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PM Mark Carney met with Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali in Toronto on May 8 (at right), where they held talks on furthering Canada-Guyana ties, expanding investment opportunities across key sectors, and the growing role of the more than 100,000 Canadians of Guyanese ancestry in deepening bilateral relations. Ali was in Toronto that weekend where he also met with many of the Guyanese diaspora, including young admirers (at left) at Brampton's Triveni Mandir, and attended community engagements. More photos on Pages 14-15



Diaspora invited to transformation partnership

— President Dr Irfaan Ali told members of the Guyanese diaspora gathered in Brampton that overseas concerns have shifted dramatically from crime and instability to investment, housing, and participation in Guyana's transformation, as he outlined an ambitious vision for a rapidly modernising nation that is increasingly seeking deeper diaspora involvement.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI News Report

Brampton – By the time President Dr Irfaan Ali arrived at what he described as the “top issue” now occupying the minds of overseas Guyanese, the packed hall at the Pearson Convention Centre in Brampton had already travelled with him through highways, hospitals, bridges, biodiversity alliances, digital dashboards, energy corridors, and futuristic cities rising out of the rich, Guyana earth.

But it was a simpler question, rooted less in infrastructure than psychology, which appeared to define the emotional centre of the well-attended diaspora engagement.

“I’ve been coming to diaspora engagement for decades, and the top issue used to be security,” Ali told members of the Guyanese diaspora gathered for the May 9 event. He was in Toronto that weekend, where he attended community events that saw widespread diaspora participation and adulation.

He added, “Today [security] is the last issue on the minds of those persons. Guess what is the top issue today? How can we invest? How can we be part of the development? How can we own a home? How can we be part of the building out of Guyana?”

For Ali, the shift represented more than a changing conversation. It represented, he argued, a changing country.

“That tells you that the story of Guyana is one that is positive, and one that is transformative,” he declared.



President Ali addresses the diaspora. FB photo

In his wide-ranging address to the rapt audience, Ali disclosed that the government of Guyana had received close to 600 responses from members of the diaspora, with many messages reflecting optimism about the country's future and interest in participating in its rapid development.

As he noted, approximately 420 of those responses complimented Guyana's development and offered encouraging

See Page 14: Welcome extended

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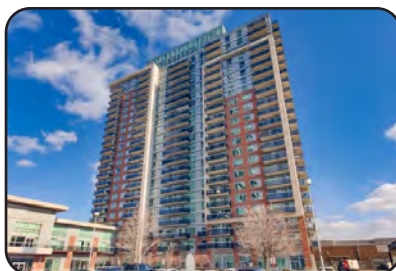
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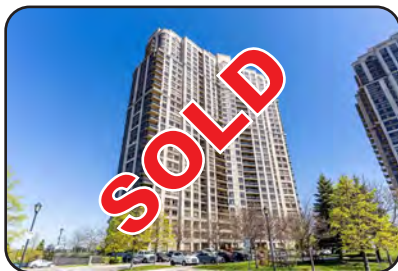
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President Ali (centre) with TPS Chief Superintendent Mandeep Mann (left to right), Chair of the Justice of the Peace Advisory Committee Nicholas Charitsis, Brother Omar Farouk, and the JPACC's Nainesh Kotak

President Ali celebrates Guyanese diaspora, unity at IMO

— President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali joined worshippers at the International Muslim Organisation (IMO) mosque in Toronto on May 8 for Friday Juma prayers, where he praised the Guyanese diaspora's contributions to Canada and highlighted unity, service and national development during a community gathering attended by dignitaries and faith leaders.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI News Report

Etobicoke – President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali on May 8 attended Friday Juma prayers at the International Muslim Organisation (IMO) mosque in Toronto, joining worshippers and community leaders at what is regarded as one of the GTA's earliest Islamic establishments.

President Ali visited Toronto that weekend, where he met with members of the Guyana diaspora and participated in well-attended community engagements that included his trip to the IMO in Etobicoke.

The visit drew a packed hall of worshippers, reflecting both the significance of the occasion and the strong engagement of the Guyanese and wider Muslim communities across the Greater Toronto Area. Also attending the Juma were worshippers from across the globe.

Delivering the *Khutba*, or Friday prayers, Imam Arif Assim, himself an instrumental figure in the *Qibla Foundation* and a long-time community advocate, spoke on the importance of unity, service, and collective responsibility, offering what many worshippers later described as a timely and inspiring message.

Following the prayers, President Ali joined worshippers for a communal gathering and luncheon before delivering a special address in which he thanked members of the Guyanese diaspora for their ongoing contributions to both Guyana and Canada.

President Ali said the Guyanese diaspora remains an impor-

tant part of Canada's multicultural landscape, noting that Guyanese abroad have continued to contribute meaningfully to a broad range of national and civic discussions and solutions.

During his remarks, the Guyanese Head of State also addressed global issues, spiritual and identity challenges confronting modern societies, and priorities being pursued by his government.

President Ali additionally commended IMO President Brother Omar Farouk for his public service and leadership, particularly his vision that institutions such as mosques can play meaningful roles in public policy conversations and community development.



Imdad Farouk meets President Ali

owner of Caribbean Cuisine.

In his concluding remarks, Brother Farouk thanked the congregation and wider community for their support throughout President Ali's visit. He also expressed appreciation to worshippers and attendees from across the globe who gathered for the opportunity to meet President Ali during his visit.

As President Ali spoke, a palpable sense of pride and appreciation moved through the gathering, with many attendees expressing a shared sense of connection to Guyanese identity, achievement, and community advancement.

Among those in attendance were Guyana's Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Charles Ramson Jr.; former Canadian Minister of Immigration and current MP Ahmed Hussen; Secretary of State for Labour and Etobicoke North MP John Zerucelli; Toronto Police Service Chief Superintendent Mandeep Mann; Honorary Consul General at the Guyana Consulate General in Toronto, Mani Singh; Advisor to the Saudi Royal Family Dr Faiz Al-Abideen; senior officials of the Guyanese government; and members of the Elite Presidential Guard Unit.

Guests were later treated to lunch prepared by Brother Faizul Khan,



President Ali addresses worshippers; at right, IMO President Brother Omar Farouk

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MP John Zurecelli addresses officials and employees at SMART Local 285
Federal plan targets faster homebuilding

— A government release says its Spring Economic Update 2026 is pairing housing construction with workforce expansion through investments aimed at accelerating homebuilding, strengthening the skilled trades, and modernising Canada's construction systems, measures the federal government says will benefit communities such as Etobicoke and the wider GTA.

Ottawa – A government of Canada news release says the federal government's Spring Economic Update 2026 is designed to address Canada's housing pressures by combining investments in skilled labour with measures intended to accelerate the pace of home construction.

On May 8, the MP John Zurecelli, Secretary of State (Labour), visited SMART Local 285 in Etobicoke to highlight housing measures contained in the update that are aimed at building more homes through workforce expansion, faster construction timelines, and support for modern methods of construction.

The release stated that the government's housing approach combines workforce development with targeted housing initiatives intended to move projects more quickly from planning to construction.

Central to the plan is up to \$6 billion over five years to recruit, train, and hire skilled trades' workers across Canada. The funding is expected to support occupations including electricians, carpenters, welders, construction workers, sheet metal workers, and gas technicians, while also helping create employment opportunities in the trades.

In Etobicoke, where housing demand continues to remain high, the federal government said these workforce investments will be paired with financing measures intended to accelerate housing construction. The update includes more than \$7 billion in low-cost loans through the Apartment Construction Loan Program, supporting the construction of up to 16,500 rental homes nationwide.

The Spring Economic Update also allocates \$41.9 million over five years beginning in 2026-2027 to modernise Canada's homebuilding system. The funding is intended to streamline regulations, reduce duplicate inspections, and support modular and factory-built housing through updated National Model Codes developed in collaboration with provinces and territories.

The government said the measures are also expected to support greater use of Canadian materials, including lumber, steel, and concrete, while encouraging faster and more sus-

tainable construction methods.

Speaking during the announcement, Zerucelli said addressing the country's housing shortage requires investment in the workforce needed to build new homes.

"Solving Canada's housing challenge means building – and that starts with having the skilled workforce to deliver," Zerucelli said.

He added, "Here in Etobicoke – and across Canada – these investments will help create good-paying jobs, strengthen the local economy, and deliver the housing that families need now and for the future."

Jack Wall, Director of Canadian Affairs for SMART Canada, said the measures recognise the role skilled trades' workers play in Canada's future growth.

"With more than 17,000 members across Canada, SMART Canada knows firsthand the impact these investments will have on our members, families, and communities nationwide," Wall said.

Alex Petricca, Business Manager of SMART Local 285, described the announcement as "a positive step forward" for workers and communities.

The release noted that the Spring Economic Update builds on earlier federal housing measures, including \$1.7 billion through the Improving Housing Supply Act aimed at cutting red tape, lowering costs, and speeding up homebuilding across the country.

It further stated that \$41.9 million over five years beginning in 2026-2027 will be directed toward modernising homebuilding by streamlining regulations and National Model Codes, accelerating modular and factory-built housing approvals, supporting innovative construction methods, and improving housing data systems to speed delivery.

In addition, the federal government said it intends to unlock financing for "missing middle" housing by expanding mortgage insurance for residential buildings containing between three and eight units, with a 30-day consultation process expected to follow.

The release added that Team Canada Strong plans to invest up to \$6 billion over five years to grow the skilled trades' workforce, including support for apprentices and measures aimed at reducing the time to Red Seal certification by as much as 50 percent.

The federal government said these initiatives will work alongside broader national housing measures under Build Canada Homes to address varying housing needs across the country.



MP John Zurecelli with the team at SMART Local 285 in Etobicoke



Secretary of State and Etobicoke North MP John Zurecelli joined community members, including IMO President Omar Farouk, during a May 14 cleanup campaign at Smithfield Park in Etobicoke. Volunteers collected 20 bags of garbage in approximately two hours, highlighting a shared commitment to keeping neighbourhood parks clean, safe, and welcoming for families and residents.

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Editorial

Return and rebuild

For generations, our Guyanese families lived with the quiet ache of farewell. Suitcases were packed, and diplomas slipped into folders. Tears were shed at Timehri before departures to Toronto, New York, London in the UK, where opportunities for better lives awaited.

Few countries across this globe have experienced the pain of the brain drain as deeply as Guyana.

Teachers left classrooms; nurses departed hospital wards. Engineers, accountants, pharmacists, and doctors took the skills in those diplomas abroad, helping to build other lands, while families and memories remained behind, the homeland struggling to hold onto its brightest sons and daughters.

The recent United Nations *Development Programme Democracy and Development Report* cited Guyana's 12th place among 175 countries with the world's highest levels of skilled emigration (Jamaica is in third place); but this merely places statistical language around a reality that generations of Guyanese lived personally, emotionally, and with an eternal ache for the homeland.

Yet today, something appears to be changing. That change was evident during President Dr Irfaan Ali's May 9 address to members of the Guyanese diaspora gathered at the Pearson Convention Centre in Brampton.

Beyond the applause and patriotic enthusiasm, there flowed a deeper undercurrent throughout the engagement: that many overseas Guyanese are looking homeward again, not only with nostalgia, but with renewed possibility.

President Ali himself pointed to this transformation when he reflected on how dramatically diaspora conversations have evolved over the years. There was the time when overseas concerns centred heavily on crime, instability, and uncertainty. But today, many Guyanese abroad are asking different questions: How can we invest? How can we own a home? How can we become part of Guyana's development story?

Clearly, a pivot has occurred, and it is a trajectory that matters. For decades, migration often felt less like a choice, and more like necessity. Parents encouraged children to leave for security, education, stability, and a better future. But now, amid Guyana's rapid transformation, our diaspora is witnessing a nation that increasingly seems to be imagining a future large enough to not only include them once more, but also their foreign-born children.

President Ali's multimedia presentation in Brampton of new highways, expanded healthcare systems, educational institutions, digital governance initiatives, energy projects, and the proposed Silica City development was ultimately about more than infrastructure. It was also an invitation for us as a diaspora to see ourselves not merely as distant spectators to Guyana's upliftment, but to become participants in its unfolding.

Most importantly, this moment should not be viewed through the narrow lens of economics alone. The relationship between Guyana and its diaspora has always been emotional, cultural, and deeply human.

Our diaspora never truly left Guyana behind. We carried with us accents that were perhaps softened, but never erased; in cultural practices that flourish in our kitchens, in our love for cricket, in our stories about Demerara, Berbice, Essequibo that are now living in our children.

So what now appears to be emerging is a new kind of conversation, one less defined by departure, which was always about connection; and now, about reconnection.

Of course, trust, opportunity, fairness, and good governance will remain essential if Guyana hopes to meaningfully reverse the historic, debilitating brain drain outflow. Progress must continue to be broad-based, inclusive, embracing, sustainable, and profitable.

Meanwhile, there is something undeniably moving, and meaningful, in seeing how our diaspora, once shaped by departure, is now beginning to imagine returning, reinvesting, reconnecting, and rebuilding.

For much of modern Guyanese history, our homeland's story was written through departure; but now, increasingly, it appears the next chapter is beginning to be written through return, renewal, and re-engagement.

Caribbean heritage a reflection of our elaborate diversity

The Caribbean is often painted with a single brushstroke, images of sun, sea, and steelpan. Yet the region's true beauty lies in its elaborate diversity.

From the Bhojpuri rhythms carried by Indian Indentured labourers to the drumbeats borne across the Atlantic by enslaved Africans; from Indigenous traditions to the enduring influences of European, Chinese, Portuguese, Syrian, and Lebanese communities, the Caribbean is a living mosaic of intertwined histories.

Walk through Port of Spain, Georgetown, Kingston, or Bridgetown, and you will taste that fusion in the food, hear it in the languages, including English, French, Dutch, Spanish, Creole, Patois, Hindustani, and see it reflected in daily life.

It comes vividly alive in festivals: Diwali diyas glowing beside decorated Christmas trees; in Eid prayers rising in neighbourhoods that also prepare for Carnival; in Phagwah powders colouring streets not far from steelbands rehearsing for Panorama.

This is not fragmentation; it is harmony. The Caribbean's strength has never been sameness. It is resilience forged in shared struggle and collective reinvention. Out of colonialism and displacement emerged extraordinary creativity, entrepreneurship, scholarship, and a global cultural influence that far exceeds the region's geographic size.

Diversity is not a footnote in the Caribbean story; it is what defines us.

That same spirit now animates efforts to promote Caribbean culture abroad.

In Canada, more than one million people trace their roots to the Caribbean, yet the community remains under-recognised despite its profound contributions to business, public service, arts, education, and civic life.

Many ethnocultural and religious communities in Canada have been formally acknowledged with heritage month designations.

The Caribbean community deserves the same recognition, not as a symbolic gesture, but as an affirmation of its distinct identity and enduring impact on the Canadian story.

The call for Caribbean Heritage Month has itself become a powerful demonstration of Caribbean togetherness.

A coalition of 25 and growing organisations, including festivals, cultural associations, nonprofits, student groups, and businesses, has united in support of formal recognition by the federal government.



Ryan Singh

Festivals across the country stand in solidarity, from Toronto Caribbean Carnival (the largest Caribbean festival outside the region) to Caribbean Days in Vancouver, CariFestival, Vancouver Island's i-LandFest, and Island Fest in London, Ontario.

Band camps such as Lux Carnival, Rayne Carnival, and Tribal Carnival carry forward the intricate artistry of mas and lend their collective voice.

As our community spans the country, many regional community organisations stand part of our collective, including The Caribbean Canadian Association of Waterloo Region, Guyanese Association of Manitoba, Barbados House Montreal, and the Windsor-Essex Caribbean Association.

In British Columbia, five groups have endorsed Caribbean Heritage Month, including The Bahamas Cultural Association of BC, Barbados Cultural Association of BC, Guyanese Canadian Cultural Association of BC, Trinidad & Tobago Cultural Society of BC, and Vancouver Island Cultural Hub.

A collective of community-based groups has also supported the call for recognition, Building Togetherness, Green Dupatta, Blocko - Blackness YES, St Lucia Canada Foundation, and the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association.

With food central to our culture, Bedessee Caribbean Food Specialist and the Taste the Caribbean festival agreed we should formalise a month for the community.

And the voice of our youth has been heard through the endorsement of the Guyanese Student Council at York University, and the Caribbean Student Association at the University of Ottawa.

This movement reflects the very essence of the Caribbean: many nations, one people. Many histories, one culture. Many voices, one rhythm.

Caribbean culture was born from diversity and strengthened by unity; its story is one of resilience transformed into brilliance, of difference woven into harmony.

Our diversity as one will live and thrive in our new home, Canada, seeks to uphold that principle.

As Canada continues to define itself as a multicultural nation, recognising Caribbean Heritage Month is not simply about celebration; it is about belonging. It is about acknowledging that the Caribbean mosaic is an integral piece of Canada's own.

And when we honour the Caribbean's many roots, we affirm a shared future built on inclusion, pride, and collective strength.

Join us, and let's have Caribbean Heritage Month declared in Canada. For more information, visit CaribbeanMonth.ca.

How a stitch in time held families, households together

In our utilitarian house when I was growing up back home, nothing was allowed to fade away, but was instead given immortality through constant repair.

An enamel cup acquiring a hole in one of its overlapping dents was made to stand in a corner, its handle akimbo with outrage, to await the arrival of the itinerant mender of pots and pans. The broken wicker in a chair was supplemented with layers, the chicken wire leaving behind enlarged honeycomb patterns on its sitter.

So thrifty was my family that even the silence, when it was torn open after quarrels, was quickly mended by Ma; such was the grammar in the household of my youth, not to put too fine a point on it: thread the eye of a needle, then patch, protect, and preserve.

Looking back, I see thrift threading through my family more as pragmatism than philosophy. It was survival stitched-in into quotidian routine. The adults around me moved rapidly through the house with the urgency of battlefield medics, forever in acts of performing field surgery, stitching up small domestic wounds before it became fatal for a side from a pair of socks, or a chamber pot being demoted in rank to house a pea plant.

A shirt pocket caught by a thorn from a Portugal tree? Stitch it! The underneath seam of a pair of pants rent with a mighty leap across a waterway swollen with recent rains was never irreparable. Or so it seems.

Then there were those murmured complaints, "Look how the child gone and push he big toe through the front of this brand new shoes again. Lord and Father, put a hand! He will make we pauper - half the family will end up in the madhouse, and the other half will end up in the poorhouse!"

That child, regrettably, was me. To hear Ma murmur under her breath, it seems I came into the world screaming, but mostly kicking with both feet that each ended with ten voracious caterpillars for toes.

With such lethal toes, new mosquito nets were soon peppered with round holes. It was as if during the night a battle was being fought at sea like in the colonial days, with numerous small cannonballs fired at the moving targets of mosquitoes, the missiles leaving behind small, round holes after exiting the net.

Holding up the evidence of the warfare between belligerent toes and the elusive mosquitoes, Ma would exclaim, "Look at the size of his hole; an elephant could fly through, and will still have room to change its mind!"

Soon patching, cross hatching, and over stitching made the

net look like the map of the Caribbean pinned on the wall at my school. Each patch used a different shade of thread, the stitching like little islands floating as an archipelago that was being pulled apart by a restive, resisting sea.

Then there were the shoes, the infamous "crepe sole", its soles membrane-thin, the canvas uppers instantly permeable to rainwater, and the fronts a permanent imprint where my toes pressed forward, eventually breaking through, during football games played with immature, green coconuts.

My older kindred on the street taunted me endlessly about my footwear. "Well, look the little Englishman reach!" they heckled, pointing to my immaculately whitened shoes, adding, "Next thing he walking up and down the road with top hat and cane like the Governor General himself!"

What did they know about the nuances of footwear anyway? They mostly chased the coconut barefoot, the soles already hardened into leather, their souls calloused with their hard lives.

Naturally, my requests for sturdier, more expensive shoes were treated with the kind of scathing parental amusement usually reserved for the politicians in the capital city.

"Shoes to play football?" my old man scoffed, "Look here child! You think money dripping out of the standpipe by the road?" Instead, he pointed to my shortsighted grandmother struggling to thread a needle in the dim lamplight.

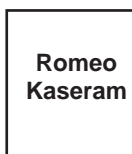
"A stitch in time saves nine," he recited. He always delivered these life altering proverbs with his forefinger raised like the pundit, who liked to issue proclamations he felt would change for better the doomed path our modern-day civilisation had taken.

Decades later I understood what the family was stitching together in our household. It was not merely mosquito nets, shoes, or Ma gently mending egos after internal conflicts.

Instead, it was on-the-ground repair against the depredations of decay in a time and generation that had learned that replacement was luxury and quite unaffordable; instead, repair was essential against expiration, expenditure, and exhaustion.

Today, I still see the rise and fall of Ma's needle and thread in the weak lamplight across those distant evenings, as she dutifully and endlessly stitched my mosquito net to the buzz of annoyance from mosquitoes telegraphing their disappointment abroad.

Years later, when the child grew into an adult standing in leather shoes, the understanding came this was all about survival itself in our marginalised corner of the world, where we taught ourselves how to mend what an extractive history had ruptured.



Romeo Kaseram

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

Markham mandir's celebration honours Indo-Caribbean legacy, resilience

— Ontario's Indo-Caribbean community gathered in celebration, remembrance, and renewal during the second VCC's Annual 5K Run and Walkathon, an event that not only reflected growing participation and support, but also underscored a deepening commitment to preserving heritage, strengthening identity, and carrying forward the legacy of Indian Arrival into future generations.

Markham – The Indo-Caribbean community across Ontario came together in a vibrant display of unity, heritage, and cultural pride as the second VCC's Annual 5K Run and Walkathon recorded another successful year of growth and community engagement.

Held as part of the commemoration marking 188 years since the arrival of Indians to the Caribbean beginning in 1838, the event brought together families, youth, seniors, volunteers, and supporters in honour of the sacrifices, resilience, and enduring contributions of their ancestors to both the Caribbean and Canada.

What began only last year as a modest community initiative has quickly evolved into a meaningful annual tradition rooted in remembrance, cultural continuity, and collective identity.



In photos, the 5K Run and Walkathon saw close to 200 participants this year

Sanjay Kumar, Chair of the 5K Run and Walkathon, said the steady growth of the event reflected the community's deepening commitment to preserving and celebrating Indo-Caribbean heritage.

"The first year welcomed approximately 130 participants and raised just over \$2,000. This year, participation grew to just under 200 attendees, with fundraising surpassing \$5,000, a clear reflection of the community's continued

commitment to preserving and celebrating Indo-Caribbean heritage," Kumar stated.

The Walkathon also serves as part of the wider 28th Annual Caribbean Indian Heritage Event, scheduled for May 23 at the Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham.

The long-running heritage program is presented through a partnership between the Toronto Arya Samaj and the Vedic Cultural Centre, institutions that have played a central role in supporting spiritual, educational, cultural, and community programming for Ontario's Indian diaspora for decades.

Located in Markham, the Vedic Cultural Centre continues to serve as a significant cultural and religious hub for the Indo-Caribbean and wider Indian community, housing both Toronto Arya Samaj and Arya Samaj Markham.

Organisers noted that in recent years, increasing support has also come from a broader cross-section of the Indo-Caribbean community, as cultural organisations, performers, and community leaders continue to rally around efforts aimed at preserving traditions, educating younger generations, and strengthening intergenerational ties.

The 28th edition of the Heritage Program continues that mission by encouraging com-

munities to revisit the history of Indian Arrival with renewed appreciation and understanding. Through education, storytelling, cultural performances, youth engagement, and community participation, organisers hope to preserve the experiences and contributions of earlier generations while ensuring those histories remain accessible and meaningful for younger Canadians.

Varun Kumar, Chair of the Commemoration of the 188th Anniversary of the Arrival of Indians to the West, said events such as the Walkathon and Heritage Program play an increasingly important role as Ontario's Indo-Caribbean population continues to grow.

"Events such as the 5K Run and Walkathon and the annual Heritage and Cultural Program play a vital role in strengthening cultural pride and community unity," Kumar said.

Incoming Toronto Arya Samaj President Indeera Prashad also expressed enthusiasm for this year's program, particularly its focus on creating opportunities for younger generations to better understand their roots and heritage, while allowing elders and long-standing community leaders to witness the continuation of their cultural legacy.

Organisers say the growing participation, expanding partnerships, and increasing collaboration between multicultural leaders and community organisations across York Region highlight the enduring strength of faith, family, heritage, and collective identity within the Indo-Caribbean diaspora.

They added that the success of the Walkathon and broader heritage celebrations reflects a shared commitment not only to honouring the past, but also to building a vibrant and connected future for generations still to come.

The 28th Annual Caribbean Indian Heritage Event takes place on May 23 from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Vedic Cultural Centre, located at 4345 14th Avenue near Kennedy Road in Markham. Organisers say the free public event will feature food, entertainment, music, and cultural programming for visitors of all ages.





Offshore wealth, onshore fight to retain talent

Dear Editor,

I write with deep and critical concern regarding the latest United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, which reveals that Guyana now records one of the highest rates of intellectual flight (brain drain) in the world.

This finding is profoundly troubling, especially as it comes at a time when our nation is experiencing unprecedented economic growth under the administration of President Dr Irfaan Ali.

While the government is touting the oil-driven boom, the UNDP report exposes a parallel crisis: our brightest minds, namely, doctors, engineers, scientists, educators, and other professionals, are leaving in alarming numbers.

These professionals cite lack of opportunities, inadequate research infrastructure, limited professional advancement, and concerns about governance and public sector inefficiency. A “square peg in a round hole” syndrome.

An economy that fails to retain and attract its own talent is building on sand. The Guyana government must confront a hard truth: economic growth without human capital retention is unsustainable. The very people needed to diversify the economy, strengthen public institutions, and drive innovation are departing for Canada, the US, the UK, and elsewhere.

The long-term cost, in lost tax revenue, reduced service delivery, and weakened national resilience, will far exceed short-term fiscal gains.

I urge the Guyana government to consult with the Speaker of the House, Manzoor Nadir urgently by calling Guyana National Assembly to order to fill the still open constitutional appointments so that taxpayers and the gen-

Rather than erasure, contextualise names

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the recent discussion regarding the potential renaming of Nelson Island. While the desire to modernise our national nomenclature and distance ourselves from colonial vestiges is a sentiment many share, we must consider the profound historical cost of such a transition.

To change the name of a place is not merely an administrative update; it is a fundamental alteration of its historical significance, and a calculated erasure of its identity.

History, in all its complexity, is anchored to names. Nelson Island serves as a silent witness to several distinct eras of our national narrative, from its role in maritime defence to its sombre history as an entry point for indentured labourers, and a place of political internment. These names act as markers on a map of our collective memory.

When we remove a name, we thin the thread that connects modern citizens to the lived experiences of those who came before us.

eral public can benefit from such, and the Opposition can hold the government accountable for missteps, financial or otherwise.

Thereafter, the government should take bold steps by launching a national talent retention strategy with specific, measurable targets, including a Presidential Advisory Council on diaspora and local talent.

Also, Research and Development funding should be increased to at least one percent of GDP, creating competitive research grants, innovation hubs, and public-private partnerships.

The government should also reform the public sector by engaging the various unions, craft compensation, and career progression to attract and retain top professionals, especially in health, education, and engineering.

Also, it should create and maintain a “return and thrive” programme offering tax incentives, start-up capital, and re-integration support for Guyanese abroad.

It should also regularly publish brain drain metrics in a transparent, publicly accessible dashboard, with annual reporting to Parliament.

Guyana’s promise will not be fulfilled by oil alone. It depends on the engineers who design our infrastructure, the doctors and nurses who staff our hospitals, and the teachers who shape our next generation.

Let us not build a wealthy country that no one with options wants to live in.

I call on the government, private sector, and civil society to treat this UNDP warning as a national emergency. The time for rhetoric is over; action is overdue.

Jonathan Subrian, Guyana, via email.

Furthermore, renaming a site does not change the events that occurred there; it only makes them harder to recall. History should not be sanitised or obscured to fit the comforts of the present.

Instead of erasing names, we should focus on contextualising them. If the concern is the glorification of a colonial figure, the solution lies in education and the installation of monuments that honour the Indentured labourers and political prisoners who truly define the island’s legacy.

By keeping the name while telling the full story, we acknowledge the struggle and the evolution of Trinidad and Tobago.

We risk a future where our geography is stripped of its depth, replaced by names that lack the weight of centuries. Let us preserve our heritage by facing our history head-on, rather than attempting to rename our way out of a complex past.

George Elias, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

Why Guyana needs to have an oil refinery

Dear Editor,

I write to underscore, with renewed urgency, the strategic imperative for the establishment of a domestic oil refinery in Guyana.

Recent developments, both globally and within our own energy sector, have laid bare a structural vulnerability that can no longer be managed through temporary measures or external arrangements.

Guyana today stands at a paradoxical crossroad. We are a rapidly emerging oil-producing nation, yet we remain dependent on external refining capacity to meet our domestic fuel needs.

This disconnect between production and processing is not merely an economic inefficiency, it is a national vulnerability.

As recent geopolitical tensions have demonstrated, exogenous shocks, particularly those emanating from instability in the Middle East can swiftly disrupt global supply chains, inflate prices, and threaten the reliability of refined fuel imports.

The government’s swift response to the recent gasoline supply concerns was commendable and necessary. However, such interventions, while effective in the short term, do not address the underlying structural gap.

Reliance on imported refined products leaves Guyana exposed to volatility in international markets, limits our ability to stabilise domestic prices, and constrains long-term planning across key sectors of the economy.

It is within this context that President Dr Irfaan Ali’s renewed engagement with regional and international partners, including the Dominican Republic, must be viewed with a sense of urgency.

While refining partnerships may offer interim relief, they should not substitute for a clear and deliberate national policy aimed at establishing domestic refining capacity.

The case for a Guyana-based refinery rests

on three pillars. First, we have the energy security. A domestic refinery would insulate Guyana from external supply disruptions and reduce exposure to geopolitical shocks. It would ensure continuity of fuel supply for transportation, industry, and essential services, even in times of global uncertainty.

Secondly, there is economic transformation. Refining adds value to our crude oil, creating downstream industries, generating employment, and expanding the industrial base.

It allows Guyana to capture a greater share of the energy value chain, rather than exporting raw resources and importing finished products at a premium.

Third, there is regional leadership. With careful planning, Guyana can position itself as a refining hub within the Caribbean and northern South America, supplying not only domestic demand, but also contributing to regional energy resilience.

This aligns with broader Caricom objectives, and strengthens Guyana’s role as a driver of regional integration.

To be clear, the question is no longer whether Guyana should pursue a refinery, but how and when. The government must now move beyond exploratory discussions, and signal a firm commitment through feasibility studies, investor engagement, and policy frameworks to advance this project.

Strategic partnerships, including those with the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago, should be structured to complement, not replace this national objective.

Guyana’s oil wealth presents a rare and historic opportunity. To fully realise its benefits, we must ensure that our energy architecture is not externally dependent, but internally resilient. A domestic oil refinery is central to that vision.

I respectfully urge that this matter be advanced as a priority within the government’s energy strategy.

Dr Tilokie Depoo, Guyana, via email.



Irfaan Ali



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Washington, Beijing, circle Guyana's emerging minerals potential

Guyana's bauxite industry is once again attracting the attention of global powers. But this time, the interest extends far beyond aluminum ore. It is now tied to the geopolitics of critical minerals, supply-chain security, China-US rivalry, and the future shape of Guyana's post-oil economy.

That reality became clearer last week when US Under Secretary of Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg disclosed that Washington is actively exploring opportunities in Guyana's bauxite sector and broader mining industry. Speaking in Georgetown after discussions with President Irfaan Ali, Helberg said the US is interested not only in expanding private investment in bauxite production, but also in surveying Guyana's mining lands using advanced technologies to identify other potentially valuable minerals.

On the surface, the announcement may appear to concern a relatively traditional industry. Bauxite has been mined in Guyana for more than a century, particularly around Linden, Kwakwani, and the Berbice River. The sector once stood alongside sugar as one of the central pillars of the national economy before entering decades of decline marked by underinvestment, labour disputes, and fluctuating world prices.

Yet the renewed American interest signals something much larger: Guyana's mineral wealth is increasingly being viewed through the lens of strategic competition and industrial security.

For decades, bauxite was valued primarily for its aluminum content. However, today countries are beginning to view mineral deposits as complex reservoirs of multiple strategic elements. Modern research shows that bauxite formations can contain rare earth elements: gallium, scandium, vanadium, titanium minerals, and other materials essential for semiconductors, defense technologies, electric vehicles, renewable energy systems, and aerospace manufacturing.

In an era when the world is racing to secure critical mineral supply chains, Guyana's geology suddenly appears more important than previously imagined.

The timing of Washington's interest is hardly accidental. The US and its allies are increasingly concerned about excessive dependence on China for strategic minerals and industrial processing. At the same time, global aluminum supply chains remain heavily concentrated in a handful of countries, especially Guinea, Australia, and China itself.

Guyana offers several advantages. It possesses known bauxite reserves, Atlantic shipping access, political stability relative to some competitors, and an increasingly investment-friendly climate driven by the country's oil boom. Helberg's remarks suggest that Washington now sees Guyana not merely as an oil producer, but as a broader strategic resource partner.

Importantly, the US interest also reflects concern over China's growing footprint in Guyana's mining sector. Today, the dominant force in Guyana's bauxite industry is the Chinese-owned BOSAI Minerals Group, which acquired the Linden operations in 2007 after the privatisation of former State-owned assets.

Since then, BOSAI has become the driving force behind the industry's revival. The company invested heavily in new kilns, conveyor systems, barges, mining equipment, and processing facilities. The commissioning of Kiln No 15 in 2023 – the first new kiln installed in Linden since the 1970s – reportedly involved approximately US \$120 million in investment.

Production growth has been dramatic. After years of contraction between 2014 and 2020, Guyana's bauxite industry rebounded sharply from 2021 onward. Production reportedly rose from roughly 523,000 tonnes in 2023 to approximately 1.7 million tonnes in 2024, with projections approaching four million tonnes by 2025.

The recovery restored jobs and revitalised communities such as Linden, where mining remains central to local economic life. Employment reportedly increased from about 665 workers in 2020 to more than 1,000 by 2025.

But the resurgence also exposes one of Guyana's enduring economic dilemmas: while foreign investment has revived the sector, ownership and control remain overwhelmingly external.

This is not unique to Guyana. Many resource-rich developing countries struggle to balance the need for foreign capital and technology against concerns over profit repatriation, limited domestic value-added production, and vulnerability to global market shifts.

The challenge for Guyana is, therefore, not simply whether foreign powers are interested in its resources. The real question is whether the country can leverage that interest to produce lasting national development.

That will require thinking beyond the export of raw ore.

Historically, Guyana exported mainly raw or semi-processed bauxite, rather than producing alumina or aluminum domestically. This significantly limits the amount of industrial value retained within the economy.

If Guyana is to avoid repeating the classic "resource curse" pattern, policymakers will need to consider how mining can support broader industrialisation. That may involve downstream processing, specialised mineral refining, technical training, research partnerships, energy infrastructure, and manufacturing linkages.

There is also a compelling argument for greater geological surveying.

Helberg's comments about advanced mineral surveys deserve careful attention. Much of Guyana's interior remains underexplored by modern standards. If advanced surveying identifies commercially viable concentrations of rare earth elements or other critical minerals associated with bauxite formations, Guyana's strategic importance could increase substantially.

That possibility introduces both opportunity and risk.

On one hand, critical minerals could diversify Guyana's economy beyond oil and traditional mining. On the other, they could intensify geopolitical competition over Guyana's natural resources.

Already, the country occupies an increasingly sensitive geopolitical position. Its offshore oil boom has attracted enormous American interest, while Chinese firms continue expanding their presence in infrastructure, mining, and construction.

At the same time, Venezuela's territorial claims against Guyana continue to generate regional uncertainty. In this environment, strategic minerals may become another arena in which global powers seek influence.

The Ali administration, therefore, faces a delicate balancing act.

Guyana benefits from diversified foreign partnerships. Chinese investment helped rescue the bauxite industry during years when few others showed interest. American investment could now bring additional capital, advanced technologies, logistics improvements, and

potentially new export markets.

But Guyana must avoid becoming trapped in a zero-sum geopolitical contest between Washington and Beijing.

Instead, the country's objective should be pragmatic nationalism: welcoming foreign investment from multiple partners while ensuring that national interests remain central. That means stronger local content policies, transparent concession agreements, improved environmental regulation, and long-term industrial planning.

Environmental management will be especially critical as mining expands.

Bauxite extraction has historically produced deforestation, land degradation, and river sedimentation. Increased production without adequate safeguards could intensify ecological pressures, particularly as climate change already increases flooding risks and environmental vulnerability across Guyana.

The issue of red mud disposal may also become increasingly important. Red mud, which is the waste generated from bauxite refining, contains iron oxides, titanium compounds, and trace rare earth elements. Globally, researchers are investigating whether these residues can be reprocessed to recover valuable minerals while reducing environmental hazards.

Guyana should monitor these technological developments closely. What was once considered industrial waste could eventually become economically valuable.

There is another important dimension to the discussion: logistics and regional integration.

Helberg emphasised Guyana's potential role as a logistics hub connecting northern Brazil to Atlantic shipping routes and the Caribbean. This idea aligns with broader regional infrastructure ambitions involving roads, ports, river transport, and trade corridors.

If realised, such infrastructure could benefit not only mining exports but also agriculture, manufacturing, and regional trade. Guyana's geography gives it strategic potential as a gateway between South America and the Caribbean Basin.

Still, infrastructure-led development carries its own risks. Large-scale projects require careful planning to avoid debt burdens, corruption, and environmental disruption. Guyana's rapid oil-driven growth already places immense pressure on State institutions and governance systems. Adding a mining and logistics boom to the equation will test regulatory capacity even further.

Ultimately, the renewed global interest in Guyana's bauxite sector reveals a broader truth about the country's transformation.

For much of its post-independence history, Guyana was viewed internationally as a small, economically struggling State on the margins of global commerce. Today, oil wealth, mineral potential, and geopolitical positioning have radically altered that perception.

The country is no longer peripheral. It is becoming strategically important.

That importance creates extraordinary opportunities. But it also demands a higher level of statecraft, institutional competence, and long-term planning than Guyana has historically required.

The central challenge is not whether Guyana possesses natural wealth. The country clearly does. The challenge is whether that wealth can be converted into broad-based, sustainable development rather than narrow enclaves of extraction.

Bauxite alone will not determine the answer. But the industry's revival, and the growing international scramble around it, may provide an early test of how Guyana intends to manage its new era of resource abundance.



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Devi Mandir honours mothers, celebrates young scholarship winners

— Devi Mandir brought together families, community leaders, scholarship recipients, and mothers for an evening of celebration and reflection on May 10, as the Pickering mandir marked Mother's Day while recognising youths who were awarded scholarships through the Hindu Forum of Canada.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Pickering – As mothers were honoured for their sacrifices and quiet guidance, young scholarship recipients at Devi Mandir emerged as reflections of those very lessons in the next generation carrying forward academic promise, maternal devotion, and cultural inheritance.

The gathering at the Pickering mandir blended celebration with aspiration, bringing together families, community leaders, sponsors, and students for an evening that recognised both matriarchal guidance and educational achievement.

The scholarship initiative, administered through Devi Mandir and supported by the Hindu Forum of Canada, recognised youth whose academic accomplishments were celebrated before an audience of proud parents, relatives, and supporters.

Addressing the gathering, Vishnu Sookar, Vice Chair Trustee of Devi Mandir, described the evening as “a moment of great pride and heartfelt celebration” for the mandir community.

“As we gather to congratulate our young children on receiving scholarships from the Hindu Forum of Canada, we are deeply honoured, not only by their achievements, but by the trust placed in us,” Sookar said.

He noted that the scholarships represented more than financial assistance, describing them as “a powerful investment in the future of our youth, in our next generation of leaders, professionals, and custodians of our values and culture”.

Sookar also expressed gratitude to Hindu Forum representatives Tahir Gora and Rao Yendamuri for entrusting Devi Mandir with administering the initiative.

“Your confidence in us, and your commitment to supporting the educational journey of our young people, speaks volumes,” he said, adding, “From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for believing in our community and in our children.”

The evening's overlap with Mother's Day gave the event added emotional resonance, with mothers recognised as foundational figures in the lives and achievements of their children.

“And how beautiful it is that we celebrate this occasion on



Mother's Day,” Sookar declared, while further noting, “A day that reminds us of the love, sacrifice, and unwavering strength of our mothers, who are often the first teachers, the guiding lights, and the quiet forces behind every child's success.”

“To the mothers here tonight, this achievement belongs to you as well,” he added.

The celebration extended beyond the scholarship presentations, evolving into a broader expression of community solidarity and support.

In a Facebook statement issued following the event, Devi Mandir thanked attendees, sponsors, and community organisations whose contributions helped make the evening possible.

“A very special thank you to everyone who came out... to support Devi Mandir as we honoured our mothers and celebrated the incredible youth who received scholarship awards,” the mandir stated.

It added, “Your presence made the evening truly meaningful.”

The mandir also acknowledged the Hindu Forum for sponsoring the scholarships and “uplifting our youth”, while expressing appreciation to businesses, organisations, and individual donors who contributed to the evening's success.

Sponsors included Forta Fence and Gates, which sponsored dinner for the event; Maha RudraDev Mandir, which sponsored refreshments and supported the evening through additional participation; the Durham Ramayan Sangh; DealerTech; The Lymphedema Fitter Company; as well as individual and anonymous donors.

The statement described the event as reflective of the wider role mandirs continue to play within our Indo-Caribbean and Hindu diaspora communities, not only as places of worship, but as centres of education, mentorship, culture, and communal care.

“Devi Mandir is more than a place of worship – it is a family, rooted in love, guided by our mothers, and strengthened by the next generation,” the statement declared.

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Diaspora urged to join The Walnut Foundation's life-saving walkathon

— Our thriving diaspora across the GTA is being called upon to lace up their walking shoes and join a growing community movement confronting one of the most pressing health disparities facing Black men today.

The Walnut Foundation (TWF) is preparing to host its 12th annual Walk the Path Walkathon on June 6, bringing together families, survivors, advocates, healthcare professionals, and community supporters in a united effort to raise awareness about prostate cancer and the importance of early detection.

The annual event, which takes place from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. along the Etobicoke Creek Trail in Brampton, has become a major community initiative focused on Black men's health, prostate cancer screening, education, peer support, and life-saving intervention.

This year's walkathon comes amid continuing concern over the disproportionate impact prostate cancer has on Black men in Canada. As TWF notes, Black men are 76 percent more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer, and more than twice as likely to die from the disease, largely because it is often detected too late.

TWF says the disparity is not necessarily because the disease is more aggressive, but because barriers to screening and healthcare access continue to delay diagnosis and treatment.

Founded in Toronto, TWF has developed a grassroots model focused on meeting men where they already gather, including churches, barber shops, union halls, sports groups, and community spaces. Through free pop-up PSA screening clinics, outreach programs, and peer support initiatives, the organisation has tested more than 1,000 men to date, with one in five requiring follow-up care they may not otherwise have received.

Samlalsingh joins Ward 1 Council race in Pickering

Pickering – Long-time Pickering resident and business owner Michael Samlalsingh has officially announced his candidacy for City Councillor representing Ward 1 in Pickering's upcoming municipal election. He brings with him decades of financial leadership experience and a platform centred on responsible growth, community safety, and improved municipal services.

Samlalsingh, who has lived in Pickering with his family for 39 years, said his decision to enter municipal politics is rooted in a deep connection to the city, and a desire to help guide its future as the municipality continues to expand.

Born in Montreal and raised throughout the GTA, Samlalsingh is a graduate of Pickering High School, and has built both his professional and family life within the community he now hopes to represent at City Hall.

Currently the owner and operator of a local accounting firm serving businesses and residents in Pickering, Samlalsingh previously spent more than two decades in senior financial leadership positions at major financial institutions, including serving as Director of Finance. Here, he managed large operational and capital budgets while overseeing teams of finance professionals.



Michael Samlalsingh

Among the priorities outlined in his campaign are community safety, expanded youth programs, and more efficient snow removal operations aimed at improving municipal services.

"As Pickering experiences unprecedented growth, I am committed to ensuring that development is managed responsibly and effectively," Samlalsingh stated, adding, "My priorities include enhancing community safety, expanding youth services, and improving snow removal services through increased efficiency and leveraging growth in the tax base to provide better service to residents."

Samlalsingh also emphasised the importance of public consultation and direct engagement during the campaign.

"I want to hear directly from residents about their concerns, ideas, and what is working well in our community," he said, further declaring, "This election is about the people of Ward 1 and ensuring their voices are heard and represented."

As the municipal election season begins to take shape across Ontario municipalities, Samlalsingh said he is looking forward to meeting residents at upcoming community events and encouraging greater civic participation in the electoral process.

He can be reached at michael.samlalsingh@gmail.com, or call 416-993-6153.



Participants warming up at a TWF walkathon

The Walk the Path Walkathon supports all four pillars of TWF's work, including screening clinics, monthly support groups, community outreach, and research partnerships with the University of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine and Toronto Metropolitan University's medical school.

TWF has also established scholarships and research endowments aimed at supporting future healthcare leadership and improving outcomes for Black and racialised communities.

Dr Gervan Fearon, President of George Brown College, is serving as Honorary Chair of this year's walkathon. A prostate cancer survivor himself, Fearon has become an influential advo-

cate for education, health, and community development.

An accomplished economist and academic leader, Fearon has previously served as President of Brock University and Brandon University and has held senior positions at Toronto Metropolitan University and York University. He also served in the Ontario public service and co-founded the Canada Caribbean Institute.

TWF said Fearon's personal journey and longstanding commitment to community empowerment continue to inspire awareness and action surrounding prostate cancer advocacy.

Anthony Henry, TWF President and Managing Partner with Manulife Wealth Inc., said the organisation remains committed to breaking down barriers that often prevent Black men from seeking early screening and support.

Henry, who has served with the Foundation since 2012, brings both professional leadership and deeply personal experience to the organisation's mission. One of four family members diagnosed with prostate cancer, he is also a certified Prostate Cancer Peer Navigator with the True North Program at Princess Margaret Hospital.

The Foundation says peer support and open dialogue remain central to its approach, particularly within communities where conversations surrounding men's health can often remain difficult or delayed.

TWF is encouraging members of the diaspora and our wider GTA community to register, donate, sponsor walkers, and participate in the June 6 event as part of a broader effort to promote preventative healthcare and early detection.

The event will be held at the Etobicoke Creek Trail located at 30 Loafer's Lake Lane in Brampton, near Sandalwood Parkway and Conestoga Drive.

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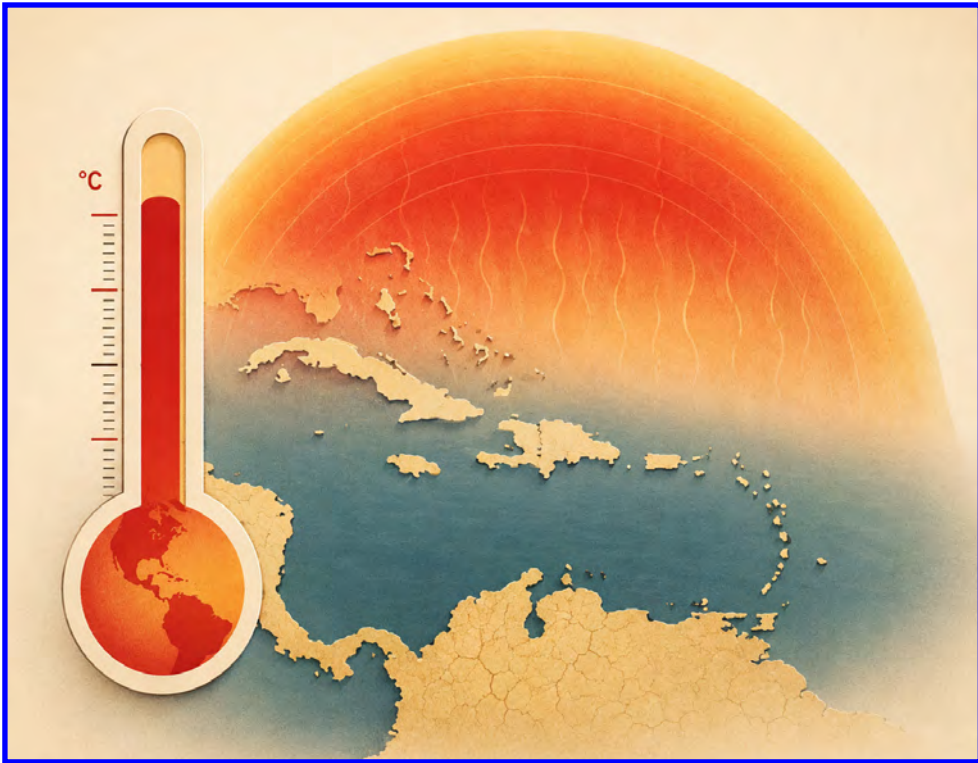
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Caribbean under severe El Niño alert

— Caribbean climate experts are warning governments, farmers, businesses, and regional stakeholders to brace for potentially severe heat and drought conditions linked to a developing El Niño pattern expected to affect the region through 2026 and 2027, with possible implications for food security, water supplies, tourism, and public health.

Regional climate experts are urging Caribbean governments, businesses, farmers, and other stakeholders to prepare for potentially severe climate extremes as a developing El Niño pattern threatens to bring hotter and drier conditions across the region in 2026 and 2027.

El Niño, a climate pattern marked by the warming of ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, occurs every two to seven years and is associated with significant disruptions to global weather systems. It represents the warm phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation cycle, weakening trade winds and altering rainfall and temperature patterns worldwide.

Climatologist Dr Cedric Van Meerbeek of the Barbados-based Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) warned that the developing El Niño is likely to produce periods of reduced rainfall and intensified humid heat across the Caribbean. He cautioned that such conditions could affect water availability, agriculture, and public health, while increasing the likelihood of heat stress and prolonged dry conditions.

The CIMH said that without adequate planning and preparation, the socio-economic consequences of “cascading and compounding hazards” could be severe.

Historically, El Niño episodes have been linked to some of the Caribbean’s most severe drought periods, including those experienced between 2009 and 2010, and again from 2014 to 2016. Experts also noted that El Niño conditions increase the risk of extreme heat, wildfires, and marine heatwaves that can trigger coral bleaching.

The report noted that similar combined climate impacts were observed during the record heat years of 2010, 2023, and 2024. Areas already experiencing drought conditions, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean, could face slower recovery of water resources during the upcoming wet season, which may begin as early as this month.

Although El Niño is generally associated with quieter Atlantic hurricane seasons, Dr Van Meerbeek stressed that the threat from storms remains significant. He pointed to examples such as Hurricane Andrew in The Bahamas in 1992 and Tropical Storm Erika in Dominica in 2015 as reminders that a single storm or heavy rainfall event can still inflict major damage.

Dr Michael Taylor, co-director of the

University of the West Indies Climate Studies Group, Mona, said current forecasts suggest the Caribbean could face a “multi-hazard regime” in which heat, drought, and marine impacts occur simultaneously and reinforce one another.

“What we are seeing in the forecasts is the emergence of a potential multi-hazard regime – where heat, drought, and marine impacts can occur together and reinforce each other,” Dr Taylor said.

He added that research conducted by the group has consistently identified compound climate extremes as a major threat to Caribbean livelihoods and economies, underscoring the need for coordinated regional preparedness and integrated planning.

Both the CIMH and UWI’s Climate Studies Group said the emerging pattern reflects increasingly interconnected climate risks affecting sectors such as agriculture, water management, energy, and health.

They warned that reduced rainfall and elevated temperatures could lead to agricultural losses, threaten food security, and place additional strain on water and energy systems. Health concerns linked to water quality, heat-related illnesses, and vector-borne diseases could also intensify.

The experts further cautioned that broader economic effects may also be felt across tourism, fisheries, shipping, and regional trade. They noted that drought conditions have already disrupted operations at the Panama Canal, an important transit route for Caribbean imports and exports, contributing to rising transportation and living costs.

Dr Van Meerbeek urged governments and the public to monitor updates from the upcoming Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum, organised by the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, which takes place later this week.

The forum brings together regional climate experts, meteorological services, and stakeholders from climate-sensitive sectors to provide guidance ahead of the Caribbean wet and hurricane seasons.

CIMH Principal Dr David Farrell stressed the importance of early awareness and preparedness, saying timely and actionable climate information is critical to helping governments and communities respond effectively to extreme weather threats.

“Proactive measures are vital for mitigating the impacts of extreme weather events on climate-sensitive sectors, communities, and national economies,” Dr Farrell said.

He added that the institute has expanded its work in areas such as water systems, marine monitoring, climate observation, and early warning services to strengthen regional resilience and improve preparedness for increasingly volatile climate conditions.



Ask Jay...

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MORTGAGE FRAUD IN ONTARIO: STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES AND LESSONS LEARNED

There was a troubling story about Karen, a retired teacher who had always been diligent with her finances and careful about whom she trusted. One day, she crossed paths with an individual claiming to be a reputable mortgage agent. This person seemed knowledgeable and friendly, quickly earning Karen’s confidence. What Karen didn’t realise was that the so-called agent was actually a skilled impostor orchestrating an elaborate fraud involving a network of people posing as legitimate homeowners.

The impostor convinced Karen to remortgage her own home, assuring her it was a smart financial move that would yield great returns. He then manipulated her into using the proceeds to take out second mortgages on properties, which in reality, belonged only to these fake homeowners. The paperwork was convincing, and the promises seemed solid. But as time passed and repayments mysteriously stalled, Karen began to suspect something was wrong.

By then, the damage had been done – she had unknowingly handed over her financial security to a sophisticated scam, and the impostor disappeared, leaving her with mounting debt and a shattered sense of trust.

Karen’s story is a sobering reminder of how even the most cautious individuals can fall prey to mortgage fraud when criminals are determined and well-prepared.

To protect yourself from mortgage fraud, start by always verifying that your mortgage professional is properly licensed. This ensures they have met the necessary education standards and are operating under a regulated brokerage, giving you an extra layer of security. Be extremely cautious with your money – never hand over large sums directly to an individual. Insist that all payments go through your lawyer or a trust account at a reputable brokerage. If someone asks for a big personal payment upfront, take it as a serious red flag.

It’s just as crucial to read every document carefully, making sure you understand all the details about fees, risks, and any potential conflicts of interest. Don’t let anyone pressure you to sign quickly – take your time to review everything thoroughly, and never agree to anything that seems incorrect or incomplete.

If you have any doubts, consult your own independent lawyer rather than one suggested by the broker or agent, and never feel obligated to sign documents immediately. Always give yourself at least 24 hours to go over the paperwork, so you know exactly what you’re agreeing to.

While most mortgage professionals are dedicated and trustworthy, it’s still important to stay vigilant. Always double-check that your broker or agent is properly licensed, carefully review all documents, and avoid rushing into any agreement. Before making a commitment, consider reaching out to family or friends for their perspective, and whenever possible, hire a lawyer to review the paperwork to ensure your interests are fully protected.

Mortgage fraud isn’t just something that happens “out there”. It’s happening to people in our neighbourhoods, sometimes just down the street. In every story I heard, the victims were under stress, rushing to refinance, desperate to save their homes, or overwhelmed by paperwork. That’s when fraudsters strike.

Mortgage fraud is a real threat in our own communities, with scammers constantly devising new ways to deceive unsuspecting homeowners. These fraudsters work hard to earn your trust, only to exploit it when you least expect it. Staying cautious and asking questions can go a long way – when it comes to mortgage fraud, a healthy dose of skepticism can protect you from years of regret.

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Welcome extended to diaspora to be partners

From Page 1

words, while 159 inquiries focused on six broad categories, including investment opportunities, housing, migration matters, public services, and healthcare.

Ali said business investment, finance, and economic development emerged as the largest category of concerns, accounting for roughly 20 percent of the inquiries, while housing, land, and property represented another significant portion.

Travel, tourism, migration, and diaspora affairs also featured prominently among the submissions, alongside issues relating to security, infrastructure, public services, health, education, and environmental concerns.

Ali noted that the changing nature of diaspora questions reflected a broader transformation taking place within Guyana itself.

“We work by data. And this is what the data tells us,” Ali said while outlining how government agencies now categorise and track public concerns through a digital monitoring system.

He explained that a real-time dashboard allows government officials, including himself while overseas, to monitor issues raised during outreach engagements and follow up electronically.

“Even when I’m travelling, I can see in real time every issue that is raised by any person or on any outreach by any government official,” he said.

Ali further disclosed that many participants who submitted questions before the engagement had already begun receiving electronic responses, documents, and advice from government agencies during the event itself.

“Some of you, if you check your phones and your email now, you’ll be receiving responses to your queries,” he told the gathering.

He also used the engagement to encourage overseas Guyanese to see themselves as participants in Guyana’s future, rather than distant observers of its development.

Central to that appeal was the government’s planned Silica City development, which Ali described as “a city of sustainability; a city of wellness; a city of the future”.

“We are building a new city. That city is called Silica City,” he said, adding, “Basically, it is a city 50 years ahead of its time.”

Ali revealed that the first 200 homes in the development are nearing completion, and that international investors have

See next page: **Diaspora focus**



Guyana government ministers, and diaspora members at the event. Photos by Russell Lutchman and FB





Diaspora focus shifts to investment, housing

From Page 14

already signed onto future phases of the project.

“We want at least 25 percent of the city to be dedicated to meeting the needs of the diaspora,” he stated.

Throughout the lengthy address, Ali outlined what he described as Guyana’s broader national transformation agenda, pointing to major infrastructure projects, expanding energy systems, new educational institutions, healthcare investments, agricultural modernisation, and regional integration initiatives.

He spoke of new highways connecting regions across the country, the development of a deepwater harbour, expansion of the Wales energy site, the construction of the new Demerara River Bridge, and plans to further strengthen links with neighbouring Brazil and Suriname.

He also highlighted investments in education and workforce training, including a new STEM school, hospitality institute, nursing school, and what he described as a world-class offshore drilling training facility.

“We are laying the foundation for a modern, competitive, and prosperous nation,” Ali affirmed.

Yet even amid the sweeping catalogue of projects and economic ambitions, he repeatedly returned to what he described as the “human” dimension of development.

“You see, we are speaking about more than roads and bridges and buildings,” he said, adding, “We are speaking about a nation where every child, regardless of where they are born, has the opportunity to dream without limits and to succeed without barriers.”

Ali argued that Guyana’s future depended not only on infrastructure and investment, but also on social cohesion, responsibility, and national unity.

“At the heart of this is people,” he said, adding, “How do I take 60 years of different approach and build it into the next 60 to 100 years of harmony?”

He then urged members of the diaspora to embrace “the philosophy of harmony”, while encouraging them to contribute to Guyana’s development through investment, advocacy, and positive engagement.

“You can be part of this story by playing your role, by positive messaging, by promoting Guyana,” he told the audience to widespread, appreciative applause.



Guyana defends Essequibo with evidence, sovereignty, historical legal record

By Dhanpaul Narine

Sister Noel Menezes had three passions. The first was to examine the role of the Portuguese in the Caribbean. The second was to investigate the welfare of Amerindians in Guyana. The third was complicated.

Sister Noel, as she was fondly called, spent hours poring over documents that were related to the Guyana-Venezuela border dispute. She read the literature in English and Spanish, but did not take a position. She wanted her students to do the research and present the arguments. Let the facts lead to the conclusion, she said.

Sister Noel was head of the history department at the University of Guyana. She introduced the idea of a *Bachelor's Thesis* in the department. This meant that students would choose a topic, and use primary and secondary source materials for their research.

It was a radical idea at the time for an Undergraduate program. But she pointed out that those who wanted to do post-graduate work would find the benefits in their research. This writer was a student of Sister Noel, and he chose to look at the Guyana-Venezuela border dispute as his research project.

The coast of Guyana, or the Guayans, was first sighted by Christopher Columbus in 1498. He had little interest in the region, and proceeded to colonise elsewhere.

It was Sir Walter Raleigh who showed interest in the area. In 1595, he entered what was known as Guyana, and he also visited parts of Venezuela. Sir Walter was on a mission to find the Golden City of El Dorado. He calculated that the city was "far up the Orinoco River in Guyana".

Sir Walter was a skillful writer, and described his visit in his book *The Discovery of Guiana*. This publication in 1596 generated interest in the Orinoco region. The Golden City was not found, and King James had Sir Walter beheaded for treason. But his name lives on, as the capital city of North Carolina is named after Raleigh.

The Dutch, a maritime nation, established trading outposts in the Essequibo and Corentyne Rivers as early as 1613. The British and French also attempted to settle, but with less success. In 1621, the Dutch built a fort and trading post at Kykoveral, at the confluence of the Essequibo, Cuyuni, and Mazaruni Rivers.

In 1742, Laurens Storm van 's Gravesande became Governor-General of the Essequibo. He continued a policy of outward expansion that would include Demerara as a sugar producing area.

The 19th century was a tumultuous time for the colonising powers. Wars, and the changing of colonies were common. The Dutch lost the three colonies, Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice to the British, and in 1831 they became known as British Guiana. By 1835, it became necessary to define the western border. Robert Schomburgk was sent in 1841, by the British government, to carry out a survey of Guiana's boundaries. The Schomburgk Line gave British Guiana control of the mouth of the Orinoco River.

Venezuela objected to the Line, and claimed that Britain had "illegally acquired an extra 30,000 square miles of territory". There was a lull in the border dispute until 1886, when Britain declared that the Schomburgk Line was the "provisional border" between Guyana and Venezuela.

There was a lot of back and forth between the nations, with Venezuela breaking off diplomatic relations with Britain, and the US getting involved in 1895 to bring the matter to arbitration, by invoking the Monroe Doctrine. The Panel of Arbitration met in Paris and consisted of high-powered and distinguished people of learning, from England, the US, and Russia. They were given 15 months to prepare, present, and to arrive at a final settlement.

Benjamin Harrison, a former American President, was Venezuela's chief legal counsel. He was well-prepared, thorough, and brilliant in his delivery. Saverio Mallet-Prevost served as his Secretary. On October 3, 1899 in a unanimous ruling, the Schomburgk Line was accepted as the border between British Guiana and Venezuela.

However, Venezuela was awarded "a substantial territory east of the line, including the mouth of the Orinoco River".

In January 1905, commissioners from Britain and Venezuela signed the formal maps that accepted the boundary as "full, perfect and final". In 1948, the Organic Law of the Federal Territories was published in Venezuela. It recognised, "British



Guiana as defined by the Border Treaty between Venezuela and Great Britain". Venezuela accepted the boundary until 1962. In that year, it challenged the validity of the 1899 award and demanded redress.

A great deal has been said about the memorandum of Saverio Mallet-Prevost. In January 1944, he received the Order of Liberator award from Venezuela. Three weeks later, he wrote a memorandum, which he instructed should be published after his death. In his memo, Mallet-Prevost claimed that there was a deal between the British and Russian delegation to cheat Venezuela.

Mallet-Prevost presented no proof, merely conjecture and speculation, but this was seized upon by Venezuela to claim that the 1899 award was "null and void". Interestingly, the notes of the Arbitration Panel showed no evidence of collusion.

In 1961, the language of Guyanese independence from Britain was spoken widely. The American President John F. Kennedy visited Caracas in that year. According to declassified information, President Kennedy encouraged Venezuelan leaders to escalate its claim over the Essequibo to destabilise the Jagan government.

In an interview with this writer, Dr Cheddi Jagan stated that he was visited by Venezuelan officials in 1962. They requested that he agreed to reopen talks about the border. Venezuela, in return, would stay quiet about Jagan's communist ideology in the forthcoming elections.

But Jagan did not buy into it. He saw the Venezuela request as part of an imperialist strategy to undermine his government. Jagan referred the Venezuelans to the 1899 Arbitral Award, and to the Public Record Office in London. The US was convinced that Jagan would turn Guyana into a second Cuba.

US Secretary of State Dean Rusk, implemented a policy "to replace Jagan", with the CIA carrying out covert operations in Guyana. There was widespread violence in Guyana, and with a system of proportional representation, the downfall of the Jagan government took place in 1964. This opened the door for Venezuela to make its move.

Forbes Burnham, Jagan's successor, wanted the glory to collect the keys and sign the historic documents that would grant Independence. The Venezuelans went knocking on his door, as they had done with Jagan earlier. But this time there was a major difference. Burnham would be meeting Venezuela in the presence of the British.

For Great Britain, the time had come to rid itself of a pesky and uncomfortable mess. It reasoned that after Independence, the border would become a Guyanese problem. In an effort to ease tensions, and ensure a smooth path to Independence, the three countries came up with the Geneva Agreement in February 1966.

As far as Guyana was concerned, the 1899 settlement stood as sacrosanct, and the Geneva Agreement was just "talks about talks" that carried little weight.

However, for Venezuela it was a different matter. Its leaders took the Geneva Agreement to the nation, and explained that the 1899 Award was fraudulent, and that was why the United Nations had agreed to reopen the case.

The reality was that the Mixed Commission that flowed from the Agreement achieved little. It met nine times and failed to arrive at a practical solution. The Venezuelan members argued that the boundaries should be redrawn. The Guyanese members wanted Venezuela to show why the 1899 Award

was invalid. Jagan argued that the Geneva Agreement was unnecessary, since Guyana was still under British rule, and Venezuela could have done little to delay Guyana's Independence.

Guyana proceeded to its Independence in May, 1966. In October of that year, Venezuela seized the eastern half of Ankoko Island. It brought in tanks and weaponry to fortify the island, and has built a bridge to connect Ankoko with its mainland.

The Johnson Administration urged President Leoni of Venezuela to "go easy" on the border question, leading up to Guyana's 1968 elections. According to a memorandum from President Lyndon Johnson's Special Assistant, Walt Rostow, "We repeatedly reminded the Venezuelans that if they undermine Burnham, they run the risk of getting a communist under Cheddi Jagan".

The deadlock in the Mixed Commission led to a cooling off

period for 12 years, under the Protocol of Port of Spain in 1970. Venezuela refused to renew the Protocol in 1982. It was agreed by both sides that the matter should engage the attention of the UN Secretary-General for a possible solution. A "good officer" was appointed in 1990 to look in the controversy, but again little was achieved.

In 2004, the situation changed radically. President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela visited Guyana. When asked about the border controversy, President Chavez said, "The Venezuelan government will not be an obstacle to any project to be implemented in the Essequibo territory aimed at benefitting the population of that area."

He added, "The issues over the Essequibo territory will be dismissed from the context of social, political and economic relations between both countries." In other words, the Venezuelan President considered the matter closed.

In March 2005, President Chavez went further. He lauded the cooperation between Guyana and Venezuela in the political and economic areas. He went on Venezuelan television and said that, "the United States intended to use Venezuela in 1962 to overthrow Cheddi Jagan, out of fear that Guyana could become a communist government along the lines of Cuba." It is interesting to note that President Chavez was repeating what President Romulo Betancourt feared in 1962. Foreign Minister Nicolás Maduro went along with Chavez's position.

After years of failed mediation, Guyana filed papers in March 2018 for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to resolve the border dispute. The Court ruled in December 2020 that it was qualified to listen to the case. The official hearings took place in May 2026. Guyana's presentation was robust and compelling. The team argued that the 1899 Award was full, fair, and final, and was one that Venezuela failed to contest for over 60 years.

It debunked the Mallet-Prevost memorandum, and said that it should not be taken as a legally binding document. Venezuela portrayed itself as the victim, but failed to prove that the 1899 Award was flawed.

The Venezuelan lawyers repeated the contents of the Mallet-Prevost memorandum, and also focused on the Geneva Agreement. But, as was shown, this was not a replacement for the 1899 Award. Then there was the Venezuelan referendum of 2023 that made the Essequibo a state of Venezuela. This was the height of absurdity. How could one country hold a referendum to annex two-thirds of another country? The interim acting President of Venezuela, Delcy Rodríguez, said that her country will not accept the ruling of the ICJ, if it goes against Venezuela. This is highly irresponsible and is an appeal to emotions.

In the meantime, there have been developments in the US, and in a bi-partisan way. US Congresswoman Maria Salazar, a Republican, stated that Venezuela should respect Guyana's territorial integrity, and learn from Guyana's management of its oil wealth. Congressman Gregory Meekes, a Democrat, said that "any attempt by Venezuela to unilaterally claim authority over Essequibo is unacceptable." He called on the administration of President Donald Trump to stand with Guyana.

Sister Noel Menezes is no longer with us. She wanted the evidence to lead to the conclusion. Does Venezuela have a legitimate case over the Essequibo? The facts do not support its case. The Essequibo has had unbroken Guyanese occupation since 1831. President Hugo Chavez knew Venezuela had no legitimate claim. He considered the matter closed in 2004, and that it where it should be.

Queens Book Fair celebrates firefighters, police, and community leaders

By James Paul Narine

The Queens Book Fair and Literary Festival Inc. honoured Hometown Heroes to a packed and diverse audience on May 16. The event was held at the Queens Library, Richmond Hill Branch, in Hillside Avenue, Queens, New York. The honorees were Captain Mario A. Deras, Commanding Officer of the 106 Precinct, in Queens, and Firefighter Thomas P. Gonzalez, Richmond Hill Engine 294, also in Queens, New York.

Dr Dhanpaul Narine, the Director of the Queens Book Fair, welcomed everyone and remarked that the meeting was at a critical time in New York. He said that police officers and firefighters are usually in the front line to protect the community. He referred to a tragic incident in Richmond Hill, only a few days earlier, when a fire took a life. The cops and firefighters were the first responders, and they managed to save a number of other residents in the building. Dr Narine called on the community to support the police and firefighters, and to give them the respect that they deserve. He then invited Sherry Algreto to give her remarks.

Algreto is a livewire in the community, and is also a trailblazer. She is the first Indo-Caribbean woman to head a Community Board in New York, and also the first person with Trinidad and Tobago origins to hold this position. She was recently re-elected as Chairperson of Community Board 9, in Queens.

Algreto has dealt with the police and firefighters in the course of her duties, and she knows at firsthand how tirelessly they work for the community. She said that on many occasions they put the interests of the community before their families.

The moderator Dr Veronica Wiltshire was amazing. She took charge of the program, and combined her knowledge of the role of the police and firefighters with present day realities. She has a passion to see the upliftment of our youth, and her message for them to do well was inspiring. One of the standout events in the program was the performance of our young people with their speeches. These were related to the topic and they reflected the importance of the police and firefighters in our community.

Speakers included Ariana Narine, Joseph and Emily Algreto, Aneesh Sugrim, Samaya Shivprasad, Lionel Narine, Chandanie Panday, Emma Singh, Amira Singh, Karissa Jagbeer, Alexander Dial, Ganga Dripaul, and Sandra Persaud. Nafisa Watson represented the Guyana Consulate General in New York, while Pastor James Pressey gave a rousing speech to highlight the importance of firefighters and the police. There were also



In photo at left, Dr Veronica Wiltshire (center) receives an award from Community Board 9 for her outstanding work in medicine and community service; in photo at right, Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar (second from right) presents a Proclamation to Firefighter Thomas P. Gonzalez (second from left); also in photo are Sherry Algreto (left) and Dhanpaul Narine at right

inspirational messages from Dr Kwesi Johnson, Principal of Epic South School, Dr Subhas Mohan, and community leader, Rhonda Binda.

Sherry Algreto coordinated the presentation to the honorees. She read the biographies in her inimitable style, and thanked State Senators Leroy Comrie and Joe Addabbo, Congressman Meeks, City Council Member Lyn Schulman, Assembly member David Weprin, and Queens Borough President Donovan Richards for the citations and Proclamations. Distinguished service recognitions were given by Community Board 9 as well.

Plaques were presented by Director Dhanpaul Narine on behalf of the Queens Book Fair. Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar was there in person to present Proclamations to Captain Deras and Firefighter Gonzalez, which went down well with the audience.

In his reply, Firefighter Gonzalez thanked the Queens Book Fair and Sherry Algreto for the great honour. He pledged to



work even harder to serve the community. The organisers were thrilled to have the presence of Captain Evan Galane of the 102 Precinct in Queens.

An event of this magnitude required the input and support of many persons. Emily Algreto designed a beautiful flyer, Sophie Narine provided transportation, while Cindy Maraj and family offered delicious snacks, and members from KBM Ministries helped with the set-up. Tony Singh, from the Community Pantry donated sandwiches that everyone enjoyed. Ashook Ramsaran author of Beyond Expectations, printed the program free of cost.

Queens Library, Richmond Hill Branch, has been most generous with their time and space and we thank them. Nandy Persaud gave a well-prepared vote of thanks. She said that the Queens Book Fair fills a void in the community. It gives youths the opportunity to excel and parents look forward to the presentations. The next event will be held in September, 2026.

New book opens up conversation on difficult chapter in Guyana's history

— *The Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean diaspora in the GTA will have an opportunity on May 23 and May 24 to engage with one of the most traumatic and contested chapters in Guyanese history as historian Dr Baytoram Ramharack launches his latest book examining the 1964 Wismar Massacre and its enduring legacy.*

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Community Report

Toronto – Our Indo-Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora in the GTA will gather later this month for two public launches of a new historical study examining one of the most painful and politically charged episodes in Guyana's pre-independence history.

Dr Baytoram Ramharack will launch his latest book, *The Wismar Massacre: A Case of Ethnic Cleansing of Indians in Guyana*, on May 23 at the Bharat Sevashram Sangha Canada, 2107 Codlin Crescent in Toronto, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

A second launch will take place on May 24 at the Vedic Cultural Centre, 4345 14th Avenue in Markham, from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Copies of the book will be available for purchase and autographing by the author.

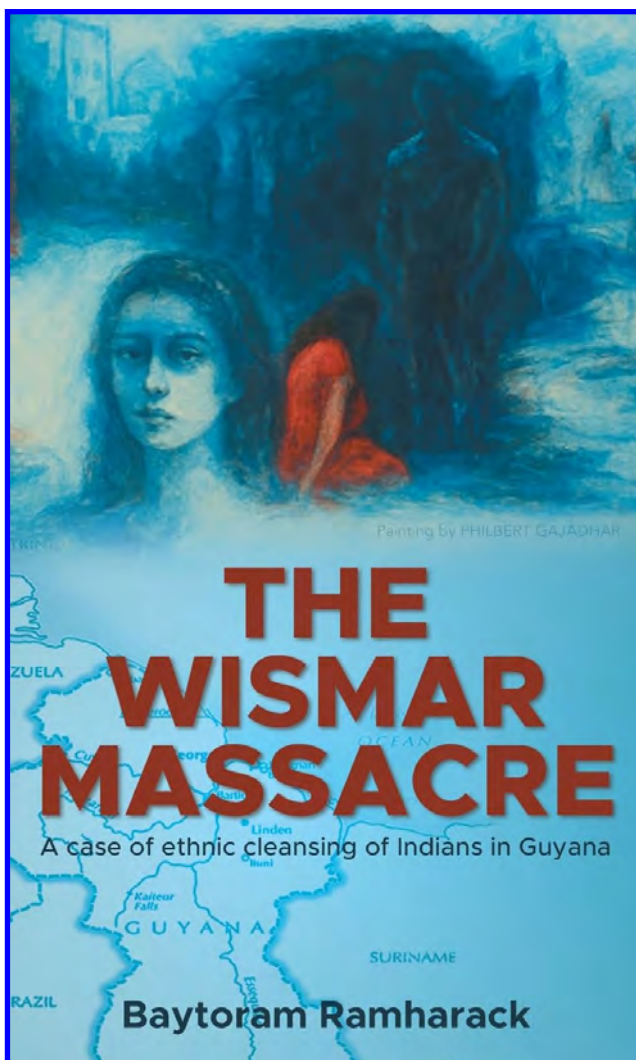
The publication is being presented as an extensive historical examination of the violence that unfolded in the Wismar-Christianburg area between May 24 and May 26, 1964, during a period of intense political and ethnic tension in what was then British Guiana.

Ramharack's study draws on more than two decades of archival research, oral testimony, official reports, eyewitness accounts, and recovered colonial correspondence to reconstruct the events surrounding the attacks on the Indo-Guyanese population residing in Wismar and Christianburg.

As Ramharack notes in the text, the violence resulted in the forced displacement of thousands of Indo-Guyanese residents, alongside killings, assaults, looting, and the destruction of homes and businesses.

The work relies heavily on findings from the official Wismar Commission Report, presented to the PNC-UF Government in January 1965, as well as testimonies from survivors, government officials, and members of the British Guiana security forces.

The book also examines correspondence between the Governor of British Guiana and British officials in London in an effort to better understand the colonial administration's role and concerns during the period leading up to Guyana's



Independence.

Ramharack argues that the attacks were not isolated acts of spontaneous violence, but part of what he describes as a broader pattern of organised ethnic targeting.

He refers to the violence as "ethnic cleansing", drawing partly on language used by Commissioners who described the attacks as "planned" and "organised".

In examining the political backdrop to the violence, the study

situates the events within the turbulent nationalist struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, when political divisions between the People's Progressive Party, led by Dr Cheddi Jagan, and the People's National Congress, which was led by Forbes Burnham, increasingly became entangled with ethnic tensions between Indo- and Afro-Guyanese communities.

The book further argues that British colonial authorities, amid Cold War anxieties surrounding Jagan's Marxist orientation, contributed to the worsening political and ethnic fractures that shaped the period.

However, at the centre of the publication is an emphasis on the experiences of victims and survivors, particularly voices that Ramharack says have remained largely absent from official historical narratives.

The study contends that the trauma of Wismar was not only experienced in 1964 itself, but continued afterward through silence, displacement, and unresolved questions surrounding land, property, and historical acknowledgement.

For many Guyanese families, particularly within our diaspora, memories of Wismar survived quietly across generations, often carried through personal recollection rather than public discourse.

In that regard, the upcoming launches are expected to resonate beyond academic or literary circles, particularly among Indo-Caribbean and wider Caribbean diaspora communities in the GTA seeking to engage more deeply with Guyana's complex political and social history.

The publication explores themes of colonial legacy, ethnic conflict, political manipulation, national identity, and postcolonial memory, while also raising broader questions about historical accountability and remembrance.

For the younger generations in our diaspora, the launches may also serve as an opportunity to engage with a historical episode that shaped the lives, migration patterns, and anxieties of many Guyanese families during the years surrounding independence.

The events are being organised as community-based engagements intended to encourage discussion, reflection, and historical examination of the Wismar tragedy and its continuing legacy within Guyanese society and its diaspora.

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

Narine explores tension with progress, environment

A Review of Dhanpaul Narine's

Ramraj: An Amazonian Fantasy

By Shabna Rahman

In his latest work, *Ramraj: An Amazonian Fantasy* (2025), Dhanpaul Narine ventures into the heart of the Guyanese interior to explore a conflict as old as the hills and as current as today's headlines: the tension between industrial 'progress' and environmental preservation.

The novel centers on Ramraj, a youth characterised as "ruthlessly depraved" and rebellious. He takes up a position as a cook for a hydropower project in the Amazon, but he is the only one who shows up there.

What begins as a job for his bosses from Georgetown quickly evolves into a transformative spiritual odyssey. Abandoned in the deep interior, Ramraj is taken in by the residents of Saikan, which is headed by the elder Shaman George.

He experiences firsthand the simplicity of their lifestyles, and their need to protect their environment. This allowed his foundational beliefs to be shaken and his reality to be reshaped.

For those of us tracking Guyana's rapid development, Narine's portrayal of the proposed hydropower dam is particularly striking. He frames the project not merely as infrastructure, but as an "onslaught from machines and pollutants" that threatens the Indigenous way of life.

The author's criticism on dishonest government officials shows the deep public concern for our environment and natural resources.

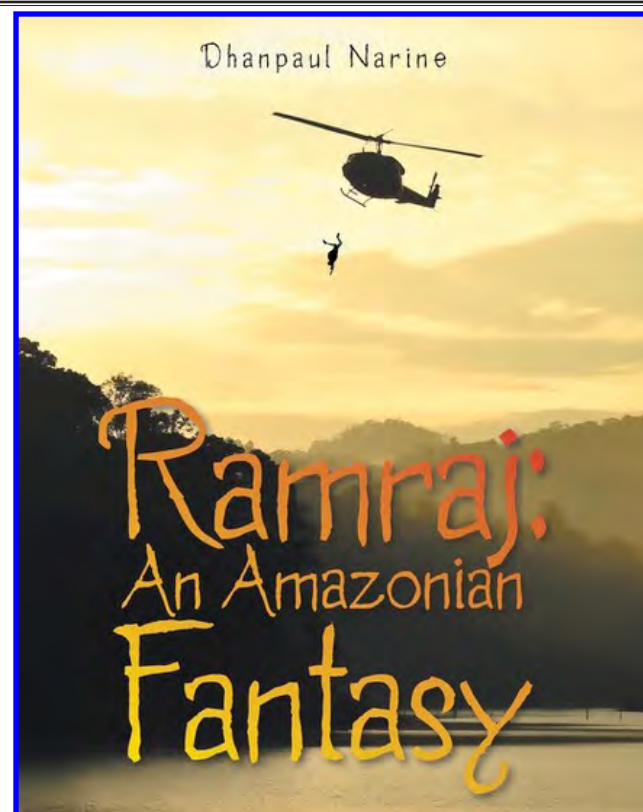
If you cherish the untouched beauty of our hinterland, you will find Ramraj's shift from a project employee to a defender of the land, particularly moving. It serves as a reminder that our 'progress' must never come at the cost of our soul or our soil.

The novel's turning point moves from the physical forest to a supernatural vision of national unity. Through a series of 'fantastical dream revelations' guided by Shaman George, Ramraj influences a political shift that feels like a 'love letter to Guyana.'

The proposal to convert the Georgetown Prisons into the Jagan-Burnham Park is an extremely skillful or effective action. It suggests that the scars of our past can, and should, be repurposed into gardens of racial harmony and shared identity.

While the "fantasy" element allows for a hopeful, almost utopian ending, the questions the book raises about land rights, political integrity, and the "beauty of the rainforests" are very much grounded in reality.

Ramraj: An Amazonian Fantasy is a masterful, highly skillful, and critically admired creative work that challenges us to consider what we are willing to sacrifice in the name of development, and what we must protect at all costs. [The book is available on Amazon.](#)



McWatt's 'The Snag' makes history with landmark OCM Bocas Prize victory

In a landmark moment for Guyanese and Caribbean literature, Guyanese-Canadian author Tessa McWatt has been named the overall winner of the 2026 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature for her memoir *The Snag: A Mother, a Forest, and Wild Grief*.

The prestigious award, regarded as one of the Caribbean's foremost literary honours, carries a cash prize of (US) \$10,000, which is sponsored by Trinidad and Tobago's One Caribbean Media.

McWatt's victory marks the first time in the 16-year history of the prize that a Guyanese author has claimed the overall award.

Published by Random House in Canada and Scribe in the UK, *The Snag* was praised by judges as "a work of rare brilliance".

The announcement was made on May 2 during the 2026 Bocas Lit Fest in Port-of-Spain by celebrated editor and publisher Margaret Busby, who served as Chief Judge for this year's panel.

Busby was joined on the final judging panel for the OCM

Bocas Prize by Jamaican-British poet and memoirist Raymond Antrobus, Jamaican-American academic Kelly Baker Josephs, and British academic Alison Donnell.

The awards ceremony also paid tribute to literary scholar and critic Frank Birbalsingh, recipient of the 2026 Bocas Henry Swanzy Award for Distinguished Service to Caribbean Letters.

The ceremony also honoured poetry winner Canisia Lubrin for *The World After Rain*, and fiction winner Justin Haynes for his debut novel *Ibis*.

In awarding McWatt the top honour, the judges highlighted the memoir's emotional depth and sweeping engagement with both personal and planetary grief.

In the judges' citation, they wrote: "It articulates, in bold, clear, and searingly beautiful language, how our personal grief is intimately connected to planetary loss. Elegantly crafted, and compelling at every turn, it speaks at once to the specificity of losing a parent, to the collective trauma of ancestral grief, and

to our communal sorrow in the face of monumental planetary disturbances."

In *The Snag*, McWatt reflects on caring for her elderly mother as she confronts worsening dementia, while simultaneously turning to the natural world for solace and understanding. The memoir examines themes of memory, mortality, decay, renewal, and ancestral inheritance, weaving intimate family experiences into broader meditations on environmental and collective loss.

Now based in the UK, McWatt serves as Professor of Creative Writing at University of East Anglia. Over the course of her literary career, she has published 11 books, along with numerous short stories and essays, and has also established herself as a librettist.

This is not McWatt's first recognition from the Bocas Prize. In 2021, she won the nonfiction category for her acclaimed book *Shame on Me: An Anatomy of Race and Belonging*.

First awarded in 2011, the OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature continues to celebrate and elevate outstanding Caribbean writing across fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, while spotlighting voices whose work resonates far beyond the region.



Tessa McWatt

Twelve-year-old Alice became immersed in books about teenage investigators and mystery solvers. One day, the alignment of circumstances fueled her urge to become an amateur detective, but her imaginary world of heroic sleuth was shattered by the cowering reality of paranormal encounter.

The chance to escape big city chaos for a more peaceful life of a cottage-like existence appealed to Alice's parents. Alice, on the other hand, was not as excited about the move.

After a year of trying to settle into the community, the hospitality of the residents eventually eased her anxiety about transitioning from modern city dwelling to rural simplicity. The half-acre lot with tall oak trees backing onto a trickling brook did not mean much to her.

Living an hour away from the nearest township limited Alice's entertainment. She spent most of her time reading detective novels or watching TV.

On summer weekends, her dad cut the grass with his tractor lawn mower. He eventually started cutting the neglected lawn next door whenever it became an eyesore. Her mom spent time working on her kitchen garden. Alice's fear of bugs kept her indoors.

On a warm summer day, with her investigator senses tingling, she decided on a spontaneous mission while her parents sat by the brook, roasting hot dogs while gazing at the flowing water. She snuck out of her home and padded to the house next door. Her heart skipped a beat when she found the front door unlocked.

With a thumping heart, she turned the knob. The door slowly swung wide open by itself on rusty hinges, letting out a torturous shriek that sent Alice scampering behind the side wall.

After an agonising few minutes, with her heart in her throat, she tiptoed back to the front door and peeked inside the tiny house. She froze and held her breath from the creaking sound of the floorboard on her first step inside the front door. Intent listening detected no movement, which gave her the courage to take a second step and follow the direction of her eyes, which locked



The Supernatural The Rippling Brook

onto a sunbathed military cot in a corner of the living room.

As she drew closer, Alice gasped. A bony man lay on his back, almost as flat as the bed sheet. The sun's beams reflected off his taut, pale skin like shiny elastic stretched over his bald head and prominent ribs. A dust-covered, crumpled sheet covered the lower half of his body. His eyeballs were sunk deep into his eye sockets. A dull, musky odour crept up on Alice, threatening to make her faint, which triggered her legs to react.

Alice darted out of the house and bounded across the lawn to her home without pausing to shut the front door or glancing in her parents' direction. She dashed through the back door and skipped up the stairs. She dove under her pillow and used the bedcovers as a protective shell. Her sweat-soaked pajamas sent her into a teeth shattering shiver. Squeezing her eyes shut did not erase the vision of the mummified man lying on the bed.

Before her breathing settled, her body stiffened at the sound of the back door slamming shut. With her heart pounding, she lifted the pillow and listened for her parents' familiar voices. The same musky smell from the house next door burned

her nostrils. Did the offensive odour follow her with the intent of invading her body? Had she inadvertently awakened evil in the house next door, and was now trapped alone in her home with it? Alice felt a blow to the pit of her stomach. What had she done?

Before she had a chance to resolve the issues haunting her, she blacked out, and a different awareness overwhelmed her. Her spirit seemed to rise from her body. She found herself back in the house next door. This time, Alice had a strange sensation of a love connection with the body on the bed. A drawer in a fil-

ing cabinet to her right slowly opened, revealing labeled folders.

The first folder lifted itself out of the drawer and floated over to the kitchen table. It opened to the page that showed a death certificate with the name, 'Emily Crow'. She died of a stroke at the age of 89. Another folder contained the birth certificate of 'Donny Crow'. Though there was no death certificate, Alice somehow knew that the couple had become reclusive and had eventually been forgotten by society.

At the age of 92, two months after Donny had buried his wife by the brook, grief had sucked the energy out of him, leaving a vacuum in his life that rendered him incapable of getting out of bed.

Alice found a pen and pad still clutched in Donny's hand. The note on the pad expressed his desire for their love to transcend death and for them to be together forever in the afterlife. Donny died of starvation.

For the first time, Alice noticed a note on the door with the demolition date for the dilapidated house, which was deemed too dangerous to remain standing. There was a chance that Donny's body would have been unnoticed and become a part of the debris destined for the dump.

When Alice awoke to find herself in her bed, she told her parents that she had had a strange dream. She did not tell them that Emily had guided her spiritually to her discoveries.

After alerting the authorities, Alice's parents stood with their arms around each other in reverence to Donny being interred next to his Emily by the brook, the place that they had loved to spend time together. Thanks to Alice, their final wish had come true.

Alice's heart warmed when she envisioned the same loving fate for her doting parents. Their adoring smiles at each other suggested that they had unknowingly chosen their destiny and final resting place. Alice made a mental note to give them everlasting love, like the Crows, by the rippling brook.

Kamil
Ali





NAFA's leadership, left to right, Ravi Adalath, Maltee Ramlogan, and Shiva Nandlal at the annual gala



All Fours veteran Karl Bissoon (centre) with Terry Lalchan (at left), and Sherwin Ali at right



Proud winners with family and friends at NAFA's annual gala. Photos by Russell Lutchman

Karl Bissoon honoured for 50-year legacy by NAFA at annual awards

— The National All Fours Association celebrated excellence, fellowship, and Caribbean community spirit during its elegant 2025-2026 Awards Banquet on May 15 in Brampton, with one of the evening's defining moments being recognition of veteran player Karl Bissoon for his 50 years of contribution to the game and our diaspora's community life.

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Brampton – Beneath the warm glow of chandeliers, gold-accented décor, and sparkling trophies at the Lions Banquet Hall in Brampton, generations of All Fours players, supporters, organisers, and families gathered on the evening of May 15 in celebration of another successful season for the National All Fours Association (NAFA).

The evening blended the aesthetic of a professional décor with the familiar warmth of Caribbean camaraderie, as sharply-dressed attendees filled the banquet hall for an event that honoured championship teams, outstanding players, and long-standing contributors to the game.

Yet amid the celebration, music, and spirited fellowship, the emotional centre of the evening belonged to Karl Bissoon, whose recognition for five decades of contribution to organised All Fours in Canada drew admiration, reflection, heartfelt tribute, and affectionate heckling from across the room.

For many in our Caribbean diaspora, All Fours has always represented far more than a card game of tricks and trumps. Transported across oceans through migration, and sustained through community gatherings, basements, recreation halls, and weekend 'limes', the game has since evolved into a cultural bridge connecting generations of our Caribbean people across Canada, the US, and back to the homelands.

Bissoon stands among the pioneers who helped to formalise and sustain that enduring tradition.

During the presentation, Sherwin Ali, past president of the

Brampton All Fours League, reflected warmly on Bissoon's influence and leadership across the five decades.

Ali put the question to the room after the sustained applause died down: "So how does one describe Karl?"

"Well, when you build a house, the first thing you need is a strong foundation. If the foundation is not strong, the house is going to fall."

Ali said Bissoon helped lay that solid foundation long before many senior, current, and generational members joined the community, helping establish a culture rooted in integrity, sportsmanship, and fellowship.

Additionally, Ali described Bissoon as a man with "integrity", and a card player who competed hard, but always with fairness, respect, and sportsmanship.

He also noted that while Bissoon may now be stepping back from formal leadership, his influence within the All Fours community continues to endure.

Bissoon, he declared, still gives advice, encourages growth, is eternally forward-thinking, and wants NAFA to thrive for the right reasons, all signals that he continues to be driven by his deep passion for, and his enduring commitment, to the game.

A noticeably emotional Bissoon, speaking to the heartfelt admiration that was palpable in the room, reflected humbly on the uncertain beginnings of the organisation five decades earlier.

Bissoon recalled that 50 years ago, along with a friend who has since passed away, the idea was born to form an All Fours association.

He recalled there were initial but predictable foreboding and doubt about organising and building an association; but they persevered.

Looking down five decades, he recalled how resilience and fortitude emerged: "Why don't we organise something ourselves? Why don't we create a place where people can come together through this game we love?"

There was uncertainty surrounding those early years, he remembered, when the founders questioned how they would find players, build tournaments, and sustain the organisation over time.

But little by little, game by game, tournament after tournament, the All Fours footprint began to be firmly established, he said.

Looking across the festively-decorated hall, at players and supporters spanning multiple eras, Bissoon described the moment as deeply rewarding, recognising the overlapping generations in the players present, the bonds forged in lasting friendships, and the emergence of extended All Fours' "families".

The banquet itself reflected that spirit of togetherness and camaraderie throughout the evening, as the awards presentations, entertainment, music, tassa drumming, and hot, spicy, and delectable Caribbean food unfolded beneath NAFA's slogan: "One Game... One People... One Association."

For younger players and attendees, Bissoon's award also served as a reminder of the generations who helped preserve Caribbean traditions and social spaces within our Caribbean diaspora.

What began decades ago around folding tables and informal gatherings has now evolved into a structured and enduring organisation that continues to unite our Caribbean communities through competition, storytelling, friendship, cultural continuity, and importantly, futurity.

When Bissoon received his award, the applause that emerged, filling the banquet hall for the veteran and beloved All Fours player, was warm, spirited, and deeply rooted in fellowship and admiration.

It was not only the celebration of a veteran, not only about honouring the past, but affirmation that the tradition Bissoon helped build is thriving with every shuffled deck, every spirited hand, and every All Fours 'lime' that continue to be shaped by our enduring Caribbean instinct to come together.



How labour, land acquisition fueled Indo-Guyanese prosperity, permanence

By Harry Hergash

Over the years there has been much misinformation and misrepresentation in the Guyana media regarding the acquisition of land during the indentureship and the early post-indentureship years by the indentured Indians to Guyana and their descendants.

With the May 5 focus on Arrival Day, in this article I look at the acquisition of land by the ancestors of Indo-Guyanese, which enabled them to build a successful future for subsequent generations through their development of the rice and cattle industries.

The first attempt at land acquisition came around 1869. In a September 8, 2012 article in the *Guyana Graphic* (an Internet publication under new ownership) historian and former President of Guyana, David Granger, writes, "After the first 30 years of the indentureship system, it was calculated that about 30,000 immigrants were entitled to free return passages to India at a cost of \$250,000 after their contracts had expired. Within a decade, the number of claimants, and the cost of their passages, had doubled. In order to avoid their responsibility, the planters and the colonial administration developed a number of land settlement schemes... to lure the immigrants into accepting land *in lieu* of their return passage".

In reality, forfeiture of return passage was payment for the land. However, these land settlement schemes were poorly conceived with little or no infrastructure. Poor drainage and irrigation were major drawbacks, and ultimately these schemes were unsuccessful in attracting or retaining many of the Indians.

By the 1890s many Indians started to move away from the sugar estates to nearby villages after their contracts expired. With the change in the country's mining regulations in 1899 to allow gold mining by "pork knockers", independent miners, large number of African villagers started to leave their coastal villages for the gold fields in the interior region.

In order to finance their new venture, many sold their ancestral lands to the Indian newcomers. Others offered their ancestral lands to the Indians as collateral for loans. Either by sale, or when borrowers could not repay their loans, village lands were legally transferred to the Indians.

The legal transfer of these African ancestral lands were of great concern to African leaders at the time. In his book *Tiger in the Stars*, historian Clem Secharan quotes a 1928 speech at Manchester, Corentyne by Dr T.T. Nicholson, vice president of

Faith, food, song mark Mother's Day at Imdadul

By Romeo Kaseram
An LJI Community Report

Toronto – More than 400 women were honoured in a warm outpouring of appreciation and celebration as the Imdadul Mosque marked Mother's Day with music, food, prayerful togetherness, and a spirit of gratitude that transformed the gathering into both a family reunion and cultural celebration.

The Mother's Day programme brought together guests from across Canada, the US, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and as far away as Mauritius, reflecting the broad and interconnected community that has become a hallmark of the events hosted by this dynamic mosque.

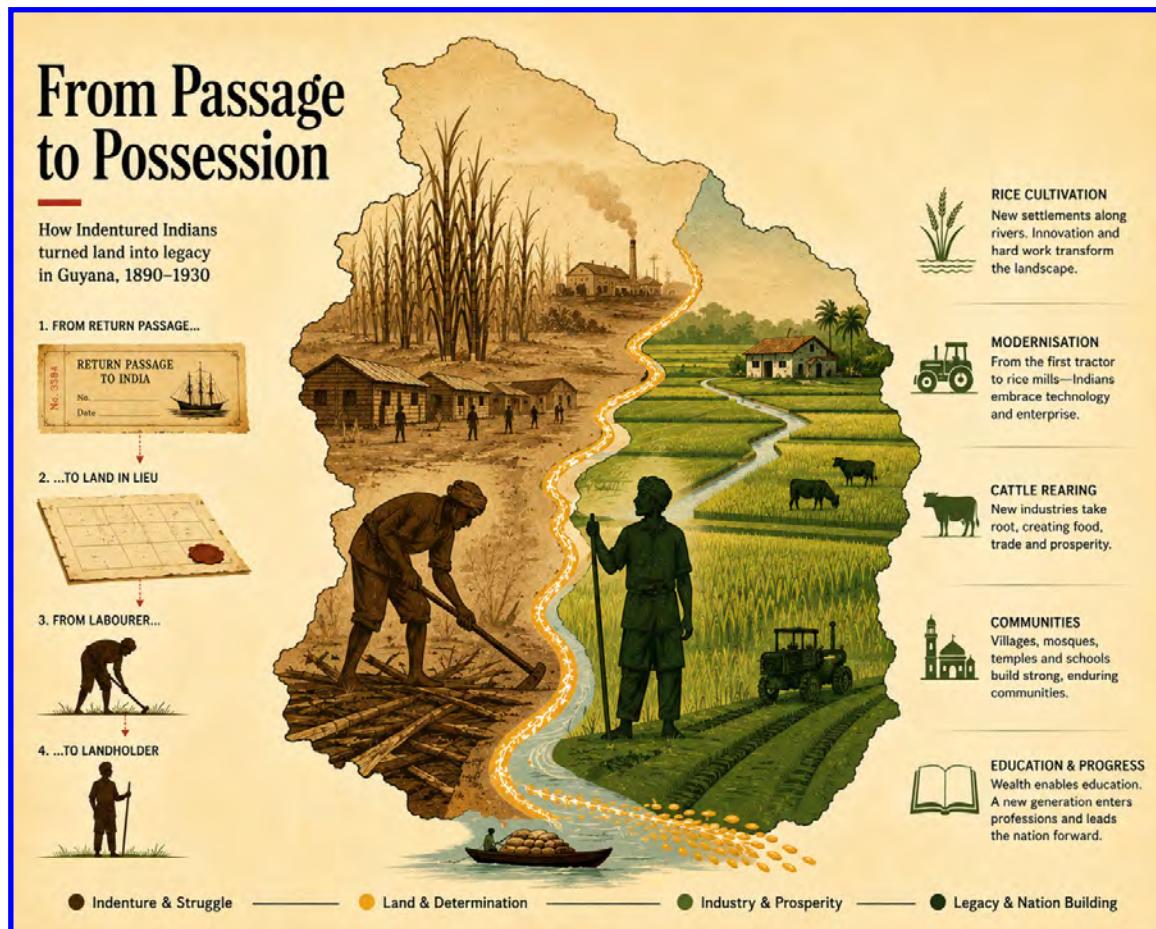
A highlight of the celebration was the musical entertainment led by Rabbi Rampersaud, whose singing and charismatic stage presence energised the gathering and evoked memories of Guyana's Muslim Education Trust College (METC) community.

Accompanied by fellow performers Muntaz, Nazira Baksh, and Bibi, Rabbi arrived with a full musical ensemble that attendees described as feeling "like an METC reunion", rekindling friendships and shared memories among former students, families, and supporters.

Also among the distinguished guests were Dr Faiz Al Abideen of Saudi Arabia; former Guyana Diwali Queen Rehana Ali; Omemma Kassim and the Kassim family; Hafeeza Khan, visiting from California; Shamsun Neehar Khan of New York; Zafrulah Khan of Florida and members of the Khan family.

In attendance too were Zabeeda, Lequat, Sally Azeez, Nari Ali and the Ali family, teacher Muntaz, and Saleema. Guests from Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago also joined the celebration, adding to the gathering's distinctly Caribbean warmth and hospitality.

Special guests included Shaykh Osman Nakshbandi of Pakistan; Shaykh Abu Muaz from New York and Toronto; and



the *Negro Progress Convention*: "It must strike everyone forcibly that the land given to them by their forefathers were getting away from them, and their East Indian brethren were fast taking hold of these lands..."

While lands in the interior were opening up for gold mining in the 1890s, the sugar industry was experiencing a depression that was limiting the employment of Indians. Increasingly Crown lands along the banks of rivers were placed on sale for purchase by Indians. This led to Indian settlements along the banks of the rivers.

In this regard the story of Jugdeo (Jagdeo), as reported in *Tiger in the Stars* by Secharan is remarkable.

Jugdeo was born to indentured parents and acquired land along the Mahaicony river where by 1922 he was cultivating 3,000 acres of rice. He was the first person in the then colony to use machinery for rice cultivation, acquiring in 1916 the first tractor (a Caterpillar) in the colony to plough his fields and transport his paddy. Also, he used a steam thresher to separate the paddy from the straw, and had his own rice mill to dehusk the paddy to produce rice.

With the depression in the sugar industry, the smaller estates found it difficult to survive. Many were acquired by larger operations and consolidated under one administration. Some, espe-

cially in the Upper Corentyne, were divided into large parcels and sold to individual Indians, who went into large scale rice cultivation and cattle rearing.

Others, mainly in Essequibo, were sold to individual Indians who subdivided and sold, or rented smaller parcels for rice cultivation, while operating rice mills where the renters sold or paid a fee for milling their paddy.

In Essequibo, Rash Beharry an indentured Indian, was a prominent community and Hindu leader, successful businessman, and prominent rice producer. He is recognised as a pioneer exporter of Guyana grown rice, which he exported to Trinidad under the brand name *RB Gold*, around the beginning of the 20th century. Many years ago I was informed by one of his descendants that he had owned the Johanna Cecilia and the Adventure Estates.

In Guyana, McDoom Village is a prominent village on the East Bank of Demerara. According to a Facebook post, Haji Muckdoom arrived in British Guiana in 1884 from Uttar Pradesh, and was indentured to Plantation Peter's Hall. After his contract ended he took ten acres of land *in lieu* of his return passage, started rice cultivation, and operated a grocery and a tailoring business.

In 1921 he and his family purchased parts of Plantation Houston, subdivided and sold parcels, built a mosque, and founded the village under the name McDoom Village.

The period from 1890 to 1930 saw many indentured Indians and their descendants making great strides economically through rice farming and cattle rearing. During this period the wealthier families were able to educate their children, and many Indians started to enter the medical and legal professions.

Despite this breakthrough, many Indians remained poor, living under squalid conditions in logies on the few dozen operating mega-estates. There they had to wait until the early 1950s when the sugar barons were pushed to start a program of better housing for those still in the logies. Even then the workers had weekly deductions from their wages for loans granted, and transport (legal transfer of the land) was withheld pending full repayment.

Upon arrival in British Guiana, the indentured Indians were at the bottom of the economic and social ladders. Today, their descendants, now more familiarly known as Indo-Guyanese, in an independent Guyana are well-represented in all spheres of life, including the independent professions of law and medicine, commerce, and politics.



Imdadul mosque celebrated Mother's Day on May 9



Machel at centre stage. *Photos by Hinano Beekhoo*
Toronto celebrates Machel

Toronto – Our diaspora turned out in strong support on May 6 when soca icon Machel Montano attended the Canadian premiere of his documentary *Like Ah Boss: Journey of a Soca King* at the historic Paradise Theatre during Departure Festival. The screening, followed by a live Q&A session, saw members of the Caribbean diaspora in attendance, along with fans, music enthusiasts, and supporters eager to celebrate one of the Caribbean’s most influential contemporary performers.

According to the festival’s official event listing, the documentary follows Montano through Trinidad and Tobago’s 2015 Carnival season, capturing the intense preparation, performances, and demands surrounding his celebrated *Machel Monday* concert and his Road March and International Soca Monarch victories.

The evening also highlighted the continuing influence of Caribbean culture within Canada’s multicultural landscape, with many attendees viewing the premiere as an important moment for soca music and Caribbean storytelling within mainstream arts and film spaces.

Montano first rose to prominence as a child performer before becoming one of the genre’s most recognisable international ambassadors. He has spent decades helping expand the global reach of Caribbean music through performances, collaborations, and festival appearances around the world.

For many in attendance, the Toronto premiere represented more than entertainment, emerging as a celebration of Caribbean resilience, creativity, and the enduring cultural connections that continue to shape our diaspora communities across Canada.



Families from across GTA gathered at Queen Palace Banquet Hall in Scarborough on May 9 for the Mother’s Day Extravaganza, which was presented by Tropical TV and Valmiki Ashram. The energised and highly-entertaining cultural show featured performances by Guyanese chutney star Terry ‘Guyana Baboo’ Gajraj, top Trinidadian Chutney soca queen Rawytee Ramroop, Chalisa, the Singh Sisters, Nadina, and several dance groups, including Mahima Dance Academy, Fusion Dance Centre, and West Indian Fusion Dance Centre. The evening blended music, dance, celebration, and community tributes in honour of mothers, matriarchs, and maternal figures, reflecting the warmth and vibrancy of our thriving diaspora here in the GTA. *Photos by Hinano Beekhoo*



Raveena Tandon revisits era of Bollywood's painful tabloid culture

— Veteran Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon has revisited the emotionally turbulent media culture of 1990s Hindi cinema, reflecting on an era when sensational headlines, gossip magazines, and editorial gatekeeping often shaped public perception of actors long before celebrities had direct access to audiences through social media.

Long before Instagram statements and celebrity-controlled narratives became part of modern entertainment culture, Bollywood stars often lived at the mercy of weekly tabloids, gossip magazines, and speculative headlines.

For veteran actress Raveena Tandon, that period remains one of the defining realities of stardom in the 1990s in an era she now says left many actors vulnerable to what she described as unchecked “yellow journalism”.

Speaking on *Not Done Yet with Malini Agarwal*, a podcast by *Times Entertainment*, Tandon reflected candidly on how entertainment reporting during that period could shape careers, reputations, and public perception with little opportunity for immediate correction.

“I think yellow journalism had no control that time,” Tandon said, adding “And one could not probably even clear the air sooner, faster, like you can now do on Instagram or put out a post and you have a direct interaction with your audience, which was not earlier.”

Historically, “yellow journalism” refers to sensationalised reporting that prioritises scandal, exaggeration, speculation, and emotionally charged headlines over balance and nuance.

In Bollywood’s 1990s media ecosystem, the phrase became closely associated with sections of entertainment journalism that thrived on celebrity rivalries, rumours, personal relationships, and intrusive coverage of actors’ private lives.

Tandon suggested that access to influential editors often shaped how celebrities were portrayed publicly.

“Earlier, if you were in the good books of the editor, then things would work out for you,” she said, adding, “Otherwise, if you were just a private person. No, you weren’t allowed to live then.”

Her remarks have reopened conversation around an era when film magazines wielded enormous cultural influence across India and throughout the global diaspora.

For many Indo-Caribbean and South Asian households in Toronto, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and New York, glossy Bollywood magazines circulated almost as widely as the films themselves, travelling through grocery stores, barbershops, VHS rental outlets, beauty salons, and family living rooms.

The stories printed inside those publications often helped shape the mythology surrounding Bollywood’s biggest stars.

Among the most scrutinised figures of that era was veteran actress Rekha, whose personal life and relationships became the subject of decades of persistent speculation and sensational reporting. Entertainment magazines frequently blurred the line between public persona and private reality, transforming the

actress into both cinema icon and tabloid fascination.

Actress Mamta Kulkarni also became emblematic of the excesses of tabloid culture during the 1990s. Media coverage surrounding her career often shifted from film reporting into sensational narratives involving glamour, controversy, and alleged underworld associations, with speculation at times overshadowing discussion of her performances and professional work.

Even male superstars were not insulated from the machinery of entertainment gossip. Akshay Kumar, one of Bollywood’s most bankable actors, frequently found his personal relationships transformed into recurring tabloid narratives, as magazines and entertainment columns closely followed and often dramatised his high-profile romances and breakups.

Tandon said the emotional consequences of such reporting could linger long after headlines faded.

“So that was, you just had to wait till the next headline and a very tiny apology which really made no sense,” she said, further noting, “So the headline just, the damage was done by that, it sat on in people’s minds, and the damage was done, and there was no reversing it.”

She described the experience as “a phase of really being bothered about everything”, revisiting the psychological toll that accompanied fame during Bollywood’s highly competitive and heavily mediated era.

The discussion also examined how the industry has evolved in the age of smartphones, paparazzi culture, and algorithm-driven celebrity engagement. What once depended on magazine editors and weekly publication cycles now unfolds instantly across social media platforms, where actors can directly address controversies, rumours, and misinformation before narratives become entrenched.

However, the *Not Yet Done* episode also balanced these reflections with lighter moments, including exchanges involving Internet personalities Orry and Ruhee Dosani, as well as questions from Tandon’s daughter Rasha Thadani.

Raveena also hummed a few lines from one of her popular songs during the conversation, offering audiences a nostalgic reminder of her enduring connection to Bollywood’s golden commercial era.

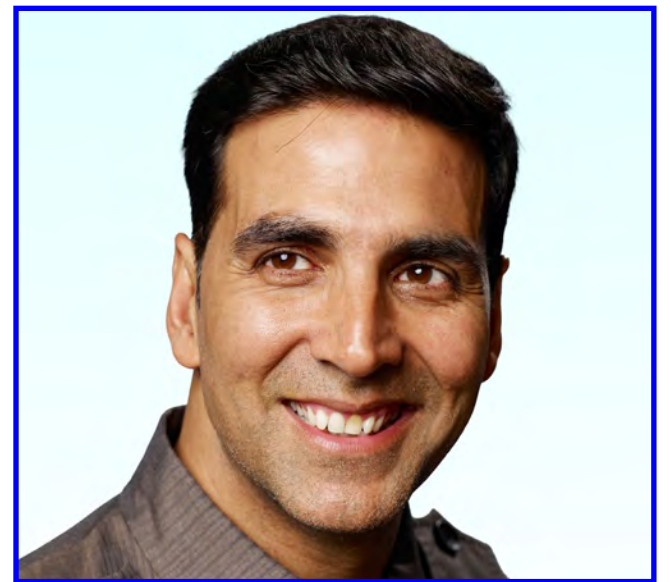
For many of our diaspora viewers who grew up during the VHS and satellite television boom of the 1990s, Tandon remains among the defining faces of Hindi cinema, a part of a generation of stars whose films, songs, and screen personas travelled far beyond India and became deeply woven into our diasporic cultural memory.

On the professional front, Tandon was last seen in *Patna Shuklla* and *Ghudchadi* in 2024. She is next set to appear in *Welcome to the Jungle*, directed by Ahmed Khan and featuring Akshay Kumar alongside a large ensemble cast.

She is also attached to upcoming projects including *Maa Vande* and the Tamil-language film *Vishwanath and Sons*, while reports have additionally linked her to *Lawyer* starring Vijay Antony.



Mamta Kulkarni



Akshay Kumar



Rekha



Raveena Tandon



Ranbir Kapoor plays Lord Rama in *Ramayana*

Ramayana sets new Bollywood cinema benchmark

Indian cinema’s long tradition of mythological storytelling is preparing for one of its most ambitious modern reinterpretations with *Ramayana*, an upcoming two-part cinematic epic spearheaded by producer Namit Malhotra and directed by acclaimed filmmaker Nitesh Tiwari.

Mounted on a scale rarely witnessed in Indian filmmaking, the production is already generating significant international attention because of its vast technical scope, global collaborations, and unprecedented workforce.

According to details released by the filmmakers, more than 10,000 crew members are currently involved in the project, making it the largest crew ever assembled for an Indian movie.

The production team spans multiple departments, including production design, visual effects, action choreography, costume creation, and large-scale world-building operations intended to recreate the ancient epic for modern audiences.

Backed by Prime Focus Studios in association with DNEG and Monster Mind Creations, the film is being envisioned not simply as a theatrical release, but as a global cinematic event combining Indian storytelling traditions with cutting-edge filmmaking technology.

The project carries additional international significance because of the involvement of DNEG, the Oscar-winning visual-effects company known for its work on several globally acclaimed productions. The collaboration is expected to

play a central role in shaping the film’s visual language and immersive scale.

Industry observers note that while Indian cinema has produced numerous visually ambitious historical and mythological productions over the decades, *Ramayana* is being positioned as a landmark attempt to elevate the genre to a new global standard.

The film is also expected to receive a worldwide IMAX release, reinforcing the producers’ intention to market the project as an international theatrical spectacle.

Starring Bollywood actor Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama, the production has already generated intense anticipation surrounding its casting, visual treatment, and narrative interpretation of the ancient Sanskrit epic traditionally attributed to the revered poet Valmiki.

Speaking previously about portraying Lord Rama, Kapoor described the role with reverence and emotional weight.

“He stands for compassion, for courage, for righteousness and forgiveness. He is called Maryada Purushottam, which stands for an ideal man,” Kapoor said during a promotional appearance.

Producer Namit Malhotra said the film has been approached with “responsibility, devotion and care” in order to bring the epic to audiences “in its truest spirit and scale”.

“This is a story that belongs to all of us,” Malhotra added.

Beyond the boundary, communities unite with cricket, compassion

On May 30, Mississauga's Celebration Square will once again echo with the familiar sounds of Caribbean cricket culture: applause rippling through the crowd, animated appeals rising from the pitch, and the rhythmic pulse of music binding players and spectators into a shared communal experience. Yet beyond the scoreboards, the boundaries, and the celebratory atmosphere lies something far more profound.

At the heart of the upcoming Cricket to Conquer Cancer tournament is an appeal not simply to sport, but to solidarity.

Organised in support of the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, the initiative represents a powerful convergence of culture, compassion, and civic purpose. What emerges on the cricket field on May 30 will not merely be competition, but a visible demonstration of how our diaspora can transform cherished cultural traditions into meaningful public action.

For our Caribbean communities across Canada, cricket has never existed solely as recreation. It has long functioned as a shared language of memory and belonging, connecting generations from Georgetown to Port-of-Spain, Kingston to Bridgetown, and now throughout Canadian cities, where migration has carried Caribbean lives, histories, and identities.

Many within our diaspora still remember improvised cricket matches played in village streets, vacant lots, schoolyards, and narrow back lanes where makeshift rules, laughter, and participation mattered far more than polished technique. Cricket endured because it reflected something essential about community itself: resilience, adaptability, teamwork, and collective joy.

Those same values now find renewed meaning in the fight against cancer.

The urgency of that struggle is impossible to ignore. In Canada, two in five people are expected to be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime. Behind that stark statistic are families navigating fear, treatment, uncertainty, and recovery. Few communities remain untouched by its reach. Nearly everyone knows a relative, friend, colleague, or neighbour whose life has been altered by cancer.

It is precisely this shared vulnerability that gives Cricket to Conquer Cancer its resonance beyond sport.

The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation's *Carry The Fire* initiative has emerged as a compelling symbol of resilience and sustained commitment to advancing cancer research and patient care. Through this tournament, that message is translated into direct community participation, where fundraising, awareness, and cultural gathering become part of a larger humanitarian effort.

Importantly, the structure of the tournament itself reflects that spirit of inclusion.

The fast-paced T5 format has been deliberately designed to maximise participation and accessibility. Teams composed of colleagues, families, neighbours, friends, and community organisations will take the field in matches where every player contributes. Batters retire after reaching 15 runs, ensuring others have an opportunity at the crease, while adapted rules rooted in the informal traditions of Caribbean and South Asian street cricket prioritise involvement, improvisation, and collective enjoyment over individual dominance.

In many ways, the format quietly mirrors the broader fight against cancer itself. Progress depends not upon isolated effort,

but upon shared responsibility, in researchers, clinicians, caregivers, survivors, families, and supporters all contributing to a common purpose. Everyone carries part of the innings.

The funds raised through the tournament will support three critical areas identified by PMCF: early detection, innovative treatments, and comprehensive patient support. These initiatives range from improving diagnostic capabilities and advancing precision medicine to supporting the emotional wellbeing of patients and families navigating the realities of illness and recovery.

Such work matters profoundly. It transforms public goodwill into tangible scientific advancement and compassionate care.

Equally significant is what this event reveals about the evolving role of diaspora communities within Canada itself. Cricket to Conquer Cancer demonstrates multiculturalism not merely as symbolic celebration, but as active civic contribution. It is culture mobilised in service of the public good.

On May 30, boundaries will be marked across the cricket field at Celebration Square. But the true reach of this effort will extend far beyond them into research laboratories, hospital rooms, treatment centres, and homes, where families continue to carry hope through difficult circumstances.

Every run scored, every ball bowled, and every cheer from the crowd will stand as a reminder that even in uncertain times, communities still possess the capacity to gather around compassion, purpose, and collective care.

In that sense, Cricket to Conquer Cancer becomes more than a tournament.

It becomes an affirmation that we are all willing to carry the fire forward together.





The Princess Margaret
Cancer Foundation UHN

CRICKET

The message shines brightly from the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation: *Carry the Fire*, both a call and a promise.

When we step onto the field for Cricket to Conquer Cancer, we are doing more than playing a game. Each team, each run scored, each dollar raised helps carry that fire forward, lighting the path toward brighter tomorrows for cancer patients everywhere.

Fundraising efforts through the tournament help *Carry the Fire* for a new generation of patients, supporting the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation's trailblazing work to transform what it means to be diagnosed with cancer.

As the PMCF explains, cancer is complex. It is not a single disease, but a group of hundreds, shaped by lifestyle, environment, and genetics. The challenges are immense. Yet the belief guiding the work at PMCF is equally powerful: through collaborative research, intensive training, and engaged philanthropy, those challenges can be overcome together.

Today, the PMCF's world-renowned team of doctors, researchers, and scientists continue to carry that fire forward. Their mission is to advance early detection, develop innovative treatments, and expand comprehensive patient support so that those facing cancer can benefit from the very best outcomes and experiences.

The goal is clear: to help cancer patients everywhere live longer, healthier lives; and ultimately, to build a future where fewer people live in fear of the disease.

And come May 30, as the bat meets the ball at Celebration Square, our diaspora will help keep that fire burning.



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