dr Baytoram Ramharack's *Wismar Massacre*

New book examines Wismar's painful legacy

From Page 1

the gathering, structuring his address around three interlocking ideas: *Yatra* the ancestral crossing from India to British Guiana; *Swaraj*, or Independence; and the violence of Wismar itself.

"The first word is what is called a *Yatra*, right? That is the journey, the odyssey, when ancestral Indians left Calcutta and went to British Guyana," he said, invoking the arrival of Indo-Guyanese aboard the *SS Whitby* and the *SS Hesperus* in 1838.

From there, Ramharack unfolded the historical canvas, speaking of plantation rebellions, labour unrest, and the Rosehall Massacre, arguing that Guyana possessed "a long tradition of people who have been very much involved" in resistance, resilience, and political struggle.

Yet the emotional core of the afternoon repeatedly returned to the events of May 1964, when violence erupted in the Wismar-Christianburg area amid intensifying political and ethnic tensions in what was then British Guiana.

Drawing upon more than two decades of archival excavation, oral testimony, official reports, and survivor recollections, Ramharack argued that the attacks were not spontaneous outbursts of rage, but "organised and well-organised", **borrowing directly from the language of the Commissioners** who investigated the violence.

"It was racial and political," he stated.

His book contends that approximately 3,000 to 3,400 Indo-Guyanese residents were displaced during the attacks, while businesses, homes, and livelihoods were reduced to ash, absence, and abandonment.

"There were about 87-89 businesses that were destroyed," Ramharack said, adding "Hundreds of houses were burnt; burnt to the ground."

Throughout the address, the Demerara River emerged not merely as geography, but as both witness and refuge, the final corridor through which terrified families fled burning homes and collapsing certainties.

"If you are under attack here, the only thing you could do to get to safety is to find your way ... to the Demerara River," he said, adding, "You get into those river taxis and then you can find your way across."

He described families escaping aboard vessels such as the *R.H. Carr* and the *MV Barima*, while others attempted to swim across the river carrying little beyond fear, fragments, and family.

At one point, Ramharack reflected quietly on the deteriorating remains of the *R.H. Carr* itself, now abandoned at what he described as "Skull Point".

"It is a sad situation," he said, declaring, "No attempt to preserve."

That sense, and symbolism, of abandonment – archival, institutional, emotional – threaded itself through much of the afternoon's discussion.

"I was born in 1960," Ramharack said, further noting, "But the question I had in my head is, 'Why is it that when Wismar comes up, there's really a sort of a blank ... or a fear in people's minds?'"

That silence, he suggested, extended beyond private households and into the architecture of national memory itself.

Ramharack told attendees at the book launch he was unable to locate the official *Wismar Commission Report* in Guyana's National Archives, parliamentary library, or university collections.

"So somebody had to scrub that report," he concluded.

According to Ramharack, the report survived because former diplomat Odeen Ishmael preserved **a copy that was later**

digitised and placed online, allowing survivors, descendants, and researchers to finally access material that had long hovered among removal, rumour, and record.

His address also moved into the deeply and viscerally painful terrain of violence against women during the attacks.

Ramharack recounted testimony involving women who were beaten and raped, including multiple women from the same household in Silver Town.

"It's hard for me to say this," he told the gathering softly, and with a touching empathy that rippled throughout the hall.

He described the process of repeatedly reading survivor testimony as "very grueling", particularly as many victims were forced to relive their trauma through police reports, commissions, retelling, and recollection.

"So you have that repetition of that trauma over and over," he said.

At several moments, the formal lecture dissolved gently into something more intimate as audience members gave heartfelt at times tearful testimony [see next page], speaking about refugee relatives, remembered fragments of family stories, and emotional inheritances carried quietly through decades of migration, dispersal, and unarticulated trauma.

Ramharack repeatedly stressed his Wismar project was not intended as triumphalism or political provocation, but as attributable, documentary recovery rooted in testimony, transcripts, and traceable evidence.

"The victims are speaking," he said, declaring, "They all have names."

He also defended his use of "ethnic cleansing", arguing that the organised destruction of homes, businesses, and communities, coupled with forced displacement, intimidation, and sexual violence, justified the term.

"It was an ethnic cleansing because that entire community was uprooted and... forced to leave," he said.

He further examined the volatile political climate of the period, including tensions between the People's Progressive Party and the People's National Congress, unresolved institutional distrust, and the lingering shadow of colonial intervention during the Cold War years.

But in its final movement, the address turned away from the political machinery and toward historical stewardship.

"Indian history belongs in the archive, but it belongs to the public," Ramharack said.

Invoking Michel-Rolph Trouillot and his work *Silencing the Past: Power and the Product of History*, Ramharack argued that communities themselves must participate in documenting their experiences, preserving testimony, and resisting erasure.

"If we don't participate in documenting our own experience, then our story is not being told," he stated.

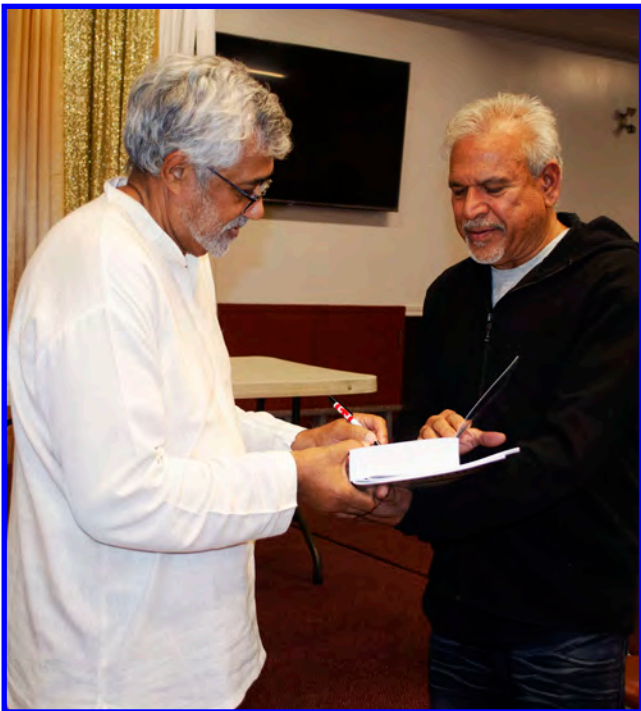
For our diaspora at the VCC mandir, the launch of Ramharack's latest text appeared to resonate far beyond scholarship or literary discussion. Instead, at times the event itself grew into a living archive, part lecture, with moving, expressive, and tearful lamentations, and profoundly poignant with collective remembering.

Wrapping up his address, Ramharack reflected on the many messages he had received from members of the Guyanese diaspora scattered across Canada, the Caribbean, the US, and elsewhere, many of them descendants of families who have carried memories of Wismar in silence for decades.

"There are people who are coming forward to talk their truth and their stories," he said.

He added, "And I think if this project that I've done has that effect, then I think it was worth more than two decades of putting this story together."





Ruth Bissoon (photo above, left) speaks to the gathering about her memories of Wismar; in photo above at right is Ruth's sister Jeanette; in photos, guests and speakers at the *Wismar Massacre* book launch

Daughter of Wismar recalls river, ruin, refuge



— For decades, the Wismar Massacre has survived in Indo-Guyanese households not as public history, but as fragments in hurried departures, half-packed suitcases, whispered warnings, and the memory of children crossing the Demerara River with trepidation and anguish. At the May 24 launch of Dr Baytoram Ramharack's *Wismar Massacre*, in an eye-witness testimony of flight, fear, and fortitude, one daughter of Wismar gently reopened that wound, recalling how her mother gathered six children and fled the spreading flames of violence and uncertainty in May, 1964.

...
By Ruth Bissoon
Special to Indo-Caribbean World

Dr Baytoram Ramharack, thank you for the invitation to share some of my memories of the Wismar Massacre with you and this group. I do this in honour of my parents, Edward Bissoon and Lucy Luke-Sukra, for their courage, their tenacity, their sacrifice, and their love for all peoples.

My dad's dad, Bissoon Beechan, died when my father was 14 years old. At that young age, he had to quit school to work to help provide for his mother and seven younger siblings. A few years later, he journeyed from Bush Lot Village, West Coast Berbice, to work at Demba so he could support them better.

A few years later, in December 1948, he married Lucy, also of Bush Lot Village, whom he knew from church. The very next day they left for an adventure of a lifetime. It would not have been easy for my mom, as she was the eldest child and her widowed mom's right arm.

For the first six years, they lived in rented quarters in Christianburg, where I was born.

In 1954, they moved to Wismar. The original small house they built, at 18 Silvertown, was made entirely with sheets of aluminum. It was right beside the Demerara River. From it, we could wave to the sailors on board the Saguenay ships as they sailed just a bit further up the river to load bauxite.

You could say my parents were entrepreneurs. They added to the house, and built four rooms on the ground level to rent to Demba and Sproston's workers. Later, in 1961, they built a store, on the ground level, in which they sold everything, from buttons, to shoes, to fabric, to bikes – just about everything except groceries.

My dad continued to work at Demba. I think it would be safe to say that he loved and was loved and trusted by all his co-workers.

In addition to caring for us six children, my mom ran the store. She was a natural at it; she was knowledgeable, as her dad had owned a store and tailor business in Bush Lot until his death.

As May 1964 came around, my parents gathered us and told us that in the event that we were attacked, we were to hide in the bushes and trees in our backyard. My mom packed some of our clothing in a few suitcases. We lived out of those suitcases, so when we later fled Wismar with them, they were half empty.

I remember May 25, 1964.

Education was important to my parents so the older three siblings, including me, travelled to McKenzie High School as usual.

Shortly before the morning recess, the Bissoon sisters were called to the principal's office. Mr Ogle, who was white, British, informed us that an Afro-Guyanese man, claiming to be a friend of my dad, had come to the school to escort us home. Mr Ogle was not comfortable with this arrangement and offered to take us to his own home.

We recognised this man as indeed a friend and co-worker of my dad, and chose to go with him. He told us to walk quickly together on the sidewalk. He would ride his bike on the opposite side of the road, and for our mutual protection, we were not to make it obvious that he was escorting us.

When we arrived at the site of the boat crossing, the boatman told us that our house had already been attacked. We could see

that the windows were broken. When we arrived on the Wismar side, we quickly ran to our house. Our parents ushered us into the bedroom for safety.

Now that all of us were together, my parents began discussing next steps. My mother was a woman of faith, and so courageous. She said that she would take us to the McKenzie side where it would be safer because the houses there were company-owned. From there, she would try to find a way to get through the jungle to Soesdyke, and then to her mother. Wow!

My brave dad said that he would remain and try to save our house and the business.

My mom sent me to get my Uncle Sam, her younger brother, who lived in rented quarters, perhaps five to ten minutes from us.

Then she sent me to reserve a boat. We lived well with our neighbours, so it was not a surprise that the boatman, who was Afro-Guyanese, agreed to pick us up, not at the regular landing site, but in front of our house, and take us, not to the regular landing site across the river, but by the Catholic church, which was a bit down the river.

With my mom leading the charge, we, including my uncle, quickly ran to the boat. We left our suitcases in the church, which was open, and ran to the home of an Indo-Guyanese acquaintance. Thankfully, they opened their door and welcomed us.

My uncle and I went back to the church building to pick up our suitcases and buy food from a fast-food restaurant. I remember being amazed that the menu included hot dogs.

Perhaps, it was a friend of a friend, a Portuguese man with a jeep, who agreed to drive us through the jungle. It was a rough ride. He said he had to hurry back to get his Indo-Guyanese wife to safety.

When we exited the jeep, possibly in the Village of Soesdyke, it seemed to me that immediately we were surrounded by many loving, welcoming Indo-Guyanese. One family took us to a house where we were able to bathe. I was especially thankful for that because I had been carrying my two-year old sister who threw up on me several times during the bumpy trip.

These good folks, these angels, fed us and provided us with bedding. I wish I knew who they were so I could thank their descendants. The next morning, once again, they fed us and helped us find transportation to Georgetown, to the area where cars for hire to Berbice were parked.

I remember. I remember one driver, as soon as he saw my mom, six kids, and my uncle, immediately came forward and drove us to Bush Lot Village, West Coast Berbice, to my mom's childhood home where Grandmother Carrie welcomed us.

Within a few minutes, it seemed like the whole village descended on her house eager to hear our story, which my mom related. No sooner had she finished and the crowd had left, that my dad arrived. He had been rescued.

My father's story is recorded in the Wismar Commission Report, dated Day 2, Tuesday, 17 November 1964, pages 35-46.

We were penniless, displaced, 'Wismar People', refugees in our own country. In addition, my parents owed the merchants in Georgetown from whom they bought items for the store. So, my dad heroically returned to his job in McKenzie.

Again, I say that my parents were hard-working and courageous. The following ten years were challenging, but they persevered. As a child, I did not fully understand their strength and sacrifices, but am thankful that they modeled hard work, love, and forgiveness.

Once again, thank you, sir, for this book. You did what needed to be done, what I could not do. You shared our stories. You have brought to light what has not been openly discussed. I hope that this period of British Guiana's history will be included in the school curriculum, and that one day, a movie will be made based on your book.



Modern-day statecraft still navigating line between Dharma and deception

By Dhanpaul Narine

“Eloquent, and a talker wise, able to handle opposition, steadfast, speaking as instructed, such should an ambassador be.” This could be from a Ministry of Foreign Affairs job description. But it is from Kautilya (350 to 283 BC).

“Never attempt to win by force what can be won by deception.” This is from Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 to 1527 AD). This strategy has underpinned the foreign policy of a number of countries, with the realisation that it is difficult to pin down a nation at the bargaining table since it cannot be trusted to make a deal.

Does this sound familiar in the ongoing US-Iran War, with both sides blaming the other, and Oman playing both of them?

Kautilya and Machiavelli are two profound thinkers, ages apart, who continue to influence statecraft, governance, and international politics.

Kautilya wrote his *Arthashastra*, or the *Science of Material Gain* for King Chandragupta Maurya. It is a Sanskrit treatise that includes statecraft “politics, economic policy and military strategy”.

Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* for Lorenzo de Medici of Florence. He suggested that it was better if a leader was feared rather than loved. Affection was temporary and unpredictable, but fear, backed by punishment, was respected.

Kautilya, known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta, was a Hindu scholar who had an all-round education in medicine, astrology, and law. He was an advisor to King Chandragupta, who founded the Mauryan empire in Northern India, and who ruled from 321 to 297 BC.

The Mauryan Empire had about 60 million persons, and historians estimated it to be one of the most populated empires at the time. It is said that the empire stretched from modern Afghanistan to Bengal, and deep into southern India.

There are different versions as to how Kautilya met Chandragupta, but they have a common theme: Kautilya saw the young Chandragupta playing a game and was impressed with his leadership skills. He took Chandragupta under his wings and began to train him in the science of statecraft.

Kautilya had worked for the Nanda Empire as a minister. According to the stories, Kautilya was insulted by King Dhana Nanda. He fled the Nanda kingdom and swore revenge. He found the qualities of a ruler in Chandragupta, and together they set about plotting Nanda's downfall.

What was the *Arthashastra* and how was it used to exert control and to defeat the enemy? Kautilya outlined seven core principles that form the essential elements of the Saptanga theory. The *Swami*, ruler or King, is the central authority. The ruler must be self-disciplined. He must be knowledgeable about his country, and be concerned about the welfare of the people. The ruler must have wisdom, and be a person of good character.

The next rung is the *Amatyas*. They are the ministers who would help in the administration of the State. They implement policy, and ensure the stability in the kingdom.

The *Janapada* is the kingdom and its people. A good ruler would want the kingdom to be fertile and to produce wealth for all.

Durga deals with defense. The State must be fortified and be impervious to the enemy. Only then can there be internal stability.

Danda combines legal and military power to help maintain internal security. Then there is *Mitra*, who are the friends of the state. Diplomacy is the key to cooperation. It maintains a healthy balance with other States, ensures stability, and can work for the mutual benefit of friendly States.

It is argued that the seven core principles serve as a handbook for pragmatism, and from which a ruler can learn to protect his kingdom. It is important to note that the State was created to enable the individual to practice his or her *Dharma*.

The King was the embodiment of virtue and a protector of *Dharma*. He could be questioned if he went against the prevailing notion of *Dharma*. In this way, he was not above the law, and was answerable to his subjects.

The *Arthashastra* comprises 15 books, and 150 chapters. There are 6,000 *sutras* that are written in Sanskrit, prose and verse. The *Arthashastra* was lost for centuries, but was redis-



covered in 1905, and it immediately captured the attention of historians, political scientists, and researchers.

It became clear that ancient Maurya had a remarkable sophistication in governance. As was seen, Kautilya placed the King at the centre of the administrative system. In the happiness of the people, lies the happiness of the King.

The stability of the State was dependent on a strong administration. There were departments that were responsible for taxation, commerce, mining, agriculture, and forestry, among others. The role of each department was clearly outlined, and employment into a department was based on competence and honesty. Audits were enforced to prevent the misuse of public funds.

Kautilya recognised the importance of sound economic management. Agriculture was central to the prosperity of the nation and the basis of political power. There was expansion in land cultivation, and irrigation, and the State regulated weights and measures. This was the civil service in action long before it was invented in the West.

How was Chandragupta able to exert control over such a vast kingdom? The devolution of power meant that the provinces had the authority to make decisions, but they were accountable to the central administration based in the capital, Paliputra.

Kautilya recognised the need for a strong army. The infantry, chariots, cavalry, and elephants “formed one of the most powerful forces of its time”. But it was his *Mandala*, or circles theory that is widely discussed in the field of international relations. There are seminars in US intelligence, and the security forces of other countries, to analyse the *Mandala* theory.

The theory is referred to as the circle of States. It says, “Your neighbour is your natural enemy, and the neighbour's neighbour is your friend.”

Kautilya states that a country's neighbour is a natural enemy since there will be border disputes and competition for resources. But the country beyond one's enemy is a friend and the next could go either way. It is, therefore, in the interest of the weak nations to team up with a strong neighbour to seek protection.

If this is applied to the Caribbean, one finds that Venezuela is an enemy of Guyana. But Trinidad is friendly to Guyana, while it is seen as an enemy of Venezuela.

Barbados, on the other hand, is playing both Venezuela and Guyana. It welcomed interim President Delcy Rodriguez of Venezuela as Guyana protested.

Guyana and Trinidad have broken ranks with Barbados, and Caricom, over Cuba. But Guyana and Trinidad need a big and powerful State to protect them. They are closely affiliated with the US, who has given them public support. The US is an enemy of Cuba.

For Kautilya, a kingdom does not have friends. It has interests, and a King should not hesitate to break relations that are inimical to its interests.

“Power is the possession of strength,” says Kautilya. He urged the king to use gifts, bribery, deception, conciliation, or war, to achieve his objectives.

Like Kautilya, Machiavelli was a high-ranking advisor to a ruler. He wrote *The Prince* in 1513 to impress the Medici family who had returned to power after the overthrow of the Florentine

Republic. He had hoped to return to his job as a counselor to the Medici family.

His book has reportedly been read by scholars, politicians, and leaders. He argues, “It is better to be feared than loved; love is fickle, fear is constant.” The work has been described as a handbook for tyrants, but his defenders argue that *The Prince* should be read alongside his other work, *Discourses on Livy*, to get the full picture of a prince that would unify Italy.

What was the practical advice that Machiavelli dispensed in his treatise?

Rulers should surround themselves with people of substance, according to Machiavelli. The flatterers and sycophants have no place in the circle of influence. Many leaders believe in self-importance and love to hear people sing their praises.

But a good leader would want to hear the unvarnished truth. He or she would consult with trusted advisors to learn what is really being said on the street. There are some leaders who will not budge

even though the tide of public opinion is against them. They refuse to listen to the people.

Machiavelli wants leaders to adapt to changing circumstances. In today's world, adaptability is of paramount importance, especially in the digital age. Leaders must be willing to learn from others, to employ teachers who will do the mentoring, and be prepared to defend policies even at personal risk. One way to learn is to read and study history. This would expand the mind, and bring lessons that could be used for the future.

But a sensible leader cannot allow his ministers to become more powerful than himself, and his inner circle. He must keep State secrets to himself. If he becomes too chummy with others, the curtain of fear will be lifted. Ministers will think that they are on the same level with the ruler, and this could not be tolerated.

Machiavelli warns that a ruler should not be idle in times of peace. He should take nothing for granted. People are plotting to oust him, when he least expects it. He should build weaponry, and be prepared at all times to defend his kingdom.

Machiavelli sees the importance of a balance of power and alliances. He advocates for an army drawn largely from citizens. But while commanding his army, a ruler must be cruel, as it is the only way to keep the army fit for combat.

Scholars have attempted to compare and contrast the writings of Kautilya and Machiavelli, and to assess the impact of their work in the present-day context. It is generally agreed that *The Prince* was a handbook that outlined how to hold on to power, while *Arthashastra* was a manual that delved, in a systematic way, into the internal structure of the kingdom.

Machiavelli said that man was a “wicked lot and will not keep their promises to you, you likewise need not keep yours to them”. For Kautilya, the chariot needs all the wheels. He wanted the King to listen to all advice, and believed that a King who administers justice with *Dharma*, and written law, would be able to conquer the whole world.

How relevant are Kautilya and Machiavelli in today's world? It is argued that Kautilya's *Mandala* theory, and Machiavelli's treatise on foreign policy, assert that the tactics of balancing power depends on maintaining good relations with the enemy's enemy. Machiavelli looked at how a leader should maintain power, but in Kautilya's case, national security and economic well-being go together.

Max Weber, the sociologist, sees Kautilya as the “ultimate paragon of political realism”, while Machiavelli proposes the use of ruthless means to maintain power. Henry Kissinger reinforces Kautilya's pragmatism that a well-satisfied population is hardly likely to rebel.

The *Arthashastra* and *The Prince* are both masterpieces of statecraft. The foreign policy of India, which is pragmatic non-alignment, is arguably based largely on the ideas of Kautilya. A number of Third World leaders borrow high-handed ruthlessness from Machiavelli's playbook to obtain and retain power.

For Kautilya and Machiavelli, there are no friends in politics and international relations. A nation will seek alliances to further its own interests. In many cases, it will not be straightforward, and a good ruler cannot say one thing and mean another.

Primnath Gooptar's new book turns gaze to villages after kala pani departure

— The recent publication of *Indentured Survivors of the British Empire Vol. 1: The Arkathiya Crossings* by Dr Primnath Gooptar opens a profound new direction in Indo-Caribbean historical inquiry, shifting attention away from the ships that carried our Indentured ancestors across the kala pani and toward the families left behind in India, where silence, rupture, memory, and survival lingered long after the sails disappeared beyond the horizon.

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Literary Diaspora Feature

For generations, the Indo-Caribbean story has largely been told through movement – through the crossing of the kala pani (black water), the arrival onto plantations, the long labour in cane fields, and the gradual making of new lives across Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, Fiji, Mauritius, and other scattered geographies of empire. Our historical imagination, shaped by migration itself, has often remained fixed upon the voyage outward, toward the ocean and the uncertain futures awaiting those who crossed.

Yet with the publication last week of *Indentured Survivors of the British Empire Vol. 1: The Arkathiya Crossings, The Other Side of the Kala Pani Indentureds: How Those Left Behind Survived*, Dr Primnath Gooptar seeks to turn that historical gaze back toward the villages left standing in the wake of departure, asking not only what became of those who crossed the black waters, but what became of those who remained behind, waiting amid the slow ache of uncertainty.

In that reversal alone lies the emotional force of Gooptar's latest project.

The village itself suddenly emerges as an historical site. The unanswered, inquiring letter that journeyed across the ocean becomes historical evidence. The waiting mother, the abandoned wife, the suspended engagement, the child growing beneath the shadow of disappearance, all now move from the margins of the story of Indentureship toward its centre.

In his commentary on the book, historian Dr Jerome Teelucksingh of The University of the West Indies in St Augustine, Trinidad, described the eminent author's latest text as “a powerful and transformative contribution to the historiography of the Caribbean”, noting how Gooptar excavates “the silent weight of separation and uncertainty as their loved ones vanished across the Kala Pani”.

Teelucksingh's commentary enters the narrative almost as an emotional threshold through which readers begin approaching the deeper world Gooptar seeks to recover. He writes of mothers, fathers, wives, and children sustaining themselves through “prayer, ritual and the power of memory”, while pointing to the oral testimonies within the text as “trembling voices that echo through time with heartbreak, longing and grace”.

The language resonates because the history itself remains emotionally unfinished within our Indo-Caribbean imagination.

Indentureship has often been examined through economics, migration patterns, plantation systems, labour structures, and colonial administration, all of which remain essential to understanding the period. Yet beneath those frameworks lies another archive, one that is quieter, more intimate, and often harder to measure, and which is composed of grief, waiting, rupture, longing, and our stubborn human instinct to remember, mourn, and hope.

It is this quieter archive that Gooptar's wider body of work has consistently pursued.

Across decades of scholarship, writing, and cultural preservation, he has repeatedly returned to the fragile ways our Indo-Caribbean memory survives after displacement, whether through cinema, Ramleela, village rituals, oral storytelling, genealogy, music, or inherited cultural habits that continue travelling across generations long after the original worlds that produced them have faded.

That larger continuity within his *oeuvre* becomes even clearer through the posthumous Foreword written in February 2023 by the late Dr Brinsley Samaroo, one of the Caribbean's most distinguished Indo-Caribbean historians and public intellectuals. He died in July that year.

Samaroo's Foreword does more than simply endorse the manuscript; instead, it provides a philosophical and moral framework through which the work itself may be understood. He describes the project as a major historiographical inversion that shifts historical attention away from migration alone and toward “the untold story of the families left behind”, arguing that the violence of Indentureship extended far beyond ships



and plantations into the emotional, bureaucratic, and genealogical structures of everyday life.

In Samaroo's reading, empire functioned not only through visible systems of labour extraction, but also through quieter forms of administrative violence, through ledgers, legal exclusions, seized lands, erased names, suspended marriages, and communities slowly hollowed out by recurring departure.

What emerges is not simply a story of migration, but of engineered absence.

Particularly striking is Samaroo's suggestion that silence itself became a form of archive. He writes of “a mother's silent wait at the doorway, a widow's unacknowledged grief, the unspoken names in a genealogy”, observing that these silences were not empty, but “charged with love, memory and profound endurance”.

That insight opens an important way of understanding Gooptar's larger intellectual project.

For throughout his career, Gooptar has repeatedly turned toward spaces that formal archives often fail to fully contain. His earlier scholarship on Indian cinema in Trinidad explored how films from India became far more than entertainment for our Indo-Trinidadian communities navigating displacement and inherited longing.

Cinema itself became an emotional bridge to an ancestral homeland known largely through fragments, imagination, songs, and stories.

Film music travelled across villages through radios, gramophones, open-air cinemas, weddings, and the famed “Mike Men” whose towering sound systems mounted on the rooftops of cars transformed public gatherings into moving archives of memory and belonging.

Elsewhere, Gooptar documented the Ramleela tradition in Sangre Grande, in northeastern Trinidad, not merely as theatrical performance, but as ritual memory enacted collectively within public space, preserving myth, language, gesture, and continuity through repetition across generations.

His work, *Nandi Village*, similarly reconstructed Indo-Trinidadian rural life across earlier decades, preserving textures of speech, kinship, humour, labour, aspiration, and anxiety that modernity continues to steadily erode.

Read separately, Gooptar's body of work appears to move across different subjects. However, read together, they reveal a remarkable coherence.

Again and again, his work circles back toward the same underlying question, namely: How do displaced communities resist erasure?

Suddenly, cinema ceases to appear as being merely nostalgic. Ramleela becomes more than performance; folk songs become more than entertainment. Oral histories become more than recollection; and even silence itself becomes meaningful, trans-

formed into a counter-archive against disappearance.

This is precisely why *The Arkathiya Crossings* feels so resonant for Indo-Caribbean readers today.

Particularly evocative are references to *Vanshavalis*, the ancestral genealogical records maintained by Brahmin record-keepers in India, alongside the *Chitthi Melas*, those letter fairs where scribes read correspondence aloud for largely illiterate communities irreparably separated by oceans and empire's apathy.

The imagery itself carries enormous and poignant emotional force: villagers gathering beneath uncertain skies to hear news from absent husbands, sons, brothers, and daughters; letters crossing seas while memory struggled against oblivion; the very ink itself on the page becoming a fragile bridge between the living and the lost.

Samaroo notes, too, how folk songs absorbed this trauma, preserving memory through oral resistance and ritual continuity. In this sense, Gooptar's work ultimately asks us to reconsider where our Indo-Caribbean history truly resides. Not solely within colonial records and official

archives, but within rituals, songs, inherited instincts, family stories, absences, and the emotional residue carried quietly across generations.

For our diaspora readers here in the GTA and beyond, this matters deeply, since many of us continue inhabiting fragments of these inheritances without always recognising their deeper historical origins. The filmi songs remain; the Bhojpuri

echoes remain; the tassa rhythms remain. The emotional gravitas of Ramleela remains; the reverence for ancestry remains.

However, beneath them linger older histories of rupture, endurance, improvisation, and survival.

At a moment when diasporic identity can sometimes flatten into surface symbolism or algorithmic shorthand, Gooptar's *oeuvre* insists gently but firmly upon depth. It asks us not merely to inherit culture passively, but to investigate it, to read more deeply, to enter archives and oral histories, to ask difficult questions about memory, disappearance, and continuity, and to understand the emotional architectures beneath inherited practices that still shape our communities today.

And perhaps this is where the narrative finally turns toward us as a diaspora.

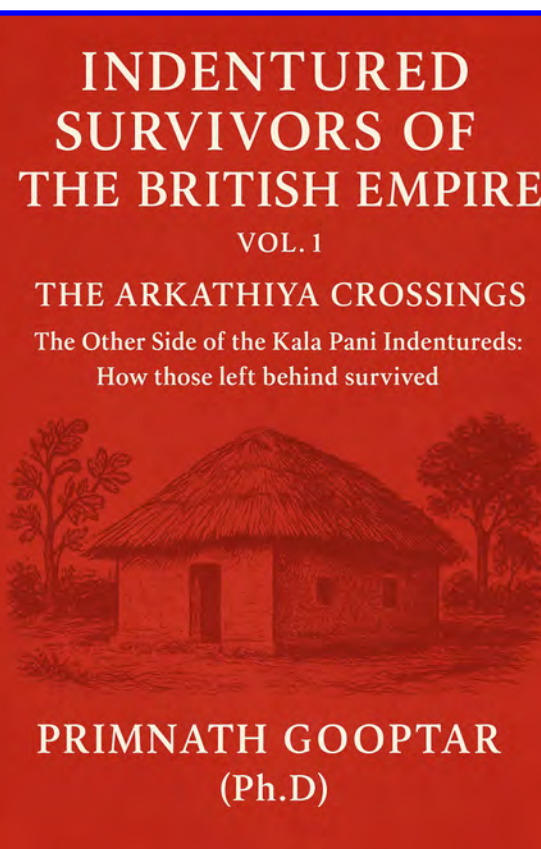
For archives do not sustain themselves automatically; neither do communities. They survive through participation, via read-

ing, listening, questioning, remembering, and carrying stories forward into new generations willing to engage with the difficult inheritances history has left behind.

Near the close of his Foreword, Samaroo describes Gooptar's manuscript as “History with a Moral Heart”. It is a striking phrase, not because it rejects scholarship, but because it insists that scholarship itself may still remain human; that history can still grieve, that archives can still feel, and that remembrance itself may become an act of cultural survival.

And now, with *The Arkathiya Crossings*, Gooptar appears ready to extend that act of remembrance even further, returning not simply to the ships that carried our Indentured ancestors away, but deploying a gaze that has circled back to the villages where silent faces still look eternally outward to the kala pani long after empire moved on.

Sources for this exploration include commentary by Dr Jerome Teelucksingh, Senior Lecturer, History Department, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine in Trinidad; the Foreword to *Indentured Survivors of the British Empire Vol. 1: The Arkathiya Crossings*, by the late Professor Brinsley Samaroo; scholarship by Dr Primnath Gooptar on Indian cinema and Indo-Trinidadian identity; in reporting by the now defunct Trinidad Newsday; and institutional material from The University of the West Indies.





Niagara Falls is lit up last month in Guyana's national colours. Photos by Russell Lutchman and Facebook



Guyana's diaspora celebrates Diamond Jubilee Independence milestone

— Hundreds of Guyanese and friends of Guyana gathered across the GTA late last month to celebrate Guyana's 60th Independence Anniversary through flag-raising ceremonies, interfaith observances, cultural performances, and community gatherings that reflected both pride in the homeland's journey and confidence in its future.

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By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Toronto – The Golden Arrowhead flew proudly above communities across the GTA as Guyanese Canadians and friends of Guyana came together to celebrate the country's Diamond Jubilee Independence Anniversary, marking 60 years since the nation became independent from British colonial rule on May 26, 1966.

Among the largest celebrations was a day-long observance held on May 30 at the North York compound of the Consulate General for Guyana in Toronto, where hundreds gathered for a flag-raising ceremony, interfaith service, and cultural showcase.

The event, the first large-scale Independence celebration to be hosted on the Consulate General's grounds, unfolded under bright sunshine as attendees embraced what organisers later described as a renewed sense of patriotism and optimism about Guyana's future.

A highlight of the proceedings came when Osman and Bibi Shariman Ali, parents of Guyana's President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, joined Honorary Consul Mani Singh and members of the Consulate staff in cutting a commemorative Diamond Jubilee anniversary cake as the crowd cheered.

The celebrations began with a land acknowledgement delivered by Gillian Williams, followed by an Indigenous dance and poem recital presented by siblings Navita and Animesh Persaud.

Interfaith prayers were offered by Pastor Andrew Eastman of Grace Life Centre in Scarborough, Pandit Jageshwar Sharma of Maha Lakshmi Narayan Mandir in Mississauga, and Imam

Shaykh Faisal of the Islamic Forum of Canada in Brampton.

Members of the Guyana Defence Force Ex-Soldiers Association of Canada then hoisted Guyana's national flag, the Golden Arrowhead, while attendees stood in tribute. The national anthems of Guyana and Canada were performed by Shaundell Parris, accompanied by Juno Award-winning trumpeter Jan Morgan.

Throughout the afternoon, music, dance and food combined to celebrate Guyana's multicultural heritage. Guests enjoyed traditional Guyanese dishes, including curry, cook-up rice, dhal puri, potato balls and barbecue chicken, accompanied by mauby and sorrel beverages.

The cultural programme reflected Guyana's rich ethnic tapestry, featuring Indo-Caribbean fusion dance performances by students of *Footsteps Dance School*; Afro-Caribbean presentations by members of the *Children and Youth Dance Theatre*; and patriotic songs and dances by the Singh sisters, Suhana, Sumeera, and Sunaya, accompanied by the Ramesar brothers.

Visitors were also welcomed by steelpan performances from Toronto-based Guyanese artiste Roy McCrea, known professionally as *D'Jango-Jango Pan Fyah*.

In brief remarks, Singh pointed to Guyana's diversity as one of its greatest strengths, adding that the country continues to serve as an example of peaceful coexistence among people of different backgrounds and faith traditions.

He noted that Guyana remains a nation of six races and multiple faiths living together in harmony while pursuing the vision of 'One Guyana' championed by President Ali.

Singh also highlighted Guyana's rapid economic transformation, noting that Guyana continues to record some of the strongest economic growth rates in the world.

"We are living in the most interesting, fascinating, and exciting times in the history of our country," Singh told the appreciative gathering.

The celebrations extended well beyond Toronto.

One week earlier, on May 23, hundreds of residents braved heavy rain to attend a Guyana Independence flag-raising ceremony, cultural show and fashion extravaganza at Brampton City Hall. The event was hosted by the City of Brampton in collaboration with the Guyana Consulate.

Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown used the occasion to recognise the City's substantial Guyanese community and its contributions to civic life.

"I'm told, based on our latest estimates, there are 14,000 residents in Brampton with their roots in Guyana; 14,000 residents, all proudly from Guyana," Brown revealed.

He added, "I personally feel that I'm becoming a little bit more Guyanese by the day."

Brown praised the community's vibrancy and spirit, declaring to applause, "The Guyanese know how to have fun. Loud, proud, friendly, and happy. Today in the City of Brampton, we all celebrate together the proud Guyanese heritage in the city of Brampton. Happy Independence Day!"

The Brampton celebration featured cultural performances, fashion displays, community presentations, and traditional Guyanese snacks supplied by local entrepreneurs. Approximately 400 residents, elected officials, business leaders and faith representatives attended the event.

Meanwhile, in Ajax, residents gathered at Pat Bayly Square for another flag-raising ceremony marking the Independence Anniversary. Singh, members of the Guyana Consulate team, and Osman and Bibi Shariman Ali joined community members and dignitaries in commemorating the milestone.

Hosted through the efforts of former Ajax councillor and 2026 mayoral candidate Ashmeed Khan, the event brought together members of the Guyanese diaspora and the wider community in a celebration of heritage, culture, and national pride.

The anniversary observances formed part of a wider series of events organised across Canada to commemorate Guyana's Diamond Jubilee year.





In photos, at the Imdadul Islamic Center (right) and the International Muslim Organisation (at left), worshippers gathered to mark *Eid al-Adha* to celebrate community, renew friendships, strengthen family ties, and extend kindness to neighbours and strangers alike



Faith, prayer mark GTA Eid al-Adha observances

— Our community’s Muslim faithful across the GTA joined millions around the world in celebrating *Eid al-Adha* on May 29, gathering in mosques, community centres and homes for prayer, fellowship, and acts of charity. At mosques such as Imdadul Islamic Center and the International Muslim Organisation, worshippers marked one of their most sacred observances, reflecting on values of faith, sacrifice, gratitude, and compassion that stand at the heart of the holy day.

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It was a warm, almost-summery May 29 when members of the Muslim faith gathered in the GTA in their finest attire, greeting family, friends and neighbours with embraces, handshakes, and the traditional exchange of *Eid Mubarak* greetings.

For many, the day began with special congregational prayers before continuing with festive meals, family visits, and acts of generosity directed toward those less fortunate.

Known as the Festival of Sacrifice, *Eid al-Adha* commemorates the profound faith, devotion, and obedience of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). The observance also marks the conclusion of the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the central pillars of Islamic faith and practice.

Beyond its religious significance, *Eid al-Adha* serves as a reminder of universal values that resonate far beyond the mosque. The occasion encourages believers to share food and resources with those in need, strengthen family and community bonds, and reflect on the virtues of selflessness, gratitude, and compassion.

Those themes were echoed by political leaders across Canada as they extended *Eid* greetings to our Muslim communities.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford noted that *Eid al-Adha* is a time when Muslims gather with family and friends to observe a sacred holiday rooted in faith and sacrifice.

“*Eid al-Adha* marks the end of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, and it is a time to reflect on the values of faith, sacrifice, gratitude and generosity,” Ford said.

He described the occasion as an opportunity for families, friends, and communities to come together in prayer and celebration while extending compassion and support to those in need.

“At a time when many people around the world are facing conflict and hardship, the message of peace, compassion and unity at the heart of *Eid al-Adha* serves as an important reminder for us all,” he added.

Prime Minister Mark Carney similarly highlighted the values that define the observance, describing *Eid al-Adha* as “a celebration of compassion, generosity, and service”.

“These are values that are fundamental to Canada and at the heart of Canadian Muslims’ contributions to building a stronger, more prosperous future for all,” Carney said.

His remarks underscored the role Muslim communities continue to play in strengthening the social, cultural, and economic fabric of Canadian society.

Federal Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture Marc Miller also reflected on the significance of the day, describing *Eid al-Adha* as a celebration marked by compassion, solidarity, and hope.

Beginning with early morning prayers, he noted, the holiday provides an opportunity for Muslims to gather with loved ones, share festive meals and give generously to those in need.

Miller also reaffirmed support for Muslim communities across Canada and condemned discrimination and Islamophobia.

“We believe that it is a fundamental right for all members of a community to be able to express their culture, beliefs, and faith in complete safety,” he said.

He added that Canada’s diversity remains one of the country’s greatest strengths, enriching communities and helping build a stronger future for generations to come.





Deputy CG Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette (right) with husband, Pharez. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo



Toronto became another home, Deputy Consul General tells diaspora

— For five and a half years, Deputy Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette worked diligently to connect Trinidad and Tobago's diaspora through culture, community, and conversation. As she prepares to leave Toronto, she reflected not only on diplomacy and service, but on a deeper discovery: that home is not confined by geography, but expands wherever people gather in friendship, memory, and belonging.

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By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Toronto – On the evening of May 29, the Consulate General for Trinidad and Tobago was elevated into becoming more than a diplomatic space. It felt, instead, like a gathering of extended family. It was where members of our Trinidad and Tobago diaspora joined fellow diplomats, community leaders, cultural advocates, and well-wishers to bid farewell to Deputy Consul General Tracey Ramsabagh-Mannette, who after five and one half years, is now a permanent strand in the fabric of our shared, diasporic story here in Toronto.

It was the kind of evening where speeches were expected. And indeed, with the tenor, texture, and tonality that emerged from the key speakers, notably Ramsabagh-Mannette's address, the evening evolved into something more than a formal diplomatic send-off.

What unfolded was far more than a farewell. Instead, it became a heartfelt reflection on migration, identity, belonging, and the enduring search for home.

Standing before a room filled with a people who had themselves crossed oceans, built new lives, and learned to carry multiple worlds within them, Ramsabagh-Mannette offered a deeply personal observation that would centre both the heart, and the hearth, that evening.

As she told the gathering, somewhere along the way, Toronto had stopped feeling like simply a place where she worked, and had become another version of home.

Instead, it became a reflection on migration, identity, belonging, and the enduring ties that connect people to a homeland they may have left behind, but never truly and wholly departed.

Positioning her farewell remarks on a trajectory that expounded on the meaning of home, Ramsabagh-Mannette offered a deeply personal meditation that resonated with many in attendance, notably in a city shaped by generations of migrants who continue to carry multiple homes within them.

"It's a complicated and deeply personal thing, this business of home," she told her listeners.

Throughout life, she reflected, people encounter many versions of home, as in childhood homes where memories are formed; in family homes built with love and intention; in spiritual homes rooted in faith and values; and in professional homes discovered through meaningful work.

She added that sometimes, people also discover a second home among strangers who somehow become family.

"And perhaps that is why this posting has affected me so

deeply," she said, further noting, "Because somewhere along the way, Toronto stopped feeling like simply a place where I worked, and started feeling like another version of home."

The observation appeared to strike a chord with many in the audience, with many understanding the layered nature of belonging.

For those who make a career in diplomacy, Ramsabagh-Mannette noted home often becomes a complicated concept. Diplomats spend years learning how to arrive, adapt, connect, and eventually depart. Yet she acknowledged carrying a personal question throughout much of her career.

How could she claim to love Trinidad and Tobago so deeply while spending significant portions of her life living abroad?

It was a question, she said, that many of us in the diaspora may recognise.

"After all, I chose a path that places me outside of Trinidad and Tobago for significant periods of time, much in the same way that many of you chose to migrate."

Over time, she observed how members of our diaspora are sometimes made to feel that distance weakens their connection to the country of their birth. However, she arrived at a different conclusion.

"Distance does not weaken love," she remarked, adding, "If anything, sometimes it sharpens it."

Living away from home, she explained, often heightens appreciation for the details that define identity, noted in the rhythm of speech, in our familiar humour, cherished foods, beloved music, and our resilience that have long characterised nationals from Trinidad and Tobago.

Those observations led into one of her address' most warmly received passages, as she celebrated the dual identities many members of the community navigate every day.

"You have become cultural superheroes," she declared.

With humour and affection, she described a community equally comfortable with winter and Carnival, hockey and cricket, maple syrup and mauby, poutine and pelau.

"You can spend half the year dreaming about landing in Scarborough, Tobago, and the other half shovelling snow in Scarborough, Ontario," she joked, drawing knowing laughter from the audience.

But her light-hearted observations underscored a more serious point. Home, she suggested, is not simply a place on a map. It is an identity that travels. And this was the understanding that shaped much of her work during her five-and-a-half-year posting here in Toronto.

Rather than finding a community waiting to be built, Ramsabagh-Mannette said she discovered one that was already thriving.

"I discovered a community that was already shining" she said.

The role of the Consulate General, she explained, became one of creating opportunities for connection and amplification.

Over the years, the Consulate General opened its doors to

cultural events, book launches, theatrical productions, art exhibitions, religious observances, charitable initiatives, comedy shows, and community celebrations. Partnerships expanded, communications grew, and new connections emerged among organisations and individuals across the GTA and beyond.

She remarked that what emerged was something larger than any single event: an ecosystem; a network of relationships; and a community increasingly connected by shared purpose and mutual support.

In one of the speech's most poignant reflections, Ramsabagh-Mannette suggested that our community was searching for something deeper than entertainment or programming.

"They were looking for belonging," she said, further declaring, "They were looking for connection. They were looking for a home."

That search for belonging has long shaped diaspora communities, including those that continue to preserve and celebrate Trinidad and Tobago's culture across Canada.

Indeed, only two days later, many of those same themes would echo during Indian Arrival Day celebrations hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus and Seniors Association, where its members gathered once again to celebrate heritage, friendship, and community, a living example of the very bonds Ramsabagh-Mannette had described that evening.

As the farewell address drew to a close, more gentle humour was mixed with poignant reflections.

Jokingly, Ramsabagh-Mannette told her audience she had briefly considered treating her departure like a difficult breakup, taking steps to block everyone on social media, avoiding photographs, and listening to *tabanca* music for those who are heartbroken.

It was an admission that this was not a relationship she wished to leave behind.

"But the truth is, this is not a relationship I want to get over. Because life teaches us that we cannot be grateful only for the joyful moments. We must also be grateful for the bittersweet ones. The sadness we feel when something ends is often evidence of how meaningful it was while it lasted. And every meaningful chapter expands our understanding of who we are and where we belong," she said.

For Ramsabagh-Mannette, Toronto had become far more than a diplomatic posting. It had become part of her understanding of home.

Leaving with what she described as an overwhelming sense of gratitude, she thanked Consul General Simone Young, the Consulate General's staff, and our wider community for enriching her experience and broadening her perspective.

Her final thought lingered long after the applause had faded.

Trinidad and Tobago, she said, is far larger than its geographic borders. It lives wherever its people gather to celebrate, create, care, and to cherish one another, and keep our culture alive.

"Home is not diminished when it expands," she said, declaring, "It simply finds room for more people."





Guests at the TT 50 Plus Indian Arrival Day celebration were departing Deputy Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette (left), who was honoured with a farewell ceremony, and Dr Nalini Mohabir, who delivered the feature address. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo

TT 50 Plus marks Indian Arrival Day

Arrival Day is more than a commemoration of a voyage across oceans, but a celebration of resilience, perseverance, and the generations who transformed hardship into opportunity.

Delivering the keynote address at the Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus Association's Indian Arrival Day celebration, held in Scarborough on May 31, Dr Nalini Mohabir reflected on how the descendants of Indentured labourers carried not only their belongings, but also their ingenuity, work ethic, and determination into new lands and new lives.

Her remarks traced a journey from the canefields and villages of Trinidad and Tobago

to the multicultural communities of Canada, where as an Indo-Caribbean people, we have contributed across every profession and sphere of society. While acknowledging the struggles of the past, she urged recognition of a community whose story extends far beyond its origins.

Dr Mohabir also highlighted one of Indian Arrival Day's enduring gifts: the ability to live, work, and flourish across cultural differences. In that spirit, Indian Arrival Day stands not only as a remembrance of ancestry, but also as a celebration of unity, belonging, and the rich multicultural inheritance that continues to shape Caribbean communities at home and throughout the diaspora.



The Festival Management Committee is inviting applicants from passionate, experienced, and community-minded professionals for the following positions:

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Verma walks away from routine back to theatre

— Veteran Bollywood actor Rajeev Verma is reflecting on fame, repetition, and rediscovery after quietly stepping away from mainstream cinema and television. In a revealing interview, the actor spoke candidly about creative exhaustion, typecasting, and his return to theatre, literature, and a more grounded life away from Bollywood's containing glare.

There are actors who leave the screen dramatically, with farewell speeches, emotional tributes, and a final cinematic bow. Then there are actors like Rajeev Verma, who simply drift away from the glare of Bollywood almost quietly, like a familiar face disappearing into the final scene after years of occupying the emotional fixtures of Indian cinema.

For generations of moviegoers, including many across our Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean diaspora, Verma became one of Hindi cinema's most recognisable father figures. Whether in *Maine Pyar Kiya*, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, *Hum Saath-Saath Hain* or *Koi... Mil Gaya*, he often embodied the dependable patriarch: calm, respectable, emotionally steady, and quietly authoritative. Yet behind that familiar cinematic warmth, Verma says the joy of acting had gradually begun to fade.

Speaking recently in an interview with *Dear Generation*, the veteran actor reflected on how years of repetitive casting and industrial routine slowly drained the creative fulfillment from his work.

"The joy had gone out of it for me," he admitted.

What emerged from the interview was not bitterness, but fatigue, the kind that settles in when art slowly begins to resemble office work.

"Gradually, the enjoyment just disappeared," Verma explained, adding, "It had become routine work – like, you're in Mumbai, so you keep going, keep working, just carrying on with the same grind."

For audiences raised on Bollywood's emotionally expansive storytelling, Verma's reflections carry a certain poignancy. Hindi cinema has long relied on archetypes in its heroes, mothers, villains, comic sidekicks, sacrificial fathers – and the actors who succeed in one mould are often trapped within it.

Verma said that after the blockbuster success of *Maine Pyar Kiya*, producers repeatedly approached him with near-identical wealthy father roles.

"If you do one particular kind of character, the filmmakers don't really think beyond that afterward," he said, adding, "They just think, 'Who's working well in father roles right now?' And then you get permanently boxed into that category."

There is an irony in that confession. Verma became memorable precisely because he brought humanity and restraint to those characters. Yet the very success that made him indispensable also narrowed the industry's imagination about what else he could become.

"Every film kept offering me the same role," he recalled.

He added, "I'd ask what the character was, and they'd reply, 'Sir, the same type you did before.' That's when I felt like stepping away, because the joy was gone. At heart, I come from theatre."

The actor also described the punishing rhythms of television production, where long shooting schedules gradually replaced artistic exploration with mechanical repetition.

"You'd arrive in the morning and get home at 10 at night," he said, adding,

"Eventually, I made office-like rules for myself – I'd reach by

10 and leave by 8 in the evening, that's it. I realised it had all become routine," he noted.

That word, routine, lingers heavily throughout Verma's reflections. In many ways, his comments open a broader conversation about burnout within India's entertainment industry, where actors often juggle relentless schedules while trying to preserve a sense of creative identity.

But Verma's narrative is equally about reclamation.

Rather than remain trapped inside a system that no longer nourished him, the actor quietly returned to the spaces that had first shaped him artistically: books, theatre, teaching, and community engagement.

Today, he runs a theatre group in Bhopal, conducts drama workshops, and devotes his energy to performance as a tool for social awareness and emotional sensitivity.

"I'm very fond of reading books... theatre is my passion," he said.

In another striking observation, Verma argued that theatre and performing arts should not be confined only to actors, but should also be embraced in professions such as medicine, policing, and administration because of their role in nurturing empathy and communication.

For many in our diaspora, particularly those among us who grew up consuming Bollywood through VHS tapes, Sunday television broadcasts, and crowded cinema halls across Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and Toronto, Verma represents a familiar emotional vocabulary of Hindi cinema's golden commercial era. He was never the flamboyant superstar at the centre of the poster. Instead, he occupied something subtler but equally enduring: the emotional architecture



Rajeev Verma

around the hero.

His screen presence stretched across an era that included some of Bollywood's biggest stars, among them Salman Khan, with whom he became so strongly associated that many viewers believed he was Salman's real-life father.

In an earlier interview with *NDTV*, Verma reflected warmly on the lasting legacy of *Maine Pyar Kiya*, noting that audiences still remembered its dialogues decades later.

Away from cinema, Verma's personal life also carries connections to one of India's most famous film dynasties. He is married to Rita Verma, sister of veteran actress and politician Jaya Bachchan, making him brother-in-law to megastar Amitabh Bachchan. Yet unlike the intensely public lives often associated with Bollywood celebrity, Rajeev and Rita Verma largely chose distance from the industry's glamorous circuits, preferring a quieter life rooted in theatre and education in Bhopal.

Long before cinema found him, Ranjeev Verma had trained and worked as an architect in a government firm. Acting, he revealed, was never originally part of the plan. It was only after a relative informed him that Rajshri Productions was searching for someone to play Salman Khan's father that he auditioned in Mumbai, a moment that unexpectedly altered the course of his life.

Now, after decades in front of cameras, Verma appears content stepping away from the machinery of fame, not in a dramatic exit beneath studio lights, but a quiet return to passion, purpose, and self; in a quiet return to the slower, more reflective rhythms of theatre, literature, teaching, family, and ordinary human connection.



Ramakant Dayama

Actor Dayama passes at 69

— Veteran Indian actor Ramakant Dayama, known for his work across theatre, film, television, and streaming platforms, died in Mumbai on May 26 at the age of 69 following a prolonged illness. Tributes poured in from colleagues and admirers who remembered him as a warm, versatile, and deeply respected performer.

Veteran Indian actor Ramakant Dayama, whose career spanned theatre, cinema, television, advertising, and digital streaming platforms, died in Mumbai on May 26 following a prolonged illness. He was 69.

The news of his death prompted an outpouring of grief from colleagues in India's entertainment fraternity, many of whom remembered him not only as a gifted actor, but as a generous and spirited presence whose artistic journey traversed multiple generations of Indian storytelling.

Actress and longtime friend Shubhangi Latkar confirmed his death through an emotional social media tribute accompanied by a video showing Dayama singing, dancing, and laughing among friends. In her tribute, she reflected on unfinished plans the pair had hoped to realise together, including a Hindi stage production and a poetry presentation.

"When I requested him, he smiled and said, 'Let me get well soon,'" Latkar wrote, recalling one of their final conversations.

She described Dayama as "full of life, warmth, and energy", adding that despite months of illness, he continued to inspire those around him with resilience, humour, and artistic passion.

Dayama began his artistic career in street theatre before transitioning into film and television, building a reputation as a dependable character actor whose performances quietly enriched productions across genres and formats.

Among his notable film appearances was his role as an Indian Hockey Federation official in the Shah Rukh Khan-led sports drama *Chak De! India* in 2007. That same year, he appeared in *Gandhi My Father*, before later taking on the role of a political secretary in the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *Paa* in 2009.

Over the years, his filmography expanded to include projects such as *Shuddh Desi Romance*, *Brothers*, *Bank Chor*, and *Ram Setu*, while his work also extended into productions including *Mumbai Saga*, *Crew*, *Farzi*, *The Trial*, and *The Chargesheet*.

For many younger viewers, Dayama became widely recognisable through his portrayal of *Shantilal Mehta* in the acclaimed web series *Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story*, a performance that introduced his work to streaming-era audiences and reinforced his versatility as an actor capable of moving fluidly between stagecraft and contemporary screen storytelling.

His most recent appearance came in the award-winning short film *Thursday Special*, alongside actress Anubha Fatehpuria. The project was presented by filmmakers Shoojit Sircar and Vikramaditya Motwane.

Despite his extensive screen career, Dayama remained deeply connected to theatre. In July 2022, he performed at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in a production where he portrayed former Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma before an audience that included then-President Ram Nath Kovind.

Outside of film and theatre, Dayama also became familiar to audiences through television advertising campaigns for major brands including ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, Chupa Chup, and Thumbs Up. One of the Axis Bank commercials featuring the actor received recognition at the Abby Awards in 2023.

Dayama is survived by his wife, Dr Asha Naithani Dayama, and daughter, actress and digital creator Yashaswini Dayama, known for her performances in films and web productions including *Dear Zindagi* and *Adulting*.



Hema Malini accepts the posthumous *Padma Vibhushan* on behalf of her late husband Dharmendra during the 2026 Padma Awards ceremony presented by India's President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi on May 25. Malini stated afterwards that she felt Dharmendra's "warm presence" as she received the honour.



Draft Night and Match Day. Photos by Russell Lutchman and Rizwan Mohammed



Cricket unites communities in record fundraiser

— Hundreds of participants, volunteers, survivors, celebrity ambassadors, and supporters gathered at Celebration Square in Mississauga on May 30 as the second annual Cricket to Conquer Cancer fundraiser raised a record-breaking \$1.3 million for The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, helping advance cancer research, treatment, and patient care.

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Mississauga – The thwack of cricket balls hitting bats, the cheers from supporters, the aroma from food vendors and the rhythms of cultural performances combined to create a festive atmosphere at Celebration Square on May 30, where hundreds gathered for a cause that extended far beyond sport.

Players, volunteers, cancer survivors, community leaders, families and celebrity ambassadors came together for the second annual Cricket to Conquer Cancer fundraiser, helping raise a record-breaking \$1.3 million in support of The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation and its mission to advance cancer research, treatment, and patient care.

What began in 2025 as Canada's first major street-cricket fundraiser has quickly evolved into one of the country's most significant community-driven fundraising initiatives. The 2026 event surpassed last year's fundraising total of approximately \$1.16 million while welcoming an expanded field of participants united by a shared commitment to creating a world free from the fear of cancer.

Throughout the day, Celebration Square was transformed into a vibrant gathering place where seasoned cricketers played alongside newcomers, corporate teams competed with community organisations, and supporters from diverse cultural backgrounds rallied around a common purpose.

The event's unique street-cricket format encouraged participation from players of all skill levels, reflecting the inclusive spirit that has helped fuel its rapid growth. While friendly competition unfolded on the pitch, the deeper purpose remained firmly in focus.

For many participants, the event represented an opportunity to honour loved ones lost to cancer, celebrate survivors, and contribute to research that may change countless lives in the future.

Cancer continues to affect families across every community. Organisers noted that approximately two in five Canadians are expected to receive a cancer diagnosis during their lifetime, underscoring the importance of continued investment in research, prevention, early detection, and treatment.

"In its second year, The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation Cricket event continues to unite a passionate community around a shared purpose, fueling the next breakthroughs in cancer research, diagnostics, and care," said Dr Miyo Yamashita, President and CEO of The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation in a media release.

She added, "We are deeply grateful to every participant who stepped onto the pitch and every supporter who sponsored

them. The funds raised will fuel research that has an impact on outcomes across Canada and globally. Thank you for helping us Carry The Fire."

One of the defining features of Cricket to Conquer Cancer is its ability to bring together diverse communities through a shared love of the game.

Long regarded as a cultural touchstone throughout the Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, and many Commonwealth nations, cricket has become one of Canada's fastest-growing sports, particularly among immigrant and multicultural communities. The fundraiser reflects that diversity, creating a space where sport serves as a bridge between cultures while supporting a cause that touches virtually every family.

The event also featured live entertainment, cultural performances, food and beverage vendors, cricket vendors, and interactive activities that allowed supporters of all ages to participate.

Adding to the excitement was the participation of several celebrity ambassadors, including international cricket star Carlos Brathwaite, Canadian music icon Jully Black, former NBA player Jamaal Magloire, actress Supinder Wraich, and Canadian Women's National Cricket Team Vice-Captain Achini Perera.

Top fundraising teams earned the opportunity to draft celebrity players to their rosters through a special celebrity draft, further strengthening the connection between fundraising and friendly competition.

For international star cricketer Brathwaite, the cause is deeply personal.

"When my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer, and when I lost my close friend Kenroy to this disease, it deepened my commitment to making a difference," he was quoted as saying in the PMCF's media release.

He added, "I'm proud to bring my passion for cricket to this event and rally support for cancer research that is transforming outcomes, back home in Barbados, and around the world."

Perera also reflected on the personal significance of participating in the event.

"This event brings me back to where my love of cricket began – in the basement with my older brother, using his oversized gear and dreaming of being part of the game," she said, adding, "I used to show up to his matches hoping I'd get the chance to step in, and when I finally did, it opened the door to opportunities I never imagined. Supporting The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation Cricket event is my way of giving back and to help create a brighter future for patients and their loved ones."

Researchers, clinicians, and scientists at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre continue to advance discoveries in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship care. Organisers noted that support generated through events such as Cricket to Conquer Cancer helps sustain work that benefits patients not only in Canada, but around the world.



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