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Vol. 43 • No 4 • October 15, 2025 • Tel: 905-738-5005 • 312 Brownridge Dr. Thornhill, ON L4J 5X1 • indocaribbeanworld.com • indocaribbeanworld@gmail.com

Our Community Is Thriving!



One Love Table held its latest charitable event on October 5. In attendance was MP Salma Zahid (right), who addressed the gathering, and spent time greeting volunteers, among them (from left) Zubeeda, Karen, and Shafeeya. More on Page 10.



In a quintessential moment capturing family togetherness during Diwali, siblings Latchmin Kissoon and Roy Doobay greet each other at the recent CMIC Diwali Gala, which took place on October 12. More on Page 16.



In photos, the the new Demerara River Bridge; left, Ali speaks at the ceremony; in photo, top right, a section of nationals assembled for the event. Facebook photos

New Demerara River Bridge spans vision, Guyana's renewal

— From the GTA's diaspora to nationals assembled in the homeland, the commissioning of the new Demerara River Bridge was more than the unveiling of an iconic span; instead, the moment grew into national pride, uniting all Guyanese in celebrating progress, vision, and building for generations ahead.

By Romeo Kaseram

A Special LJI Diaspora Report

Toronto – Screens glowed in living rooms in the GTA when members of the Guyanese diaspora gathered in their thousands to view the live commissioning of the new Demerara River Bridge on October 5,

the spectacular arc of concrete, steel, and symbolism affirming Guyana's steadfast march toward transformation and modernisation.

In the days following the commissioning, Toronto's Guyanese community spoke with renewed affection and commitment for the homeland. At community gatherings, mandirs, and mosques, talk of the bridge stirred nostalgia and optimism in equal measure.

"I remember the challenge it was to cross the old bridge," one diaspora member said. "And now, today, to look at the arc and majesty of the new bridge fills me with pride knowing that Guyana is

recovering, and building not only for tomorrow, but for the next 100 years. I was glued to my phone's screen throughout the commissioning, and I felt very happy afterwards. Now I watch the bridge all the time on the live traffic camera on the *Guyana Chronicle's* website."

At the Imdadul Mosque in Toronto, seniors recalled a past when navigating the old bridge took a toll on their patience, time, and pockets.

One elder stated, "I watched it [on October 5] on the tablet with my grandchildren, and I told them about how we used to wait in our cars in long lines

See Page 11: Diaspora, homeland

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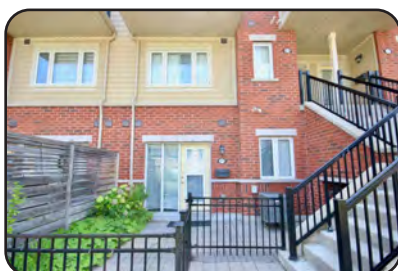
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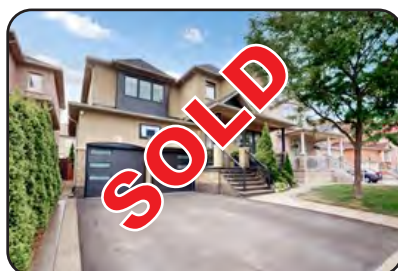
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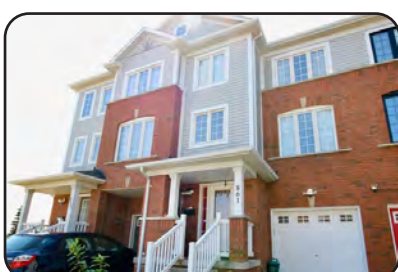
3-bdrm, 4-bath townhome blends style, space, unbeatable location. Bright open-concept layout with hardwood flring on mn & 2nd flrs - clean, modern vibe. Upstairs, spacious primary bdrm has walk-in closet & updated ensuite, 2 spacious extra bdrms - room for entire family. Prime Brampton area by schools, parks, shops, transit, & major hwy's, a move-in-ready home!



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National All Fours Association season now underway

holding their games at the Twilight Restaurant in Scarborough. The October 5 session saw Knight Riders pulling ahead of Snipers for a 25-24 win, with Nitro ahead of Lions 25-18, and D'Boyz defeating Kingsmen with 25-18. Game 2 will take place at Nitro later this month with the teams on a break celebrating Thanksgiving and Diwali.



Honorary Consul Singh at right

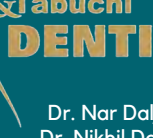
Guyana Consulate General marks Amerindian Heritage Month

cultural, economic and political evolution of Guyana. He also referenced Canada's National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, which was being celebrated on the same day.

Jan Morgan provided musical entertainment, with a poem on Indigenous peoples read by young Noah. Acting Consul General Grace Joseph hosted the event, while the Vote of Thanks was delivered by the Consulate's Lorraine Harry.



IMO's Omar Farouk (left) and Singh



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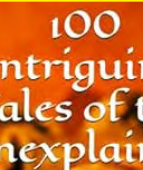
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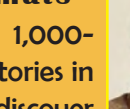


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In photos, organisers, guests, and friends of Guyana at the October 3 event



Diaspora marks PPP/Civic’s election victory

The PPP/Civic’s resounding victory in the 2025 national elections in Guyana was celebrated at the Windies Restaurant & Sports Bar in Scarborough on October 3. The evening was filled with cheer, camaraderie, and patriotic pride as members of the Guyanese diaspora gathered to share in the triumph.

The event, organised by the One Guyana Forum, the Association of Concerned Guyanese, and the Windies Restaurant, overflowed with celebratory energy, reflecting the deep connection Toronto’s Guyanese community continues to feel with the homeland.

Leading the celebration were organisers that included Jerry Karamat, Mahesh Ramdeo, Ramesh Ramcharan, Nutana Singh, Bejai Jairam, and Shiv Persaud, each warmly acknowledging the spirit of unity and national

renewal symbolised by the PPP/Civic’s victory.

Also attending the well-attended event was Honorary Consul Mani Singh from the Consulate General of Guyana here in Toronto, his presence underscoring the occasion’s official and celebratory significance.

Following a sumptuous buffet dinner provided by the Windies Restaurant, the evening’s speakers highlighted the magnitude of the September 1 election results, noting it to be an emphatic landslide, and an indicator it was a clear endorsement of the PPP/Civic’s leadership and its mandate to take Guyana forward.

The landslide victory, described as both flawless and transparent, was recognised by all the speakers as a reaffirmation of the people’s confidence in Guyana’s democratic journey, its emerging growth and trajectory, and its promising, future direction.



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Editorial

Lights of Diwali

A single *diya* flickers in warm homes in Mississauga, Brampton, Scarborough, and throughout our GTA. Its small flame is welcoming family members arriving from the autumn chill outside for Diwali celebrations within.

This tiny *diya* travelled across continents and centuries, from the Port of Calcutta in India across the Atlantic with our Indentured ancestors. Still a humble clay vessel, it is prominent in the bamboo-arched splendour of the Divali Nagar in Trinidad, at the Grand Deep Jale Diwali celebration at the Kitty Seawall Roundabout in Georgetown; and, today, in our diaspora homes from Queen Street, Toronto, to Queens, New York.

Diwali continues to mark our renewal, resilience, and moral clarity. For our ancestors uprooted from India and replanted in the Caribbean's cane fields, Diwali's light continued to shine in their homes and lives, where it transformed memory into ritual, and loss into celebration.

In our ancestors' nurturing hands, Diwali became not only a symbol of faith, but an act of reclamation, an assertion that culture, despite being uprooted, could still take root and thrive inside hardship.

Today, as our Indo-Caribbean community lights *diyas* here in the GTA, Diwali again affirms its larger truth: that even in displacement, humanity carries within it the spark of home. Our diaspora's celebration is more than remembrance: it is a continuity of spirit, proof that light endures through displacement, and that heritage, shared across oceans, can illuminate the multicultural fabric of nations like Canada.

Yet even as our *diyas* glow across our cities, the world trembles under gathering dark clouds. In the Caribbean, anxieties rise over militarisation and the border dispute with Guyana being incited by Venezuela, reviving colonial echoes of power and possession. Caricom nations warn that regional peace, and livelihoods bound to tourism and trade, are being put in danger.

Globally, the Israel-Hamas war continues to devastate, with Gaza suffering from tremendous loss of lives, facing the horrors of famine, its cities leveled by inexorable bombardment.

Meanwhile, the attack on the Ukraine by Russia grinds on into its fourth year; alliances are fluid, and another winter of war and hardship lies ahead for the millions of displaced lives.

Each of these crises marks a different form of darkness: political, moral, spiritual. They remind us that the age of reason still stumbles before the primal shadow of conquest and revenge. And yet, even here, the message of Diwali persists: light must not retreat merely because darkness multiplies in our turbulent world.

Against such a backdrop, Diwali's meaning feels newly urgent. The *diya*, humble and enduring, asks not only that we banish darkness from our homes, but that we confront it within ourselves: belligerence, envy, anger, apathy. Its glow is both private meditation and public call; that we act with kindness, generosity, and reconciliation in restoring balance; that we hold compassion as our highest offering.

We should not dismiss such symbolism as gentle sentiment in what is becoming more and more a materialist world of hard power, acquisition, and appropriation. Let us not forget that history shows moral imagination often lights the first path toward change. Our past evidences that empires do fall, not always by force, but by the slow illumination of conscience.

For our Indo-Caribbean diaspora, Diwali invites reflection on how inherited resilience can guide us through today's uncertainty. The same light that steadied our forebears through storms of history now calls us to illuminate our fractured present in building community, bridging divides, and being the first to extend a hand in darkness.

In a time when the world's map is being set ablaze with weapons' fire, Diwali reminds us that each *diya* lit in sincerity diminishes despair. Let the millions of *diyas*, lit in Trinidad, Guyana, New York, and the GTA, become not merely symbols but a constellation of hope guiding us toward a gentler, more luminous, and peaceful world.

INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
Letters to be published will be edited where necessary.
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DEI’s next shift sees decline becoming embedded inclusion

DEI must DIE... a new wave that has emerged to push back against formal diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies. Rooted in 1960s civil rights laws like the US Civil Rights Act (1964) and affirmative action policies, DEI evolved through legal mandates and social movements to combat discrimination based on, among other things, race, gender, and disability.

DEI surged in the early 2020s with an emphasis on racial justice. Many organisations sought inclusion initiatives, metrics, and expanded workplace equity. The merit of DEI was to ensure that racial biases and discriminatory acts would be mitigated, providing an equal opportunity to everyone regardless of race, origin, gender, sexual orientation, and so on.

Deniers of DEI dispute the fact of institutional racism and bias, and downplay barriers for individuals from the non-majority community. The politicalisation of anti-DEI policy has caught wind as a simplistic message to the populist movement, providing an illusion of an invasion of foreigners. Rooted in xenophobia, it has been portrayed as diluting society and providing unfair advantages to racialised people and newcomers.

In Canada, a nation that is popularised by its multicultural policy, some corporations and institutions have not explicitly dismantled DEI yet. Many companies still maintain inclusion strategies, equity audits, and public-facing commitments to diversity. However, beneath the surface, signs of retreat are emerging, such as downsized teams, DEI leadership roles consolidated, and public reporting diluted.

Meanwhile, some companies are quietly rebranding their programs under broader terms like “belonging”, “inclusive culture”, or “employee engagement”. A 2024 Deloitte Canada report noted that while 86 percent of organisations claim to prioritise DEI, only 28 percent measure outcomes meaningfully; and fewer still link those outcomes to leadership accountability.

Despite the rise of a DEI rollback, core issues remain prevalent in society. Indigenous reconciliation, anti-Black racism, disability inclusion, and LGBTQ+ equity are ongoing challenges in Canadian workplaces and institutions.

The importance of DEI, despite its growing unpopularity, has led to the evolution of how to address the above-mentioned challenges. The era of glossy diversity reports and public commitments may be giving way to quieter, more embedded approaches. For organisations, the choice now is whether to treat inclusion as



Ryan Singh

a fading trend, or as a long-term cultural investment, regardless of political winds.

The rise of DEI was not accidental; it was based on a premise that there were significant issues, and many responded to this as it was commonly identified that these issues had to be tackled.

Despite the decline in formalised DEI, the underlying principles have not only survived, but have been intertwined into common practices.

One of DEI's most evident legacies is visibility. DEI forced organisations to confront what was long ignored: disparities in leadership, pay, hiring, access, and inclusion. Employee demographics became metrics. Spaces of power were asked to explain themselves. By making inequity measurable, DEI made accountability possible.

Another legacy is a cultural shift. Inclusion, belonging, and anti-bias conversation, what was once seen by many as optional, has increasingly become part of employee expectations, public reputation, and brand risk. Because of DEI policy, many employees now expect that their workplace offer respect, belonging, and opportunities for all, not just merit based on traditional hierarchies.

DEI programs, affinity groups, and bias training have generated these shifts. Even when formal DEI roles shrink, many practices survive embedded in HR, strategy, and leadership values. Perhaps the most important lesson: intent alone is insufficient. DEI's successes largely correlate with organisations that combine strong leadership commitment, clear metrics, investment in underrepresented talent, and consistent culture change.

The real legacy of DEI is this: it changed what people expect from institutions. How workplaces handle that expectation now will determine whether the gains are sustained or fade.

The mischaracterisation of DEI is just a simplistic attempt to shift the conversation to mobilise intolerant and bigoted mentalities, and leverage those sentiments for political gain. And despite the decline of forefront DEI, the underlying principles of DEI have been woven into practices and planted the seeds for a more conscience approach.

Regardless of whether it is labelled DEI or not, the purpose of the movement was to shift thinking, ensure fairness, and provide equality of opportunity. In fact, if formal DEI has been diminished, but is now embedded into common practices is in fact a success for DEI. Yet still, there is much more work to be done; the opportunity of mobilised detractors has actually led to a transformation that will forward DEI to continue its ongoing evolution.

Unraveling the knotted threads of time, memory, and faith

Not to put too fine a point on it, my first sewing lesson while growing up back home was less a domestic chore and more an emergency operation in ER. The pants lay anesthetised on the table, legs splayed, and there I was, holding a large, threaded needle and responding to Code Blue, the rent fabric a casualty of boyhood cricketing overreach to a distant branch for an elusive mango catch.

My grandmother, chief surgeon, and moral and mother superior, towered over me, arms folded, saying, “Little boy, stitch it up! You don't want people to see your unmentionables out on the road!”

Ma's intervention was less about instruction, and more revelation. In our household, a needle was more than an instrument for sewing and repair. It was also the equivalent of a life-altering piece of scripture; and wielded by Ma, it was swift, decisive, and occasionally vengeful.

“A stitch in time saves nine,” she thundered above the hellish roar of the flames, the *chulha's* stand morphing into a temporary pulpit. I never figured out what ‘nine’ we were saving. Perhaps souls; or pennies; or maybe nine toes?

If Ma was seeing incipient signs I would grow up to become an anarchist, the evidence was already noticeable in my toes, each a *saboteur*. With my feet, no shoe felt safe while traversing dark alleys. My toes devoured each shoe with military precision, left right, left right, chewing away with insatiable hunger like termites in a mahogany drawer.

Inspecting another pair of shoes called too early to eternal glory, Ma Superior would lament during its committal, “Child, you sure your big toe don't have teeth? Look how the shoes bite up inside.” She was not wrong. Put my feet into a pair of “crepe soles” and it was a feast on sole, with the uppers for dessert.

And the mosquito net! That delicate gossamer between dream and dengue, miasma and malaria, never stood a chance with my voracious feet. Wake up in the morning and a leg would be outside, having clawed its way through the net during the night, a feast for the mosquitoes, and yet another worrisome sting for Ma that my restive spirit would not be contained.

“Is another hole you make again?” Ma cried, adding, “Soon it going to have more patch than net.” And so, Ma patched and patched, until the mosquito net looked like the map in my classroom, cast tightly across the globe, each colony stitched up and bound in a different colour.

I did not assemble it all until later, when I came to understand we were a family of many unrelated parts; that we were a patch-work by-product from the left-overs of a gorging empire. A discarded flour bag was sewn into a pillowcase; lengthy,



Romeo Kaseram

sturdy needles were used to hand-stitch sugar bags re-purposed into curtains; crocus bags were threaded with thin ropes and made into hammocks.

In one way or another, part of how we defined ourselves was sewn together from the detritus of empire after the ships left, weighted down and unwieldy like the mosquitoes, taking away sugar, spices, and our sweat. Later into my boyhood, after seeing a painting of Queen Victoria, I thought that Ma would have turned her petticoat into bedsheets for our entire village.

But back then, I saw only the comedy of it all; the way every repair became a negotiation between my awakening rebellion and Ma's survivalist tendencies. While my stitches were crooked, hers were stiff and straight-backed commandments. Passing me the needle with legacy in mind, but mostly resignation over her growing short-sightedness, she would state in the imperative, “Thread it!”

Squinting, my tongue out for precision, yet deliberate with my miscues, she became impatient at my playfulness with her long-sightedness to equip me to navigate this sundered world.

“Little boy, you holding the needle like you fighting mosquito with a toothpick. Make haste!”

My fingers were not as versatile and efficient as my toes. When I was done sewing the ripped seam of my pants, close inspection discovered her leap in faith had tripped on a cross-hatching of knots. She would mutter direly, “Father in heaven, give me strength to teach this little boy to sew in a straight line.”

Yet behind the laughter were metaphor and strategy. Every seam she closed was an act of survival, every patch a protest against our indigence. When she darned my socks, she was not just patching up holes; with the little we had, she was ensuring I stepped out prepared for a world deliberately made uneven for my tentative, exploratory footsteps.

Meanwhile, even as she darned and damned, I was busy reopening: one tear, one rip, one well-caught mango at a time. Later in life, with regret, I came to understand I was reopening wounds she had closed without anaesthetic; wounds acquired during battles in the cane fields from the chains she wrapped around cut bundles that were tons and tons of sugar canes; later in life, I understood how these chains had snaked out, wrapping themselves around her ankles.

I wonder if the family kept Ma's sewing tin, then re-purposed and redolent of camphor; if so, today it would smell of rust, its knotted balls of re-purposed, coloured threads faded and inextricable; even back then, Ma had come to know, even as her fingers grew fragile, there was no stitching back this unraveling world.



West Indies Women's cricket team

Good coaches make winning cricket teams

Dear Editor,

As I watch the Women's World Cup cricket in Sri Lanka and look at the team standings, it is obvious that a certain team previously known for their world class cricket is missing, namely, the West Indies.

When the West Indies narrowly beats a team like Thailand, you know there's a problem. Not forgetting the current performance of their counterparts in the India Test matches. I don't need to be a prophet to predict who will win the second Test match in India.

When I was growing up in Guyana, the question was asked at times, "Why can't Guyana have their own international cricket team?" After all, Guyana had produced some of the top-tiered players in the world back then.

We were given the answer that, "Since Guyana is a small country population-wise like the other West Indies nations, the pool of talent would be greater collectively". Perhaps there is some merit to it.

However, when you look at world class cricket, some of the most dominant teams have less of a population size than their competitors. This also applies to soccer.

So, what is it? I personally believe that though the population size can contribute to the pool talent, the main factor has to do with identifying, developing, and nurturing talent from a young age.

This means investing in training, better cricket facilities and coaching. One of India's great cricket coaches was not Indian. He instilled a new level of confidence in India cricket.

A good cricket player does not necessarily make a good coach. A good coach in any sport needs to have an in-depth understanding of the game and the ability to teach. One needs to be able to teach the technical aspects of the game and to predict the movement of the game, which is what is around the corner, and so coaching accordingly.

A coach needs to be involved in continuous learning. For starters, we need world class coaches to develop world class players.

The West Indies cricket team is selected by the head coach and data-driven performance. India's cricket team is selected by a five-member board based on not only on performance, but team balance and form.

But it starts with excellent scouting at the junior levels. There is a saying, "It is madness to keep doing the same thing and to expect different results": this summarises West Indies cricket.

Daniel Singh, via email, Guyana.

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• IMPORTANT PUBLIC NOTICE •

Re: New Guyana Passports

October 4, 2025

The Consulate General of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in Toronto, Canada wishes to advise that effective October 6, 2025 all nationals desirous of applying for a new Republic of Guyana Passport are required to make an appointment online at <https://guyanaconsulatetoronto.com> or by calling the Consulate General via telephone number 416-494-6040 to secure an appointment to begin their application for a new Republic of Guyana Passport.

Please note that after securing an online appointment all applications must be submitted in person at the Consulate General of Guyana. These modifications are vital to support the processing of the new Biometrics Passports.

The Consulate General thanks you for your co-operation and understanding.



Mani Singh
Honorary Consul, Toronto, Canada

Consulate General of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Toronto, Canada
505 Consumers Road, Suite #707, North York, Ontario M2J 4V8

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Demerara Bridge a new symbol of connectivity

Dear Editor,

It is with a heart full of hope and pride that I join the nation in celebrating the commissioning of the Bharrat Jagdeo Demerara River Bridge. This magnificent structure is more than a feat of engineering. It is a powerful symbol of a united, forward-moving Guyana – opening a new chapter of connectivity and progress for generations to come. The naming of the bridge is a fitting tribute. It honours a lifetime of dedicated service to our nation by Jagdeo. President Irfaan Ali did well to remind us of the importance of recognising our leaders in their time, not only after they are gone.

Before looking ahead, we must also offer a heartfelt salute to the teams who maintained the Old Demerara Harbour Bridge for decades. Their grit and perseverance were a quiet, essential service to our nation, as anyone who endured a closure can attest. I am deeply grateful.

As we embrace this new asset, a primary hope for all Guyanese is that its enhanced capacity will ease the traffic congestion that tested the patience of our working people for several generations. To truly realise this promise, we face a gentle but important challenge. We must match our new infrastructure with a renewed spirit of civic care. The bridge's full potential depends not just on its lanes, but on our collective commitment to road-use principles built on "care, caution, and consideration".

This leads me to reflect on our shared responsibility. The true value of any public treasure lies in how its users preserve it. It was disheartening to see the new bridge, so soon after opening, marred by litter and other troubling acts – a live act of public urination on the steel barriers even appeared on social media.

These incidents prompt a heartfelt question for our national family. As we build a world-class economy, are we at the same time nurturing a national character that is equally refined?

In this light, the recent call by Jagdeo for a stronger national value system is, therefore, not just timely – it is essential. Without a foundation of integrity, environmental stewardship, and civic duty to each other, our steel-and-concrete achievements will be hollow monuments without an equal amount of character to showcase our humanity.

Our visitors notice our conduct, and the legacy we wish to



Jagdeo and supporter at the bridge's commissioning project to the world can be compromised if we do not arrest these acts of public disorder urgently.

We can take inspiration from initiatives like First Lady Arya Ali's beautification projects, where the simple garbage bin is reimagined not as a mere receptacle, but as a symbol of an enlightened society – a daily choice to elevate our surroundings and show respect for our community.

Let this magnificent bridge be more than a path over water. Let it become our collective pathway to a future where our national character is as strong, beautiful, and resilient as the structures we build.

Sasenarine Singh, via email, Guyana.



Potential in TT's tourist charms

Dear Editor,

A powerful vision for Trinidad and Tobago's future should embrace its rich cultural diversity, natural beauty, and untapped tourism potential. Attracting world-class hotel chains like Sandals is essential; they recognise our country's unique appeal, from Carnival, pan, and calypso to pristine beaches, waterfalls, and world-renowned fishing. With Tobago's recent upgrade in airport facilities, there is a prime opportunity to develop twin destinations, namely, Chacachacare and No Man's Land, offering tourists diverse experiences in a single trip, fostering longer stays and higher revenue.

Tobago's charm lies in its quaint villages, vibrant culture, and natural attractions like the Nylon Pool and salt ponds (Chacachacare), places that can rival the best in the world.

However, Tobago's push for full self-governance must be balanced with national unity. While Tobago's desire for independence is understandable, it is crucial that final decision-making remains with the government of Trinidad and Tobago, safeguarding our collective economic stability, currency, and development plans.

Tourism development must be strategic in maximising foreign exchange earnings, creating employment, and supporting local communities. When Sandals returns, international hotels will follow.

Revitalising the economy, preserving culture, and ensuring equitable development requires strong leadership in leaders who accept tough choices and act in the best interest of the nation. Now is the time for true patriots to step up, put aside fears of controversy, and do what's necessary to secure the future together.

Gordon Laughlin, via email, Trinidad and Tobago.

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Guyana's Mohamed father-and-son duo indicted in US gold fraud case

Following months of speculation, Guyana's elected opposition leader, Azruddin Mohamed and his father, Nazar Mohamed, were indicted by an American grand jury in Florida on 11 charges, among them conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud, money laundering, bribery, and tax evasion.

To face the charges, it is very likely that the Mohameds will be extradited, if requested by the US government. So far, they have not directly commented on the indictments, other than claiming that they are politically motivated.

The truth is, the US government has been investigating the Mohameds long before they were sanctioned. Indeed, they were previously close to the ruling PPP/Civic party, but were sidelined once they were sanctioned, leading Azruddin to form the WIN party.

The charges follow sanctions placed on the father son duo in June 2024 by the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

Sanctions against the Mohameds stemmed from the co-ordinated efforts of Homeland Security Investigations, New York Organised Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Strike Force, Diplomatic Security Service, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Intelligence – New York Operations, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Miami Field Office, with assistance from HSI Miami, CBP Miami and New York Field Offices, New York City Police Department Intelligence Bureau, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

OFAC stated that the Mohameds abused Guyana's highly fractured gold industry in which small-scale gold mining operations hold a majority share of the country's gold production. These small, family-owned businesses have informal relationships with larger purchasers and traders like Mohamed's Enterprise. Once mined, Guyanese gold is sold and traded throughout international markets, including the US, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, and the European Union.

In providing a background on the Mohameds, OFAC said Nazar Mohamed founded Mohamed's Enterprise in Guyana before expanding to the US as a moneychanger and transitioned into gold trading, growing Mohamed's Enterprise into one of Guyana's largest gold exporters. In time, Azruddin Mohamed ultimately took over Mohamed's Enterprise, which also now does business as "Confidential Cambio".

Azruddin and Mohamed's Enterprise allegedly evaded Guyana's tax on gold exports and defrauded the Guyanese government of tax revenues by under-declaring their gold exports to Guyanese authorities. Between 2019 and 2023, Mohamed's Enterprise allegedly omitted more than 10,000 kilograms of gold from import and export declarations, and avoided paying more than US \$50 million in duty taxes to the government of Guyana.

It claimed that Mohamed's Enterprise allegedly bribed customs officials to falsify import and export documents, as well as to facilitate illicit gold shipments. Also alleged is it paid bribes to Guyanese government officials to ensure the uninterrupted flow of inbound and outbound personnel that move currency

and other items on behalf of Azruddin and Mohamed's Enterprise.

In addition, it is being alleged that to conceal their illegal activity and operate with impunity, Azruddin and Mohamed's Enterprise engaged in extensive bribery schemes involving government officials in Guyana. This includes providing direct and recurring bribery payments to Guyanese government officials to ensure favourable treatment in criminal or civil matters that would otherwise suggest their involvement in illegal criminal activity. In return, corrupt officials receive cash and gifts for incidents that are overlooked.

The US District Court Southern District of Florida indictments list wire instructions for four shipments of gold during the period October 5, 2021 to February 21, 2023, each amounting to 165 kilograms of gold through Miami to a buyer in Dubai.

Another shipment of gold bars valued at US \$5.3 million was intercepted at Miami International Airport on June 11, 2024, and is subject to seizure by the US government.

The indictments also list the shipments of four shipments of six empty wooden boxes each containing Guyana Revenue Authority and Guyana Gold Board seals from Dubai to Miami on each of four dates between January 13, 2021 and June 10, 2023. These empty wooden boxes with seals affixed evidently facilitated the evasion of taxes and duties.

In addition, the indictment lists the shipment of a Lamborghini using a false invoice showing a cost of US \$73,500 instead of its true value of US \$680,000. In doing so, it is alleged that Azruddin avoided paying more than US \$1 million in taxes.

If found guilty on the charges of conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud, the Mohameds could face a maximum of 20 years on each count, maximum supervised release of three years, a maximum fine of US \$250,000, or twice the gross pecuniary gain or loss.

On the charges of wire fraud, they could also be sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment and maximum supervised release of three years and a fine of US \$250,000 or twice the gross pecuniary gain or loss.

The grand jury is also seeking a maximum of 20 years' imprisonment, three years supervised release and a fine of US \$500,000, or the value of the property involved in the transaction for conspiracy to commit money laundering.

The grand jury also accuses the Mohameds of paying bribes to Guyanese government officials, including customs officials, so that customs officials would accept shipments of gold by Mohamed's Enterprise with duplicate paperwork and reused GRA and GGB seals from Miami to Mohamed's Enterprise office in Guyana, thereby avoiding the payment of Guyanese taxes and royalties.

Meanwhile, Azruddin Mohamed has remained relatively quiet since the indictments. The Guyana government has stated that it will extradite the Mohameds, if requested.

In spite of the unavoidable charges, there still appears to be some sense of doubt or stupidity among some individuals. For instance, in an apparent APNU statement, the party said it is "incumbent on the Mohameds to



Dwarka Lakhan



The US Indictment



Nazar (left) and son Azruddin Mohamed

release the necessary information to possibly absolve themselves of the accusations that they face". This statement certainly has far-reaching implications.

The APNU statement further suggests potential criminality among government officials. It states: "Mr Azruddin Mohamed, both in the pre-election and post-election periods, claimed to be in possession of incriminating evidence of criminality by government officials. We would recall that in June this year, he revealed text conversations with President Irfaan Ali that purportedly implicated the President in the Lamborghini tax evasion scandal. Just a few days ago, the WIN leader clearly implied that he is prepared to sing like a canary and make further revelations against government officials."

It added, "The APNU Coalition firmly believes that should Mr Mohamed have credible evidence of criminal activity by the government or any other officials, he should see it as his civic and moral duty to present such evidence to the police or to the public."

Well, if Azruddin sings like a canary – if given the opportunity to do so – there's a lot more drama to come.

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

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One Love delivers food hampers, compassion, and empathy

Scarborough – In a gesture of gratitude and solidarity, One Love Family Services hosted its Drive-Thru Dinner for Gaza on October 5 in Scarborough, bringing together compassion, community, and care for the Thanksgiving season.

The generous dinner, provided courtesy of The Kabab Shoppe, Toronto, lifted above being more than a fund-raising meal, transforming into an expression of collective empathy for those enduring unimaginable hardship.

Also during the event, vehicles arrived constantly to take away food hampers not only for the body, but also nourishment for the spirit, One Love's team of dedicated volunteers moving with quiet grace, and open, welcoming hearts.

The event was graced by several distinguished guests, including MP Salma Zahid, Shaykh Abdullah Hakim Quick, and Honorary Consul Mani Singh from the Guyana Consulate General, Toronto. Each eminent guest addressed the well-attended gathering with words that resonated deeply across faiths and cultures.

An erudite scholar and respected spiritual leader, Shaykh Abdullah Hakim Quick offered a moving reflection on the historical and moral forces behind the ongoing conflict, calling for compassion and steadfast advocacy for justice and peace.

The well-regarded MP Salma Zahid, speaking with heartfelt conviction, shared insights into her ongoing work in Ottawa to raise awareness of the scale of human suffering in Palestine, reminding those present of the federal government's commitment, empathy, and action.

Bringing greetings on behalf of the government of Guyana, Honorary Consul Singh spoke of the shared humanity that binds communities across borders, and the importance of standing with vulnerable populations, particularly marginalised Muslim communities around the world. He was accompanied by the Consulate's Executive Officer, Robert Bazil.

True to its core mission, One Love Family Services also conducted its monthly food hamper distribution alongside the event, offering curbside pickups. The charity's cadre of volunteers also delivers hampers across the GTA to families in need.

During his address, One Love Table's leader, Habeeb Alli, emphasised that the organisation's vision extends far beyond moments of crisis.

He recalled that One Love Table's founding mission remains committed to serving all families, regardless of faith, gender, or ethnicity, noting that the threads of compassion and empathy are intricately woven into our collective humanity.



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Diaspora, homeland celebrate commissioning of new Demerara River Bridge

From Page 1

to get across the old bridge. To see the new bridge built as good as one here in Canada made me proud to watch the ceremony with my grandchildren. Guyana has come a long way since my wife and I left over 40 years ago.”

In Guyana, residents spoke of tangible change with optimism. “We won’t need to get up at four in the morning anymore,” said Masie Barclay, a Georgetown commuter whose weekday trips once stretched beyond three hours.

“When I heard about the new bridge, I thought it was a wonderful idea. It is such a relief for us,” she told the local media.

But it was Romel Sookram, attending the ceremony, who captured the collective gratitude. “Three years ago, it was an imagination. Now it is reality. Major kudos to the workers – every single one of them did a good job,” he told the Guyana media.

At the ceremony’s heart, President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali announced that the bridge would bear the name of former President and current Vice President Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, honouring his decades of service to national development.

“As President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, it is my honour, my privilege, and indeed my duty, to dedicate this bridge in the name of Bharrat Jagdeo,” Ali declared, adding, “From this day forward, it shall be called the *Bharrat Jagdeo Demerara River Bridge*, because great men deserve recognition, because visionaries deserve legacies, and because Guyana never forgets its giants.”

Ali described the bridge as a symbol of readiness, and a statement to the world that Guyana is modernising, industrialising, and bridging its own destiny.

“Every commuter will feel it. Every business will benefit from it. Every investor will take note of it,” he said.

He noted that the structure connects two of the country’s fastest-developing regions, transforming the West Bank into an emerging industrial hub.

“This bridge, is, therefore, not just a crossing,” he added. “It is a catalyst.”



Juan Edghill

Constructed by China Railway Construction Corporation Limited, with consultancy from Politecnica, the US \$262 million, four-lane, 2.6-kilometre cable-stayed bridge features a 50-metre high-span clearance for uninterrupted river traffic and a pedestrian walkway. Designed to last a century, it replaces the 1978 floating bridge that had long exceeded its lifespan and caused hours-long delays.

Rising 50 metres above water at its peak, the bridge enables 24/7 passage for both vehicles and vessels, and is expected to accommodate roughly 50,000 commuters daily. Unlike its predecessor, it operates toll-free, connecting Regions Three and Four in a seamless artery of commerce and mobility.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, Public Works Minister Bishop Juan Edghill described the bridge as “a story of resilience, patience, quiet endurance, and shared purpose”.

Thanking affected families and communities, he said, “To the families who reshaped their days around construction, who endured the dust and disruption, thank you! To those who gave up their entire homes for this great cause, I say thank you! Your patience and partnership built the foundation of this bridge.”

Edghill called it an “engineering masterpiece”, lauding its precision and span.

“It stands as a proud testament to what can be achieved when visionary leadership, discipline, execution, and global collaboration meet,” he said.

Also attending the commissioning, China’s Ambassador to Guyana, Yang Yang, described the project as a “bridge of friendship between China and Guyana”, celebrating it as a milestone of the Belt and Road partnership and a model of responsible international cooperation.

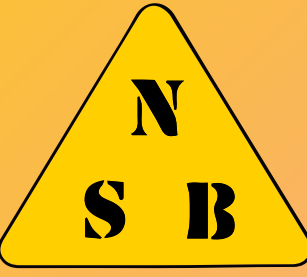
Ali reminded citizens that the bridge’s completion coincides with the 33rd anniversary of Guyana’s return to democracy, a moment that was both symbolic and instructive.

“This bridge is financed not by chance, but by deliberate reinvestment of our natural resources... Oil revenues wisely managed are being converted into structures like this; projects that deliver benefits to every Guyanese,” he said.



The Demerara River Bridge. Facebook photo

He added, “This bridge is proof that our resources are not squandered; they are reinvested into the long future of the people of our country. And so, my brothers and sisters, this bridge is your gift.”



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María Machado awarded Nobel Peace Prize

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, who remains in hiding, was awarded the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize on October 10 for “fighting dictatorship” in Venezuela, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced in Oslo.

Machado, 58, is the first Venezuelan to receive the Nobel Peace Prize and the sixth laureate from Latin America. The Norwegian Nobel Committee said in its citation, “When authoritarians seize power, it is crucial to recognise courageous defenders of freedom who rise and resist.”

A trained industrial engineer, Machado was barred by Venezuelan courts in 2024 from contesting presidential elections against Nicolás Maduro, who has ruled the country since 2013. Despite her disqualification, she threw her support behind former ambassador Edmundo González, drawing large crowds across the country. Witnesses and media images showed thousands attending her rallies before authorities escalated crackdowns on her movement.

Several of Machado’s close associates have faced arrest, including her head of security during the campaign. Six members of her team took refuge in Argentina’s embassy after Venezuelan prosecutors issued warrants for their detention.

Kristian Berg Harpviken, secretary of the Nobel body, said he had spoken directly with Machado before the announcement.

“She said it was overwhelming and that this was a prize for a whole movement, the movement in Venezuela that has fought for democ-

racy,” Harpviken said. It remains uncertain whether Machado will attend the Nobel ceremony in Oslo on December 10, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel’s death.

The United Nations Human Rights Office welcomed the award, calling it a recognition of “the clear aspirations of the people of Venezuela for free and fair elections”.

Analysts said the choice underscored the committee’s independence in the face of political pressure.



María Machado

“I think the main take-away is that the committee is again demonstrating its independence, that they wouldn’t be swayed by popular opinions or political leaders to award the prize,” said Halvard Leira, research director at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

The announcement came after a week in which US President Donald Trump repeatedly declared that he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. Trump, a vocal critic of Maduro, has intensified his rhetoric on Venezuela, recently saying the US would “look into attacking drug cartels coming by land”.

“The democratic opposition of Venezuela is something that the US has been eager to support. So, in that sense, it would be hard for anyone to constitute this as an insult to Trump,” Leira said.

The award also comes amid heightened US maritime operations in the Caribbean, with American forces reportedly intercepting several vessels allegedly carrying narcotics off Venezuela’s coast.



Ask Jay...

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TORONTO’S HOUSING MARKET IN FLUX: STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

The phone hasn’t stopped ringing recently. Some callers sound excited, others anxious, but they all want to ask the same question: “Jay, what’s going on with the market?”

The headlines are everywhere – Toronto’s housing market declined again in August, with the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board reporting a 5.2 percent drop in the average selling price compared to last year. Condos were hit the hardest, especially in the suburbs, where prices fell more than ten percent.

Last week, I met a young couple who had been renting in Liberty Village for years. They showed me a few condos they were considering, but the wife hesitated. “What if prices kept falling?” she asked.

It is the question on every buyer’s mind. My advice to them –and to anyone considering buying right now, is this: don’t try to time the bottom. Instead, focus on finding the right home at a price you can comfortably afford.

This is one of the most buyer-friendly markets we’ve seen in years. Sellers are now negotiating more actively. I recently closed a deal where my clients secured a condo 15 percent below the asking price, with the seller covering part of the closing costs. That would not have happened two years ago.

Yes, prices may decrease further, but waiting indefinitely could result in missing out on the perfect home. Get pre-approved, stay informed about interest rate announcements, and be prepared to move when the right opportunity comes along.

On the other hand, I recently met a condo owner in Etobicoke. She wanted to list at last year’s prices. I warned her that the market had shifted. She insisted. Weeks went by. No offers.

Finally, she adjusted her price, this time to match today’s market, and within days, we had showings and an offer. For condo owners, sometimes the most brilliant move is not to sell at all.

The lesson is clear: with nearly ten percent more listings than last year, buyers have many options. Setting realistic prices is now crucial. Detached and semi-detached homes in the 416 are maintaining their value better, but sharp pricing and good presentation remain essential.

A long-time client pulled me aside after a showing and admitted he regrets using his house like an ATM during the boom. He had refinanced several times, thinking property values would keep rising. Now, with prices down and payments higher, he feels stuck.

I tell every homeowner the same thing: today’s market is different from the one we experienced during the pandemic. Don’t over-leverage. Protect your equity. Avoid tapping into it for lifestyle spending. If you’re not planning to move, ride out the volatility. Toronto has faced downturns before, and over the long term, property values here have always recovered.

The Bank of Canada has indicated more rate cuts, leading lenders to compete more fiercely than ever for business. If you have a renewal coming up, do not just accept your bank’s first offer. Negotiate and explore fixed and variable options. Even shaving half a point off your rate can save thousands over the life of your mortgage.

Canada-wide, housing prices are expected to decline by about two percent this year, with Toronto likely facing a sharper drop due to its heavy reliance on condos. Federal housing Minister Gregor Robertson even described the condo market as being in “free fall”. Strong words, but not without truth.

Nevertheless, downturns don’t last forever. As interest rates fall and affordability gradually improves, buyers will return. Toronto continues to attract newcomers, businesses, and investments. Long-term demand for housing stays strong.

Markets evolve, but the core principles of wise real estate investment stay the same: plan carefully, think long term, and adapt to the changing landscape.

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CPO Deanne Taylor during her presentation

Imdadul’s seniors empowered through safety and wellness

— At the Imdadul Centre, Mondays are a time for fellowship, reflection, and empowerment among seniors. The Imdadul Senior Program combines community spirit, wellness activities, and safety awareness, offering participants not only companionship but also valuable tools to protect themselves against modern-day challenges like scams and distraction thefts.

By Romeo Kaseram
A LJI Community Report

Members of the Imdadul Senior Program gathered on October 6 for an informative and interactive session on community safety, featuring Toronto Police Service Crime Prevention Officer Deanne Taylor of 31 Division. The Imdadul Senior Program continues to provide an essential space for senior members of the community to engage in meaningful dialogue about contemporary issues and personal challenges. Comprised of 40 vibrant and active participants, the group meets every Monday at the Imdadul Centre. The program honours the legacy of volunteerism, service, and spirituality that these seniors have long contributed to the wider community.

Each week, the gathering is organised by Sister Naz, a proactive and deeply compassionate member of the Imdadul mosque, whose leadership and enthusiasm help sustain the group’s warm and welcoming atmosphere. The sessions blend gratitude, education, and shared experience, allowing members to discuss their daily lives while maintaining a strong sense of fellowship.

Recognising the importance of health and physical activity, the program embraces *Movement is Medicine*. Participants take part in senior-friendly exercises, often guided by online instructional videos, to maintain flexibility, vitality, and connections. Following the sessions, they are treated to culturally appropriate and nutritious meals, reflecting both care for physical well-being and attention to cultural familiarity.

A key feature of the October 6 session was the special presentation by Officer Deanne Taylor from 31 Division, who addressed the growing threat of distraction thefts targeting seniors. Officer Taylor, who began her role as a Crime Prevention Officer in April 2025, outlined her division’s broader commitment to community safety through education, crime data analysis, and collaboration with residents and businesses.

Her presentation explained that distraction theft occurs when criminals divert a victim’s attention to steal valuables such as wallets, phones, or jewelry. Examples include asking for directions, pretending to spill something, or initiating personal contact under false pretenses. Officer Taylor emphasised that such incidents can even take place within places of worship, where trust and openness are often assumed.

She urged attendees to maintain personal space and remain vigilant when approached by strangers.

“Preventing distraction theft means always maintaining your personal space. Do not let others get close enough to hug you or shake your hand,” she advised. Her safety tips also included keeping belongings zipped and within reach, staying aware of surroundings, attracting attention if anxious about an interaction, and reporting suspicious activity to the police right away.

The presentation reinforced the program’s mission to empower seniors through knowledge, education, and proactive engagement. It was a blend of practical education with social connection while supporting the physical and emotional well-being of its members. At the same time, the October 6 session strengthened Imdadul’s proactive and collective response against evolving threats to its seniors.

With files by Sayem Khan



In photos above, CPO Taylor visits with her listeners following her presentation and their physical activity

Imdadul’s volunteers nourish hope via generosity, compassion

— For nearly two decades, the Imdadul Islamic Centre’s Feed the Homeless program has united volunteers and families in a monthly act of compassion and generosity. Guided by Brother Zafarullah Khan, this initiative has become a cornerstone of community service combining faith, charity, and culinary care to serve the city’s most vulnerable.

On the first Sunday of every month, the aroma of freshly prepared meals fills the Imdadul Islamic Centre as volunteers, young and old, gather to cook, package, and distribute food to Toronto’s needy, a ritual of kindness that has endured for almost 20 years.

The *Feed the Homeless* program has long been one of Imdadul’s earliest and most enduring community outreach efforts, often the first initiative hosted each year in both the Islamic and Gregorian calendars.

Under the leadership of Haji Zafarullah Khan, affectionately known as Brother Zaf, volunteers begin early in the morning to transform the mosque’s kitchen into a hub of service, solidarity, and community.

The volunteer chefs, including Brother Zaman Khan and Brother Yunus Ali, bring their culinary skill and care to each event. They not only prepare meals for the homeless, but also play a pivotal role during *Ramadan*, where they help serve *Iftaar* dinners for more than 500 congregants nightly.

Each month’s menu reflects both the season and the diverse cultures of the community. Typical packages include a hearty main course, fresh fruit, dessert, and a beverage, balanced according to Canada’s Food Guide. Every package is meticulously



lously presented, a detail that Brother Zaf insists reflects the dignity each recipient deserves.

It is about more than food; it is about respect and love that his actions and finessing convey to volunteers, ensuring that presentation and care remain as vital as nourishment. Once the meals are ready, volunteers deliver them to various shelters across Toronto, engaging directly with recipients and gathering feedback to continually improve the program.

The rising cost of living in Toronto has made affordability an increasing concern. Drawing on his experience with the Ontario Federation of Labour and the non-profit sector, Brother Zaf is deeply familiar with the struggles of low-income families and the gaps that government programs often leave unaddressed.

Initiatives like *Feed the Homeless* help fill those voids through faith-driven community care.

The success of the program echoes what author James Clear calls the “power of compounding” in his book *Atomic Habits*, where small, consistent actions create profound, resonating impacts over time.

Since its inception in 2008, amid the global financial crisis, the initiative has served thousands of needy across the Greater Toronto Area.

October, designated as Islamic Heritage Month in Canada, highlights the contributions of Muslim Canadians to the nation’s social and cultural fabric. The enduring success of Imdadul’s *Feed the Homeless* initiative stands as a powerful example of how charity, faith, and community spirit continue to shape a more compassionate Toronto.

With files by Sayem Khan



In photos above, Imdadul’s team of chefs and volunteers prepare a meal for distribution



Above, from left, Dr Gupta, Dr Doobay, and Dr Sonia Anand; in photos, guests and attendees at the Diwali Gala



Faith, service, and gratitude shine brightly at CMIC’s 45th Diwali Gala

— The Canadian Museum of Indian Civilisation, housed at Vishnu Mandir, marked its 45th annual Diwali Gala and fund-raiser on October 12 at the Holiday Inn Toronto. The grand celebration honoured faith, heritage, and philanthropy, spotlighting exemplary community leaders whose lifelong service continues to illuminate Canada’s multicultural landscape.

...
Toronto – Radiant lights, music, dances, and devotion filled the banquet hall of the Holiday Inn on October 12 as the Canadian Museum of Indian Civilisation at Vishnu Mandir hosted its 45th Diwali Gala, an evening uniting culture, charity, and celebration under the theme of light triumphing over darkness.

In his written welcome message, Vishnu Mandir’s leader and founder of the

Canadian Museum of Indian Civilisation, Dr Budhendranauth Doobay, opened the gala with “immense pride and gratitude”, a heartfelt greeting that blended joy with reflection.

As he stated, “This evening is not only a celebration of Diwali, but also a reaffirmation of our shared commitment to our rich culture.”

Dr Doobay reminded attendees that Diwali’s essence lies in renewal and unity.

“It is the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair,” he said, adding, “In that spirit, we gather here tonight to honour and support the preservation and promotion of India’s vast civilisational legacy, which continues to inspire generations across the globe.”

The evening’s tributes highlighted the enduring contributions of several distinguished

community leaders.

Among them were Dr Suresh Gupta of The Gupta Group and Easton’s Group, who was recognised for his “deep humility and devotion”, and for embodying the principle that “true success lies in service to others”.

From humble beginnings, Dr Gupta built a thriving Canadian hospitality and real estate enterprise grounded in hard work, integrity, and gratitude.

Beyond business, his leadership extended to service, most notably through the Anand Bhawan Seniors Home, which upholds the dignity of elders.

His generosity and mentorship of future generations reflect the ideal of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, the belief that the world is one family.

In his address, Dr Gupta paid a moving tribute to his late wife, Rashmi Gupta, whom he described as his “strength, inspiration, and guiding light”. Married for 53 years, she was a true *ardhāngini* – the better half – who lived with grace and dignity, always putting others before herself.

Together, the couple built not only a fam-

ily and business enterprise, but also a legacy rooted in compassion and faith.

The gala also honoured Laj Prasher and his family for their visionary philanthropy and spiritual leadership. Their contributions include supporting Hindu Heritage Month at Vishnu Mandir and commissioning monumental works such as the 54-foot Lord Rama *moorti* at the Hindu Heritage Mandir, and the 35-foot Radha Krishna statue at Vishnu Mandir, symbols of devotion and unity that will endure for generations.

Appreciation was further extended to Rani Gupta and her late husband, Ramesh Gupta, for their humility, honesty, and lifelong dedication to faith.

Special recognition was also accorded to Pandit Deokaran (Bhoj) Sharma, who has served Vishnu Mandir for over 40 years. In his written President’s message, Krishna Misir expressed deep gratitude, noting, “His loyalty is unquestioned, and his commitment is immeasurable and scarce to find.”

Pandit Bhoj, beloved by Vishnu Mandir’s congregation, will celebrate his 70th birthday at Vishnu Mandir on October 24.





Happy Diwali!

On behalf of the residents of Humber River – Black Creek, I extend my sincerest greetings to all South Asians in our community and across Canada as you celebrate Diwali.

This sacred occasion carries profound meaning, symbolizing the spiritual victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. It is a celebration of family, faith, and community, reminding us of the values that unite us all.

Canada is brighter because of the contributions of the South Asian community. Your traditions and values enrich our nation and strengthen the bonds of unity we share.

As you gather with family and friends to share in prayer and reflection, may your celebrations be full of joy, prosperity, and peace.



Hon. Judy Sgro

Member of Parliament for Humber River – Black Creek

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An Ode to Stelling Road: Remembrances of my first 14 years back home

By Dhanpaul Narine
Nothing grows in that place. It is as if the Gods cursed it and made the grass forever brown. But this blighted and barren piece of land was my home for the first 14 years of my life.

Even then, they said it was unfit for human living but we didn't know better or cared. There was nowhere else to go, and so Sookoo Yard, in Stelling Road, became my nirvana, my special little heaven that was tucked away minutes from the Essequibo River.

It was in the 1950s when I was sent to live with my grandparents. They were already in Sookoo Yard, and they welcomed a little boy into a world that was filled with many wonders and pitfalls.

My first day at the public school was unforgettable. My Nana had me on his shoulders, and I surveyed my surroundings from above. When I descended into the real world, Miss Cox took me by the hand and led me to a classroom filled with children of my age.

It was the play class, and as the name suggested, we played all day. We jumped, skipped rope, made paper kites, and ran from one end of the room to the other. By the end of the first month, a cap was placed on my head with the word 'dunce' on it.

It wasn't long before the Headmaster C.V. Nunes requested to see Ma.

"Your boy can't read, or write, or do sums," he said, adding, "You must teach him."

Ma, shoeless, and in her tattered petticoat explained that she couldn't read as well. Mr Nunes threw up his arms in exasperation and we left.

"You don't let anyone break your spirit," Ma said, declaring, "Do the right thing and the Lord will smile at you. I believe in you."

It was not uncommon for the zinc roof from the *logie* to be peeled away in the strong winds, leaving us exposed to the deluge of water. An entire night of rainfall would lead to unmanageable floods.

Then unwanted guests appeared: baby tadpoles with wiry legs, little snakes dancing in the stagnant water, and humongous roaches surrounded our cots, riding on the little ripples created by our soft feet. We prayed desperately for the sun to dry the earth, but when that came the putrid smell of stale debris went on for weeks.

Soft shoeless feet meant tip-toeing on the roads filled with bricks and broken glass. We sat all day in class with feet on the cold concrete as we recited the times tables by rote.

My best friend was Michael Worrell, who lived in the *logie* next to us. His dad was a farmer with a small plot of land next to Parika. Uncle Worrell would bring plantains home that he shared with us. his kindness must have rubbed off on Michael because he looked out for me.

There was also Zelle Dasrath and her family, who were most kind and shared food with us. Zelle is still around to recall those days.

The weather cleared up, and the rains were replaced by sunshine. Then came the school tests. This was the one thing I dreaded the most. I would rather take a hundred flooded *logies* than to subject myself to the exams.

These exams were brutal. The questions had no bearing on what we learned all year. There were additions and divisions, and they mixed them up just to confuse me.

I pretended to write some numbers, hoping that the general knowledge questions would be kinder.

These were confusing as well. We had to decipher abbreviations. The letters were in bold print and looked as if they were from another planet. There was one question that asked the meaning of LBW.

I played a fair bit of cricket, and should have



Sookoo Yard, deserted and decayed, in photo at left; above, Zelle Dasrath-Nicholson (left), who remembers the old days, with Dhanpaul Narine

The razor blade left a gaping hole on the paper. What would be Ma's reaction? She calmly took me by the hand to school and showed the report card to my teacher.

Miss Smith smiled and shook her head in disappointment. Ma and Smith did not say a word. I wanted them to say something, anything, but their silence was powerful and I got the message loud and clear.

I turned 12. My limbs were longer and my voice had begun to change. Ma no longer had a spring in her steps, and she became tired all too quickly. We knew that she needed to see a doctor, but she laughed at the idea; besides, where was the money for a doctor?

Grandfather went to sell his sweets, and Ma and I sat by the *koker* looking for shrimp in the

heat of the midday sun. Sookoo raised the rent by a dollar. I tried to get a job at the local sawmill, but Benjie Kwan, the owner, said I was too young, and sent me to fly a kite.

I had failed every test I took and was blissfully playing with my marbles when my parents came for me. They said the school was failing me. I would do better in a High School.

I am at Saraswat High School in dusty Dekinderen. Ma is in heaven, looking down at me and smiling. The record number of passes at the school is by Kazim Yusuf from Tuschen, with seven GCE O'Levels, at one sitting.

I enroll for eight subjects. I will break the record and ride victorious into the sunset. Grandpa went into his pockets and pulled out every last cent, and penny, to pay for the exam. He smiles and says he believes in me.

I present myself at Eve Leary, in Georgetown, and did the best I could. One sunny day, the postman arrives at school with a brown envelope. Principal Julius Nathoo calls an assembly and waves the envelope.

"I have the results," he declares. I wait and wait, amid the screaming and excitement, but my name is not called. There has to be a mistake. Principal Nathoo shakes his head, ever so slightly, and says, "You have failed in every subject." I see darkness as my world collapses.

It is 2025, and I stand at Sookoo Yard. It's deserted and decayed. The tall grasses have taken over, but the water still trickles to where our *logie* used to be.

I close my eyes. I see the day when they said I wrote the best dissertation on the subject, and awarded me a PhD from the London School of Economics. I am on a double-decker bus to clear my head and I am happy.

I take a deep breath, see the pigeons flying at Trafalgar Square, and thank those two persons from the *logie* who believed in me.

Wishing everyone a joyful Diwali!

May the Festival of Lights bring peace, prosperity, and happiness to your homes and hearts.



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Landmark text illuminates foundations of Guyana’s accounting sector

Balkaran, Lal: *History of Accounting and Auditing in Guyana: Including the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Guyana, Other Agencies, and Select Areas of the Caribbean - 1800-2024*
A Review by Nizam Ali, FCCA, CTA

Retired Partner (KPMG, Barbados) and Nizam Ali & Co.
Since the Father of Accounting, Italian friar and monk Fra Luca Pacioli wrote the first accounting text back in 1494, thousands of books on the subject and its related areas have been published, mostly by the more developed and industrialised nations that laid the foundations for the profession.

But how did colonial legacies, regional ties, and global forces shape the accounting profession in Guyana? The answers are in this well-researched 350-page book where, prolific author, Lal Balkaran, traces the history of accounting and auditing from 1800 right up to 2024.

Organised in 13 chapters, 88 sections and eight appendices, it shows a wide range of issues and events sourced from colonial and post-colonial records including the evolution of accounting, the influence of the British accountancy bodies, the key businesses, impact of Bookers (the one-time behemoth until 1976), the first accounting firm of Fitzpatrick Graham & Co. to set up shop in 1910, Indigenous firms, businesses, relevant statutes, accounting education, accounting schools, and early pioneers.

It also contains biographies of notable accountants including Institute of Chartered Accountants of Guyana’s Past Presidents, Auditors General, Commissioners of Inland Revenue, other notable accountants, and much more.

This landmark publication offers a deep dive into the evolution of accountancy and auditing in Guyana from the time when Dutch accounting systems prevailed, through colonial rule, Independence, and into the modern era of globalisation.

It is the first and only book of its genre in Guyana and the wider Caribbean with a sweeping historical analysis of attempts at forming accounting associations before independence and the history behind the ICAG. The rise of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) as the designation of choice in Guyana and across the Caribbean is explained.

The author has also researched the role of Guyanese women in these professions, and unearthed the first women to qualify as chartered secretaries, chartered accountants, and certified

accountants, including the first woman to be admitted as a partner in a major accounting firm in Guyana. He also places such achievements in a global context alongside other women achievers in other countries.

Almost like an encyclopaedia, this book is well worth its value, and is a must-read for accountants, auditors, finance personnel, historians, researchers, and anyone interested in the intersection of profession, politics, and post-colonial development in the Caribbean.

Whether you are from Guyana, or curious about the evolution of professional institutions in former British colonies, this book offers rich insights grounded in over two centuries of history.

Through engaging anecdotes, illustrative examples, extracts from colonial records and other authoritative sources, Balkaran’s *History of Accounting and Auditing in Guyana* also reveals how economics, politics, finance, law, geography, corporate culture, and business customs have all impacted the growth and development of accounting and auditing throughout the country.

In addition, the author ably shows how the profession contributed to the overall economic development of Guyana over the years.

The book has so far received wide acclamation by several notable university professors, executives of professional associations, and accounting practitioners in the UK, the Caribbean, and North America.

The only comprehensive chronicle of Guyanese accountancy from the colonial period to the present, the book provides a

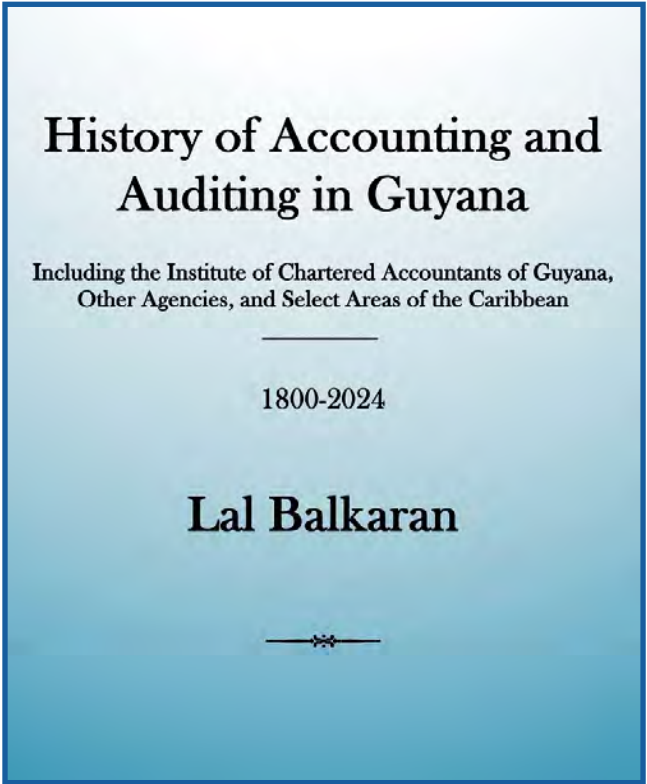
thorough knowledge of the origins of accounting and auditing, and considers the development of these two professions in all their major domains, including public practice, governance, financial reporting, business management, government, and education.

In addition, one can expect to find some rare historical information on the genesis and development of Internal Auditing, the Audit Office, Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Guyana, Guyana Revenue Authority, Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Statistical Bureau, institutions that heavily influenced the growth of accounting and auditing.

It is, indeed, a pioneering book written with unmistakable passion for, and knowledge of, the subject matter by Balkaran,



Lal Balkaran



an award-winning internal auditor who has shown remarkable dedication in documenting the rich history of these two professions.

Through meticulous research and careful analysis, he has captured some almost-forgotten historical information, and reconstructed key events relating to these professions before these become lost in time.

The work is a significant contribution to Guyana’s professional and national heritage, and a great addition to the accounting and auditing profession in Guyana and beyond.

It represents a monumental contribution to business scholarship that all Guyanese and Caribbean accountants can be proud of and inspired by.

Without doubt, Balkaran has demonstrated true patriotism to his country of birth, and has contributed a great deal to the world of knowledge.

He is also the author of several documentaries and reference publications on Guyana and on business including *Biographical Dictionary of Guyana*, *Bibliography of Guyana*, *The Rise of Accounting, Auditing, and Finance*, and several other volumes, all of which are described on the [author’s website here](#).

Seeking inspiration, Lila Gagnon, an aspiring Toronto watercolour artist, arrived in the quiet hamlet of Maple Hollow in the Laurentian Highlands of Quebec. She rented a century-old log cabin at the forest’s edge. The locals called it La Maison du Vent – the House of Wind – because of the way the air whistled through the eaves, even in the stillest of nights.

After unloading her belongings in the cabin, an urgently needed washroom break sent her to the combination toilet and bathroom outhouse behind the residence supplied by the fresh water of a mountain stream.

Returning to the single-room cabin, she surveyed her living space, a single bed tucked in one corner, a galley-style kitchenette lining the opposite wall, and a cast-iron potbelly stove in the centre. The space was simple, but comfortable.

After blowing into her hands and rubbing them together for friction to warm them, Lila opened the stove’s door to load the firewood from the tray on the floor beside the stove. She stared at a soot-stained, sealed envelope lying in the stove’s empty chamber.

“That’s odd,” she whispered to herself. She picked up the envelope and flipped it over a few times before gently slipping her finger under the flap to break the seal of the brittle paper. With a pounding heart, Lila extracted a piece of yellow, lined paper and read the handwritten, spidery script written on it: they murmur at midnight; if you listen, do not respond; if you respond, do not look; if you look, do not run; if you run, do not look back; if you look back, you seal your fate.

The imprint of a maple leaf’s ribs on the paper prompted her to peek again into the envelope. She gently lifted a dried leaf out that she had missed earlier.

It had to be a prank – a remnant from a previous tenant, or perhaps the work of local kids. Yet, the lack of any signs of forced entry, the careful placement of the note, and the dried leaf’s ghostly imprint on the paper all contributed to an unsettling feeling that crawled into her bones.



The Supernatural The Midnight Murmurs

She set the envelope, yellow paper, and leaf on the kitchen counter and lit the fire in the stove as the sound of crickets and frogs accompanied the blanket of darkness covering the residence and the surrounding forest.

She brewed tea and climbed on a barstool to sip her body-warming beverage and eat a slice of cold pizza that she had bought on her way to her destination. She re-examined the paperwork as she supped, until exhaustion from the long day and tiring drive made her eyelids heavy and deepened her yawns. She pulled on her pajamas and socks, climbed into bed, and slipped under the thick downy covers.

Around midnight, she thought she heard her name being whispered by the wind through the eaves in a language just beyond comprehension. She covered her ears while trying to convince herself that her overactive imagination was awakened by the note’s warning: “They murmur at midnight.”

“Go away, you’re not real.” She whispered under her breath to bolster her resistance, but her heart skipped a beat when she realised that she had unwittingly responded! “Oh no...” But it was too late. She had broken the first rule. She had responded. Fear sent her under the covers, eyes wide open and ears perked up for sounds. She remained alert for what seemed like forever, until the light of dawn rescued her.

During her visit to the general store in the village the following day, she asked the elderly shopkeeper about the house’s history.

“Locals never go near that place.” He spoke in a hushed tone and avoided eye contact. “No one owns it, and people disappear there.” He handed Lila her groceries and quickly turned away. Lila’s chest tightened. If there were no owners, then who had

advertised and signed the lease as the landlord?

On the drive back to the cabin, Lila chuckled to herself. Every village has its superstition. She spent the rest of the day painting in the forest until tiredness and the evening chill sent her indoors, and she went to bed early.

“Who is it?” Lila, still half asleep, responded to a tapping on the window pane at midnight. She clutched her throat when she spun around to find two twigs tapping the window as if held by invisible hands on the inside of the cabin! She had broken the second rule – ‘If you respond, do not look.’

Goosebumps covered her when the third rule – ‘If you look, do not run’ swirled in her head. She dropped the covers in preparation for getting away from the creepy twigs, forcing her to consider the fourth rule – ‘If you run, do not look back.’

Lila hopped off the bed and scampered to the door. She yanked it open and sprinted to her car in her pajamas and socks, her breath forming mists in the chilled mountain air. Her blood turned cold when she grabbed the door handle. The car was locked and the keys were in the cabin!

She glanced back at the open cabin door, sealing her fate. She fell to the ground and left her body, floating into the air as a dried autumn leaf. While the wind blew her toward the cabin’s door, she witnessed her body sink and disappear into the ground. A moment later, the earth opened up and closed after consuming the automobile.

The cabin’s door slammed shut after Lila entered. The open envelope waited for Lila to settle in before sealing its flap. Once inside, Lila was shocked to find a list of names gradually appearing with numbers beside them. She was now registered with the number ‘Two’ beside her name. She had lasted two nights!

Like the others before her, Lila’s physical disappearance did not erase her presence. She had become another voice competing for dominance in the cacophony of whispering winds through the eaves.



Kamil Ali

Happy Diwali



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Persad-Bissessar reaffirms govt’s commitment to rebuilding economy

— Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar on Monday described the 2026 National Budget as “a budget for the people”, asserting that the \$1 reduction in Super gasoline, a new job creation fund, and fair contribution measures reflect her government’s commitment to rebuilding the economy through equity, accountability, and opportunity.

...
Port-of-Spain – Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has described the 2026 National Budget as one designed to “touch every sector and everyone for a better quality of life”. Referencing the late Black Stalin’s iconic calypso, *We Can Make It If We Try*, she said the fiscal package delivered on October 13 was anchored in hope, fairness, and shared progress.

Speaking at a post-budget press conference at Parliament, Persad-Bissessar said her government’s first national budget is guided by a single principle, *T&T First*. Every dollar, she said, must serve the public good, not private gain.

She explained that the TT \$1 reduction in Super gasoline will bring immediate relief to both citizens and small businesses.

“In 2024, some 457.1 million litres of Super gasoline were sold at the pumps,” she said, adding, “This reduction means nearly half a billion dollars will remain in the pockets of the people – money that can be used to buy schoolbooks and look after their children.”

Persad-Bissessar accused the former administration of over-charging citizens for Super gasoline and “keeping the money in their pockets”. She quipped that while they claimed there were no riots, “the people rioted with their fingers on Election Day”.

She confirmed that the Unemployment Relief Programme and the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme will be phased out, saying these programmes had been corrupted by inefficiency and misuse.

“These will be real jobs with real people, not ghost gangs,” she declared, announcing a \$500 million Employment Support Fund under the Finance Ministry to create sustainable employment opportunities.

She added that about 8,000 vacancies have already been identified, with applications set to open at the Couva Cycling Centre.

“In real time, citizens will see job openings posted online,” she said, promising greater transparency in recruitment and



Persad-Bissessar following the Budget reading

deployment.

Persad-Bissessar acknowledged that the Budget contains “goodies and some not-so-goodies”, but maintained that fairness requires everyone to contribute their share.

“For too long, the largest financial institutions have thrived while ordinary citizens were under pressure”, she said.

She explained that the new 0.25 percent levy on the assets of commercial banks and insurance companies will ensure those who have benefited most from national growth now help sustain it.

When asked whether banks might pass on the levy to consumers, she was resolute: “They may try, but that is why we are in government. We will make sure that does not happen. We are ready for them!”

Turning to the housing market, Persad-Bissessar said her government is formalising the rental sector to protect both landlords and tenants. She clarified that the landlord property surcharge is not a property tax but a fairness measure.

“This is where we are putting a surcharge on people who are earning income from their properties,” she said, declaring, “There are people who live abroad and have multiple houses earning income, and they do not pay any taxes.”

Persad-Bissessar added that even former government ministers will be subject to scrutiny: “There must be sharing of the burdens as well as the wealth of the country.”

However, she reiterated, “I make it very clear: this is not a tax budget; it is an accountability budget.”

On enforcement, she said compliance officers will monitor the system using existing data on rental properties.

“Tenants have a choice to move if landlords increase rents,” she added.

Addressing concerns about the three percent NIS contribution increase, Persad-Bissessar stressed that the ten percent salary adjustment for public servants covers 2014-2016 and 2017-2019, while the NIS changes take effect from January 2026.

“A detractor saying across the floor that you give them ten percent and taking back three percent – don’t get chain up!” she said, noting, “This thing does not kick in until next year; all this money for the percent happened in the past.”

She added that the National Insurance Scheme was found “in a state of collapse”, and that without intervention, there would soon be no funds to pay pensions. She encouraged citizens to enroll in private pension plans, now tax-exempt, to bolster long-term savings.

Defending the decision to peg oil and gas prices at US \$73.25 per barrel and US \$4.25 per mmbtu, respectively, Persad-Bissessar said these projections were carefully chosen for stability.

“We didn’t use Brent; it is just one projection. We feel comfortable with our figures,” she noted.

She reaffirmed that the 2026 National Budget was “not about making the rich richer”, but about creating a balanced framework in which all citizens share responsibility and reward.

“My government made a simple promise; to protect the people and manage the economy responsibly,” she said, adding, “When citizens asked us not to raise the price of gas, we did better – we reduced it. When they asked us not to raise the price of food, we reduced that too.”

Persad-Bissessar said the budget’s aim was to restore confidence and ensure that the benefits of growth reach those who had been left behind.

“This Budget is for the people; every single one of them,” she concluded.



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Deepika Padukone



Shah Rukh Khan (left) and Deepika Padukone

Deepika Padukone calls out industry double standards, fights for respect

— When Deepika Padukone broke her silence about walking away from *Spirit and Kalki 2898 AD*, she was not simply defending a schedule. Instead, she was calling out a double standard, one that still governs how Bollywood measures work, worth, and womanhood. For us as a diaspora, the echoes from Padukone's call have travelled far beyond Mumbai.

...

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Diaspora Feature

For weeks, her silence became the story. The headlines wrote themselves: *Fee hike; Entourage costs; Creative differences*. Then, in a measured interview with *CNBC-TV18* earlier this month, Deepika Padukone finally spoke, shifting the narrative from speculation to principle.

She said, "By virtue of being a woman, if that comes across as pushy or whatever, then so be it."

Her calm defiance cut through the din and misalignment of social chatter. Beneath the glamour and box-office arithmetic, Padukone exposed an older problem, namely that when women in India's film industry set limits, they are called demanding; when men do the same, they are called disciplined.

Bollywood, for all its evolution, still views its heroes and heroines in different time zones. From the early studio era to today's streaming empires, the industry has thrived on endurance: long hours, erratic shoots, and the myth of tireless devotion.

Meanwhile, Bollywood's male superstars have long exercised the privilege of time management. Some work fixed hours, take weekends off, and set clear boundaries, all without scrutiny.

Padukone's demand for an eight-hour shift, which is a standard in most global industries, became a cultural fault line precisely because it came from a woman.

Her request coincided with the Indian film industry's post-pandemic recalibration, when the economics of scale began to collide with conversations about mental health, maternity, and humane scheduling.

Her exits from *Spirit* and *Kalki 2898 AD* were widely dissected. The former's director, Sandeep Reddy Vanga, posted cryptic messages about betrayal and "dirty PR games". The latter's producers, *Vijayanathi Movies*, confirmed they had "decided to part ways" after "a long journey".

But behind the official statements lay a more intimate clash: professionalism versus perception.

Padukone's decision, viewed by some as bold, and by others as stubborn, forced the industry to examine its own inherent contradictions.

In her *CNBC-TV18* interview, she observed, "A lot of male superstars in the Indian film industry have been working for eight hours for years, and it's never made headlines! A lot of them only work Monday to Friday; they don't work on weekends."

She contrasted this culture of unspoken privilege with the chaos of the everyday set, the "*chalta hai*" [Let it be] attitude, as she

called it.

"While the industry is termed an industry, we have never really worked like one," she said. That comment hit a nerve. Bollywood's spontaneity, often romanticised as creative freedom, has also meant disorganisation, last-minute scheduling, and physical exhaustion for actors and crews alike.

Padukone's stand also drew attention to the silent costs borne by women after motherhood. Her return to major projects following the birth of her first child came with practical boundaries that many working mothers across professions would recognise in having to balance recovery, childcare, and career expectations. Yet the reaction to her position revealed how little room Bollywood allows for such negotiation.

However, support has come from inside the fraternity. Singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh liked and shared her comments online, a small gesture that carried symbolic weight.

Also, Ajay Devgn, responding to a journalist's question at a public event, said most filmmakers already work within "eight-to-nine-hour shifts", and that "honest filmmakers will not have a problem with this".

Their responses hinted at a generational shift in a quiet acknowledgment that the old romanticism of "shoot till sunrise" no longer aligns with professional reality.

But Sandeep Reddy Vanga's veiled posts exposed the other side of the debate, perhaps a strain of machismo that is still alive in popular cinema. His rhetorical question, "Is this what your feminism stands for?" attempted to recast professionalism as betrayal, art as personal loyalty.

In an industry where male directors have long been mythologised as visionaries and female stars as muses, Padukone's insistence on structure and equity struck at the very myth of chaos as genius.

Meanwhile, here in our diaspora, we are watching these battles unfold with a mix of empathy, recognition, and head shaking in the affirmative.

Across the Caribbean, Canada, and in the US, Indo-Caribbean women in film, business, and education echo similar experiences, where professionalism is mistaken for arrogance, and drawing boundaries are seen as rebellion.

For many diaspora members in Toronto, Port-of-Spain, and Georgetown, Padukone's determination feels less like celebrity news and more like a mirror held up to workplace hierarchies that never quite shed their colonial blueprints.

Padukone's career has always balanced discipline with instinct. From her debut in *Om Shanti Om* opposite Shah Rukh Khan to her acclaimed turns in *Chhapaak* and *Padmaavat*, she has built an image of both grace and grit. Her recent *Instagram* post announcing *King*, her sixth collaboration with Khan, offered a gentle counterpoint to the controversy.

"The very first lesson he taught me was that the experience of making a movie, and the people you make it with, matter far more than its success," she stated on *Instagram*.

This post about process and an interac-

tive culture over payoff framed her entire argument. For Padukone, structure does not reside in control but in care; it is ensuring that creativity can flourish without burnout, resentment, or inequity.

Her remarks also resonate with her work through the *Live Love Laugh Foundation*, which has spent a decade promoting mental health awareness. The eight-hour shift, seen in that light, becomes part of a continuum, in the push for psychological safety and respect in industries still learning to separate passion from exploitation.

In many of our diaspora households, stories of similar negotiations abound: our Caribbean nurses pulling double shifts in Mississauga and Brampton; the accountant burning the midnight oil in Georgetown; the career of a high school teacher here in Scarborough impeded by invisible ceilings.

For us in the diaspora, Padukone's insistence on equitable hours is not elitism but solidarity, a singular reminder that dignity of labour, and respect for humanity, notably gender, tran-

scend borders, accents, and pay scales.

The eight-hour shift debate may mark a turning point for Bollywood's labour ethics. As the industry globalises, its working conditions face new scrutiny from unions, audiences, and now increasingly from its own stars. The conversation is part of a wider reckoning: equal pay, parental leave, safe sets, and transparent contracts.

If Hollywood's *#MeToo* moment began with personal testimonies and led to systemic reform, Bollywood's change may emerge from quieter acts of insistence, from actresses like Padukone, who without shouting, still remain resilient in challenging the hierarchy, and are refusing to conform.

Padukone's next chapters already seem to embody that quiet momentum. Alongside *King*, she is slated to appear in Atlee's *AA22xA6* with Allu Arjun, signalling that creative respect and commercial success need not be at odds. Now the same social media that once amplified rumours about her exits are now underscoring her message about equality.

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Bernard Julien remembered for elegant, stylish, quiet crafting of swing

— From Lord’s to the Oval, from the rhythm of his left-arm swing to the cadence of his quiet resilience, Bernard Julien’s life traced the arc of Caribbean cricket itself: triumph, turbulence, and enduring grace.

...
Former Trinidad and Tobago, Kent, and West Indies all-rounder Bernard Julien, a key member of the West Indies’ victorious 1975 World Cup team, died on October 4 at the age of 75.

His career, distinguished by elegance, discipline, and moral complexity, spanned an era when cricket was both a game and a stage for post-colonial expression.

Julien’s left-arm rhythm and right-hand poise made him one of the most stylish and reliable all-rounders of his generation. His 26 not out in the inaugural World Cup final at Lord’s against Australia sealed a 17-run victory that lifted a region’s spirit.

Few moments in Caribbean sport have carried such symbolism: the West Indies, triumphant on the world stage, declaring their arrival through both artistry and steely nerves.

Born in Trinidad and Tobago, Julien made his first-class debut at 18 and announced himself to the cricketing world in 1973, scoring a scintillating 121 off 127 balls in just his third Test, sharing a 150-run partnership with Garry Sobers at Lord’s; it was an innings that combined youthful exuberance with rare technical maturity.

By the time of his retirement, he had played 24 Tests, scoring 866 runs at 30.92, including two centuries, and taking 50 wickets at 37.36. In One Day Internationals, he claimed 18 wickets at 25.72, leaving behind statistics that only hint at his quiet influence on the team’s early successes.

At County level, Julien became an adopted son of Kent, appearing in 179 matches between 1970 and 1977, taking 336 wickets and scoring 3,296 runs. His seven-year tenure produced



Bernard Julien

seven trophies, among them the Gillette Cup, two Benson & Hedges Cups, and a shared County Championship title in 1977.

Following his passing, Kent described Julien as “an exciting stroke player and one of the most effective left-arm swing bowlers of his generation”, adding that “the thoughts of everyone at the club are with Bernard’s family and friends at this sad time”.

Teammate and legendary West Indies captain, Sir Clive Lloyd, remembered Julien as the consummate professional.

“He always gave you over 100 percent. He never shirked his duties, and I could always rely on him with bat and ball,” Lloyd said, adding, “He gave his all every time ... what a fine cricketer. We all had total respect for him. He enjoyed himself and was loved by everyone around.”

At the height of his career, Julien repre-

sented a new archetype in West Indies cricket, a cricketer of both intellect and instinct. His action was smooth, his delivery capable of moving the ball both ways, and his temperament calm even under pressure.

His performances in the 1975 World Cup were pivotal: 4 for 20 against Sri Lanka, 4 for 27 against New Zealand, and 2 for 38 in the final, alongside that decisive unbeaten 26.

Yet, Julien’s story is also a reflection of the moral complexities of sport and society in the late 20th century. His participation in the 1977 Kerry Packer World Series and later the 1982-1983 and 1983-1984 rebel tours to apartheid South Africa effectively ended his international career.

Those choices, made amid competing pressures of opportunity, conscience, and survival, placed him in the crosscurrents of history.

Cricket West Indies (CWI) President Kishore Shallow acknowledged this complexity with rare candour, stating, “The passing of Bernard Julien invites reflection on both the brilliance

of his cricketing life and the complex times through which he lived. His career reminds us that the story of West Indies cricket is not only about triumphs on the field but about the choices and circumstances that shaped generations of players and the region itself.”

Shallow continued, “As we honour Bernard Julien, we also recognise the importance of reflection and inclusion. The time has come to view that chapter of our history not through exclusion, but through understanding. Cricket West Indies believes that all who have contributed to our regional game, in whatever context, are part of our shared story.”

In that spirit, Shallow called for a regional act of acknowledgement and pardon, suggesting that “the day will be deeply significant when Caricom, with grace, undertakes a regional act of acknowledgement and pardon, embracing both the living and the departed, as a quiet but profound tribute to the full journey of West Indies cricket”.

In his later years, Julien faced and overcame major and challenging health issues. Diagnosed with throat cancer in 2005 at age 54, he was given a 90 percent chance of survival, which he fought with characteristic resolve. The same poise that defined his determination on the field, with either ball or bat in hand, guided him through recovery.

CWI’s official statement reflected the sentiment of a cricketing family in mourning, declaring, “His passing reminds us that a life devoted to purpose never truly leaves us. Cricket West Indies stands with you in this moment of loss, and we hope Bernard knew he was valued and loved by the cricketing family he helped to shape, and that he found peace knowing his contribution will always endure.”

Julien’s life was not only measured by runs and wickets but by the integrity of his motion, in the unhurried elegance of a professional who played cricket as though he were composing a regional legacy. His rhythm belonged to an age when West Indian cricket was becoming both art and assertion, a mirror of our Caribbean region’s awakening to its inherent capabilities.

Gavaskar laments West Indies’ decline

— In Ahmedabad, the contest ended almost before it began with India dominant, West Indies feeble, and Sunil Gavaskar dismayed. The once-feared Caribbean fast-bowling tradition, he wrote, now “looked more like net bowlers”.

...
Indian cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar has launched a scathing critique of the West Indies’ continuing decline in Test cricket, following their innings-and-140-run defeat to India in the opening Test of the series.

Writing in his *Sportstar* column, Gavaskar said the gulf between the sides was so wide that the result “barely made news”, a far cry from the days when a West Indies loss would have “sent shock-waves around the cricketing world”.

In a blistering assessment of the Caribbean bowling attack, the former India captain reserved faint praise for only one pacer.

“In Ahmedabad, apart from Jayden Seales, the other two were simply trundlers,” Gavaskar wrote, adding, “No disrespect intended to them, but to see the first bouncer being bowled after half a dozen overs had been bowled made one ask, ‘Is this really the West Indies pace attack?’”

Gavaskar, who faced the legendary quartet of Andy Roberts, Michael Holding, Joel Garner, and Colin Croft, described the absence of aggression as symbolic of a deeper malaise.

“Yes, bowling bouncers is a big effort, and on a hot day, it can take a lot out of a bowler,” he acknowledged.

He added, “But it is a surprise weapon to

stop the batter from moving on to the front foot regularly.”

The match itself was a one-sided affair. India declared at 448 for 5, with centuries from K.L. Rahul, Dhruv Jurel, and Ravindra Jadeja, before dismissing the West Indies twice, for 162 and 146 in just two and a half days.

Mohammed Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah led India’s attack with relentless precision, while the West Indies’ bowling lacked both menace and imagination.

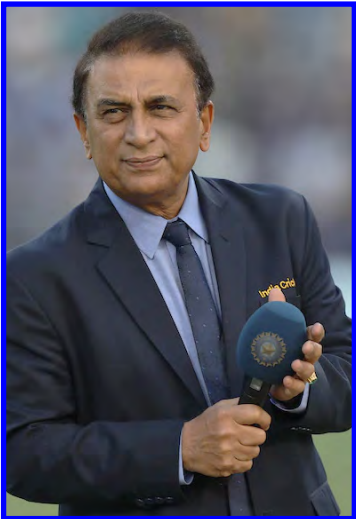
Gavaskar contrasted the current team’s timid approach with the once-glorious legacy of Caribbean cricket.

“For a team that once boasted of the likes of Viv Richards, Clive Lloyd, Gordon Greenidge, and Brian Lara, there is simply nobody in this current team who looks like getting a million country miles close to them,” he lamented.

The numbers underline the extent of the decline. Between 1971 and 1987, during Gavaskar’s own playing career, India won only five of 31 Tests against the West Indies.

However, since 2002, the Caribbean side has not managed a single Test victory against India. Across the last 25 encounters, India has claimed 15 wins, with the rest drawn, quite a reversal of the historic power balance that once defined the sport.

Even with the bat, the contrast was stark. Gavaskar noted that only Alick Athanaze (38) and Justin Greaves (32) “showed any appetite for a fight”, underscoring the lack of depth and resolve in the current lineup.



Sunil Gavaskar

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India-Pakistan match turns surreal

— An errant coin toss, a swarm of bugs, and a bat lifted just too soon were memorable moments during India's Women's World Cup clash with Pakistan in Colombo, producing a match that was riddled with quirks, rulings, and bug spray.

Even before a ball was bowled, the Women's World Cup match on October 5 between India and Pakistan in Colombo began with confusion.

Pakistan captain Fatima Sana called "tails" as India's Harmanpreet Kaur flicked the coin; however, match referee Shandre Fritz misheard, announcing, "Heads is the call". Broadcaster and former Australia batter Mel Jones, conducting the toss, repeated the error. The coin landed on heads, and erroneously, Pakistan were declared to have won.

But neither captain challenged the mix-up, and Sana, perhaps sensing a sliver of cosmic 'coin-cidence', confirmed Pakistan would bowl first.

The game, already under a tense political and sporting backdrop, with no handshake between captains, began with a coin flip miscall no third umpire could review.

If the toss was bizarre, what followed was downright surreal. As India settled into their innings, flying insects staged an uninvited invasion onto the field. Buzzing across sight-

lines, clinging to helmets, and clouding the outfield, by the 25th over Harmanpreet Kaur had enough batting them away. She raised the issue with the umpire.

So play paused briefly, a "bug break" not written into the laws of cricket, before resuming amid the persistent pestering.

The match saw Pakistan's fielders waving towels, wielding spray cans, and taking evasive action from thick swarms of insects. Even an exterminator, gas mask in place, entered the field, sending clouds of fumigating gas drifting across the pitch. But the bugs maintained their resilient pace, putting both batters and fielder on the defensive.

Likely a variety of winged termite attracted to the stadium floodlights, the visitation caused delays throughout play, with Pakistan offspinner Rameen Shamim at one time seeking help with what appeared to have been an insect lodged in her eye during the 38th over.

Amid the chaos of coin and creatures came a moment that created a whole new buzz.

Pakistan opener Muneeba Ali was adjudged run out during the chase of India's 248, sparking protest from her captain Fatima Sana. Replays showed Muneeba had safely tapped her bat into the crease before the throw from Deepti Sharma struck the stumps; however, it turned out at that precise instant, her bat was



India's Harleen Deol is buzzed by insects during the match

lifted off the ground. Citing the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the BBC clarified that the "bouncing bat law" under Law 30.1.2, introduced in 2010, was not applicable. The protection applies only when a batter is running or diving, not when overbalancing or lifting the bat after grounding it.

"The third umpire was entirely correct to give this out," the MCC affirmed. The decision stood. But now confusion swarmed the field, lingering like the insects that refused to perish despite the best efforts of the fumigator.

Adding to Pakistan's woes, top-scorer Sidra Amin, who compiled a disciplined 81 from

106 balls, was later reprimanded for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct.

She had struck her bat forcefully onto the pitch after her dismissal, which is a violation under Article 2.2, relating to "abuse of cricket equipment or fixtures".

Amin accepted the charge and the sanction proposed by referee Fritz, earning one demerit point and a possible fine of up to 50 percent of her match fee.

India dismissed Pakistan for 159 in their chase of 248; the win extended their dominance over Pakistan, making it the 12th win in 12 ODIs.



Mithali Raj

ACA adds women's names to cricket sites

The Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) on October 12 dedicated two sections of the ACA-VDCA Stadium in Visakhapatnam to Indian women cricketers Mithali Raj and Ravi Kalpana. The dedication coincided with the India versus Australia ICC Women's Cricket World Cup fixture.

As part of its ongoing efforts to celebrate women's contributions to cricket, the ACA named a stand after Mithali Raj and a gate after Ravi Kalpana.

The ACA move followed a request from star batter Smriti Mandhana during a *Breaking Boundaries* fireside chat in August with Andhra Pradesh Minister Nara Lokesh.

Mandhana highlighted the lack of stadium stands named after leading Indian women cricketers, and suggested naming them in their honour would recognise their contributions to the sport, and inspire the next generation of professional women cricketers.

"The ACA's tribute to Mithali Raj and Ravi Kalpana reflects a deep commitment to honouring the trailblazers who have redefined women's cricket in India, while inspiring the next generation to dream bigger," the ACA said in a statement.

Mithali is a former India captain, while Kalpana is an Andhra-born wicketkeeper-batter.



Ravi Kalpana

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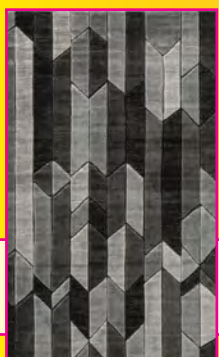


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