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Our Community Is Thriving!

Diaspora leaders call for healing, unity, and justice

The tragic death of Adrianna Younge has seen our diaspora leaders here in the GTA calling for compassion, unity, and justice. Their calls are as much a balm as a reminder that even amid such a painful loss of a young life, a nation can choose unity over chaos; that Guyanese can respond to tragedy not by breaking apart, but by drawing closer together.

Toronto – The tragic death in Guyana of 11-year-old Adrianna Younge has not only pierced the conscience of a grieving nation, but has also stirred poignant appeals for healing and solidarity from Guyanese diaspora leaders here in Canada.

Amid national mourning and societal unrest in the homeland, here in the GTA International Muslim Organisation's leader, Omar Farouk, and community leader, Roy Doobay, have urged Guyanese at home and abroad to honour Adrianna's memory with compassion, unity, and a renewed commitment



Omar Farouk



Roy Doobay

to peace and justice.

Adrianna's death, still under active investigation, has sent shockwaves through Guyana, igniting protests, public anguish, and most distressingly, incidents of retaliatory violence, including the horrifying acid attack on schoolchildren and a teacher from Chateau Margot Primary School.

In response, community leaders, in Guyana and abroad, have spoken out forcefully to condemn the violence, and to reclaim the national conversation toward healing and reflection.

In a public statement titled *Leadership in a Time of Loss*, Farouk extended condolences to Adrianna's family and expressed solidarity from the Guyanese diaspora.

"No words can undo the sorrow that now lives in the hearts of her parents and loved ones, but as a nation, including those

See Page 11: Leaders call



The Law & You Conference at Vishnu Mandir on April 19 saw our community engaging with legal experts in discussions about the consequences of impactful actions that can forever change our lives. In photo are moderator Dhaman Kisson (left to right); visiting guest from the UK, Vidur Dindyal; and VM's leader, Dr Budhendraauth Doobay. See Page 14.

PM Persad-Bissessar's vision anchored in healing

Kamla Persad-Bissessar's return to lead Trinidad and Tobago as its Prime Minister signals more than a political comeback; it marks the beginning of a leadership vision anchored in empathy, national healing, and generational transformation, with a vow to serve the forgotten, commune with the people, and to govern with love.

Port-of-Spain – In a stirring and emotionally charged address delivered at President's House in Port-of-Spain on May 1 after being sworn-in as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, UNC leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar pledged to lead a government defined by empathy, inclusion, and generational transformation.

With this declaration, she made history as the only woman to return as prime minister for a second term, dedicating her leadership to those left behind, forgotten, or silenced.

"For too long, citizens have carried the heavy burden of a government that had forgotten them," she declared, adding, "It is time to set Trinidad and Tobago on the right path, where we cease to govern to simply win the next general election, and instead govern to create wealth and opportunities for seven generations into the future."

Persad-Bissessar, 73, returned to office after her UNC secured 26 seats in the

April 28 general elections. Addressing the nation at her swearing-in ceremony, she articulated a governing philosophy centred on love, care, and communion with nationals of Trinidad and Tobago.

Departing from her 2010 oath that was sworn on the *Bhagavad Gita*, this time

she chose the Constitution to represent her commitment to equality across faiths and people, later explaining, "We say here that every creed and race find an equal place. There is just one God and there is one race – the human race."

Her enabling message was one of intimate proximity to the lives and struggles of nationals of Trinidad and Tobago.

As she affirmed, "You will be my priority. You must always know you have a leader who cares for you and understands your problems. My role as Prime Minister is simple – it is to love you and to do everything possible to make you and your loved ones happy."

While pledging kindness and service, Persad-Bissessar also issued an unequivocal warning to her incoming government ministers, one which notably, was layered with an irrevocable, maternal strength.

"If you treat citizens with callousness, contempt, or corruption, I guarantee you retribution will be swift and brutal. Never mistake my appearance or

See Page 20: 'Not for power'



Her right forefinger ink-stained after voting, TT's newly-elected Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar takes the oath of office in Port-of-Spain on May 1

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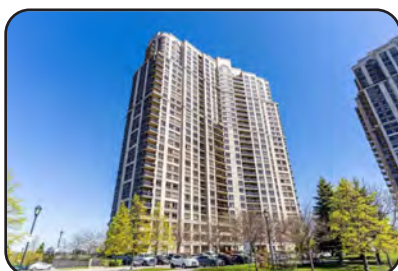
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Rotary Club marks 20 years with an evening of giving

The highlight of the evening was the Rotary Club's donation

Marking its 20th anniversary, the club was lauded for its two decades of impact. President Ashni Ramsammy took the opportunity to share their recent achievements under her leadership. Serving as the evening's host was lawyer, philanthropist, and community leader Dhaman Kissoon, who reflected on Rotary's journey and underscored its lasting legacy.



The Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City Centennial's hard-working team at its Spring Fling gala; in front row, centre, is Club President Ashni Ramsammy. *Photos by Ramesh Ramkalawan*



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RKMCC’s leader, Dwarka Persaud (front row, second from right) with Vaishali Panwar (at right, front row) and members of the Ram Leela cast

RKMCC fund-raiser features eternal Ram Leela

An evocative staging of Ram Leela at the University of Waterloo on April 19 moved the audience with its fusion of faith and artistry, while uplifting our diaspora’s pride; even as the event raised vital funds for the new Radha Krishna Mandir (see photo at bottom right), it also offered a glimpse into how we are preserving our heritage while building for future generations.

Waterloo – The Humanities Theatre at the University of Waterloo pulsed with emotion and purpose on the evening of April 19, as families, youth, elders, and artists came together in a spirited celebration of culture, community, and futurity.

A vivid performance of Ram Leela, presented by Panwar Music and Dance, transformed the stage into a space where the eternal narrative met the living pulse of our thriving diaspora.

Directed and choreographed by Hemant and Vaishali Panwar, the performance drew from Tulsidas’ Ramcharitmanas, combining devotional chants, classical Kathak dance, and expressive theatre. It narrated the journey of Lord Rama from exile to victory using arresting visuals and keenly portrayed performances.

However, at its heart, the uplifting moment for the evening was not only about the splendour on stage; it was also about legacy, identity, and the collective generosity of how our community is committed to building its future.

The production served as a fund-raiser for the nearly completed Radha Krishna Mandir and Cultural Centre (RKMCC) in Cambridge. The 21,000-square-foot facility is soon to become a cornerstone of spiritual, educational, and cultural life in the area. With construction well underway, the evening’s contributions represented a meaningful step toward fulfilling that vision.

In a community where many youths are Canadian-born and of Indo-Caribbean descent, the event’s significance was deeply felt. Their participation alongside the careful guidance of directors and the involvement of parents was seen by many in attendance as a signal of cultural continuity and of our resilience.

It meant that the Ram Leela play became a bridge that spanned not just continents, but across generations.

Many volunteers were instrumental in making the evening a success. Deepika Patel, Venu

Gandreti, Vishnu Balabhadur, and Navneet Pansotra led the event’s coordination efforts, and were supported by a team of dedicated community members.

Their behind-the-scenes work allowed the performance’s artistry to shine while ensuring a welcoming and immersive experience for all attendees.

Local businesses and professionals also stepped forward, offering sponsorship and support. Among them were Chai Wala, National Research & Development Inc., Gino’s Pizza, Jas Lamba (Right at Home Realty), Healthwise Pharmacy, A.R. Blinds, Jalpesh Patel (Mortgage Specialist), Kasturi Indian & Hakka Chinese Cuisine, Super India Food Market, Indian Puja Bazaar, Milan Indian Street Food, Our Packaging Service, Tulika Hora (Business Horizons), and Woodland Park Dental.

The event also drew praise from community leaders. Dhaman Kissoon, a lawyer, community advocate, and host for the evening, later thanked the Panwars, saying: “I attend many professional shows all over the world. I was tremendously impressed by the professionalism of all the actors. Each participant, actor, and actress took their responsibility seriously, and the results were overwhelming... The fact that you donated this show to the Radha Krishna Mandir is extremely generous.”

Kissoon added that Hemant and Vaishali were “an asset to the entire Canadian community”, while commending their creativity and leadership.

His remarks echoed the broader sentiment felt in the theatre that evening in the collective admiration for their artistic efforts that brought together spirit, discipline, and a resonating sense of purpose in futurity.

The Board of RKMCC has since extended its gratitude to donors, attendees, and spiritual leaders that made the event a success.

Among them were Dr Budhendranauth Doobay of Vishnu Mandir, Pandit Hardat and Seeta Ashwar, and the management of Bhawani Shankar Mandir in Brampton, all of whom were thanked for their encouragement and support in helping complete the centre.

Once open, RKMCC will provide spaces for worship, learning, and community engagement in nurturing the values that were so vividly enacted on stage that evening.

With files by Dr Bhaleka Persaud



The evening saw many youth participating in the Ram Leela event



Construction of the Radha Krishna Mandir continues, with the building now showing signs of its rootedness and sacred presence. The hardworking team at RKMCC is striving for its completion with ongoing fund-raising to transform this beautiful edifice into a cornerstone for our spiritual and cultural upliftment.



Young actors in a pointed display of determination during the performance

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Editorial

National homecoming

Not all revolutions begin with a clenched fist. Some arrive with open arms, eyes warm with memory, and a voice that calls each national by name. Kamla Persad-Bissessar's return as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is not just a political re-entry; it is a national homecoming.

It is the re-emergence of a politics that dares to speak of love in public life, of healing in governance, and of a maternal vigilance ready to defend the nation's most vulnerable.

On May 1, beneath the formal trappings of a swearing-in ceremony at President's House in Port-of-Spain, Persad-Bissessar presented a rare offering in political rhetoric: tenderness. In pledging to "love you and to do everything possible to make you and your loved ones happy", she reframed the act of governance not as command but as communion.

Her return, as the only woman in the nation's history to serve two terms as prime minister, was steeped in more than precedent; it was anchored in promise. Notably, it was a promise made not to the privileged few behind the lighthouse in Port-of-Spain, but to "the forgotten people" across the twin-island republic.

The heart of Persad-Bissessar's new vision is as startling as it is sincere: politics, she insists, must privilege human beings. In a time when democratic fatigue threatens the global order and public trust in institutions has frayed, her rhetoric offers a countercurrent to a caring humanity.

"You must always know you have a leader who cares for you," she said in plain words. Her language was not about flourish; instead, it was familial. This was not the realpolitik language of a detached technocrat; instead, of a mother re-entering a house that has suffered neglect.

Her speech carried both balm and blade. To the nation, she offered love and restoration. To her ministers, she issued a warning: "If you treat citizens with callousness, contempt, or corruption... retribution will be swift and brutal."

It was an assertion of accountability not cloaked in bureaucratic jargon, but in the elemental language of a mother's protection, where betrayal of trust would be met with unwavering consequence. This dialectic of love with firmness, compassion, and conviction is the moral fulcrum of Persad-Bissessar's approach. It speaks not only to her years in public life, but to her years in political exile.

"I was a pariah to many," she admitted, revealing the human toll of leadership loss. Yet it was "the poorest and humblest people" who restored her spirit. This reciprocity, between leader and led, is now the basis of her social contract.

Skeptics will inevitably raise the spectre of political romanticism, questioning whether affection can truly translate into administration. Love, they may argue, is not policy. But this is a misreading of both Persad-Bissessar's intent and the nature of her public leadership.

Her love is not abstract; it is granular, regional, named. From Guanapo to Icacos, from Kernahan to Charlotteville, she called to communities by name, treating them not as data points but as constituents of care. Her governance model is not naïve; it is deliberate in its refusal to accept detachment as a prerequisite for power.

Others may argue that her speech was heavy on sentiment and light on substance. Yet the architecture of her address was clear: economic revitalisation, security reform, technological equity, and revenue diversification.

These are not mere aspirations; they are deliverables on a timeline of intergenerational responsibility.

"Some of the seeds we will plant... will blossom into trees whose fruit we may not eat," she observed, evoking the ethic of stewardship so often lacking in short-cycle politics.

In a political landscape often drained of intimacy, Persad-Bissessar has returned not as a billionaire president, but as a servant among her people. She has reminded us that the act of governance can still be tender, that public service can still be rooted in empathy, and that leadership, at its best, listens.

Her swearing-in was not the culmination of a campaign but the ignition of a covenant. A covenant in which every citizen is seen, heard, cherished, and who will be loved.

In our homeland, and in the diaspora, let us hold her to these words, and measure them in its action. For in our age of cynicism, perhaps it is time to govern with the heart.

Emerging out of pandemic isolation, ICCA thriving today

Our world paused in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic lock down, leaving us with our thoughts and an opportunity for reflection and creativity. Despite the empty streets, the vacant bars and restaurants, and the distances from each other, our minds remained alive.

During this bleak period, amidst our ever-changing world, a concept emerged as a reflection of history, culture, and community. Then, understanding what it meant to be "Indo-Caribbean" was at the forefront of my thoughts. Namely, what was the story of my ancestors; what defined the household I grew up in; what connected me to others; and what was the importance in recognising one's identity.

Born in Canada, I have considered myself "Canadian" – plain and simple. I still do, but the most important aspect of this title was that it could be represented in so many ways.

My peers were just as Canadian, but they understood their culture, were familiar with their lineage, and more importantly, have a community where they express, learn, and experience their heritage.

Those whom I define as Indo-Caribbean did not have a clear path forward, as others do from different ethno-cultural groups. But what does it mean to be Indo-Caribbean?

We are the children of ancestors who were transported from South Asia to colonies in the Caribbean to fulfil the need of labour. After the emancipation of enslaved Africans, our ancestors were targeted as an accessible and cheap labour force, and crossed the *kala pani* to toil on sugar cane plantations.

Promised a better life, many were optimistic: a new land, a new home, and a dream of opportunity. However, the new land and home were defined by degrading servitude, poverty, discrimination, and painful labour.

This story of my ancestors inspires my motives. For when they boarded ships, they were not only thinking about their futures; they were also hopeful of the opportunity they would provide for their children and their grandchildren.

Similarly, when our parents boarded planes, many for the first time, leaving behind their families to travel to a new and unknown destination, their intent was to similarly seek opportunities for their children.

I constantly reflect on my parents, much younger than I am now, in their mid-twenties. Arriving at the airport in Timehri, Guyana, it might have been the first time they saw a plane up close. No *iPhone* to *Google* to view images about their destination, and having limited knowledge of the conditions here other than what they were told by relatives who had arrived before.

They took their assigned seats on the aircraft filled with optimism to build a better life for themselves and their future family.

Fast forward almost three decades, and like my parents, many arrived in Canada, settled, built homes, and found careers across the GTA.

The dreams of our ancestors, and our parents are for their children to thrive. And through such ambition to build lives abroad, the journey that brought us here should also define our path forward.

It was in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic that an organisation was conceived based on the optimism of our ancestors, and was modelled on their dedication and hard work.

In May 2021, the *Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association* was launched on *Instagram* with the purpose of understanding who we are, where we come from, and our footprint in our new home in Canada.

Four years later, a concept that emerged on an *Instagram* account is now a registered non-profit in Canada dedicated to Indo-Caribbean people in Canada.

Now with a dedicated team of over 40 volunteers, we seek to serve our community by ensuring we are not left behind, and that we leverage the struggles of our ancestors to build a better future.

ICCA operates programs and services with the objective to connect, serve, and amplify Canada's Indo-Caribbean community. It is vital to know who we are for us to be better citizens; for us to engage with others, and for us to find paths to success.

A new, young, and eager generation, the descendants of Indentured workers, we carry on their spirit to tackle challenges, combat adversity, and work to define who we are, and to ensure that life becomes better for future generations.

Where we are today, the lives we lead, and the situations we traverse are spaces that our ancestors never imagined. Their lives were limited, but their dreams of what would be were not.

As we move forward as a community, as we continue to succeed, and as we continue to carve our place here in Canada, we should never lose sight that our lives were the wildest dreams of our ancestors. We should not take this lightly.

We are the ancestors of generations to come. Our actions today will define their tomorrow. This is why we will work to uplift our community, and ensure that we reach our full potential, so we can arrive at the places that are now in our dreams.

Growing up in the aisles of markets, theatre, and memory

It was one of my first early epiphanies as a child about the heartbeat, that moment of realisation, a glimpse into heaven – that if you want to really know a people, please do not look to their parliaments, and in that time before email, do not be deceived by the pastoral grandeur in their postage stamps.

Instead, gird your legs with stiff blue jeans against scrapes from broken wicker protruding like thorns from shopping baskets, and become immersed in their markets.

Now I am not talking about these modern-day grocery stores with frosted glass facades air-brushed with fruits and vegetables, and which look like they were grown in the late 1960s television series, *Land of the Giants*. I mean a *real* market, like Coronation in Kingston, Cheapside in Bridgetown, Stabroek in Georgetown, and my perennial favourites, the south, central, and eastern markets in Trinidad.

Here is the real deal, where vendors issue catcalls as brash and too-familiar enticements to shoppers across the aisles, much like the regulars inhabiting the musty, open-door drink-ing establishments who call out to passersby on the street.

Here you can purchase a pound of ochroes that comes with unsolicited, unscientific, and bonus advice on how to prepare them in a soup, which can either boost the love life, or reduce blood sugar to a healthy level.

Such a dynamic of engagement and immersion is the true centre of a civilisation; here is a confluence where commerce, gossip, memory, and the aroma of saltfish fermenting in the humidity collide in bountiful, nostril-clenching disarray.

However, to put theory, structure, and metanarrative aside, for me, markets are more than a site of confluence. Across my decades of visits, there is a moment in my immersion when I come to appreciate that it is throbbing with a pulse; when the location morphs from its underlying architecture of commerce to take on a life of its own.

In this radiating hub are where the cultures of villages flow in to intersect with the town; or in the *cliché* with its threads now worn down, where the rubber meets the road. It is here where I stand and wonder, my legs amply armoured against the thorny spikes of errant wicker, where I note a child accompanying an adult being taught that the price of cassava comes with qualities that cannot be monetised, such as humility and courtesy.

It is here at temporal sites of negotiation, where grandmothers like my eternal Ma, who endured persistent poverty,

the ration cards of World War II, and the exploitation of her labour by an empire greedy for sugar, bargained like a seasoned diplomat. But in the end, it was not only a root of cassava that changed hands, but glances, greetings, personal narratives, and sometimes with language edged like sharpened steel that could easily shave off the top of a green coconut.

And as an instructive moment, Ma would say to me, clinging to the folds of her *gangaree*, and at five or six years old, "Tell the nice man 'Thank You' for the cassava". At which, in a transport of spontaneity, and despite the disproving, hawkish eyes of his wife, the vendor offers up to Ma an earth-encrusted sweet potato, saying, "Boil this for the little boy".

I remember clinging to Ma's skirt in the bustle of sound and scent, awed and overwhelmed at the oversize. The subtle rot in the aroma of mangoes spotted with overripe at reduced prices was nose high; the volleys of shouting across the stalls carried with it disarming textures of affection; and being discouraged by Ma's stern eye from stamping down on discarded crab shells for the gratifying crunch.

How I luxuriated in observation! Here were church, theatre, parliament, school, post office, street corner preaching, and rumshop moralising bundled into one glorious, sweaty sprawl.

Ma was all dignity and courtesy, with a sprinkle of mischief. She had a way of picking up a small pumpkin and peering into it like a fortune-teller holding up a glass ball. Telling its future, it was "cut too early"; it was "too young and would not boil".

To the performativity of call and response in the theatre of the marketplace, the vendor's reply to an appreciative audience was, "Ma'am, it have nothing in this market older than you".

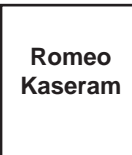
There were the moments when Ma examined a bunch of thyme like Vincent Van Gogh holding a thumb to a landscape. Here was latent creativity, Ma later stirring her master class pot of soup with its surface streaks radiating like *Starry Night*.

In my later years, I have come to understand my crab-shell crunching feet still remain rooted to these sites of memory. Our markets are more than sites of confluence; each stall is a narrative: the cocoa moulded into balls, shredded coconut thickened with molasses, and the swirls of *jalebi* glued together with sugary syrup, point to our resilience, are evidence of a retained archaeology and a foretaste of our ongoing healing after empire, and how we are forging new lives even as reparations are denied.

It is more than a throbbing pulse; it is our heartbeat.



Ryan Singh

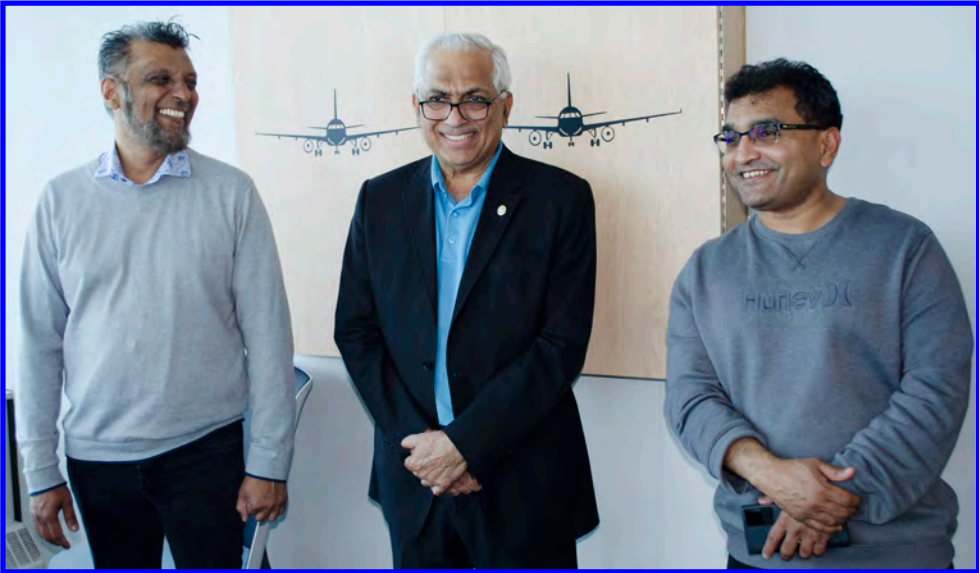


Romeo Kaseram

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One Love Family Services held its monthly Golden Series for Seniors on April 26 at Greenboro Drive in Etobicoke. The event was sponsored by the New Horizons Fund and One Love Family Services, and featured Aundre Telfer as guest speaker. Seniors in attendance responded to Telfer’s engagement on what were the issues driving their decisions for the federal elections, which were being held days later. A complimentary lunch was served during the session. The event also saw a pleasant visit, and a short, inspiring address delivered by lawyer and community advocate, Dhaman Kissoon. In photos, seniors, guests, and One Love Family Services organisers participate in the discussion and lunch.





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E: amisha@rrcpa.ca
S: www.rrcpa.ca

PNM's leadership choice may be why many supporters did not vote

Dear Editor,

Trinidad and Tobago's general election produced less of a democratic mandate and more a statement of silent discontent. Voter turnout plunged from 67 percent in 2015 to a stark 54 percent this year, indicative of an electorate speaking less with ballots and more with absence.

In our Westminster-style system, this is a form of protest that is both potent and politically dangerous.

Using approximate figures, the PNM saw its vote count collapse from 378,000 in 2015 to 220,000 in 2025 – a loss of 158,000 votes. The UNC, by contrast, increased its share from 290,000 to 334,000 – a modest rise of 44,000.

These facts tell a story more about the psychology and culture of political participation in our country than any surge of support for either side. The results do not reveal any seismic shift in political allegiance.

Instead, it is indicative of a crystallisation of partisan stability regarding the UNC, and conditional loyalty for the PNM. The UNC has, in essence, hardened into a political bloc with a relatively fixed base that votes for the party regardless of broader national currents. Its strongholds maintained voter-engagement levels close to and above the national average.

Conversely, the PNM base appears increasingly contingent – it mobilises only under conditions of inspiration or confidence – and retreats when disillusioned. They do not cross the floor, they just stay home. Constituencies won by the PNM exhibited a broader range of turnout percentages with some falling below 40 percent.

What accounted for this mass abstention by traditional PNM voters in 2025?

A plethora of factors ranging from crime to the economy can be explored, but at the heart of it is leadership selection. When Dr Rowley handpicked Stuart Young to carry the party's leadership mantle – a person widely perceived as an extension of the era and elite politics of proximity, privilege, and insularity – he bypassed democratic contestation, the core ethos of representational politics, and the one man, one vote system which was



A sombre PNM political leader Dr Keith Rowley (second, left) concedes to the UNC on the night of April 28; with Rowley are Stuart Young (left to right), Rohan Sinanan, and Port-of-Spain Mayor Chinua Alleyne

changed in the party's constitution under his leadership.

It was a move that insulted a politically conscious base beyond its membership.

The new Opposition Leader Penelope Beckles, by contrast, was always the natural successor by pedigree, principle, and position. A veteran of the party with decades of experience, she held multiple ministerial portfolios with discipline and competence, served with distinction as Trinidad and Tobago's ambassador to the UN, and remained symbolically grounded in the party's traditional ethos of meritocratic ascent.

Her relative independence from the inner circle of Rowley's governance over his ten years in office gave her a unique position: she could have been seen as real change, not cosmetic continuity.

Had Beckles been offered the opportunity to compete fairly, and had she been embraced as the future of the party, the PNM might still not have won the election, but they almost certainly would have mitigated the disenchantment that kept close to

160,000 of their voters at home.

In a political environment shaped by optics, symbolism, and fatigue, her political leadership candidacy could have restored belief in internal fairness and institutional renewal.

The numbers also, therefore, reveal two contrasting images. First, the UNC did not win over new hearts; they won by default. Second, the PNM did not lose to opposition strategy; it lost to its own failures, notably its detachment from the ground.

When parties operate in echo chambers of affluence and proximity, disconnected from the rhythms of everyday life, they fail to recognise that legitimacy must be re-earned, not inherited.

If the PNM hopes to return, it must not listen to the financiers and pundits – rather it must listen to the 160,000 people who chose not to vote for them; they are the true swing constituency.

Meanwhile, the UNC was unable to capitalise fully on the PNM's inability to address the country's main issues of crime and the economy. Despite its energetic social media campaign and deliberate

attempts to diversify its image, most notably by placing some Afro-Trinidadian candidates in traditional UNC constituencies, the electoral data shows that the party remained unable to significantly expand its base.

Their attempt to rebrand as a national, multi-ethnic alternative remains hampered by historical baggage and entrenched perceptions, not necessarily realities, of exclusion.

Voter abstention is not always apathy, it is oftentimes strategic and a rejection of the false binaries presented to them. If the PNM is to recover, it must reckon honestly with this moment. The voters it lost were not stolen, they were alienated.

Regaining them will require more than messaging; it will require a political culture rooted in fairness, openness, and trust.

Likewise, the UNC must confront the limits of cosmetic transformation. Until it can offer a truly national platform that reflects the lived realities of all citizens and not just stage their inclusion, it will remain a party that wins in retreat, not advance.

Jason Brooks, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Adrianna Younge

Call for dignity, compassion

Dear Editor,

The death of young Adrianna Younge has shaken Guyana, and rightly so. Every life lost, especially that of a child, is a tragedy. But in our grief, we must not lose sight of truth.

Three independent, internationally respected pathologists: Dr Glenn A. Rudner of Mount Sinai Hospital (New York), Dr Shubhakar Karra Paul (Barbados), and Dr Gary L. Collins (Delaware), conducted a full post-mortem examination. Their unanimous conclusion was that Adrianna died by drowning. There were no signs of physical or sexual trauma, no evidence of foul play, and no signs of forceful drowning.

This was not a rushed or local examination; it involved outside professionals, with no known ties to the government or police. Their verdict deserves respect.

Sadly, that has not stopped reckless speculation, conspiracy theories, and inflammatory rhetoric from taking over public discourse. This kind of emotional manipulation has not helped the family mourn. Instead, it has fueled unrest, fear, and even violence in our streets. Some have chosen to politicise this tragedy, using it as a weapon to stir hate, division, and even terror.

We must be better than this. Respecting the truth established by medical professionals is not an act of betrayal, it is a step toward healing. And let us respect Adrianna's family's request not to have any protest at her funeral.

Let us mourn Adrianna's passing with dignity. Let us support her family with compassion. And let us move forward with clarity and unity, rejecting those who seek to exploit tragedy for personal or political gain.

Dr Devanand Bhagwan, Guyana, via email.

Key PNM missteps that caused election loss

Dear Editor,

The PNM faithful in Trinidad and Tobago are suddenly sombre. They are being forced to face the reality of the last decade, which their party leaders tried to erase from our collective memories in their failed bid to hold on to office for a third term and for 15 years.

What the political leader of the PNM and his self-absorbed Cabinet and party Executive (incidentally almost identically the same) closed their eyes and minds to was what their decade-long occupation of office was doing to the lives and livelihood of the people, of the nation, and the future.

Dr Keith Rowley became consumed in his own arrogance and authoritarian distortion of reality. In a word, his hubris was the downfall of his party, which convinced itself that it was anointed to rule this country.

Hubris is simply and clearly defined as excessive pride or overconfidence, which drives a person to overstep limits in a way that leads to their downfall.

Convincing themselves that they were the greatest in handling the Covid-19 pandemic and public health emergency, they deluded themselves into thinking that the population was genuflecting in awe and willing to accept anything they did after that.

The PNM and its leaders took nationals for granted.

Here are some of the things that led to the demise of the PNM. Supervising the two highest annual record murder tolls in our history, and denying any responsibility for the mounting wanton murderous criminality; suspending collective bargaining for almost 12 years, and imposing a wage freeze on the workers in the face of escalating inflation.

Then there were their acceptance of exorbitant salary increases of 40 percent-plus, while imposing wage restraint on the workers, and higher taxes on the population, and thinking your delusional justification was real and acceptable to the population; also, manipulating the Constitution to impose a leader, anointed and forced on the party and country by an

authoritarian leader.

There were also Rowley drawing the ire of the members of his own party by his imposition of an anointed one, just as his treatment of then Chief Secretary Charles in Tobago led to the massive defeat in the THA; and rejection of proposals for Constitutional Change from a Committee appointed by the party-in-government at a party convention.

We also have the assaulting of independent public officers, including the Auditor-General, suppressing public service positions, denying promotions in the Civil Service, and imposing contract employees in positions denied to appointed public officers.

And we have episodes of repeatedly denigrating women and pushing thinly veiled racist propaganda and hate to divide the population; blaming civil servants for the draconian and anti-people measures that the government imposed or attempted to impose on the working people and the poor; and refusing to be empathetic with the families of the victims of the horrific fatal industrial accident at Paria for three years, then offering inadequate compensation without accepting any liability for the deaths of four workers.

And we saw the Rowley government overselling their self-delusional hope that over-reliance on

Venezuelan gas would solve the debilitating economic crisis, while refusing to pursue real diversification of the economy.

There is much more if we open our eyes and minds, and review the last decade with an objective and realistic attitude.

When the PNM was voted out in 2010, Patrick Manning did a *mea culpa*, and confessed that he and the PNM did not pay attention to their supporters (as if one's own supporters is all that matters).

For the last decade, Rowley and his party leadership did not pay attention to the entire population outside of the one percent parasitic oligarchy that they serve.

His 'master stroke' of imposing his *protégé*, Stuart Young, as PM, was a miscalculation that backfired.

Clyde Weatherhead, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Rowley is comforted by a supporter on the night of the PNM's election loss

No evidence to support marginalisation claims in Guyana

Whether or not Afro-Guyanese are being marginalised is a contentious issue that is inextricably linked to race and power in Guyana. In reality, besides innuendos and spurious claims, there is no concrete evidence of marginalisation of Afro-Guyanese.

Claims of marginalisation are premised largely on the fact that the country is being governed by the PPP/Civic, which is largely supported by Indo-Guyanese. This is a vexatious issue for Afro-Guyanese, who would do just about anything to taint the image of the government.

In fact, Afro-Guyanese largely believe that APNU, the party to which they are aligned, has an inalienable right to be in power.

The fact that Guyana is prospering from unprecedented oil wealth while the PPP/Civic is in power is also a sore point of contention among Afro-Guyanese. They feel left out at a critical juncture in the country's history, that is, while it is enjoying unprecedented economic growth.

Incidentally, the Afro-Guyanese dominated PNC (now APNU) illegitimately ruled the country from 1968 to 1992 through rigged elections, during which time Indo-Guyanese, not Afro-Guyanese, were marginalised to the extent that they had to flee the country in droves because of the lack of opportunity, violence, persecution, fear, and crime against them.

During this period, the country was plundered, economic growth stagnated, and Guyana was reduced to one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere.

APNU returned to power in 2015, but lost power again in 2020 in an election that required five months to verify the results after APNU once again attempted to rig the results. Victory by the PPP/Civic traumatised Afro-Guyanese because, at that point in time, Guyana was on the verge of becoming an oil-producing nation, with the PPP/Civic at the helm.

The opportunity to manage the country's massive wealth was lost. Since then, Afro-Guyanese have made strenuous attempts to accuse the government of marginalisation.

At the recent fourth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, Vincent Alexander, a political

activist and elections commissioner, accused the PPP/Civic administration of systematically marginalising Afro-Guyanese.

In response, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Anil Nandlall, responded that Afro-Guyanese are currently enjoying unprecedented levels of socio-economic progress than at anytime in Guyana's history.

Nandlall said: "If a forensic audit is ever done, it would reveal that Afro-Guyanese are currently better off than they have ever been in the history of Guyana. And I say that without any fear of being contradicted successfully."

Highlighting what he described as the unprecedented advancement of Afro-Guyanese under the current administration, Nandlall asserted that they are experiencing greater access to education, property, and State support than ever before.

"More Afro-Guyanese are pursuing education now than at any other point in Guyana's history. More Guyanese are on government-funded scholarships than at any other time in our country's history. More Afro-Guyanese are receiving cash grants and all forms of welfare grants from the government of Guyana than they have ever received," stated Nandlall.

According to Nandlall, individuals like Alexander "continue to sit on the backs of Afro-Guyanese", resorting to derogatory labels such as "house slaves" and "soup drinkers" when those individuals choose not to embrace their narrative.

He noted that the very government Alexander is accusing of marginalising Afro-Guyanese was the same one that, in 2014, supported a United Nations motion to dedicate a decade to people of African descent.

Nandlall pointed out that while Alexander served as Chair of the International Decade for People of African Descent-Guyana (IDPAD-G), the organisation received approximately (G) \$500 million from both the A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance For Change (APNU+AFC) and the PPP/Civic governments, yet did little to advance the welfare of Afro-Guyanese.

He called on Alexander to provide evidence of how the money spent benefitted Afro-Guyanese.

"Let him point out a single project of worth

the contributions of all immigrants who came with little, and the many who settled and helped lay the nation's foundation, Ali remarked that Guyana's ancestors enriched the national character and helped fashion a multi-ethnic society.

Though Arrival Day honours all the fore-parents who arrived on these shores, following Emancipation, and as Indentured labourers, he recognised that May 5 this year marked the 187th anniversary of the arrival of the first East Indian Indentured immigrants to Guyana. Today, their spirit and sacrifices continue to propel national development, he stressed.

"This year, however, as we commemorate Arrival Day, we do so not only to look back but to urge a deeper recommitment to the future we wish to build – a future where all Guyanese, regardless of race, heritage, religion, or background can feel a sense of belonging, pride, and purpose. No heritage must feel hidden. No voice must feel unheard..." he declared.



Dwarka Lakhan



Anil Nandlall

Diversity our strength says President Ali

Georgetown – In the wake of growing intolerance and discrimination against immigrants around the world, Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali issued a reminder this week that the country's rich diversity, built by its various peoples, is its greatest strength.

This was stated in his message to commemorate the May 5 observance of Arrival Day 2025.

Ali stated that immigrants who have built nations, powered economies, and enriched cultures around the world are now being targeted, vilified, and excluded. This should never happen in a multicultural Guyana, he stated.

"Let us never make that mistake. Let us cherish each other and uplift one another. Here in Guyana, let us continue to celebrate and value the sacrifices and contributions of all of our people. We are proud of our multicultural character. Diversity is not our weakness – it is our greatest strength," he stressed.

Urging nationals to pause and reflect on

In fact, the PPP/Civic has often been accused of paying greater attention to Afro-Guyanese in order to win their support, while ignoring Indo-Guyanese communities.

For this reason many Afro-Guyanese have openly supported the PPP/Civic, much to the chagrin of APNU.

The PPP/Civic's *One Guyana* initiative is also meant to create an all-inclusive population that provides equal opportunity to all of Guyana's citizens.

While *One Guyana* embodies the ideals of the country's motto, One People, One Nation, One Destiny, where all citizens, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to thrive and contribute to the country's development, it is often perceived as mere political sloganeering by some.

However, the government appears to be committed to achieving its *One Guyana* objectives, which would mean the marginalisation of any race is dead.

So much so, that it actually believes it has made a dramatic breakthrough in racial unity in a historically divided nation. It foolishly asserted in March 2024 to the United Nations Human Rights Committee that there are no existing ethnic divide and ethnic tensions within the country's borders.

Evidently, there is no truth to this statement. But that does not mean that marginalisation of Afro-Guyanese is real. Rather, it is a myth.

...

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

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Young Mateo following surgery



Kareem (right) smiles following successful surgery



Joshua's procedure was a success

TCCF continues humanitarian work in transforming lives in the Caribbean

Led by The Canadian Children's Foundation and Gift of Life International, another team of international and local doctors joined forces last month in Guyana to perform life-saving heart surgeries for children for whom these procedures are out of reach.

Toronto – In a week marked by skill, sacrifice, and solidarity, eight children in Guyana were granted a second chance at life, thanks to the joint efforts of The Canadian Children's Foundation (TCCF) and Gift of Life International (GOLI).

In its April mission, this humanitarian team yet again brought urgent paediatric cardiac surgeries to a region where such specialised care is often out of reach.

Led by veteran paediatric cardiac surgeon

Dr Rodrigo Soto, the visiting medical team worked side-by-side with Guyanese healthcare providers at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), performing eight heart surgeries over five days.

All patients were safely discharged by April 20, a milestone that underscored both the efficiency and humanity of the initiative.

"This partnership between TCCF and GOLI is more than just a series of missions – it is a shared vision to reduce preventable childhood mortality and build lasting capacity within Guyana's health sector," said Dr Soto.

His decades-long career in global paediatric cardiac care has made him a pivotal figure in this life-affirming work.

The April mission saw 12 initial cases identified during pre-visit online consultations and

in-person assessments, although five patients were found to be unwell at the time of the procedures.

Nonetheless, the collaborative team, comprising 24 international medical professionals including surgeons, anaesthesiologists, nurses, intensivists, and technicians, executed their work with precision and compassion.

But the mission's true heartbeat lies in the knowledge transferred to local caregivers. Since 2023, 20 Guyanese nurses have successfully completed the Congenital Heart Disease Training curriculum, each participating in at least three missions.

These capacity-building efforts, anchored in shared learning, ensure that Guyana's healthcare system will be able to carry this work forward, long after the visiting teams depart.

Dr Soto has continued to express deep satisfaction with the progress made, stating, "What started as a strategic partnership with TCCF has evolved into a friendship, and also into a very solid team capable of saving children's lives."

His remarks reflect the broader philosophy of TCCF, whose President Jay Brijpaul and Vice-President Jankie Dolaram have shaped the organisation into a beacon of volunteer-led philanthropy.

"For me, it's about seeing these children healthy and full of life again," Brijpaul told Indo-Caribbean World last year.

He added, "We find happiness in helping them return to a normal life. Many of these children are today young adults living fulfilling lives."



Kuveer is confident as he heals



Kellon smiles with a greeting



Little baby Sarah



Young Zayn is in secure hands

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Let leadership be a bridge between pain and progress

Leadership in a time of loss –
President Irfaan Ali’s leadership tested:
A measured response to national grief
By Omar Farouk, President, IMO

First and foremost, heartfelt condolences go out to the grieving family of Adrianna Younge. The pain of losing a child – especially in such distressing and unresolved circumstances – is immeasurable. No words can undo the sorrow that now lives in the hearts of her parents and loved ones, but as a nation, including those of us in the diaspora, we stand beside them in mourning, in outrage, and in the hope for justice.

The tragic death of 11-year-old Adrianna shook the soul of Guyana to its core.

Her passing – under circumstances that are still the subject of intense investigation, sparked national outrage, waves of protest, and an outpouring of collective grief. In moments like these, the strength of a nation’s leadership is tested – not in the comfort of policy, but in the crucible of public pain.

President Irfaan Ali’s response has been one of urgency, visibility, and compassion. He visited Adrianna’s family early on, engaging with them not as a politician, but as a father and citizen sharing in the country’s sorrow. He called for calm, understanding that justice cannot be achieved through chaos, and he reaffirmed his commitment to truth and accountability.

To uphold transparency and build trust, President Ali supported the inclusion of multiple independent forensic from overseas – alongside local authorities.

Three independent experts, from three different jurisdic-

tions, have spoken with one voice. Scientific truth must now prevail over speculation and politically charged conspiracy theories that have only deepened division and mistrust.

While every citizen has the right to question and protest, it must be done peacefully.

The throwing of acid on three schoolchildren and their teacher from Chateau Margot Primary School was a horrifying act that violates all moral and human decency. How can one claim to seek justice for a child while attacking innocent children in the process? This act is not only indefensible – it is abhorrent to the core and must be condemned by every right-thinking Guyanese.

Violence is never the path to justice. If anything, it dishonours Adrianna’s memory and distracts from the very reforms and healing that must follow this tragedy.

President Ali’s continued engagement with Adrianna’s family, his openness to international review, and his call for national calm reflect a style of leadership marked by compassion and accountability. The burden now lies on all of us – citizens, institutions, and government alike – to ensure that the death of a young girl is not weaponised or politicised, but remembered as a call to protect our children more fiercely and to strengthen the rule of law.

Let Adrianna’s memory not be stained by misinformation, nor her justice delayed by rage. Let it instead inspire a safer, more compassionate One Guyana – where our grief makes us wiser, not angrier, and where leadership, in its truest sense, serves as a bridge between pain and progress.



Adrianna Younge

A roadmap for healing

By Roy Doobay

First of all, my comments are non-partisan and aimed solely at articulating, in a clear and objective manner, what I have observed and read. I have gone through many of the comments and articles related to the recent events, and one thing is evident: most people seem to have their hearts in the right place as they offer suggestions to address the ongoing violence.

Let me begin by reminding everyone that Guyana is a democratic nation, one that values free speech, a free press, and the right to peaceful protest. We are a country led by a President and a government who, through word and action, have committed to putting the interests of all citizens above partisan politics.

In times of national pain and tragedy, our shared humanity must transcend division, political affiliation, and personal agendas. What we have witnessed in recent days – looting, violence, and the deliberate targeting of innocent people, including children is not protest. It is lawlessness. It must be condemned without hesitation by every law-abiding citizen.

We cannot remain silent in the face of such cruelty. The innocent children who have been burned are not just victims of violence, they are a heartbreaking reminder of how far we have strayed from our shared values. Their suffering demands our compassion, our outrage, and above all, our action. No child should ever endure such horror in a nation that calls itself just and democratic.

Guyana’s President Irfaan Ali has responded to this moment with compassion, urgency, and fairness. He has shown that leadership is not about holding a title, but about action, empathy, and responsibility. Through his daily engagement, he has demonstrated a commitment to justice, to unity, and to the well-being of all Guyanese. His response reflects the heart of a father, the conscience of a citizen, and the vision of a true leader.

At the centre of President Ali’s leadership is his vision of ‘One Guyana’ a call to build a more inclusive, equitable, and united nation where everyone, regardless of race, religion, or region, has a place and a voice. One Guyana is not just a slogan; it is a roadmap for national healing, shared prosperity, and enduring peace.

Now is the time for all Guyanese, regardless of background, ethnicity, or political affiliation, to come together. Our strength as a nation lies in our unity, in our shared values, and in our respect for law and order. Justice must be delivered for [Adrianna Younge], for the innocent children who have been burned, and for all the grieving families. And those who seek to divide us through fear, misinformation, and violence must face the full force of the law.

Let us be clear: those who resort to violence do not represent the people of Guyana. They are a misguided few. The overwhelming majority of Guyanese are peaceful, hardworking, and committed to progress. We must protect that progress and reaffirm our national motto: One People, One Nation, One Destiny and in doing so, bring to life the spirit of ‘One Guyana’.

Let us stand together in solidarity with President Ali. Let us thank him for his leadership, and for the tireless work he does in service to our country. Most importantly, let us stand together for Adrianna, for the innocent children whose lives have been forever scarred, and for a future where every child grows up safe, and every citizen lives in peace and dignity.

Roy Doobay is a community leader and volunteer at Vishnu Mandir, serving as Operations Manager and Executive Team Member. A prominent member of the Guyanese diaspora, he has led two fund-raising campaigns through the Toronto Waterfront Marathon to support the Doobay Dialysis Initiative in Guyana.



Protestors gather outside Leonora Police Station following news of Adrianna’s death

Leaders call for unity in wake of Adrianna’s death

From Page 1

of us in the diaspora, we stand beside them in mourning, in outrage, and in the hope for justice,” he wrote.

Farouk praised Guyana’s President Irfaan Ali’s response, stating it was one grounded in empathy and action. Citing Ali’s early visit to Adrianna’s family and his openness to international forensic review, Farouk noted that “the strength of a nation’s leadership is tested – not in the comfort of policy, but in the crucible of public pain”.

Crucially, he drew a moral boundary between peaceful protest and acts of violence, unequivocally condemning the acid attacks.

“How can one claim to seek justice for a child while attacking innocent children in the process? This act is not only indefensible – it is abhorrent to the core and must be condemned by every right-thinking Guyanese,” he declared.

He urged citizens not to let rage eclipse reason, nor misinformation pollute memory. Instead, he called for Adrianna’s legacy to become a catalyst for strengthening the protection of children, transparency, and rule of law in Guyana.

Stated Farouk: “Let Adrianna’s memory not be stained by misinformation, nor her justice delayed by rage. Let it instead inspire a safer, more compassionate One Guyana, where our grief makes us wiser, not angrier.”

Similarly, Doobay, a respected community volunteer and leader at Vishnu Mandir, voiced his anguish and concern in a heartfelt statement to the Guyanese community here in the GTA. In an expression of profound sorrow, Doobay emphasised that his appeal to the community was non-partisan, and instead was rooted in shared humanity.

“What we have witnessed in recent days: looting, violence, and the deliberate targeting of innocent people, including children, is not protest. It is lawlessness. It must be condemned

without hesitation by every law-abiding citizen,” he wrote.

He called for Guyanese to rise above partisan division and misinformation, and to recommit to the ideals of democracy, compassion, and lawful engagement. With a clear and unequivocal voice, he warned that silence in the face of such cruelty is unacceptable.

“The innocent children who have been burned are not just victims of violence, they are a heartbreaking reminder of how far we have strayed from our shared values. Their suffering demands our compassion, our outrage, and above all, our action,” he noted.

Doobay also acknowledged Ali’s leadership, commending his responsiveness and fairness in a moment that demanded clarity and resolve. He reiterated the importance of Ali’s vision of One Guyana as more than a national slogan, but a blueprint for inclusivity and peace.

Stated Doobay: “Through his daily engagement, he has demonstrated a commitment to justice, to unity, and to the well-being of all Guyanese. His response reflects the heart of a father, the conscience of a citizen, and the vision of a true leader.”

Both Farouk and Doobay highlighted the urgent need to protect Guyana’s children and reject those who sow discord in the wake of tragedy. Together, their statements reflected a collective yearning within our diaspora, not only to mourn, but at the same time to build a greater nation in Adrianna’s name: a country where justice prevails without violence, where leadership is defined by compassion, and where every child grows up safe, cherished, and free from fear.

As Doobay concluded, “Let us stand together for Adrianna. For the innocent children whose lives have been forever scarred, and for a future where every child grows up safe, and every citizen lives in peace and dignity.”



Mia Mottley



Andrew Holness

Regional recognition for new TT govt

Caribbean and world leaders have extended congratulations to Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar following her electoral victory in Trinidad and Tobago's 2025 general election, reaffirming strong diplomatic ties and collective hopes for regional prosperity, democratic strength, and deepened collaboration in the Caribbean and beyond.

Port-of-Spain – Following her win in the 2025 general election on April 28, Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar received warm congratulations from regional leaders and international partners, with messages emphasising enduring partnerships, democratic resilience, and a renewed commitment to shared goals across the Caribbean and global stage.

On April 29, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to X (formerly Twitter) to convey his congratulations, writing, "I look forward to working closely with you to further strengthen our partnership for shared prosperity and well-being of our people."

Modi described the bond between the two nations as one of "historically close and familial ties".

Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley, in her dual capacity as Caricom Chair, issued warm congratulations to Persad-Bissessar and her party, the UNC.

"It is, therefore, a pleasure, on behalf of the government and people of Barbados, and as chair of [Caricom], to extend warm congratulations," Mottley said.

She further noted, "We also warmly congratulate the people of Trinidad and Tobago on the peaceful exercise of their democratic rights. In a world where democracy is often tested, Trinidad and Tobago has shown that true strength lies in the commitment of its people to participation, fairness, and free expression."

Mottley expressed hope that the country's democracy would continue to inspire future generations, and pledged to work "in the spirit of partnership and shared purpose".

President of Guyana Irfaan Ali also offered his congratulations, noting the strong ties between the two nations.

"I, therefore, look forward to our continued collaboration to strengthen our relations and work towards our shared goals of advancing regional integration, economic development and the well-being of the people of our region," Ali stated.

Jamaican Prime Minister Dr Andrew Holness used a Facebook post to commend the peaceful election and Persad-Bissessar's mandate, which he described as "an indication of the confidence of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in her leadership".

He underscored the historical and cultural bond between the two nations and reaffirmed Jamaica's commitment to shared regional priorities.

"[Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar's] electoral triumph heralds a renewed opportunity to deepen and broaden our collaboration in areas of mutual interest, including, but not limited to, trade and investment, regional security, energy and climate change," Holness wrote.

He added, "The government and people of Jamaica extend best wishes to Prime Minister

Persad-Bissessar for every success as she leads Trinidad and Tobago into this new chapter of national development."

Former Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis, Dr Timothy Harris, shared his congratulations in a Facebook post, describing the victory as "a powerful reminder that resilience, hope, and unwavering love for one's people can overcome any challenge".

He recalled that Persad-Bissessar had been among the first leaders to congratulate him upon his own election in 2015, stating: "... [It] is with great pride that I return those sentiments. Our bond, forged in the fires of our shared democratic struggles, most notably during the landmark Boundaries Case, remains strong and unbreakable."

On behalf of the Peoples Labour Party, Harris added, "I wish [Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar] every success as she leads her nation into a new era of growth, fairness, and opportunity. Her victory is a clear example that democracy empowers triumph, not only for Trinidad and Tobago, but for the wider Caribbean."

Grenadian Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell joined in recognising the democratic expression of the Trinidad and Tobago electorate, stating, "We wish Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar a successful term in office as she undertakes the solemn responsibility of guiding her nation toward continued growth and development."

Mitchell emphasised the importance of deepening regional ties and addressing shared challenges through Caricom.

In an official statement, Caricom praised the peaceful conduct of the elections and extended its welcome to Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar.

"The decisive victory is a clear mandate from the people of Trinidad and Tobago as the country continues its forward journey. We look forward to welcoming [Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar] to the Conference of Heads of Government, and to her participation, as we continue to tackle emerging geopolitical issues, and seek to further improve the welfare and well-being of the people of the region."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio posted on X, stating, "She is a strong leader, friend, and US ally who shares @POTUS' priorities on security and immigration. We look forward to building a close partnership for the future of Trinidad and Tobago, and the entire Caribbean."

Further elaboration came from the US Department of State's website, where Trinidad and Tobago's peaceful electoral process was noted.

"We commend the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their continued commitment to democratic values and institutions, demonstrated through the peaceful and orderly conduct of their free and fair national elections."

The statement highlighted the long-standing relationship between both nations: "The US and Trinidad and Tobago share a strong and enduring partnership rooted in deep historic ties, regional co-operation, and shared goals for prosperity and security."

It concluded with optimism for future collaboration "to strengthen our collaboration on energy security, economic prosperity, and countering transnational crime."



Ask Jay...

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WHY NOW IS THE SMARTEST TIME TO BUY REAL ESTATE

The slow real estate market is good news for buyers. With many homes available, you have more options and room to negotiate a great deal. Whether buying your first home, moving up, or investing, acting now could put you ahead in the next few years. Over a million new people have moved to the GTA in the past five years, and many will be ready to buy by 2027. Prices keep increasing, and money in the bank loses value over time. Real estate, on the other hand, helps protect you from inflation. So don't follow the crowd – this could be the perfect time to make your move.

The condo market isn't looking great right now, especially for investors. Many bought pre-construction units, hoping to sell before closing, but that didn't work out. These condos, usually around 500–600 square feet, aren't ideal for families, and the rent often doesn't cover the costs, so many investors are now trying to sell.

If space isn't a deal breaker, this could be a great time to buy a modern condo with top-notch amenities. You can often get in with percent down, and monthly payments might be only a bit more than your current rent.

Check out older condo buildings. They might not have fancy extras, but usually offer larger living spaces. Ensure your lawyer reviews the status certificate to confirm the building's financial health. Depending on the building, you may need a five to 20 percent down payment. If the unit is vacant, you might be able to negotiate a lower price for a quick closing.

Selling and moving up in a slower market can work in your favour. Higher-priced homes usually see bigger price drops, so while you may sell for a little less, you will likely save even more on your next purchase. In this market, selling first, then buying, is smarter. That way, you're selling while prices still hold up – and buying when they have come down.

Avoid buying first and then trying to sell, as closing both deals in time may be difficult. When you sell, ask for a solid deposit – around five percent of the sale price, because it helps protect you if the buyer tries to walk away due to falling prices.

If you're buying, be sure your offer includes conditions for financing, a home inspection, and an appraisal that your lender approves. Lenders base their loans on the appraised value, not the price you offer, so if the value comes in lower, you will need to cover the difference.

If you're open to a bit of a drive, there are hidden gems just an hour outside the GTA. Take Niagara Falls, for example – you can find a charming detached home for under \$600,000, about the same price as a modest condo in the city.

Always buy something that will be easy to sell. When you invest in a premium property, you experience a higher quality of living or better rental income, and when the time comes, you can sell for a solid return.

When house-hunting, think in this order: location first, size second, and upgrades last. You can always renovate a larger home to suit your taste, but adding space to a small one is much more complex (and costlier).

Traditionally, the real estate market gains momentum in the spring, cools off during the summer, and picks up again in the fall. However, this spring is different – cross-border tariffs and a snap election are shaking things up. Take advantage of this shift by focusing on homes on the market for over a month. Many sellers are growing impatient and may be more open to negotiation.

Consider a variable-rate mortgage with the flexibility to lock in when the time feels right. Rates will come down, and you can secure a lower rate once you're comfortable. But remember: when interest rates drop, home prices usually rise.

Some of the best deals are available now, so you must be ready to act. Don't wait on the sidelines for too long; the tide will change. Whether buying your first home, moving to a bigger one, or investing in a rental property, this is the perfect opportunity.

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Law & You Conference tackles fallout from impaired driving

Richmond Hill – A cautionary tale about impaired driving and its irreversible consequences anchored this year’s *The Law & You Conference*, which was held on April 19 at Vishnu Mandir. The community-focused event drew participation from legal professionals, students, and community members seeking to better understand the legal system and its impacts on everyday life.

In a simulated courtroom scenario, a fictional case involving Roger, a landed immigrant who chose to drive after consuming alcohol that saw a tragic, fatal result unfolding, was presented for the panel’s consideration.

On the expert panel were Justice Amit Ghosh; Crown Attorney Vic Aujla of Orangeville; Assistant Crown Attorney Jasmyn Mahal; Toronto lawyer and community advocate Dhaman Kissoon; defence lawyer Michelle Johal; and Deputy Crown Attorney Robert De Chellis.

Together, they dissected the case’s legal ramifications, exploring avenues of prosecution, defence, and sentencing. The exercise vividly demonstrated how a single poor decision behind the wheel could permanently alter, and end the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

The elucidating and informative discussion that followed demonstrated the multifaceted legal considerations involved in such a significant offence, including criminal responsibility, sentencing, and community safety. Each panel member contributed insights into how the legal system responds to such situations, and the life-altering and concatenating impacts such actions would have on the fictitious Roger, his future as an immigrant in Canada, and the trauma endured by his family.

The second segment of the event offered legal education resources and guidance for students aspiring to careers in law. The panel shared personal stories, professional advice, and practical steps toward entering the legal profession.

Organised under the ongoing legal literacy initiative by the Laxmi Sabha Voice of the Vedas at Vishnu Mandir, *The Law & You Conference* was a continuation of an examination of legal topics for the benefit of our community. It was moderated by Kissoon, a barrister, solicitor, and adjunct professor at Queen’s University’s Faculty of Law.

While this year focused on impaired driving, last year’s theme addressed the legal treatment of elder abuse.





ICCA volunteers, summit organisers, and guest speaker, from left to right, Devin Mathura, Ashni Ramsammy, Ryan Singh, and Alim Lila



ICCA volunteers and summit organisers (l-r): Shameeza Yusuf, Hanso Sheopaul, Monisha Jagdat, Alim Lila, and Ryan Singh; back, Devin Mathura, Germain Kasee



Ryan Singh addresses participants



Senator Yussuff holds a fireside chat



Shivani Persad during her presentation



Senator Yussuff and Alim Lila address the summit

ICCA leadership summit maps path from legacy to leadership

Toronto – The second annual Indo-Caribbean Leadership Summit brought together a vibrant cross-section of professionals in Scarborough for a full day of empowerment, professional development, and cultural affirmation.

Hosted on May 3 at the University of Toronto’s Environmental Sciences and Chemistry building, the event offered participants a range of workshops and insights, reinforcing the vital role of Indo-Caribbean voices in Canada’s evolving multicultural story.

“The toil of our ancestors was the pathway to our privilege, and our perseverance shall be the foundation for future generations,” said Ryan Singh, Chair of the group, the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association (ICCA), whose vision helped shaped the event’s thematic arc.

Singh added, “In May, we [are observing] the Arrival of South Asian Indentured workers to the Caribbean... our ancestors. Their determination, hard work, and hope have led us to where we are today.”

It was this inter-generational spirit that opened the day’s program with a stirring fireside chat featuring Senator Hassan Yussuff, one of Canada’s first Indo-Caribbean Parliamentarians. Born in Guyana and raised in Canada, Yussuff traced his journey from humble beginnings to national leadership, emphasising the values of inclusion, equality, and tenacity. His reflections were a poignant reminder of the distance travelled and the road ahead.

Attendees then engaged in a diverse set of workshops tailored to both personal and professional growth. Topics ranged from *Mindfulness and Meditation for Executives* to *Navigating High-Stress Situations*, *Building Your LinkedIn Profile*, and *Becoming a Leader in the Workplace*.

The sessions were curated to equip participants with actionable strategies, each anchored by facilitators who brought to the table both expertise and cultural insight.

Guest speakers included Dr Natasha Bridgmohan, President & Chief Visionary Officer of TheBridgGroup of Companies; Shivani Persad, a content strategist specialising in web and email marketing; Balraj Persaud, who led discussions on managing emotions under pressure; Ashni Ramsammy, Business Development Manager at The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, who is now leading Cricket to Conquer Cancer; Melissa Sumnauth, Partner at BIPOC Executive Search; and Senator Hassan Yussuff.

Throughout the summit, Singh’s framing message remained a touchstone.

“The Leadership Summit is our step forward to ensure that we foster and support the leaders of today who will ensure Canada’s Indo-Caribbean community finds its place and strengthens its role in Canada’s multicultural fabric,” he said.

Additionally, “Hearing from experienced and accomplished individuals, receiving insight on success or pathways to improvement, are at the core of the Summit. I hope it inspires attendees and others to achieve their fullest potential.”

Alongside the professional development sessions, the event also offered participants practical resources to elevate their careers such as complimentary professional headshots, and a lunch sponsored in part by Indar’s Doubles & Roti, a culinary nod to the Indo-Caribbean cuisine and our delectable palate.

In its second year, the Indo-Caribbean Leadership Summit not only celebrated heritage and resilience, but laid down a strategic foundation for the next generation of leaders.

As Singh affirmed, the journey continues with rootedness in the sacrifices of the past and a determined eye on the possibilities of the future.



Preparations made for the summit



Participants listen attentively to a presentation



Attendees engaged in a workshop at the summit



Devin, Senator Yussuff, Alim, and Ryan

Duty, medicine, and nations meet at Queen's Book Fair

By Dhanpaul Narine

The mere mention of India and Pakistan is likely to conjure up images of rivalry and a struggle for supremacy. It could get much more serious than a game on the cricket field, as can be seen in the recent escalation of violence in Kashmir. But it does not have to be this way. It is possible for both countries to be in the same room, be friendly to each other, and share in common values.

This happened recently in New York at the Queens Book Fair and Literary Festival, where two distinguished persons were honoured for their service to the community. They were Captain Pratima Maldonado and Dr Fatima Khan. Both of these ladies have contributed immensely to their communities.

Pratima Bhullar Maldonado was born in India and immigrated to the US in March of 1994 at the age of ten. She moved to a predominantly Indian community in Richmond Hill, Queens. Pratima's father, Sr Harinder Singh Bhullar worked long hours as a driver in order to provide his family with a better life.

Pratima emulated his work ethic and pushed herself through school. She worked hard and graduated from high school at the top of her class. She was the eldest child, so she knew it was important to take care of her two younger siblings while setting a good example.

She remained involved with the Sikh Cultural Society on 118th Street in Richmond Hill, and utilised her faith to catapult herself forward. Pratima's father wanted her to get into medicine, but she dreamt of more. She wanted to give back to her community in a different way.

As a little girl, she grew up listening to heroic stories of her grandfather, who was a Major in the Indian Army. She wanted to protect people, the way her grandfather did.

Pratima's father wanted her to be a doctor as most Indian parents do, but he also encouraged her to pursue her dreams. Excited to have her family's support, she attended John Jay College in New York, and majored in Forensic Psychology.

Pratima's father passed away before she became a police officer. Her mother, Bhagwant Kaur, worked long hours as a Security Officer at John F. Kennedy airport, and still does this difficult job to this day. She told Pratima not to give up and encouraged her to follow her dreams.

In 2009, Pratima graduated from the NYPD Police Academy. In 2013, she was transferred to the 115th precinct, where she worked in Jackson Heights in a predominantly Indian community. Her ability to speak Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu gave a voice to the people of the community where she served. She volunteered her time to help the community in various ways with the aid of the Sikh Officers Association.

Everyone looked at her like she was some sort of oddity. The traditional Indian men looked at her role in the community with shock and awe. The women looked to her as an inspiration and a symbol of hope. They now knew that no matter who you are, or where you come from, you can accomplish anything in the US.

In 2016, Pratima was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and in 2018 she was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. She became the first female Sikh Sergeant and the first female Indian Lieutenant in NYPD history. She passed the Captain's exam in 2022.

She was promoted to Captain in March 2023, another milestone and high rank as a Sikh Officer. After being interviewed with several other high-ranking candidates for Commanding Officer of the 102 Precinct, Captain Maldonado was hired on February 10, 2025 for the role.

She is the highest-ranking Sikh officer in this field, but she is running the precinct where she grew up, and her mom and some family members currently live. She is the pride and

joy of the Sikh community, and is accepted by everyone.

Captain Maldonado has chosen a profession of law and order. She is an example of an immigrant who is serving to uphold the laws of this great nation.

Dr Fatima Khan is a practicing Rheumatologist, with offices based in Richmond Hill, Hillside, and Floral Park in New York. She was born in Pakistan.

Dr Khan has over 20 years of experience in this field. She earned her medical degrees from Dow Medical College in Karachi, Pakistan, in 2001. They were the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. She graduated with honours in both fields. She completed her internal medicine residency and rheumatology fellowship at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Dr Khan is currently a member of Arkansas Medical Society; American Medical Association; American College of Physicians; UAMS Infectious Control Committee; American College of Rheumatology Certification and Licensure: Internal Medicine Board Certification 2007; Arkansas State Medical Board License 2011; Rheumatology Board Certification 2012; BLS/ACLS certification; New York State Medical Board License.

Dr Khan was trained in Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Training USSONAR. She participated in a year-long course through Boston University that involves distant learning, on-site training course, and certifying examination. Dr Khan has joined several doctors in doing presentations regarding the evolution of Inflammation in Rheumatoid Arthritis.

She worked with Dr Prem Chatpar, MD, LLC, a renowned Rheumatologist in Plainview Long Island, and eventually started her own practice in 2016. The current locations where Dr Khan owns and operates are #1, 109-13 Jamaica Avenue, Richmond Hill (opened in 2016); #2, 267-01 Hillside Avenue, Floral Park (opened in 2016); and #3, 905 Hempstead Turnpike, Franklin Square (opened in 2022).

Dr Khan has also authored multiple research articles in the field of rheumatology, including Southern Regional Meeting Abstract Presentation and Publication of Investigative Medicine. Her publication in 2012 dealt with treatment with the medication Etanercept in two patients with Sarcoidosis.

She has mentored aspiring doctors to practice medicine in Rheumatology. She has been a pivotal force in the field of Rheumatology, and has helped the community both in her medical experience and through her philanthropic work.

She treats patients both spiritually and emotionally, in addition to using the sciences. Besides her expertise in medicine, she is also a mother of four children, including twin boys. She is an avid tennis player and manages to balance her success in the field of medicine, along with a loving family that is always there to support and cheer her on to greater heights.

The Queens Book Fair meeting began on a rainy Saturday with the Pledge of Allegiance. A message from Consultant Ashook Ramsaran was read. He highlighted the achievements of women, from Harriet Tubman to Maya Angelou, and remarked on how inspirational they are to our scholarship.

There were messages from His Excellency Michael Brotherson from the Guyana Consulate in New York that lauded the Queens Book Fair for keeping literacy alive. Former Mayor of Schenectady Albert Juczynski spoke of his policies that supported women and working families.

His wife Maria brought the audience up-to-date with the current state of the real estate industry in Schenectady. She was followed by educator Arthur Jackson who spoke about the need to respect and honour women.

There were also poems, speeches, and recit-



India and Pakistan meet in New York – at left, Captain Pratima Maldonado, Commanding Officer of the 102 Precinct in Queens NY, and Dr Fatima Khan, were recently honoured by the Queens Book Fair in New York

als from young persons. The moderator and chairperson was Sabrina Fleming, Principal of the Office of Adult and Continuing Education in Queens. She did an outstanding job. The presentation to the honourees was coordinated by the tireless Sherry Algreto, who is the first woman Chair for Community Board 9. She

hails from Trinidad and Tobago, and was recently re-elected to another term in office. The vote of thanks was delivered by community worker Devika George.

The next event of the Queens Book Fair and Literary Festival is scheduled for July 12, when we will honour Indo-Caribbean heritage.

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VCC's organising committee with Honorary Consul Mani Singh (centre); from left to right, Harry Persaud, Adit Kumar, Rabi Nauth, Samantha Sharma, Varun Kumar, Sanjay Kumar, and Hema Singh



VCC held a 5K Run/Walk-A-Thon on April 27 that saw participants exceeding 130; the event was a fund-raiser, and preceded the May 3 Indian Arrival celebration. In photos below, memorable moments at the 187th anniversary event



Young leaders shine at VCC's Indian Arrival celebration

The Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre commemorated the 187th Anniversary of Indian Arrival in Guyana and the Western world on May 3. Organised for the first time by younger members, the event emphasised cultural continuity, youth leadership, and community participation through diverse activities and performances.

Markham – The Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre (VCC) held a successful celebration on May 3, marking the 187th anniversary of the Arrival of Indians in Guyana and the Western world. This was the 27th consecutive year that the VCC commemorated the historical event at its venue in Markham, yet again attracting a large, appreciative audience.

A significant highlight of this year's celebration was the leadership taken by younger members of the VCC. President of Toronto Arya Samaj and Chairman of the Vedic Cultural Centre, Adit Kumar, is credited with initiating the annual Arrival Day celebrations at the Centre. Kumar noted that this year's most notable achievement was the enthusiastic involvement and leadership of the younger generation in organising the event.

In his opening remarks, event co-chair and host Varun Kumar emphasised the generational transition.

"A few years ago the organisers of this program reached out to me and others in my age group to join the planning committee and start thinking of taking a lead in future programs. We got involved, and today we are proud to present this program which was organised by my age group and younger," he told the audience.

This year's celebration continued the theme from 2024, *A Fractal Journey of Indians in the Diaspora, Part 2*, focusing on the experiences of Canadian-born descendants of Indentured labourers, and their continued connection to cultural heritage and values.

Preceding the main event, an inaugural 5K Run/Walk-A-Thon took place on April 27, led by Sanjay Kumar, an experienced half-marathon runner. Initially aiming for 100 participants, the event exceeded expectations with 130 runners and walkers.

The event served as both a successful fund-raiser and a vibrant precursor to the May 3 celebrations, prompting plans for future iterations of the run/walk-a-thon.

The main programme on May 3 featured diverse and engag-

ing activities. One of its prominent attractions was an interactive exhibition, where volunteers provided historical context for various cultural artifacts, explaining their significance in the daily lives of ancestors.

A popular component of the programme was a live cooking demonstration by internationally renowned Chef Dev, who prepared Desi Grilled Cheese with green chutney. Chef Dev provided insights into cooking techniques to enhance flavours, while members of the audience enjoyed delectable samples.

The event also catered to younger attendees, with storytelling sessions by author Sabrina Chetram engaging children under ten. Additional exhibits included performances and displays by Dolly Bollywood, STCC Dance School, Caribbean authors, Hindi writing sessions allowing children to practice writing their names, and excerpts from the movie *Doubles*. Organisers have since indicated plans for a future screening of the complete movie at the VCC.

Dignitaries attending the event included Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti; Honorary Consul at the Guyana Consulate General Mani Singh; and media personality Deepa Prashad.

Mayor Scarpitti participated in launching the annual heritage magazine, presenting a plaque in recognition of the young organisers' efforts. The magazine's articles were entirely written by Gen Y contributors who expressed pride in their cultural heritage.

Honorary Consul Singh congratulated the organisers and encouraged the continuation of their efforts, addressing attendees first in Hindi, followed by English translation.

Prior to the official opening, special invitees and media representatives attended an informative preview session in the VIP lounge, where organisers provided insights into the exhibits.

The upper hall stage program began after attendees were escorted by the rhythmic beats of the Royal Tassa group, prompting spontaneous dancing among guests. The formal segment commenced with universal prayers read by Pt Vidyarthi Sriram and a land acknowledgment presented by Lisa Bahadur. Stage performers included STCC Dance Academy, Melissa Marie Dance, Devica Yassen, and Devin Ramoutar, who played a popular Bollywood melody on the steelpan.

The event concluded successfully, with attendees offering enthusiastic feedback. The younger generation expressed strong commitment to continuing the traditions, and preserving Indo-Caribbean history and heritage in Toronto.





Imdadul's special guest, MP Judy Sgro (left), with Sayem Khan, and food fair visitor Stefan Kaseram; in photos, vendors, visitors, and admirers of fine cuisine having a wonderful time at the food fair

Imdadul fair mixes faith, flavour, and fund-raising

Despite rainy skies and a holiday long weekend, the Imdadul Islamic Center's International Food Fair made a triumphant return on April 18. The community event combined faith, flavour, and fund-raising while spotlighting homegrown culinary talent and communal unity. Imdadul continues to foster unity through shared meals and values, proving that community spirit is best served warm with sprinkles on the top.

Toronto – The Taste of Imdadul is steadily emerging as a beloved community brand, celebrated for its cultural depth and culinary diversity. On April 18, the Imdadul Islamic Center hosted its first full-scale International Food Fair since 2019, bringing together community members despite steady April showers and the coinciding observance of Good Friday.

The event served as a powerful reminder of how an eclectic cuisine continues to unite the vibrant and multifaceted community that the mosque represents.

Attendees sampled a wide variety of home-cooked meals, snacks, and desserts, prepared by community chefs whose efforts infused the event with authenticity, warmth, and the aroma of delectable spices.

Among those in attendance was Member of Parliament for Humber River-Black Creek, MP Judy Sgro, who took an active role in serving community members at Haji Zafarullah Khan's booth, underscoring the inclusive and participatory nature of the event.

The food fair was held alongside Friday prayers, which featured special sermons delivered by esteemed khateeb, including Sheikh Muzammil. The seamless integration of spiritual reflection and communal celebration created a unique atmosphere of togetherness, generosity, and wholesomeness.

Imdadul's organisers expressed heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed, noting that the funds raised would help with the mosque's ongoing initiatives.

Community members also voiced their hopes that the fair would continue to serve as a platform for young and marginalised chefs, whose talents were amply showcased through the array of home-prepared dishes.

With files by Sayem Khan



Diaspora speaks to the voices of memory, resilience by Guyana’s daughters

– Two daughters of Guyana, two voices of memory and resistance, Jan Shinebourne and Beryl Gilroy wove stories that refused to forget, challenging empire and exile with words steeped in history, identity, and longing.

...
An Ongoing Series for the Caribbean Diaspora
By Romeo Kaseram

A Local Journalism Initiative

In the shifting light of our diaspora, some voices call us back, not to the lands we left behind, but to the memories that remain etched in ritual, resilience, and resistance.

Jan Shinebourne and Beryl Gilroy, born decades apart in the once-colonial reaches of British Guiana, each carved out literary paths that bridged the Atlantic divide. Their lives, rooted in Guyana’s Canje River landscapes and Berbice folklore, unfolded in London, where they bore the weight of exile while still writing for the world they knew best.

For readers in our Caribbean diaspora, their stories offer not only a mirror of migration, but a lens through which to view belonging and becoming.

Jan Shinebourne, born June 23, 1947, in Rosehall, Canje, grew up amidst Guyana’s political and social unrest. This environment, as she later reflected for *Peepal Tree Press*, “shaped the way I saw the world and my place in it”.

Her early writings, which were plays and descriptive pieces about the forests of her childhood, foreshadowed the haunting lyricism and political consciousness that would define her *oeuvre*.

Her prize-winning story collection, *The Godmother and Other Stories*, exemplifies her ability to infuse the quotidian with the lyrical.

In *The Godmother and Other Stories*, she writes, “We rarely had occasion for dressing up, only for births, marriages and deaths. Then our Sunday best came out of the trunk, out of the mothballs... Special occasions smelt of mothballs, of best soap, talcum, perfumes and new dresses”.

Then we have Beryl Agatha Gilroy (*née* Answick), born August 30, 1924, in Springlands, Berbice, who came from a matriarchal lineage steeped in oral tradition.

Her grandmother, Sally Louisa James, “took the view that the child would learn more by being taken all over the county with her, and being given space for wonder and enquiry, than in the regimented system of primary schooling”, *Peepal Tree Press* has noted.

This alternative education, which was rooted in folklore, herbal knowledge, and colloquial proverbs, imbued Gilroy with a philosophy of freedom that would later permeate both her teaching and her writing.

Shinebourne moved to London in the 1970s, a period marked by racial tensions and civil rights activism. Yet, her writing remained firmly tethered to Guyana.



Beryl Gilroy

Her novels, including *Timepiece* (1986) and *Chinese Women* (2010), draw from autobiographical roots, exploring racial hierarchies, gender politics, and postcolonial disillusionment.

As literary scholar Susheila Nasta wrote in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*, Shinebourne’s work, like that of “many Caribbean women writers... explores new forms and discourses in an attempt to represent the politics of gender and race.”

In *Timepiece*, the protagonist Sandra navigates the tensions between her rural upbringing and urban aspirations, mirroring Shinebourne’s own journey.

“It concerns the conflicts between a rural and an urban identity... moving away from the traditional values of her cane community to the new young generation of educated Guyanese in the city,” Nasta wrote.

Gilroy’s migration was earlier, arriving in the UK in 1951 as part of the Windrush generation. Despite her first-class diploma in child development, London’s hostility towards Black immigrants forced her into domestic service and factory work before she could teach.

These experiences formed the basis of her autobiographical *Black Teacher* (1976), a searing account of racism in British schools.

“London in the 1950s was not the most welcoming of places for a young aspiring Black woman... [she] found it difficult to find a position as a teacher and was forced to search for employment in domestic service, dish washing and factory work”, the *Encyclopedia of AfroEuropean Studies* has noted.

Yet Gilroy persisted, becoming London’s first Black headteacher at Beckford School in 1968. Her writing, like Shinebourne’s, remained grounded in Guyanese memory, but expanded to address the psycho-social struggles of Black British women.

While Shinebourne’s fiction delves into postcolonial identity, Gilroy’s work straddled education, psychotherapy, and fiction. At the Institute of Education, she developed a pioneering



Jan Shinebourne

practice in psychotherapy, focusing on Black women and children.

Her PhD in counselling psychology (1987) furthered this trajectory. Her creative works, including *Frangipani House* (1986) and *Sunlight and Sweet Water* (1994), reflect a commitment to human freedom and dignity.

In *Frangipani House*, set in a Guyanese old-age home, Gilroy critiques societal neglect of elders.

As *Peepal Tree Press* noted, “*Frangipani House* is... a reflection of one of Gilroy’s professional concerns – the position of ethnic minority elders and her persistent emphasis on the drive for human freedom”.

Meanwhile, Shinebourne used fiction to excavate colonial histories. Her novel *The Last Ship* (2015) chronicles the arrival of Chinese Indentured workers in Guyana.

As *Wikipedia* noted, “The arrival of a first-generation Chinese woman, Clarice Chung... who at the age of five, travels from Hong Kong to British Guiana on the last ship to bring the Chinese to the colony”.

For our readers here in the GTA, the works of Shinebourne and Gilroy offer a literary homecoming. Their stories of migration, identity, and resistance resonate deeply with those like us who are navigating hybrid spaces, balancing inherited memories with present realities.

We urge our readers to seek out their books. Read *Timepiece* and feel Sandra’s tug between cane fields and city lights. Open *Black Teacher* and walk with Gilroy through the corridors of British schools, where the colour of her skin was both obstacle and defiance.

These are not just stories of the past. They speak to our present Caribbean experience here in the GTA, the struggles of our elders, the ambitions of our children and youth, the unspoken rituals we carry in our kitchens redolent with the scents of *chadon beni* and thyme.

Jan Shinebourne, the first woman to win the Guyana Prize for Literature, reminds us through her prose in *The Godmother and Other Stories*, that, “I am cooking for ghosts, spirits. The smell of my food is attracting them... The rituals of cooking... were part of the christening”.

Gilroy, whose grandmother warned against “spirit poorness”, lived that resistance, as *Peepal Tree Press* noted: “Her grandmother also taught that people should avoid ‘spirit poorness’... and this philosophy permeates all... Gilroy’s writing”.

Both women refused erasure. They wrote back to empire, offering us not just literature, but maps of where we have come from, and layering down the contours of where we might yet go.

Their works continue to educate, heal, and inspire. Shinebourne resides today in West Sussex. Gilroy’s legacy lives on in her son, Paul Gilroy, a renowned cultural theorist, and in the pages of her novels, which are still relevant, and urgent.

In reading them, we reclaim not just stories, but the histories wherein we are able to locate ourselves.

Haitian author Chancy’s Village Weavers cops top Bocas Festival prize

— A novel bridging continents and decades, Myriam J.A. Chancy’s *Village Weavers* uncovers the fragile threads of childhood friendships shattered by secrets, reshaped by diaspora. Awarded the 2025 OCM Bocas Prize, it marks an historical milestone as the first winner from Haiti.

...
Jamaican author and Chief Judge Erna Brodber delivered words that resonated deeply with literary communities across the Caribbean diaspora at the annual Bocas Lit Fest on May 3. Myriam J.A. Chancy’s ninth book, *Village Weavers*, had been chosen as the winner of the coveted 2025 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature. Brodber praised the work as “a compellingly ambitious and beautifully executed narrative”.

The prize for this honour is sponsored by One Caribbean Media Ltd., and comes with an award of (US) \$10,000.

For Chancy, the recognition out of Port-of-Spain was deeply personal, serving as an homage to the resilience and memories of her mother’s generation.

Set against a backdrop of 1940s Haiti, her novel weaves a tapestry of friendship between two girls from vastly different social worlds, whose bond is irrevocably altered by a concealed family truth. The narrative gracefully travels through Haiti, France, the Dominican Republic, and the US, mirroring the turbulent movements of a generation shaped by political instability and forced displacement.

Chancy’s craft thrives in its careful and poignant excavation of silence and memory. In an earlier reflection, she noted, “I realised that their memories of a Haiti which is no longer would also perish with them.”

Through fiction, she aims to preserve the intangible essence

of a bygone Haiti, ensuring that the rich tapestry of stories, woven through personal and collective trauma, is safeguarded against the erasure of time.

The novel is an embodiment of Chancy’s philosophy that fiction is an instrument of historical witnessing and emotional exploration. She explains her method involves the writer stepping aside to inhabit fully the lives of her characters.

“By anchoring the story in their childhood memories, I also endeavour to show that there is a narrow avenue of time in which the encroachment of class and social norms do not yet dominate,” she stated.

For Chancy, childhood is a realm of openness and possibility, a fleeting era before societal prejudices cement into adulthood.

“It may take a lifetime to return to that time of openness and non-judgment,” Chancy mused.

It is her sincere hope that *Village Weavers* will encourage readers to reclaim these early moments of curiosity, resistance, and connection.

Her thoughtful, poetic narrative did not go unnoticed. The judges praised Chancy as “a compelling storyteller, deftly keeping the focus on her key characters while also indicating the complex political contexts in which they live”.

They also highlighted her quietly poetic voice, enriched with striking metaphors and intensely lyrical imagery. One such metaphor is found in the image of weaver birds, a powerful symbol around which the novel revolves.



Myriam J.A. Chancy

The panel responsible for the decision comprised literary figures, including Anguillan-American writer Alexis Pauline Gumbs; Guyanese-British academic Denise deCaires Narain; and Barbados-born academic Rinaldo Walcott, alongside Erna Brodber.

Chancy’s achievement is historic for the OCM Bocas Prize itself, marking the first time an author born in Haiti has received the overall award since its inception in 2011.

This accolade adds to her impressive literary portfolio, which includes her previous nonfiction work, *Harvesting Haiti: Reflections on Unnatural Disasters*, shortlisted in 2024, and honours such as the Guyana Prize in Literature Caribbean Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Beyond the literary world, *Village Weavers* serves as a vivid reminder of the ongoing relevance of Haiti’s historical struggles, its cultural resilience, and the enduring impact of diaspora.

Chancy herself has underscored the generational impact of political turmoil, noting, “Even those who remained behind were impacted by the workings of the regime as well as the out-migration of family members. Still, as many Haitians in this generation would say, they would never have left had it not been for these political issues; their lives were defined by them.”

Chancy’s storytelling, deeply rooted in empathy and historical clarity, is her tribute to Haiti and its diaspora, making visible the quiet stories of friendship, loss, and rediscovery.



Persad-Bissessar addresses UNC women following her April 28 victory at the polls

Kamla's comeback from 'dulahin' to agency

By Nalini Mohabir

First elected Prime Minister in 2010, and then ousted in 2015, Kamla Persad-Bissessar is once again Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, after a decade in the political wilderness. As she poignantly stated during her Swearing in Ceremony at President's House on May 1: "After demitting this office in 2015, for the last ten years, I was a woman scorned, a pariah to many, because in their eyes I had nothing material to give.... I know how it feels to be forgotten, I know how it feels to be humiliated and written off, I know how it feels to be kicked and stomped on when you're down."

Being an older Indo-Caribbean woman, some had written her off. Yet she was able to do something extraordinary. As commentators observed, the overwhelming yellow of the UNC swept the electoral map of Trinidad and Tobago, suggesting that people did not vote on the basis of race but on the issues – about time!

As PM Persad-Bissessar said herself (again at her Swearing in Ceremony), "I dedicate my term as Prime Minister to the forgotten people of our country... If you are living on the fringes of the Guanapo, if you are living in the coconut estates in Icacos, if you are in Kernahan village in the Nariva swamp, on the coast-line in Charlotteville, Tobago, or in the lagoons of Barrackpore, I see you; we see you, every single one ... It is time to choose harmony over division. ...*Everything is going to be alright.*"

I was struck that Persad-Bissessar evoked Bob Marley's *Three Little Birds* towards the end of her speech, because it echoed a moment in 2007 when she was appointed Leader of the Opposition, but was bypassed for leadership of the UNC.

During the contestation of UNC party leadership in 2007, Basdeo Panday publicly suggested Persad-Bissessar should lead "the women's army of the UNC" even though the UNC had done away with the women's arm in 1995. Even back then, it was believed that a *separate* women's arm implied women's roles were not to be politicians, but rather to prepare food and rally around male politicians.

In response, Persad-Bissessar took the stage to the tune of Bob Marley's *No Woman, No Cry*, and said, "I want to tell you here today that you are not dealing with a woman scorned, but a woman in love. ... Kamla Persad-Bissessar is a woman who gets knocked down, but she gets up again, and they are never going to keep me down."

She also noted her years as a politician has not been easy; she has faced the insecurities and "macho attitudes of several colleagues". In the press the next day, she was portrayed as a battered woman, forced to still make an emotional commitment to her abuser.

When Kamla won the leadership of the UNC, the *British Broadcasting Corporation* noted that besides being the first woman to lead a major political party in Trinidad, this accomplishment was "even more significant in a male-dominated political culture where Hindu women are expected to be submissive to men".

Aunty Kamla on the other hand, in an interview with the *Trinidad Express*, on the launch of her first campaign for Prime Minister, made the point that "she was not anybody's political *dulahin*".

Aunty Kamla has been challenging the traditional role of Indian women for decades, as the themes from 2007 to 2025 show. Her re-election to the role of PM offers us an opportunity to reflect on the history and agency of Indo-Caribbean women,

and the patriarchal barriers they have had to negotiate on the road to leadership.

Historically, Indian men and women arrived in Trinidad as Indentured labourers (coolies), though fewer women than men were indentured. Since women were migrating primarily alone, they were suspected of being morally debased (that is, sexually loose, or suspiciously independent) under both Indian and colonial moral codes.

For those belonging to twice-born castes, crossing the oceans implied defilement, but for women especially, freedom of mobility was a transgressive act (and still is in parts of India).

What was seen as evidence of women's immorality was actually a fluidity and flexibility. Unions of men and women on the plantation included monogamy, but also visiting relationships and multiple partners due to the relative scarcity of Indian women.

However, 'competition' and 'scarcity' became excuses for numerous cases of "wife murder". The Indian woman, with her body compromised by the independence of her migration, labour, and relationship choices in the Caribbean, presented an affront to the Indian nation, and spurred a campaign to end Indentureship by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress.

Nonetheless, Indo-Trinidadian women remained active in cane field labour (both in its politics and in practice). In conversation with me, the former and late Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Basdeo Panday described working conditions that persisted into the 1970s, saying, "In the sugar industry to qualify for a day's work, you had to cut two tons of cane and not only cut the cane, but you had to cut and bundle the cane. Women and men did that. But the men are strong enough to cut and bundle two tons. The women were not, so they carried the children. She cut, while they bundled. You see it was a revolving source of cheap labour – when the parents die, the children would now take their place."

A feminism of the cane fields was about taking care of each other, women and children, as well as men. Despite a shared struggle, the dominant narrative of Indo-Trinidadian women became one of docility.

Stories of resistance were replaced with an ideal Indo-Caribbean femininity whereby women's roles were defined by family relations: daughter, wife, or mother. Consequently, Indo-Trinidadian women were often seen by wider society as confined by patriarchal attitudes originating in their so-called 'cultural or religious burden'.

For example, in 2013, then Senator Penelope Beckles-Robinson (now leader of the Opposition) claimed "it was the hard work done by the PNM Women's League over the years to lift the status of women that has allowed Kamla Persad-Bissessar to become Prime Minister of TT", as was reported in *Newsday* on May 20, 2013; as if Indo-Caribbean women (that is, docile *dulahins*) needed to be tutored into public life.

My hope is that in this second time around, with a promise to overturn the racially antagonistic politics of the past, Aunty Kamla will help us acknowledge history, and see a feminism of the cane fields, unapologetically, as a source of strength and agency to do things differently.

In the words of Marley: "In this great future, you can't forget your past/So dry your tears I say."

Dr Nalini Mohabir is an associate professor at Concordia University, Montréal



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

'Not for power, but service'

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kindness for weakness. There is nothing more dangerous than a mother who believes her children are in danger," she warned the upcoming ministers of her government.

It was a statement that stirred loud applause from her listeners, as it underscored her intent to lead with both compassion, conviction, and with a firm hand on the helm.

Her speech also resounded with solidarity for those long neglected by political structures, obliquely noting the dichotomy between the favoured and the underprivileged in the former government's outreach.

"Beyond the lighthouse in Port-of-Spain, there is a country with real people. Real feelings, real dreams, and real ambitions. This is our country too. I dedicate my term to the forgotten people of this nation," Persad-Bissessar declared.

From Guanapo to Icacos, from Kernahan in the Nariva swamp to Charlotteville in Tobago, Persad-Bissessar called out communities by name, which were often absent from national policy.

Assuring these communities of her government's engagement and committing to their inclusion, she declared unequivocally, "I see you; we see you, every single one. You will be treated equally and fairly. I made a promise that everybody will win, and I intend to fulfil it."

Persad-Bissessar also reflected on her years in political exile, sharing intimate details of her time away from power.

"After demitting the office of Prime Minister in 2015, I was a pariah to many because, in their eyes, I had nothing left to give. I know how it feels to be humiliated and written off. I know how it feels to be kicked and stomped on when you're down," she revealed.

Yet she credited the nation's most vulnerable with lifting her spirit and resolve, noting, "It was the poorest and humblest people who came to my aid... while others had their foot on my neck. The old guard dies; we never surrender."

It was a narrative that grew into a rallying cry for ordinary citizens, with Persad-Bissessar declaring, "You are defending your family. You are standing up for every community that was abandoned. You are fighting for every child who deserves better. We will rebuild hope. We will rebuild dignity."

Looking down the road, Persad-Bissessar promised a policy agenda aligned with generational upliftment. She laid out goals focused on economic revitalisation, security reform, technological access, and revenue diversification.

As she noted, "This day marks the beginning of a journey to rebuild our economy, restore security, revolutionise access to technology, diversify our revenue streams, and renew the people's faith and confidence to propel this country forward."

And so she stressed the long view, saying, "Some of the seeds we will plant in this five-year journey will blossom into trees whose fruit we may not eat, but our children, grandchildren, and the generations to come certainly will."

Taking aim at entrenched privilege, she spoke firmly against "fake elites and 'eat-ah-food' financiers who have looted this country for the last ten years", adding, "Democracy may be imperfect, but once every five years, no matter your wealth or status, we are all equal on Election Day."

She also criticised her predecessors for its treatment of citizens, saying, "Some may have treated the people of our land like problems, but I know that the people of our land are the solution."

And Persad-Bissessar was clear as she was unrelenting, declaring she will lead from among the people.

"Our highest priority will be not just to communicate with you, but to commune with you. I will never be detached from your feelings and aspirations... I will always be listening. I will be following you," she told her listeners.

To the rising chanting of her name by the gathered crowd, Persad-Bissessar painted a portrait of a leader returning not for power, but for service.

"You have had prime ministers before me, you will have prime ministers after me, but you will never ever have a Prime Minister who loves you as much as I do," she declared.

Well met! SRK’s sartorial splendour encounters anonymity at the Met

— In an historic debut at fashion’s grandest night, Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan brought understated Indian glamour to the Met Gala, yet found himself curiously anonymous on the international red carpet.

Under the dazzling lights of New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, Shah Rukh Khan stepped confidently onto fashion’s biggest stage, instantly making history as the first Indian actor ever to grace the Met Gala’s famed red carpet.

Draped in bespoke sartorial elegance by celebrated Indian designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Khan embodied subtle regality and effortless charisma, capturing the spirit of the evening’s theme – *Superfine: Tailoring Black Style*.

Yet, amid this grandeur, an amusing twist emerged: the international media struggled to recognise Bollywood’s reigning ‘King’.

In a moment of inadvertent humour that quickly went viral, Shah Rukh Khan found himself politely introducing himself to an oblivious journalist. Approached on the red carpet, Khan greeted with characteristic charm, “Hi, I’m Shah Rukh”.

Asked further about his designer, he warmly introduced Mukherjee, gracefully navigating a scenario far removed from his star status back in India.

The exchange showcased Khan’s humility and wit, endearing him even more to global audiences. Later, when asked about his feelings on creating history as the first Indian male Bollywood star at the Met Gala, Khan revealed a gentle honesty: “I don’t know about history, but I’m nervous, I’m excited, and Sabyasachi here,” he said, nodding to his designer friend beside him, “He convinced me to come.”

Mukherjee’s design for Khan was not merely a fashion statement; it was a thoughtful dialogue bridging cultures. In a meticulous *Instagram* post, the designer detailed Khan’s ensemble: a floor-length coat crafted from Tasmanian superfine wool, accented with Japanese horn buttons, and tailored with peak collars and wide lapels.

The garment married traditional Indian tailoring with classic Western aesthetics. Beneath this stately coat, Khan wore a silk *crepe de chine* shirt casually unbuttoned, tailored wool trousers, and a luxurious satin *kamarbandh*, or waist chain.

Completing the look, the Bengal Tiger Head Cane, crafted meticulously in 18-karat gold, adorned with tourmalines, sapphires, and diamonds, added a sophisticated edge. Mukherjee described the look as “a tribute to Shah Rukh Khan’s global stature”, emphasising how SRK’s cinematic charisma translated seamlessly onto an international fashion stage.

The Met Gala’s 2025 theme, *Superfine: Tailoring Black Style*, drew inspiration from Monica L. Miller’s influential 2009 book, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity*. With this timely focus on menswear and the nuanced history of Black dandyism, Khan’s outfit subtly celebrated parallels between Black and Indian sartorial traditions,

both marked by historical resilience and stylistic innovation. Usher, a Gala committee member, encapsulated the sentiment succinctly, noting, “The theme this year speaks to our rich culture that should always be widely celebrated.”

Co-chaired by luminaries including Pharrell Williams, Colman Domingo, Lewis Hamilton, A\$AP Rocky, and Anna Wintour, the Gala’s focus on menswear represented a powerful, inclusive statement.

Mukherjee described his artistic vision succinctly, stating, “Shah Rukh Khan is one of the greatest superstars in the world. My interpretation of the Black dandy is demonstrating his stardom on a global stage.”

His nuanced understanding of Khan’s iconic stature was evident in the restrained opulence of the design, making a compelling statement without resorting to flamboyance.

Indeed, it was Khan’s understated glamour that paradoxically amplified his presence, making him stand out amidst a sea of louder, bolder fashion statements.

Despite his formidable international following and blockbuster film career spanning over 100 movies, Khan’s modesty was disarming.

“I’m very shy,” Khan confessed to *Vogue* livestream hosts Ego Nwodim and Teyana Taylor, admitting a habitual avoidance of red-carpet events.

He added, “I told Sabya I only wear black and white, but what we designed for me is what I’m most comfortable in. That’s how I think it should be.”

This genuine admission of vulnerability resonated deeply with fans and observers alike, offering a relatable glimpse behind the carefully constructed *façade* of global celebrity.

Through subtle, personal details, a sparkling “K” pendant, layered necklaces carrying symbolic resonance, and heirloom motifs, Khan’s ensemble encapsulated a personal narrative intertwined with cultural symbolism.

His confident yet quiet arrival, cane in hand, portrayed a contemporary Maharaja, his stature proclaimed through subtle gestures rather than overt extravagance.

His attire was a nod to India’s rich sartorial past, merging indigenous style with historical influences of colonial tailoring, seamlessly aligning with the Gala’s exploration of Black diasporic fashion histories.

As Shah Rukh Khan navigated the iconic steps of the Met, his understated yet powerful presence carved a meaningful narrative into the Gala’s storied tradition. While his initial anonymity provided a humorous anecdote, his grace and understated elegance on this global stage reinforced the notion that true style transcends immediate recognition.

The night not only marked an historic milestone for SRK, but symbolised the broader narrative of representation and recognition in global fashion. In stepping onto the red carpet, Shah Rukh Khan reminded the world that the most resonant fashion statements are often whispered, not shouted.



Kajol posts to Instagram hilarious photographs ‘imitating’ SRK’s Met appearance

Shah Rukh Khan made his highly-anticipated Met Gala debut earlier this week, stepping onto the prestigious red carpet in a custom-designed, all-black Sabyasachi ensemble. The Bollywood icon’s look was notably accented by statement jewelry, including intricately designed rings, a signature ‘SRK’ neckpiece, and an impressive, oversized ‘K’ locket, symbolically affirming his status as the ‘King’.

However, reactions were mixed, with some fans and fashion critics expressing expectations that Sabyasachi could have elevated the star’s look even further.

Among the many celebrity responses was from Kajol, SRK’s long-time co-star and close friend, who posted to social media a humorous series of photographs.

In a playful *Instagram* carousel, Kajol shared photos of herself in an equally dramatic, jewelry-rich, all-black outfit, striking poses reminiscent of SRK’s Met Gala appearance. She cheekily captioned the post, *Hmmmmmmmm, spot the difference*, sparking laughter among fans, and highlighting their enduring off-screen friendship.

Kajol and SRK’s chemistry has consistently captivated audi-

ences, as showcased in Bollywood classics such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, *Baazigar*, and *Dilwale*. Their playful interactions continue to endear fans decades after their iconic on-screen collaborations.

This year’s Met Gala marked an unprecedented attendance by Indian celebrities, with SRK and Kiara Advani making headlines. Joining them were icons Priyanka Chopra Jonas, designers Sabyasachi Mukherjee and Manish Malhotra, Mona Patel, Natasha Poonawalla, Isha Ambani, and Diljit Dosanjh.

Playing cricket beyond the boundary to conquer cancer

Toronto – The rhythmic run-up of the bowler pounding on a Mississauga street in the approach to the moment of delivery, mixing with enthusiastic cheers from the crowd, will soon be rising and falling like waves breaking on a Caribbean shore.

For many of us in our thriving Caribbean community, the sound of the ocean is just as exciting as the murmuring of an appreciative crowd at a game of cricket. For us, the game is not merely a sport: it is our heritage, legacy, unity, and life itself.

However, at the end of this month, our precious game will transcend tradition to become a tremendous act of solidarity in the fight against cancer.

On May 31, Celebration Square in Mississauga will host Cricket to Conquer Cancer, Canada's first-ever street cricket fund-raiser organised by The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation.

Here, every run scored will resonate with hope, and each wicket that falls will symbolise another step toward eradicating the fear of cancer. As the event approaches, teams are gathering, strategies are being inked on drawing boards, and anticipation building, all fueled by the knowledge that their participation could change countless lives.

Cricket to Conquer Cancer is not just another fund-raiser game; more than a ground-breaker, it is a game-changer.

With over 100 teams being registered to compete in the thrilling T5 format, the organisers are targeting to put one million dollars on the fund-raising scoreboard. Each dollar will fund pioneering research at PMCF, recognised globally for its innovative contributions to cancer care.

At the event's official launch on February 4, international cricket star Carlos Brathwaite took his guard, lined up his bat, and settled down for the innings ahead come May 31.

Urging our community to step forward to bat to help cure cancer, he affirmed, "Cricket has the power to unite and inspire, and now, more than ever, we must harness that power for something truly meaningful."

Also at the February 4 launch, Miyo Yamashita, President and CEO of PMCF, underlined the crucial role community-

driven initiatives play in combating cancer.

As she passionately explained, "Our communities are at the heart of transformative cancer research. Every participant, every supporter is integral to breakthroughs that shape lives here in Canada and worldwide."

The choice for cricket as a fund-raiser is a strategic and resonant one. Now blossoming rapidly across Canada, our game is being today played in diverse urban centres here in the GTA, home to North America's largest South Asian communities.

Brendan Ennis, Senior Director of Corporate & Community Partnerships at PMCF, highlighted this unifying potential.

"Cancer doesn't need awareness – it needs impact. Cricket uniquely provides that platform, engaging diverse communities passionately committed to making a tangible difference," he remarked.

It means that the choice to hold this inaugural event as street cricket adds further depth, tapping into the grassroots ethos that defines cricket globally.

As Steve Merker, Vice President of Corporate & Community Partnerships at PMCF affirmed, "This first-of-its-kind North American event aims not

only to raise substantial funds but also inspire new supporters to envision a world free from cancer's shadow."

Cricket to Conquer Cancer's structure is dynamic, mirroring the urgency and agility demanded by its cause. Teams will face off in intense five-over-per-side matches, the short, sharp battles testing reflexes, strategy, and chemistry while under pressure.

Meanwhile, beyond the field, participants face another critical challenge in unity and teamwork: fund-raising. Each squad is targeting to raise \$6,000, with leading teams gaining an extraordinary chance to recruit cricket celebrities, transforming local matches into thrilling, legendary moments.

Yet, behind the competitive thrill lies a sobering reality in a statistic that is both chilling and personal. In Canada, two in five individuals will confront a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. Cancer remains one of humanity's greatest adversaries,

anticipated to surge by 77 percent globally by 2050.

Moreover, the disease is increasingly striking younger demographics, underscoring the need for swift, effective action.

The PMCF, with ground-breaking treatments in stem cells and immunotherapy, remains a beacon of hope, drastically improving survival rates and patient outcomes.

Dr Amit Oza, Head of the Division of Medical Oncology & Hematology at Princess Margaret, shared his profound connection to the cause.

"Funds raised here will ripple globally, enabling revolutionary breakthroughs," said Oza, adding, "As a lifelong cricket enthusiast, this initiative fills me with pride. We are blending passion with purpose, and the result will be transformative."

Indeed, the transformative potential of Cricket to Conquer Cancer extends far beyond its immediate objective. It embodies PMCF's *Carry The Fire* initiative, symbolising unwavering determination and hope, rallying people around a common purpose: a future without the fear of cancer.

For our Caribbean diaspora, cricket is embedded deeply into our cultural identity. It has been encoded in us in games played in the back alleys of Kingston, Georgetown, Port-of-Spain, and in the grand stands of Kensington Oval, Providence, and Sabina.

The values inherent in cricket in resilience, teamwork, precision, which were instilled in us at these sites of play back in the homelands reflect the qualities that are required for us to face cancer head-on.

And the event's compelling appeal has resonated strongly, evidenced by ongoing registrations, which is more than half-way there. Corporate sponsors are stepping forward enthusiastically, embracing the call to action, understanding that each dollar pledged represents another powerful step toward victory in the battle against cancer.

Come May 31, we have an opportunity to push beyond the boundary, to reshape our A-game. It would not merely be about runs or wickets, but about saving lives, restoring hope, and uniting our community against a common adversary.

Here is the opportunity to wield our well-seasoned bats to make a big hit; to make an impact by putting runs on the fund-raising scoreboard, and in so doing, becoming game-changers in the battle to conquer cancer.



Taskin Ahmed

Pacer Ahmed on the mend

Bangladesh's fast bowling mainstay, Taskin Ahmed, is on course to return to action for the team's crucial tour of Sri Lanka, scheduled from June 17 to July 16, contingent on successfully completing his ongoing rehabilitation program.

Taskin, who has been sidelined by a persistent Achilles tendon injury, missed Bangladesh's recent two-match Test series against Zimbabwe, and will also be absent for the upcoming seven T20 Internationals against Pakistan and the UAE.

He recently sought specialist medical advice in London, where comprehensive assessments by an ankle surgeon, sports physician, and physiotherapist concluded that surgery was unnecessary at this stage.

Instead, the specialists advised a meticulous, non-surgical rehabilitation strategy designed to manage and improve his tendon condition progressively. The Bangladesh Cricket Board's senior physician, Debashish Chowdhury, who accompanied Taskin during his London consultations, expressed optimism regarding the fast bowler's recovery process.

"The specialists believe that a conservative, non-surgical approach is the best course of action for Taskin at this time," Chowdhury explained, adding, "The rehabilitation programme is tailored to gradually restore his fitness and manage the tendon condition effectively. We are optimistic about his progress."

At 14 years old, Suryavanshi already a centurion

— At 14 years old, teen sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi became the youngest centurion in men's T20 cricket, smashing a blistering 35-ball hundred, the fastest ever by an Indian player.

Fourteen-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi etched his name into cricketing history late last month, becoming the youngest player ever to score a century in men's T20 cricket with a remarkable innings that guided Rajasthan Royals to a comfortable eight-wicket victory over Gujarat Titans in Jaipur.

Chasing a daunting target of 210, the teenage left-hander dismantled Gujarat's bowling attack, blasting seven fours and 11 towering sixes to reach a sensational 101 from just 38 balls.

Suryavanshi's milestone arrived emphatically when he pulled renowned leg-spinner Rashid Khan over deep mid-wicket for six, completing the second-fastest IPL century ever, behind Chris Gayle's 30-ball hundred in 2013, and the quickest by an Indian batter.

The prodigious youngster celebrated his 14th birthday earlier this year. Earlier in April he captured attention by becoming the IPL's youngest-ever debutant to dispatch his first delivery for six.

In Jaipur, Suryavanshi's explosive hitting combined power and precision as he shared a stunning 166-run partnership with fellow opener and India batter Yashasvi Jaiswal, who himself contributed a polished, unbeaten 70 from 40 deliveries.

The cricketing world swiftly reacted with astonishment and praise. Indian batting legend Sachin Tendulkar lauded the teenager's "fearless approach, bat speed, picking the length early, and transferring the energy behind the ball". He further described it as the "recipe behind a fabulous innings".

Even opponents applauded the exceptional innings. Gujarat Titans' England star Jos Buttler acknowledged graciously, stating, "Fair play youngster. That was incredible." India's former World Cup-winning all-rounder Yuvraj Singh enthusiastically tweeted, "What were you doing at 14?! This kid is taking on the best bowlers in the world without blinking an eyelid! Vaibhav Suryavanshi – remember the name!"

India's Test and ODI captain Rohit Sharma succinctly described the performance as "class", while T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav labelled it "absolutely insane".

Rajasthan Royals coach and India great Rahul Dravid offered measured praise for his young prodigy, emphasising the importance of careful management following Suryavanshi's



Vaibhav Suryavanshi

newfound fame.

"Putting a certain level of support to navigate all of this attention and still allowing him that space to be a youngster is going to be important," Dravid said, adding, "He's an exceptionally talented young player who is working really hard on his skills and abilities, but he is going to have to keep improving."

Suryavanshi's extraordinary potential had been recognised earlier when the Royals secured his services for just under \$140,000 during last year's auction, making him the youngest player ever drafted in IPL history.

Prior to his IPL exploits, as a 13-year-old, he had already impressed with a 58-ball century for India Under-19s against Australia Under-19s.

"He's got good hand-eye coordination in terms of judgment of length. That is something that has really amazed me," added Dravid.

He added, "He is very quick to pick up on anything fractionally short or full, he is really good to capitalise on that."

Scriver-Brunt leads women’s team as England seek to rebuild

— Nat Sciver-Brunt has been appointed captain of England Women’s cricket team, succeeding Heather Knight after nine years, aiming to rebuild following a tough Ashes defeat and disappointing T20 World Cup performance.

...
Nat Sciver-Brunt, the acclaimed England all-rounder, has officially taken the helm of the England Women’s cricket team, the England & Wales Cricket Board announced late last month.

Her appointment marks the beginning of a significant transition as England seeks rejuvenation following a series of disappointing results under Heather Knight, the team’s previous captain.

Knight, who led the team for nine years, was asked to step down following England’s underwhelming recent performances. England failed to advance beyond the group stage at last year’s T20 World Cup in the UAE, and suffered a crushing 16-0 defeat to Australia in the multi-format Women’s Ashes.

This comprehensive loss triggered the resignation of head coach Jon Lewis, who was subsequently replaced by former England player Charlotte Edwards.

Sciver-Brunt, aged 32, brings substantial experience and remarkable credentials to her new role. Since debuting in 2013, she has consistently proven her excellence across all formats.

Twice named PCA Player of the Year (2017, 2022) and ICC Women’s Cricketer of the Year (2022, 2023), she enjoyed an outstanding 2023, earning spots in both ICC Women’s ODI and T20 Teams of the Year.

Notably, Sciver-Brunt recently became the first player to surpass 500 runs in a single Women’s Premier League season, and the first to reach the 1,000-run milestone overall.

Currently ranked third in the ICC ODI batting rankings, Sciver-Brunt has amassed 3,811 ODI runs at an average of 45.91.

She was integral to England’s 2017 World Cup-winning squad, and has served as Knight’s deputy for the past three years.

Expressing pride at her appointment, Sciver-Brunt said: “I’m really proud to take on the role of captain of the England Women’s team, and it’s an honour to have been asked by Charlotte, someone I’ve always looked up to. Ever since my England debut back in 2013, all I have wanted to do is help the team in every way that I can. I will try my best to lead this team to success, whilst empowering them to be the best version of themselves.”

She emphasised the team’s potential, adding: “We have a really talented group, and we have a group that is united. It is a team I believe in, and a team that can have a lot of success together. It’s hugely exciting to be working with Charlotte, having had the pleasure of working with her in the last three years at Mumbai Indians. Her love of cricket and passion for the England Women’s team is inspiring, and I’m excited to see where this partnership leads us.”

Clare Connor, Managing Director of England Women’s Cricket, welcomed the appointment, stating: “We are delighted to have appointed Nat as England Women’s captain, and I know she’s excited about the honour of leading the team during an unprecedented chapter in international women’s cricket.”

Connor further praised Sciver-Brunt’s character and leadership, stating, “Everyone knows what a fantastic cricketer Nat is, but her qualities extend far beyond her skills on the pitch. She is thoughtful, resilient, and driven by getting the best out of herself and everyone around her. Nat is immensely well-respected in the group, and I know she will form an exciting and fruitful partnership with Charlotte.”

Sciver-Brunt previously captained England in the third T20I against New Zealand in 2021, and again during the



Nat Sciver-Brunt

Commonwealth Games in 2022. Her tenure as permanent captain officially commences with England’s home series against the West Indies, featuring both ODI and T20I formats, starting May 21.

Following the series, England will host India for five T20Is and three ODIs ahead of the Women’s World Cup in September-October.

West Indies selectors retain squad for upcoming England, Ireland tour

– With 2027 World Cup qualification in sight, West Indies have named a largely unchanged 15-man squad for upcoming ODIs in Ireland and England, as coach Daren Sammy urges consistency and culture-building.

...
West Indies have announced a consistent 15-member squad for their upcoming ODI tours of Ireland and England, opting to retain the majority of players who delivered back-to-back series wins over Bangladesh and England in late 2024.

Notably absent from the touring party is left-handed batter Shimron Hetmyer, currently featuring in the Indian Premier League, while young wicketkeeper-batter Jewel Andrew returns to the lineup.

Shai Hope will once again lead the Caribbean side, with experienced openers Brandon King and Evin Lewis expected to headline the top order. Keacy Carty remains a preferred option at No. 3.

Promising pacers Shamar Joseph and Matthew Forde, both of whom missed the Bangladesh series due to injury, have returned to fitness and are available for selection. Amir Jangoo, who marked his ODI debut with a century in the final game against Bangladesh, retains his place and will be aiming for an extended run.

West Indies begin their three-match ODI series against Ireland at Dublin’s Clontarf Cricket Club on May 21, with further matches on May 23 and May 25. The team will then move to England for three ODIs at Edgbaston on May 29, Trent Bridge

on June 1, and The Oval on June 3, followed by three T20Is starting June 6. The T20 squad is yet to be announced.

“These matches form a critical component towards the 2027 World Cup and there are signs of the team building consistency following the series sweep against Bangladesh and the win over England late last year,” said head coach Daren Sammy.

He added, “We expect the conditions to be challenging, but we are creating a culture and mindset which emphasise playing the brand of cricket that is taking us closer to some of our overall objectives.”

Sammy, who has overseen the team’s improved white-ball form, also confirmed a coaching staff reshuffle.

Former West Indies pacer Ravi Rampaul takes over as bowling coach from James Franklin. Additionally, former Ireland all-rounder Kevin O’Brien will join the team’s backroom staff specifically for the Ireland leg of the tour, lending local insight and experience.

Notable omissions from the squad include Nicholas Pooran, who has not featured in an ODI since 2023, and Hetmyer, who had returned briefly for the England series last year, but missed the Bangladesh matches due to illness.

With the 2027 World Cup looming, the selectors appear to be prioritising form and fitness over reputation.

West Indies currently sit ninth in the ICC ODI rankings, and are eyeing automatic qualification for the 2027 ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup, which will be hosted jointly by South Africa and Zimbabwe. Momentum from the recent series victories has positioned the squad as a growing force in white-



Shimron Hetmyer

ball cricket.
West Indies ODI Squad: Shai Hope (captain), Jewel Andrew, Keacy Carty, Roston Chase, Matthew Forde, Justin Greaves, Amir Jangoo, Alzarri Joseph, Shamar Joseph, Brandon King, Evin Lewis, Gudakesh Motie, Sherfane Rutherford, Jayden Seales, Romario Shephard.

Indian coach Gambhir opposes cricketing ties with Pakistan until terrorism ends

— India head coach Gautam Gambhir has strongly opposed any cricketing ties with Pakistan following the recent Pahalgam terror attack, stating no match is worth more than Indian lives.

...
In the wake of the tragic terror attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, that claimed 26 lives on April 22, India head coach Gautam Gambhir has publicly voiced his opposition to any form of cricketing engagement with Pakistan, including at neutral venues, until terrorism ceases entirely.

Speaking at an event in Delhi last week, Gambhir made his position clear: “My personal answer to this is absolutely no,” he said when asked about India’s potential participation in matches against Pakistan in upcoming multi-nation tournaments.

He added, “Till all this [terrorism] doesn’t stop, there should not be anything between India and Pakistan.”

India and Pakistan have not played a bilateral series since 2013, with recent encounters restricted to ICC events and continental tournaments such as the Asia Cup. Their latest face-off occurred during the 2025 Champions Trophy in Dubai.

Prospective clashes may occur in the women’s ODI World Cup and the men’s Asia Cup later this year, followed by the men’s T20 World Cup in 2026.

However, Gambhir emphasised that such decisions fall under

governmental jurisdiction.

“Ultimately, this is [the] government’s decision whether we play them or not,” he said, adding, “No cricket match or Bollywood or any other interaction is more important than the life of Indian soldiers and Indian citizens. Matches will keep happening, movies will be made, singers will continue to perform, but nothing comes close to losing a loved one in your family,” he said.

Gambhir reiterated that he respects the authority of both the Board of Control for Cricket in India and the central government to take the final call.

“This is not up to me, it is not in my jurisdiction. This is for BCCI and, more importantly, the government to decide whether we should play them or not. Whatever decision they make, we should be absolutely fine with it and not politicise it,” he said.

In a separate topic, Gambhir also addressed speculation around the selection of veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for India’s upcoming five-Test tour of England beginning in June. Both players endured lean patches during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia but played key roles in India’s recent Champions Trophy triumph.

“First things first: a coach’s job isn’t selecting the team. It is the job of selectors to select,” Gambhir clarified.



Gautam Gambhir

He added, “The coach only selects the XI who will play a match. Neither those who coached before me were selectors, nor am I a selector.”

On the continued presence of senior players like Kohli and Sharma, Gambhir added, “Till the time they are performing, they should be a part of the team. When you start and when you end is your individual decision. No coach, no selector, no BCCI can tell you when you should call it quits.”

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