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Notice to our Readers

We are monitoring the situation resulting from the COVID-19 virus and the fallouts therefrom.

Our website: indocaribbeanworld.com has been revamped and is easily accessible.

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See page 16: "We are..."

Let us flatten the curve

Leaders ask community to stay grounded

By Romeo Kaseram

As Canada and the provinces escalate responses to the COVID-19 virus, community leaders in the GTA are calling on the community to help flatten the infection curve while offering support and guidance to a population afflicted with, and impacted by, the deadly coronavirus.

Spiritual leader of the Vishnu Temple, Dr Budhendra Doobay, said while the iconic temple was temporarily closed on March 20 in response to the province's call for physical distancing, it continues to impress on worshippers, and the wider community via social media to do their part in preventing the spread of the infection.

The temple remains closed until further notice, he said. However, with worshippers advised to observe physical distancing when out in public, and to go home and stay home, Dr Doobay said the temple was continuing to reinforce anti-infection messaging through outreach via live broadcasts. The broadcasts are being conducted on Sundays from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon, and are accessible online at Vishnu Mandir's website at www.vishnumandir.com.

Further to the mandir's educational outreach to its faithful, and the wider public, Dr Doobay said extracts from these broadcasts related to the COVID-19 pandemic are being uploaded to YouTube. An earlier discussion on March 15, where Dr Doobay focused on the history of the virus, its pathology, and preventative measures, is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9JwOqYaNZM.

In the video, Dr Doobay reinforces mainstream messaging surrounding proper personal hygiene from Canada's health authorities, saying, "To prevent us from getting the coronavirus, there is one thing we must do: 'Wash. Wash. Wash.' Wash your hands for 20 seconds."

See page 16: "We are..."



The Prayer Hall of the Vishnu Mandir in Richmond Hill, Ontario, usually jam-packed during regular services, shows a solitary devotee worshiping as a result of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mandir was closed on March 20 until circumstances change.

Page one Comment – Inimical 'forces' in Guyana

Chairperson of the Caribbean Community, Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley, summed up the failed outcome of a Caricom-led attempted recount of ballots following Guyana's March 2 General and Regional Elections last month with penetrating, insightful discernment, saying: "It is clear that there are forces that do not want to see the votes recounted for whatever reason. Any Government which is sworn in without a credible and fully transparent vote count process would lack legitimacy."

Mottley's assessment is notable for its measured mix of perspicacity with diplomacy; however, in her shrewdness, she left it up to the discerning reader to fill in the blanks as to who, or what, are the "forces" in Guyana that are resisting a fair and transparent recount of the elections' ballots.

We are now in April, and a full month later, there is yet to be a credible outcome from the March 2 polls. Without verified, official results declared for Region Four, Guyanese nationals who voted in a free and fair general election are growing more and more concerned about not yet know-

ing which party will legitimately form Guyana's next democratic government.

Instead, the expectation by Guyanese nationals for a reasonable outcome, with a winner declared in the days following March 2, continues to be stalled by ascending APNU+AFC obfuscations. With APNU+AFC contesting the vote recount in the nation's courts, we are left wondering how much longer nationals, both at home and in the diaspora, are expected to wait for a legitimate, and transparently verified election outcome.

What Guyanese nationals at home and abroad now face is the bitter realisation that the APNU+AFC has deployed yet another iteration of delaying tactics to illegitimately hold on to power. Yet again it is running down the clock by challenging the vote count from free and fair general elections by deftly manipulating the built-in, time-consuming bureaucracy in the judicial system.

This is nothing less than a repeat of the questionable tactic that extended the APNU+AFC's illegitimate hold on the See page 9: "GECOM's Head..."

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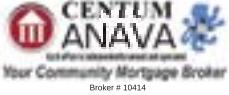
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Medical staff prepare to receive patients for coronavirus screening at a temporary assessment center at the Brewer hockey arena in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada March 13, 2020. REUTERS/Patrick Doyle

How to protect oneself and others from infection as COVID-19 cases increase

(The Canadian Press, March 28, 2020)

COVID-19 is now impacting the lives of Canadians on many levels and people across the country are seeking answers to numerous important questions they have about the novel coronavirus. Below is a summary:

What Are The Symptoms?

Health Canada says those who are infected with COVID-19 may have few, if any symptoms, or may not know they're infected because symptoms of the novel coronavirus are similar to a cold or flu.

Those symptoms have included fever, cough and difficulty breathing.

Other symptoms can include fatigue, mucus production, muscle or joint pain, sore throat, headache and chills. COVID-19 can sometimes escalate to pneumonia.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, 78 per cent of the people confirmed to have COVID-19 in this country have developed a cough, 49 per cent a fever, and 52 per cent have experienced chills.

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. Health officials are still trying to determine whether the virus can be transmitted to others if someone is not showing symptoms. While experts believe this is possible, it's considered to be rare.

What Should I Do If I Think I Have Symptoms?

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, even if they're mild, stay at home and follow local health authorities' instructions to self-isolate.

If you feel sick and must visit a health-care professional, Health Canada says you should call ahead or tell them when you arrive that you have a respiratory illness. You may be asked

to wear a mask while waiting for or receiving treatment to prevent the spread of the illness.

Tell them your symptoms and travel history and let them know whether you've had direct contact with animals or a sick person, especially if they've had symptoms.

How Sick Will I Get?

Most people diagnosed with COVID-19 experience mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, and the vast majority of those who contract the virus recover.

However, for some, especially older adults and those with pre-existing conditions, it can cause more severe illness, such as pneumonia. In some cases, it can be fatal.

As of March 27, six per cent of Canadian cases have required hospitalization, with two per cent of cases requiring admission to the ICU.

The World Health Organization has found that among patients in China, 80 per cent suffered mild cough and fever symptoms while 14 per cent suffered severe symptoms requiring treatment, including being placed on ventilators. A further one per cent lapsed into critical condition with symptoms that could include respiratory failure, septic shock and organ failure or dysfunction.

How Do I Know If I Should Be Tested For Covid-19?

The best way to determine if you should go to a testing centre is to call your doctor or local public health office.

Canada's chief public health officer Theresa Tam has said tests are prioritized for certain types of cases: travellers who have symptoms; those with severe respiratory illness, regardless

See page 15: "Helpful..."

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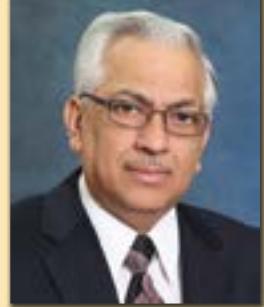
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The Indelible Red Stain

By Dr Mohan Ragbeer

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

- trashing of the country's economy and the exodus of over 400,000 Guyanese are well known.

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

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The ghost of Burnham still looms large

Dear Editor:

The turmoil that has arisen since the recent General Elections in Guyana is reminiscent of the machinations under the Burnham regime. His ghost still stalks the land. Having contested the 1973 elections as Leader of the Liberator Party, I remember Mr. Granger very well. He was then an army Major.

Contrary to the assurances given to the political parties a few days before, Guyanese will recall that the ballot boxes were hijacked by the GDF to its own Headquarters and to the Eve Leary compound where there was much manipulation before counting.

Two people were killed while trying to follow the ballot boxes and I was subsequently charged for sedition because I was in possession of an official Government document with directions to the Elections commission, and the Army and Police on how to control the ballot boxes.

We are truly grateful and highly appreciative of the efforts of the International Community for sending observers. However we need a truly independent Elections Commission to prevent the Government of the day from thwarting the will of its citizens.

The situation in Region Four is a brazen attempt by those in power to drown the legitimate voices of the electorate. The APNU and its political hacks have constantly shown a blatant disregard for the rule of law. They have flouted the rulings of our local courts and of the CCJ and continue to thumb their noses at the International Community who agree with the simple mathematical truth that 33/65 is a majority.

This is not surprising, since scholars under the Burnham regime argued vigorously that it was mathematically possible for 110% of the Buxton population to have voted under one of our previous elections. Math has never been their strong point!

The PPP accepted, their ONE seat defeat in the 2015 elections. APNU/AFC/WPA should be mature enough to accept the will of the people

in 2020. That is what happens in democracies. You win some and you lose some, and when you lose, you reorganize and rebuild.

The last Government failed on several counts. They increased taxes, voted themselves a Parliamentary raise, removed subsidies to the needy, lacked a cohesive economic plan and abruptly closed the sugar estates without an alternative employment plan for the workers who have yet to receive their severance package and by all accounts, signed a disastrous agreement with EXXON. Tell me, why would the majority of Guyana re-elect such a Government?

There has been a call by some respectable Guyanese including Mr. Eusi Kwayana, for whom I have the greatest respect, for a Unity/Coalition Government, a noble sentiment indeed. Such a Government would go a far way to easing racial tensions and insecurities. However, under the present circumstances this would amount to a capitulation to fraud. The APNU team insists that it has won the elections and continues to place obstacles in arriving at a valid recount.

Even if the animus between the two major parties can be overcome, how will the power be shared? Who will get the vital ministries of Finance, Defence and Home Affairs?

We cannot morally object to the sentiments of the International Community under the guise of sovereignty. If so, how can we agree with past International efforts to end Apartheid and for its support for the Civil Rights Movement in the USA.

We must establish Law and Order and lay the framework for a valid recount for at least Region Four or for all the Regions if required. But this must be done under strict scrutiny by the contesting political parties and the teams of International Observers. We cannot and must not repeat the travesties and injustices of the past, lest we become one of the FAILED STATES in the world despite our resources.

Dr Ganraj Kumar, Toronto, Canada

In support of a transparent recount of ballots

Open letter to:
Justice Claudette Singh, Chair of GECOM;
Hon David Granger, Leader of APNU;
Hon Bharrat Jagdeo, Leader of the PPP;
Hon Prime Minister Mia Mottley, Caricom Chair

We are all proud Guyanese wherever we now live.

The tabulation of votes in District Four on March 12/13th was not done in accordance with the law and the direct orders given by the Hon Chief Justice on March 11th. The results for that district have been assessed by all political parties except one, and by all accredited local, regional and international observers who were present, to be less than credible.

The swearing-in of a president based on that declaration of results of the 2020 General and Regional Elections overwhelmingly deemed to be flawed, should not be an option.

We support a full recount of all of the ballots cast in District Four (and all other districts that may have been called for), in a process managed with complete transparency by GECOM and under the scrutiny of agents of the contesting political parties and representatives of local, regional and international observer missions in an environment free of threats, be implemented as soon as possible. We are heartened by the consensus for the CARICOM offer to supervise the Region Four recount.

Major General Joseph Singh, former Chair of GECOM

Donald Rodney
Dr Ian McDonald, Writer
Vanda Radzik, Independent Social & Sustainable Development Guyana Adviser
Rev Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, Guyana; Presbyterian Church
Jean La Rose
Karen de Souza

Annette Arjoon-Martins, Businesswoman & Environmental Activist

Ohene Koama

Patricia Fredericks, Independent Concerned Citizen

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Benevolent Neutrality

Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana 1854-1884



Basdeo Mangru

Benevolent Neutrality is a detailed, scholarly study of the migration of Indian labourers overseas and their living and working conditions under the iniquitous indenture system. Based largely on unpublished sources, this volume analyses the socio-economic, political and cultural factors which induced a traditionally non-migratory people to leave their *matribhumi* (motherland) for service in distant sugar colonies. It examines the pressures to formulate policies and implement them, their effectiveness in protecting the interests of indentured workers and the ways in which these policies were obstructed. This book also includes a major pioneering study of Indian women migrants, particularly the circumstances of recruitment, sexual exploitation on sugar estates, the alarming rate of wife murders and women's assertiveness and militancy during periods of industrial unrest.

Benevolent Neutrality is republished as part of Hansib's 175th anniversary series commemorating Indian arrival in the Caribbean.

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Editorial

Clear, deadly threat

We are in a time and place where now as a community we must focus all our energies on a single purpose: staying alive, and keeping others alive around us. We must do everything in our power, since our lives depend on it, to avoid becoming infected by, or spreading to others, the deadly COVID-19 virus.

At this time as our part of the world faces a clear and deadly threat, our community is neither invincible, sacred, nor exempt from its onslaught. The coronavirus is novel – every human being on this planet is vulnerable, and could potentially die from COVID-19's indiscriminating, deadly infection.

Last week our community leaders reached out, warning us to take protective measures, reinforcing the ongoing calls being made by Canada's public health authorities to guard ourselves against infection, and to avoid infecting others.

Cardiologist and community stalwart, Dr Vivian Rambihar, noted the community must follow public health advisories rigorously. We have to put ourselves out, endure inconveniences, make sacrifices through self-isolation, for example, for the common good, he declared.

"By doing so, you are saving lives of friends, family, and people in and out of the community," Dr Rambihar noted.

Dr Rambihar has also identified a notable vulnerability present in our community, one that could exacerbate the coronavirus' fatal impact.

"COVID-19 is bad; very bad in the elderly, and even younger because of the other illnesses that our community is known to have – hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, in particular; then lung disease," he said.

Spiritual leader of Vishnu Temple, Dr Budhendranauth Doobay, also an eminent cardiologist, was equally insistent in reiterating that our community be attentive to all advisories being issued by the public health bodies.

Vishnu Mandir closed on March 20 until further notice; however, it has been reaching out to the community via social media to reinforce health advisory messaging, Dr Doobay said. In a video posted on YouTube, he emphasises the recursive messaging on precautionary, personal hygiene, saying, "To prevent us from getting the coronavirus, there is one thing we must do: 'Wash. Wash. Wash.' Wash your hands for 20 seconds."

Speaking with *Indo-Caribbean World* last week, Dr Doobay reiterated the requirement for physical distancing, declaring we should stay at home: "This is number one for our community," he declared.

Said Dr Doobay: "Those who are not affected think they're mightier than the coronavirus. When they get sick, only then would they appreciate the seriousness; how the virus affects everybody from young to old. People feel they're invincible until death comes; or serious illness."

Invoking a familiar language as the spiritual head of Vishnu Mandir, Dr Doobay said personal hygiene and physical distancing must become a "mantra" for our community.

"We should all be very careful. Wash the hand! Wash the hand! We can never over-emphasise this: wash the hand; and do not touch the face," he said.

As we continue to be exponentially assailed by the invisible enemy that is COVID-19, as each of us is aware, and from what the health authorities, and our community leaders are telling us, we hold in our hands not only our own lives, but the lives of family members, and those of the strangers we meet. It could not be a more literal statement that thorough washing of the hands could determine whether we become infected, and whether we, and others around us, live or die.

Right now our best efforts should be focused on avoiding infection. As Dr Rambihar has indicated, it means making sacrifices, and putting up with inconveniences by staying indoors, observing physical distancing, and giving support from a safe distance, as is being practised by Vishnu Mandir and Dr Doobay.

As much as it is a challenge for Canada's public health policies, it is similarly a personal task for each of us to work together to defeat this marauding and deadly coronavirus.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this newspaper.

Letters to be published will be edited where necessary.

Publisher/Editor: Harry Ramkhelawan

Editorial Consultant: Romeo Kaseram

Columnists/Writers: Frank Birbalsingh, Bernard Heydorn, Adit Kumar, Dwarka

Lakhan, Mohan Ragbeer, William Doyle-Marshall, Arti Panday.

Graphics: Mevlana Media: 416.789.9933 * computertrusting@gmail.com

Contact Information: Indo Caribbean World Inc.

312 Brownridge Drive, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5X1

(905) 738-5005; Fax (905) 738-3927 • indocaribbeanworld@gmail.com

Website: www.indocaribbeanworld.com

It takes an unusual event to reveal the bigotry among our society's "leaders". And nowhere will you find more of them than in good ol' Britain, especially in their patronising attitude to Indians, thanks to the legacy of British aristocrats in three centuries of plundering the world, stealing India and reducing it to poverty, with the help of natives bribed to their cause.

One modern exemplar is Jim O'Neill, an economist – formerly of Goldman Sachs, of 2007-9 notoriety – who proclaimed recently, as CNBC reported, that he was thankful that the coronavirus outbreak had started in China and "not somewhere like India", (or Brazil, where President Bolsonaro has dismissed Covid-19 as a minor event!) "because there's absolutely no way they could move to react in the way that the Chinese have done", citing "the quality of Indian governance".

He was obviously India-bashing, without an iota of concern for accuracy, in the dogmatic way of bullies and Indophobes, who have multiplied and become fashionable since Modi became PM.

And while praising China (he once served David Cameron to foster trade with China), he forgot that China had delayed by several weeks to spread warnings beyond the WHO, perhaps needing time to confirm that this was indeed a new variant, and verifying its mode of transmission, especially as an early medical report had labelled the first cases SARS. But once satisfied that it could spread person-to-person and by contact, this was published globally on Dec 31, 2019.

To address O'Neill's gaffe, let us compare the handling of COVID-19 by India and O'Neill's UK; India's first case occurred on Jan 30, 2020 in a returnee from Wuhan. Following WHO-prescribed guidelines to detect, treat and contain the virus, testing began and has since expanded; Indians were evacuated from Wuhan and Iran, and a medical team installed at Qom. All visas, barring diplomatic and employment, were cancelled until April 15, 2020, and people dissuaded from foreign travel. People coming from or having physical contact with China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany were advised of a 14-day quarantine starting February 15. International flights were screened, totalling 726,122 passengers from 7,108 flights by March 7. Social distancing, good hand hygiene, coughing and sneezing etiquette and nutritious and well-cooked food advocated. Isolation facilities were proposed for hospitals across India while ensuring adequate supplies of protective gear, medicines and other es-

Covid-19

sential elements. Mass gatherings were dissuaded, schools, colleges and cinema halls closed. On 26 February 2020, India sent 15 tons of masks, gloves and other emergency medical equipment to

China! The Indian Army began to establish additional quarantine facilities for 1,500 personnel, to be activated on demand. They did more. (<https://www.facebook.com/PunyaBhumiIndia/posts/3315424245138982>)

By March 30, India had 1,251 cases and 32 deaths in the country with a 1.35 billion population; admittedly, this total will increase as personal testing becomes available and reaches remoter areas, especially in a lock-down situation. Even so, the difference from Britain and the USA is stark. Britain had its first case on Jan 30; the government published its coronavirus action plan on March 3; yet by March 13, measures were too

lousy to prevent 17 people from becoming infected at a family funeral! Total cases on March 30 in this small island (size of Guyana) rose to 22,141, with 1408 deaths; 127,737 people were tested by March 29, in a population of 67.8 million. On 30 March, the USA has 189,236 cases with 2968 deaths; it now leads the pack, ahead of Italy, Spain, and China. President Trump is allegedly begging other countries for masks, hand sanitisers and up to 25 items.

Indian High Commissioner (UK) Vishwesh Negi called O'Neill's comments "ill-informed and irresponsible." India's response has been as swift as Taiwan's (<https://www.cdc.gov.tw/En/>), the most effective approach to the epidemic so far.

Britain and US were remarkably tardy and even dismissive. Today, UK hypocrites like O'Neill should remove the beam from their eyes and thank heaven that Covid-19 didn't start in the UK or USA!

O'Neill should pay more attention to his glass house rather than throw stones at one made of brick! He should heed Richard Horton's scathing editorial in a recent *Lancet*, criticising the UK government for doing too little, too late and leaving the U.K.'s public health system "wholly unprepared for this pandemic," adding that despite numerous warnings, Britain's strategy for containing the virus failed, "in part, because ministers didn't follow WHO's advice to 'test, test, test' every suspected case. They didn't isolate and quarantine. They didn't contact trace. These basic principles of public health and infectious disease control were ignored, for reasons that remain opaque."

A benefit of Covid-19: cleaner air in all affected cities!



Mohan Ragbeer

New age illness means life-saving decisions

Iwonder what my grandmother would say were she still around today and facing the COVID-19 pandemic now sweeping across our anxious, belaboured planet. Right off the bat (her eternal words, meaning in the first instant), Ma would insist everyone curtail their gregariousness and go into self-isolation. It would be anathema for her to challenge authority, even if it meant ceasing her daily peregrinations around the village to visit friends.

These visits were among the reasons why Ma threw her legs off the bed on mornings. It happened right after her breakfast – a tiny piece of roti only, and contented draining of a "full cup of tea" down to its dregs of tea leaves.

"A full cup of tea" remains identifiable today as part of Ma's idiolect, one of her many enduring legacies. Her "morning tea" was a stricture that had to be rigorously fulfilled. It meant the steaming, milky concoction from Red Rose tea leaves, stirred to a frothy finish with heaping teaspoons of sugar and condensed milk, had to slop precariously near its rim, always threatening to spill over.

It remains a family wonder how Ma travelled from the kitchen to the front porch, in her word, to the "gallery", delicately balancing her brimming enamel cup using an internal gyroscope, so not a drop of this milky elixir spilled. She accomplished this not only by forcefully gripping the cup by its handle, but by inserting a forefinger into the hot liquid for additional support while grimacing with discomfort from the heat.

For her ascetic piece of dry roti, which she dunked into the sugary syrup that was her "full cup of tea", Ma always indicated the required dimensions by holding out a hand with the four fingers flattened out and squeezed together. The real estate of the finger-length of petite fingers was the roti's cut-size, which she tore into small pieces preparatory to its breakfast immersion.

Then, contemplating the sun striking on the distant, thriving sugar-canapes, and enthralled by competing arias from flocks of prima donnas perched in nearby trees, Ma dipped and chewed, and took noisy, slurping draughts until the cup was lifted up and fully drained with a sigh. Her finishing flourish was arcing the dregs onto the dusty front yard.

Then, hitching up her "ghunghri", which was ensuring the knotted string in her skirt was tight and secure, Ma set out on her morning rounds of visits. If the cotton balls of clouds in the distance were embroidered with grey stitching, then she directed me to accompany her with our umbrella that was battered with wear, and tattered with

overexposure to many rainstorms.

Despite its unreliability for curvature and a healthy propensity for leakage, the umbrella was mostly verisimilitude, and was barely capable of keeping dry at least half of me. I resented being sheltered, since I liked all of me to be thoroughly soaked by the invigorating downpour.

Sometimes, Ma visited a sick friend, calling out over the territorial cackling from a coop of hens and tilted-head inquiries from a brazen rooster. As I grew older, I began to understand there were undertones in Ma's call, which at times was indirectly informing the household she was being accompanied by her young, impressionable grandson with large, discerning eyes.

It was later in life that I clued in, coming to understand Ma was encoding her greeting with a signal to her friend over modesty. It was an indication it was improper for a curious boy to witness her elderly, ailing friend dressed in petticoats; and more, even less.

My grandmother was cherished by the villagers for the depth of her empathy and care. A sick friend, bedridden and racked with bodily pains, always received considerate, caring attention from Ma's healing hands.

During these visits, bones were pulled and joints cracked, the sound explosive and sudden like gunshots in rooms lit yellow and jaundiced with spluttering kerosene lamps. Backs, shoulders, and legs were massaged with aromatic mustard oil to an accompaniment of groans from the sufferer. As a treat, scalps were heavily suffused, to the point of saturation, with cupped handfuls of revitalising coconut oil.

I am yet to understand why I was told to leave the room, to go outside and chase the chickens from garden plots, whenever a "naara" was being rubbed. My suspicions grew that I had been dismissed, since the elusive chickens could never be found. That perhaps this intimate massage was a part of the vast secrets women keep locked away in sisterhood vaults, which only they share among themselves.

This was just part of the hidden, but lived world of sisterhood my grandmother engaged in when I was a boy growing up back home. For her it was more than visiting the ailing; it was a communion of spirits, a pathway to the blessings raining onto battered umbrellas for those who visit the sick to bring relief from pain and comfort from loneliness.

Ma would not understand why our world has turned out to be so tilted and helter-skelter today; however, she would understand, and humbly comply, with self-isolation.



Romeo Kaseram

Guyana faced with a double whammy

Threat of an illegitimate govt coupled with drop in oil prices

Just two months ago Guyana's future looked brighter than ever. Massive oil discoveries had put the country on the radar screens of people who had never before even heard of the tiny nation, once ranked as the most impoverished in the Western Hemisphere, slightly above Haiti. But suddenly it was on the path to affluence.

The IMF recognized it as the fastest growing economy in the world in 2020, and for the next two years thereafter. Its' population was poised to become the richest in the world on a per capita basis. People and investors from around the world were flooding to its shores, hoping to benefit from Guyana's new-found wealth.

But like the COVID-19 virus which has brought the world to a sudden halt, political anarchy now threatens to sink the country to its lowest level ever. And its caretaker government risks being isolated as an illegitimate regime and face sanctions from the international community, putting it in the same conundrum as its immediate neighbor, Venezuela. That is, unless it agrees to a fair and transparent recount of the votes of it March 2, 2020 general elections.

It so happens that it's now been a month since the country held general elections but the results are still not finalized. Although the elections appeared to have been conducted relatively peacefully under the watchful eyes of dozens of foreign observers, the counting of votes in the country's largest electoral district, Region 4, has never been finalized.

Problem is, the incumbent coalition APNU+AFC government was on the verge of losing power to the opposition PPP/C party and the so-called constitutionally appointed Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), which is dominated by the ruling party supporters, decided to unilaterally cancel the counting of all votes and declare APNU+AFC the winner.

What has transpired since then is a series of court actions that have either allowed or disallowed the recounting process to continue. Although the leaders of the two major parties, David Granger and Bharat Jagdeo, have agreed to a full recount under the supervision of a CARI-COM team, the courts blocked the recount.

Since then, diplomats and officials from the US, European Union, UK, Canada, the Carter Center and the Organization of American States (OAS) have openly stated that the spreadsheet result of the incompletely Region 4 vote count is not credible.

In the meanwhile, caretaker President Granger appears powerless among his supporters. He has publicly supported a recount but cannot restrain his supporters from blocking a recount in the courts. At the same time, he has taken shelter in the fact that the decision about a recount rests in the hands of GECOM. This position has left some "smelling a rat" from a distance.

But recounting of the votes is not the underlying issue. At the heart of the matter is the fact that the coalition government does not want to give up power, whatever the cost. The struggle for power in a country that has always been racially divided is at the core of the crisis. If the Indian-backed PPP/C party wins the elections, the African-backed APNU (formerly the PNC) would have lost.

Ironically, much to the chagrin of the world, the PNC has rigged five previous elections after it was put in power through collaboration with the US and British governments in 1964, and believes it has a right to be in power.

Although the world has tolerated the actions of the PNC (now APNU) in the past, it is no longer willing to tolerate an illegitimate government overseeing massive amounts of oil wealth.

British Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab recently warned Guyana that "any government

sworn in on the basis of non-credible results will face strong international condemnation. If the situation continues to deteriorate, this international response will include a range of serious consequences for those concerned," adding that "the transition of government in Guyana should only take place in line with transparent and democratic principles that lead to credible results."

In addition, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs, Michael Kozak also warned of similar action. He recently summoned Guyana's Ambassador, Riyad Insanally to inform Guyana

that a government sworn in based on non-credible results would be illegitimate. "On behalf of the U.S. government, today I summoned Guyana Ambassador to the U.S. Riyad Insanally to convey our firm position that any government sworn in based on flawed election results would not be legitimate. Every vote must be counted," Kozak said on Twitter.

As well, OAS Chief of Mission, Bruce Golding, the former Prime Minister of Jamaica, expressed concern that the tabulation process lacked transparency. In an OAS release, it was noted that "following the Returning Officer's continued defiance of the Chief Justice's orders on March 13, in facilitating an open and transparent verification of the Statements of Poll, the Chief of Mission expressed further concern that "the process was unlikely to produce a credible result and withdrew the Mission from Guyana."

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has also cited Guyana's electoral process as one of the challenges now facing the OAS. "As we overcome the threat to public health posed by COVID-19, the peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean face other challenges, such as ...adherence to free, fair and credible electoral processes in Guyana."

Evidently, the very future of Guyana is now at risk, largely due to the defiance of the government and/or its supporters and GECOM to proceed with a recount of the votes of the March 2 elections and to ensure transparency in the electoral process.

It is paradoxical that a government which claims to espouse democracy is refusing to uphold basic democratic principles. It is equally contradictory that in the midst of purporting to promote racial harmony, that racial divisiveness is becoming more entrenched.

Ironically, it is naïve to believe that any semblance of racial harmony is real in a country that has historically been racially divided. At the same time, all evidence shows that those who believe that shared governance will work in Guyana are wearing blindfolds. The latter concept will only come to the forefront if the coalition government eventually loses power.

If a final recount of votes is ever done, it would not be surprising if the coalition government is returned to power through fiddling with the process. That would be possible if the integrity of the ballot boxes now in storage for more than a month is compromised. It has happened in the past and not impossible now.

Then the outcome could be one leading to civil unrest and instability, as the results would not be believable.

While electoral transparency remains unresolved in Guyana and has put the country's future at risk, the dramatic decline in oil prices to historical lows, has added to its woes. The dramatic increase in oil production by Saudi Arabia and Russia following a breakdown in OPEC talks in December, which sent prices sliding, is unlikely to be resolved soon. Guyana will therefore have to lower its expectations from oil in the foreseeable future.

That's a double whammy on a country on the brink.

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Ask Jay...

Covid-19 – Helpful Information

Covid-19 is infectious to our health and wealth. With lockdown, many businesses are laying off employees, creating an added financial stress for an already stressed population. Our Government took swift action to address the problem but with all the roadblocks created by the pandemic, financial relief will be sluggish. Here are some insights on the impact for real estate.

Rent Deferral. Tenants who cannot afford to pay their rent should inform their landlords in advance. Failure to pay rent can cause eviction. Ontario's Premier commented on this: "That's why I've directed that all eviction orders be suspended until further notice. We want to make sure you and your family can stay in your home during this difficult time. So, you can put your health and the health of others first." When we defer rental payment, it accumulates and can escalate into a large debt owing. Once the virus vanishes, the back rent is due and the tenant can risk damaging their credit and be faced with eviction.

Mortgage Deferral. RBC, CIBC, TD, Scotiabank, BMO, and National Bank of Canada are allowing homeowners to defer their mortgage payments for up to six months. Homeowners in financial difficulties should contact their lender and explore their options. Postponing mortgage payments is similar to kicking the ball down the road. Eventually, the homeowner must pay up the backlog or they can be in default. Another alternative is to refinance and increase the remaining years of payment in order to reduce the monthly payment. With the recent interest rate drop, if your mortgage is coming due in a year or two, it is a great time to renew. To break the mortgage, the lender may charge a penalty. Another option is to extend the number of years and then blend it. Let's assume that there is a mortgage on the property for an additional two years; you can negotiate three more years at the lower mortgage rate so on average, the rate drops over the five years.

First Time Buyers. If you are buying a home for the first time and your money is in RRSP or invested in stocks, then, wait until the stock market rebounds before purchasing. With a forty percent loss in the stock market, it is not the best time to cash in. First time buyers who already purchased and are waiting to close their transaction but still have their funds in mutual funds or stocks should consult their financial adviser and their lawyer. There are various options, such as borrowing against your portfolio or asking a family for temporary assistance. Check with the seller if they are willing to extend the closing or abort the sale.

New home purchase. Check with the builder because the closing date might be pushed back. If that is so, then buyers who have already sold their homes must be proactive. With buyers who sold their existing homes, hopefully their sales contract for their current home has an option to extend the closing date. If that is not possible, then reach out to the buyer. Some buyers are accommodating and would either extend the closing date or arrange to complete the transaction and allow you to rent back on a month to month bases. If that is not possible, then the only option is to search for month to month rental accommodation.

Sellers with a tight timeline. With the current outbreak, many sellers are postponing selling their homes. This will create scarcity and trigger a short-term seller's market. When a home is on the market, strangers visit and it is easy for homeowners to be infected. It is best to provide good online photos so that buyers can make an informed decision. Ask your realtor to allow only one showing at a time. Leave the home during showing. It is a good idea to sanitize the entire home, from the door knobs, stairs rail and even the cupboard doors. Ask the visitors to sanitize their hands before entering and to avoid touching things as much as possible. Ask the realtor to check if the buyers should be in self-quarantine. Restrict the visits to a maximum of four people. Children should not be allowed.

Prospective Buyers. Prospective buyers should postpone home shopping. It is best to re-evaluate your financing. If Covid-19 prolongs, then, our economy may suffer a heart attack, meaning that everything stops. Resuscitating the economy may be ambitious and recovery might be slow. This can trigger a recession and home prices may drop. RBC Economics suggests that things are about to get rocky. Senior economist Robert Hogue said that the "light was on in the housing market in February but that it is about to be turned off. The world has changed in March, and so has the outlook for the Canadian housing market. Fears of the spread and social distancing are set to decimate house viewings and buyers are likely to take a wait-and-see approach."

My prediction. The economy will contract in the first half of 2020 because of Covid-19, coupled with low oil prices and a depreciating Canadian dollar. In the second half, our children will be back at schools and we will be working harder than before. The economy will rebound and we will recover. According to Lynn Lewis, CPA, CMA, CIM®, CIMA, FCSI®, Portfolio Manager & Investment Advisor at TD Bank, "the worst thing to do during a panic is to panic. That's because panic leads to hasty, short-term decisions that jeopardize your long-term best interests."

Jay Brijpaul

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

Endgame of a cunning ruler

By Tameshwar N Lilmohan

Once upon a time, there was a cunning old man and a wicked witch who ruled a tiny country in a far-away land.

The old man was clever at playing games. He was a trained soldier and believed in winning at all cost. He would agree to the rules of the game before the game begins but would break the rules during the game and claim the prize. When he is caught cheating, he will contest the rules with the referees, some of whom were corrupt and sided with him. The other players would ask for a review of the game by different referees. In the meantime, the cunning old man would employ several strategies. Firstly, he would splurge the prize winnings on himself and some of the spectators to buy their loyalties. Then, he would bring in the wicked witch to direct the loyalists to bully and intimidate the other players and spectators. The evil witch controlled the guards at the game, and she would lead them to side with the loyalist thugs. Finally, the old man would employ the sympathy strategy. He would attend church and claim to be a Godly man who wants peace and proclaim that he would follow what the final referees decided. He would use various stalling tactics so that by the time the referees ruled that he cheated, the damage to the other players and their supporters would have been unsalvageable.

The cunning old man mistakenly thought that the rules did not allow for penalties and sanctions against him when he breaks the rules, so he disregarded the rules on every occasion.

The old man was feeling powerful. He was even invited to have tea with the Queen of England. Craving world adulation, he decided to invite international observers to the season's final game.

The cunning old man and the wicked witch hatched a plan to rig the game. His first move was to unilaterally appoint the chairman of the referees illegally. He was a smart, loyal friend of the old man's camp. The old man then stepped back, and the wicked witch took command of the referees. She conspired with the chairman to fire the chief referee, who was a fair and respectable person. She and the chairman then installed her loyalists in every position of the refereeing body. The other players complained to the Courts. The Courts once again pronounced that the old man had broken the rules and the illegal chairman was removed. But, the old man's strategy worked; the damage was done. The old man and the wicked witch had full control of the referees. A new chairman was appointed, but she was weak and succumbed to the pressures of the other corrupt referees.

Confident of his plan, the old man entered the final race. When the results came in, the old man lost the race to a young contender. But, as in every other race, he refused to give up the prize. The other competitors complained and would not allow the old man to hijack the award. The wicked witch immediately swung into action and enlisted the referees to announce that the old man had won the game. The other players put up a fight to stop the rigging of the game, but they were quickly put down by the wicked witch's loyalist thugs and guards.

The cunning old man and the wicked witch had made a fatal error in their evil plan. They underestimated the international observers and other countries' interest in the tiny country. Vast reserves of oil were discovered in the tiny country, and other countries did not want to deal with a country that was governed by an illegal leader and his cabal. They had seen enough of the same behaviour and suffering of the people from the neighbouring country. They were not prepared to have another pariah leader next door.

The old man was caught in a death trap. If he handed over the prize to the real winner, the wicked witch was going to get him; if he refused to give up the award to the real winner, the international referees would get him as they did to his cheating neighbour. His neighbours were stripped of their ill-gotten wealth and found guilty of their illegal actions.

Many wise local and international people pleaded to the old man to redeem himself. Some people asked him to start praying and ask God and the people for forgiveness. The old man was too steeped in his cunning ways and refused to pay heed to anyone's advice. The crafty old man is no longer, but his memory lives on in disgrace. As for the wicked witch, a seat is surely reserved for her in Hell.

Full Court denies application to block votes recount

Ball now lies in GECOM's court

Georgetown – The Full Court yesterday denied application for leave for the parties to appeal its ruling on the vote recount case in which it dismissed the injunctions blocking the recount of the votes cast in the March 2, General and Regional Elections.

Tuesday's rulings by the Full Court, comprising Chief Justice Roxane George and Justice Nareshwar Harnanan, now paves the way for the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) to proceed with the recount now that all the legal hurdles have been crossed.

Earlier, the Full Court had ruled that the Court has no jurisdiction to hear the application filed by APNU/AFC Candidate Ulita Moore, who sought to block a national recount of the ballots cast during the March 02 General and Regional Elections.

The interim injunction blocking the recount process, which was secured by Moore, has since been discharged.

The Full Court said that the matters raised in the injunction application fare better suited for an election petition rather than the way it was presented before the court.

Responding to the decision by Justices George and Harnanan, Moore's attorney Mayo Robertson applied for a stay in proceedings until the Appeal Court rules on the matter. His request was however denied.

The Full Court took into account the fact that the Chair of GECOM, Justice Claudette Singh had given a public undertaking that the votes would be recounted to ensure that the results of the polls are credible and accepted by the various stakeholders.

Several local and international observers, as well as Governments, have denounced the declarations made by Region Four



Chief Justice (ag) Roxane George and Justice Nareshwar Harnanan

RO Clairmont Mingo as lacking credibility.

The stakeholders had, in addition to calling for a recount, warned that a new government sworn in on the basis of fraudulent results lack credibility and transparency and therefore would not be recognised by the international community; and would face severe sanctions.

Justice Singh, in her affidavit of defence against the APNU/AFC candidate, had noted the applications by several of the contesting parties for recounts were rejected by the RO for Region Four for varying reasons, but "the Commission can intervene to correct this even at this stage".

According to the former Chief Justice, the Representation of the People Act gives the Commission two options: to either accept the Chief Elections Officer's report or order a recount of the votes cast. As such, she contended, "It would be unlawful for the court to direct the Commission on the way forward to complete the process where these issues are still outstanding."

Former ACP Secretary General adds voice for recount of votes

Georgetown – Former Guyanese Secretary General of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) bloc, Dr Patrick Ignatius Gomes, is the latest respected international figure to caution the David Granger-led administration against the pitfalls of having a president declared based on results that lack transparency and credibility.

According to Dr Gomes "the time has long passed for leaders of all political parties to give an unequivocal commitment that transparent, verified and reliable results from a re-count of our March 2, 2020, General and Regional Elections shall be accepted in their entirety as the legal basis for a democratically elected government to assume office without further delay."

He was adamant "the urgent resolution of this political impasse is essential to keep our place in history as a proud, self-respecting and law-abiding member of the Caribbean Community, who generously offered assistance; and also as a key member of that inter-continental, inter-governmental organisation of 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific States, whose navel string in the Georgetown Agreement of 1975, has given continuing solidarity to all peoples of the Global South in the fight to end poverty and achieve sustainable and equitable development."

According to Dr Gomes, "the hand of friendship from our CARICOM neighbours, needs to be encouraged and not appear as almost insulted, making it necessary for the CARICOM Team to leave prematurely....Let the recount begin and credible, verifiable evidence give us the lawfully elected government that our forefathers and mothers fought for and this and future generations deserve."

Dr Gomes, served as Secretary-General of the ACP Group of States, from March 1, 2015 and ended on March 1, 2020.

AFC now favours govt of national unity, whoever wins the elections

Georgetown – While still maintaining confidence that the governing APNU+AFC coalition has won the disputed March 2 general elections, the AFC on Monday said that whichever party forms the next government must show "magnanimity" and "accede" to an agreed governance pact that encompasses shared governance and "national unity".

The Alliance For Change (AFC) position comes amid the overwhelming view among local analysts that the governing coalition lost the general elections and that a rear-guard rigging effort to hand them victory has been stalled by the courts and local and international condemnation.

Political analysts say that the call for shared governance will ring hollow as the AFC had not pressed for this in the period prior to the election or while in government with its main coalition partner, A Partnership for National Unity (APNU).

While calls for shared governance have flowed from various quarters recently, they have been seen as opportunistic and intended to get around the key question of establishing the result of the election and enabling the swearing in of the winner.

The shift in the AFC's position also comes in the wake of one of its executives, Dominic Gaskin, expressing doubt about the figures produced by controversial Region Four Returning Officer Clairmont Mingo showing that the coalition had won Region Four with a sufficiently wide margin to enable it to be the overall winner.

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GECOM's Head responsible for a transparently verifiable elections result

From page 1:

reins of Guyana's government for over a year following its stunning no-confidence loss on December 21, 2018. Then it relied on an befuddling onset of amnesia, suddenly becoming incapable of simple arithmetic.

It then turned to delay in the winding corridors of Guyana's courts, and finally to the eminences in the Caribbean Court of Justice, where an application of common sense, along with the simplest arithmetic calculation, were done to determine what was always self-evident – that the APNU+AFC government had fallen to a majority, no-confidence vote.

It seems following March 2, APNU+AFC is still dogged by its old tricks of being incapable of transparent counting and performing simple arithmetic. Yet again, Guyana is being confronted with the APNU+AFC's vexing unwillingness, and its inherent, premeditated clumsiness with simple arithmetic, to determine what constitutes a majority vote in the counting of ballots in the vote-rich Region Four.

There is no doubt in our minds that the Guyana Elections Commission head, Retired Justice Claudette Singh, has a lot to answer for through culpability for Guyana falling once more in the grip of inimical forces. Her role as GECOM head is a pivotal one, where her commitment is to impartially ensure that the entire general elections, including its vote count, were conducted using best practices, and that it returned a free, fair, and transparently verifiable result.

None of these requirements has occurred in her stewardship, and its almost a month since the general elections took place. Instead, what she should have monitored to ensure an orderly, efficient, and transparent tabulation of Region Four's votes, continued to be disrupted

by the Returning Officer, Clairmont Mingo. The result was Mingo bold-facedly produced two blatantly rigged and questionable counts that declared APNU+AFC the winner of the March 2 polls. It was followed by a presumptuous and premeditated intent to illegitimately install David Granger as head of the government.

It is as self-evident as common sense and basic arithmetic that installation of Granger as the head of Guyana's government would be illegitimate without tabulation of the elections' result that is fair, transparent, and verifiable.

Mottley's perspicacious insight that there are forces inimical to a transparent vote count is pivotal, since it points to a deep, flagrant, and systemic undermining of democracy in Guyana. Also reassuring is the recent intervention by Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs of the US Department of State, Ambassador Michael Kozak.

Last week Kozak summoned Guyana Ambassador to the US, Riyad Insanally to convey, what was later described in a follow-up tweet, as the US administration's "firm position that any government sworn in based on flawed election results would not be legitimate". Notably, he added, "Every vote must be counted."

Every vote must be recounted; and it must be done in a manner that is fair, transparent, and verifiable. Guyana, and its nationals abroad, have laboured hard for its growing democracy. It would not do to have this achievement, for which some of us paid with our lives, undermined by inimical and cheating forces.



Gecom Chairperson, Rtd. Justice Claudette Singh

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'It is clear there are forces that do not want to see a vote recount'

Caricom, Commonwealth, Carter Center, others issue statements over lack of 'transparency, credibility'

Statement from Caricom Chair, Mia Mottley

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) deeply regrets that it has been forced to withdraw the independent High Level Team it fielded on Saturday, 14 March 2020, to supervise the recounting of the ballots in Region 4 of the General and Regional Elections of 2 March 2020 in Guyana.

The fielding of the Team had been at the request of His Excellency David Granger, President of Guyana, on Saturday 14 March 2020. In response, and given the urgency of the task, the Team was mobilised immediately and arrived in Guyana in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Given that the tabulation process had been widely viewed as not being transparent or credible, President Granger and Mr. Bharat Jagdeo, Leader of the Opposition, agreed that the only possible resolution was by way of a recount supervised by an independent team. This was seen as a significant contribution to bolstering the transparency and legitimacy of the electoral process.

This step forward had been anchored by an Aide Memoire signed by both leaders on 16 March 2020, and the Terms of Reference prepared by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) to govern the role of the High Level Team on Sunday, 15 March 2020, for the supervision of the recounting of the ballots, not only in Region 4, but in all 10 electoral districts.

A court order issued on 17 March 2020, granted an injunction restraining GECOM from recounting any ballots of the General and Regional Elections of 2 March 2020, and set aside "any agreement between the President of Guyana and the Leader of the Opposition and or any agreement between the Guyana Elections Commission and the Caribbean Community".

The Caribbean Community has no other choice but to withdraw the High Level Team.

It is clear that there are forces that do not want to see the votes recounted for whatever reason. Any Government which is sworn in without a credible and fully transparent vote count process would lack legitimacy.

I would like to thank the High Level Team for offering to serve at such short notice and for displaying the patience they have displayed over the last three days. The Team was led by Ms Francine Baron, former Attorney-General and Foreign Minister of Dominica, and included Mr Anthony Boatswain, former Minister of Finance of Grenada and Ms Cynthia Barrow-Giles, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Government at the University of the West Indies.

They were accompanied by Ms Angela Taylor and Ms Fern Narcis-Scope, the Chief Elections Officers of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.

As I said in an earlier statement it is critical that good sense prevail. The preservation of law and order is paramount and all parties must work hard to ensure that there is peace on the roads and in the communities across Guyana.

The Community remains committed to the people of Guyana.

Statement from the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Guyana

The process being conducted by the Returning Officer for Region 4 to ascertain the results of the national and regional elections held on March 2 does not meet the required standard of fairness and transparency.

The Chief Justice's ruling handed down on March 11 required the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer to determine the best method of tabulating the Statements of Poll and included the expectation "that the Returning Officer would act reasonably in ensuring a process that allows persons to observe what is being tabulated and how".

This has not occurred. Instead, and without any plausible explanation, the Returning Officer continued to ascertain the votes cast for each party list without affording the duly authorized candidates and counting agents an opportunity to see the Statements of Poll, in order to compare them with the copies in their possession. Such a process could have been easily facilitated using the same technology which allows the tabulation to be displayed.

The Returning Officer's defiance of the Chief Justice's orders and expectations, and his refusal to allow the Statements of Poll to be exhibited, gives credence to the allegations that the numbers being tabulated do not correspond with the numbers appearing on the Statements of Poll prepared following the March 2 elections.



Mia Mottley

The Mission has noted that images of the Statements of Poll published by the PPP/Civic, on its website, which it claims were given to its polling agents after the ballots were counted at each polling station on the night of the elections, produce a result that is vastly different from that being declared by the Returning Officer and would have a decisive effect on the outcome of the national election.

To date [March 13, 2020], neither the Chief Elections Officer nor APNU has challenged the authenticity of the Statements of Poll published by the PPP/Civic by producing the copies in their possession. The implications are deeply troubling and make it all the more necessary for the Returning Officer to display the Statements of Poll on which he is relying.

The OAS Election Observer Mission was pleased to have declared that the March 2 poll was, in almost all respects, well executed. The subsequent tabulation of the Statements of Poll in the other nine regions was carried out in compliance with the law and no dispute has arisen in relation to the declaration of results.

However, the process employed by the Returning Officer for Region 4 is not transparent and, based on the numbers that have emanated since the process was first disrupted, is unlikely to produce a result that is credible and is able to command public confidence.

The legitimacy of any government that is installed in these circumstances will be open to question. This would be a terrible blow to the country's democracy. The people of Guyana do not deserve this.

Given the circumstances cited above, the OAS Electoral Observation Mission regrets that it has no option but to withdraw from Guyana. The Chief of Mission will prepare his report for submission to the Secretary General.

Statement by Sir Shridath Ramphal

In the darkness of disagreement, CARICOM's helpful intervention in trying to resolve the general elections process at the request of both President Granger and Opposition Leader, Bharat Jagdeo, was a ray of light.



Sir Shridath Ramphal

has had to withdraw.

Guyana is being deprived of regional and international approval and the opportunity for global respect at a time when it matters most.

CARICOM has not closed the door to proving the preciousness of its familial ties with Guyana; it can still play the role Guyana's two political leaders agreed it should.

What is required now is for all to place the interest of the nation above other narrow considerations that could mar the country's prospects and retard the strides that the people of Guyana have made collectively.

I urge that peace and progress be pursued lawfully and transparently.

Statement from UK Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab

The transition of government in Guyana should only take place in line with transparent and democratic principles that lead to credible results.

Any government sworn in on the basis of non-credible results will face strong international condemnation. If the situation continues to deteriorate, this international response will include a range of serious consequences for those concerned.

The UK remains ready, along with its partners, to assist in ensuring a credible process that provides the democratic outcome that the Guyanese people deserve.

Statement by the Commonwealth, EU, and the Carter Center

[March 13, 2020] The international election observation missions in Guyana are deeply concerned about the continued lack of transparency in the ascertainment of results for Region 4.

The order of the Honourable Chief Justice on 11 March was not followed. The tabulation process did not resume on 12 March as mandated by the court. When the tabulation process

was resumed on 13 March, it was not in line with the judgement, which required public tabulation as a safeguard and a measure for promoting transparency and accountability. The Chief Justice reasserted today that the actual Statements of Poll have to be displayed in this process.

The orders issued with the judgement should be complied with, and the tabulation process conducted and concluded accordingly. Unless and until this is done in Region 4, the election results cannot be considered credible.

The international election observation missions encourage all stakeholders to use all available means to conclude the electoral process in a transparent manner.

We again urge all political parties to adhere to the codes of conduct they signed and to do their utmost to ensure that a peaceful environment is maintained.

Statement from ABCE Diplomats

The Ambassador of the United States of America, H.E. Sarah-Ann Lynch, the British High Commissioner, H.E. Greg Quinn, the Canadian High Commissioner, H.E. Lilian Chatterjee, and the Ambassador of the European Union, H.E. Fernando Ponz-Canto, decided to leave the Region 4 tabulation process this morning as it was clear that a transparent and credible process was not put in place by the responsible officials.

Further, we are concerned about intimidation tactics we observed against those seeking to ensure that a credible process is followed.

We must be clear that in the absence of a credible process, as directed by the Honorable Chief Justice, it is our view that any results for Region 4 which will impact the overall results of the 2 March elections will not be credible and a President sworn in on the basis of those results will not be considered legitimate.

We are all long-standing friends of Guyana whose countries have supported its development over many decades. The betterment of Guyana and its people has always been our interest. In that spirit we urge all parties to not do anything which could lead to Guyana's isolation.

Statement by US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo

[Twitter March 6]: "Spoke with Canadian Deputy Prime Minister @CAFreeland to discuss the crisis in Venezuela, the COVID-19 outbreak, support for democratic transition in Guyana, and the importance of continued strong @OAS_Official leadership on democracy and human rights."

[Press Conference March 17]: "It's important to note that the individuals who seek to benefit from electoral fraud and form illegitimate governments/regimes will be subjected to a variety of serious consequences from the United States Government."

External Affairs Ministry, India

[March 19, 2020]: Statement by Mr Raveesh Kumar, India's External Affairs Ministry:

"We are following the developments with respect to elections in Guyana closely. As a democracy itself, and a time tested friend of Guyana, India would underline that it is important that Guyana's electoral processes are credible, fair and transparent," he said in response to media queries.

Ambassador Michael Kozak, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs - US Dept of State

[Twitter]: "The people of #Guyana deserve a credible election and transfer of power that reflects their will."

"Vote tabulation irregularities marred #Guyana's March 2 elections. Our Ambassador and many observers saw flawed tabulation. Irrespective of today's legal proceedings, any government sworn in on the basis of that result would not be legitimate."

[March 6] "At this juncture, preparations to install officials without resolving the serious issues identified in the vote counting process would create a climate of uncertainty for the citizens of Guyana, Guyana's international partners, and businesses looking to invest in Guyana."

[Twitter March 25]: "I summoned #Guyana Ambassador to the US Riyad Insanally to convey our firm position that any government sworn in based on flawed election results would not be legitimate. Every vote must be counted."

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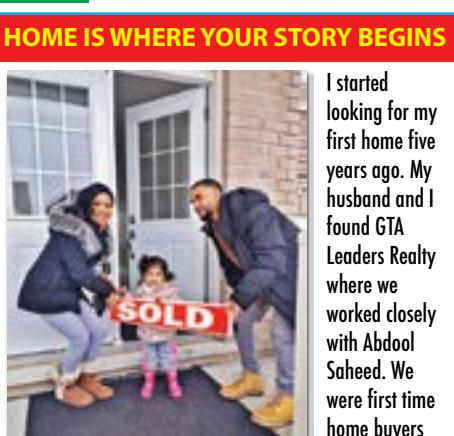


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Helpful hints to protect against the coronavirus

From page 3:

of whether they've travelled; people in long-term care facilities with influenza-like illness; and hospital-related illness, including health-care workers who are sick.

She emphasized, however, clinicians at assessment centres that are opening up across the country still have the ability to make their own judgement on who gets tested.

Several provinces and the federal government have created online self-assessment tools that will advise you what to do.

What About Travel?

The government has closed the border with the U.S. for non-essential travel, and strongly advises Canadians to avoid travelling anywhere as many countries impose movement bans, quarantines, and airlines ground flights.

All Canadian travellers returning from abroad are told they must self-isolate for 14 days after their arrival, regardless of whether they show symptoms, and monitor their health.

How Do I Self-Isolate?

Ideally, self-isolation means halting all contact with others, and setting up a space dedicated solely to the person being isolated.

Those who live with others should try to segregate parts of the home. Do not use common spaces at the same time; stay out of the kitchen; dedicate a separate washroom to that person if possible, and don't share towels or toiletries. Clean spaces where that individual has been and do not touch surfaces that person has touched before cleaning.

Only leave the home if it's absolutely necessary, such as to seek medical care.

If you have to interact with others, keep it brief. Try to maintain a safe distance and wear a mask, the agency says. Avoid people with chronic conditions, compromised immune systems and older adults.

What Is Social Distancing And How Can I Practise It?

Social distancing involves taking steps to increase the physical space between people to prevent the virus from spreading. Public health officials say this is key to reducing the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Officials insist people stay home as much as possible, and those who must go out should stay two metres away from others.

Other tips include avoiding crowds and going to public places during off-peak hours. If you are sick, stay home.

What Household Items Should I Have In Case I Need To Isolate?

Federal Health Minister Patty Hajdu has suggested that people gather enough food and other essentials, such as medicines and toiletries to last them through a two-week quarantine if needed.

However, Hajdu and other public officials, including Ontario Health Minister Christine Elliot, are also urging people not to stockpile or hoard these items, insisting it's not necessary.

The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 outbreak has led to many stores being cleared of items such as toilet paper, disinfectant wipes and certain non-perishable foods.

How Are Canadian Officials Responding To Covid-19?

Public health officials are working hard to identify and contain cases of community transmission.

Many provincial governments are taking extraordinary measures such as prohibiting large gatherings, closing schools and shuttering restaurants, gyms and theatres.

Several provinces have declared states of public emergency in response to the pandemic.

Where Can I Find Additional Credible Information?

Check government websites — federal, provincial and municipal — as well as the World Health Organization for the latest, credible information regarding the novel coronavirus.

For more information on an epidemiological summary in Canada visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html>

Where Can I Find Provincial Testing Information?

British Columbia:

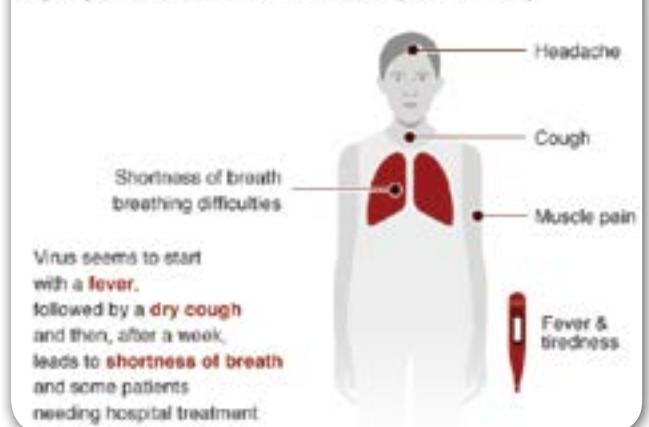
1-888-COVID-19 or healthlinkbc.ca

Alberta:

alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans

Saskatchewan:

Symptoms of coronavirus (Covid-19)



saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus

Manitoba:

1-888-315-9527 or gov.mb.ca/covid19

Ontario:

publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus

Quebec:

1-877-644-4545 or quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus

New Brunswick:

gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus.html

Nova Scotia:

novascotia.ca/coronavirus

Prince Edward Island:

1-800-958-6400 or princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/covid-19

Newfoundland and Labrador:

gov.nl.ca/covid-19/

Yukon:

yukon.ca/en/information-about-novel-coronavirus-yukon-ers

Northwest Territories:

1-833-378-8297 or hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/coronavirus-disease-covid-19

Nunavut:

gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus

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'We are on the brink of tremendous uncertainty...follow the health guidelines'

From page 1:

Speaking to Indo-Caribbean World last week, Dr Doobay said Vishnu Mandir's response to COVID-19's onslaught was to educate the community on how the coronavirus impacts on our community, and in the wider population.

Said Dr Doobay: "I think people should stay at home. This is number one for our community."

He also expressed concern about the increasing numbers of persons flouting what up to last week were persuasive government requests to avoid gathering in public. Canadians were being politely asked to observe physical distancing, remain at home, and for returning nationals to conscientiously maintain self-isolation.

However, late last week a few provinces, including Ontario, escalated from persuasive requests to more punitive measures.

Said Dr Doobay: "Those who are not affected think they're mightier than the coronavirus. When they get sick, only then would they appreciate the seriousness; how the virus affects everybody from young to old. People feel they're invincible until death comes, or serious illness."

As with his earlier *YouTube* message to Vishnu Mandir's faithful, Dr Doobay reiterated what he said had become a "mantra", imploring members of the community to take measures to avoid the COVID-19 infection.

"We should all be very careful. Wash the hand! Wash the hand! We can never over-emphasise this: wash the hand; and do not touch the face," he said.



Dr Vivian Rambihar

Along with Dr Doobay, Guyanese-born cardiologist, Dr Vivian Rambihar, was similarly insistent that the community follow the recommendations and public health guidelines.

Said Dr Rambihar: "We are in at the brink right now of tremendous uncertainty. We have to make it up as we go along... to be creative and find ways and answers, and right now to focus on two things."

His first recommendation was the community follow the public health guidelines on how to avoid becoming

infected by COVID-19.

"Many people do; but many do not [follow recommendations and public health guidelines]," he said. Additionally, "We are a social people in the West Indian community. Many of you feel [the virus infection] will not happen to you, and are continuing to do things like before."

His advice was to follow the instructions from "good science".

"If you don't, then it will be big trouble. We need to flatten the curve; we need cooperation and understanding. We have to suffer a bit for our own benefit, and for the good of the community. We have to put up with hardship for ourselves, and for the older people," he said.



Dr Budhendra Doobay

Dr Rambihar noted "a communal spirit" is needed at this time as COVID-19 sends its dire roots deeper into the province, adding, "Now it is about what you can do for the community."

For the second requirement, Dr Rambihar said isolation at home should be seen as a positive development. While the prospect of house quarantine was not appealing to a group known for its gregariousness, at the same time seclusion offered "many opportunities to do many things for our community".

Said Dr Rambihar: "Be creative, find ways and means to maintain contact with family, friends, and the wider community. Use the phone and call friends, make video calls, explore the online tool Zoom, and meet and talk with each other while social distancing."

Additionally, "Read about the things you always wanted to do; use the opportunity to exercise at home, around the yard, meditate, and focus on your health. This will all come to an end. What we have to do is not make it get worse."

Offering support and guidance to the community, Dr Rambihar said to make the best of a difficult situation was to utilise the down-time productively, noting it was an opportunity to focus on personal health, for example.

Said Dr Rambihar: "Devise routines that will keep you active physically and mentally. Ensure you have a purpose, such as focusing on bettering your health... doing something everyday that is positive so that when you return to interacting, you have not fallen into depression."

URGENT APPEAL FOR KIDNEY DONATION



Satwattie Sukul

Pandit Krishna Sukul who resides in Scarborough, Ontario, is appealing to the community for urgent assistance to help save the life of his 54-year old wife Satwattie Sukul.

She is suffering from kidney failure with both of her kidneys functioning at only 5% efficiency.

She is on peritoneal dialysis and has to do exchanges four times every day, which is done at home.

She has completed all the required medical examinations at the Scarborough General and St. Michael's Hospital and is currently on a waiting list for a kidney.

The estimated waiting period is between two to five years but with her kidney function deteriorating rapidly, urgent help is needed for a transplant of one kidney.

Her blood group is 'O', which is considered a priority but in the absence of a donor with this blood type, any other type of donor would be accepted. The doctors indicated that anyone can live happily with one kidney, and that a donor would be tested medically to ensure that there would be no complications before accepting a donation. Several individuals have done this type of procedures before and they are living a normal life.

Pt Sukul is making this earnest appeal for anyone who might be in a position to help save the life of his wife.

He may be contacted at (416) 267-5038 or through his sister Rajmini at (905) 783-0459.

McCarthy wants to make positive change

Thrilled with the opportunity to make a difference in her teenage years, the recently-crowned Miss Teenage Ontario 2020, Kristiana McCarthy says she plans to use the platform to "create a positive change, not only in my community, but across the nation".

It was a pleasant surprise when she won the Miss Teenage Ontario 2020 crown, she says.

New to the pageant world, the eighteen-year-old McCarthy says she applied for the Miss Teenage Ontario pageant without expecting to win. The move was more strategic, and was intended to acquire experience, and to help build her portfolio, she says.

Now that she is a delegate to the title, it has opened up other firsts for her, one of these being she is the first Indo-Caribbean to win the Ontario pageant.

"I am rather new to the pageant world," McCarthy says, adding, "I made my pageant debut in 2019. I placed first runner up in the Divali Nagar pageant in Trinidad and Tobago."

The Divali Nagar pageant is a well-recognised and patronised event, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but by the diaspora throughout the world. McCarthy came away with major successes in the categories for best sari, best hair, and best talent. That she is also professionally trained in dance, which she has been doing for the past nine years, no doubt added to her success at this major Caribbean event.

As Miss Teenage Ontario, McCarthy says she plans to use the platform to further her interests in intersectional feminism.

"As a woman of colour, the concept of intersectionality is very important to me," she notes.

Additionally, "Intersectionality is not limited to race and ethnicity only, but it also includes gender, sexuality, class, age, ability and faith, or lack thereof. This, paired with the importance of feminism creates a social movement that applies to women all around the globe. Each of these categories when combined, create a different life experience for women all around the world, with some being more positive than others."

McCarthy says some women have privileges that others do not share, which the theory of intersectional feminism helps to uncover. She notes such intersectional revelations contribute to the recognition and acknowledgement of differences, "rather than grouping women under the umbrella term of solely feminism".

Along with her more cerebral and academic endeavours, McCarthy is also a teen lead for Caribbean American Domestic Violence Awareness, and the WE ARE ONE movement. The latter helped donate needed items to Trinidad and Tobago during a massive flood, she says.

She has also set even more objectives that are beneficial to



Kristiana McCarthy

the community, with one of these goals being to utilise her reign as Miss Teenage Ontario to raise funds for the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada.

At this time, McCarthy is working on fundraising, her objective being to raise \$3,000 in sponsorships.

Danticat's narratives focus on Haiti, women, and the diaspora

By Romeo Kaseram

Edwidge Danticat was born on January 19, 1969 near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, during the regime of François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier. In 1971, when she was two years old, her father, André, left the family for New York, where he worked as a cab driver while on a tourist visa. Her mother, Rose, a seamstress, joined her husband two years later, leaving Danticat and her brother, André junior, behind with an aunt, and their uncle, Joseph.

Speaking with Maya Jaggi from *The Guardian*, Danticat recalled the trauma of separation during her mother's departure: "At the airport my uncle had to peel me off my mother's body. The hardest part was not knowing if it would be for days or years." According to Jaggi, her parents "had no papers in the US, and returned just once when she was seven, when they had applied for residency".

Meanwhile, the family had grown, with Danticat now having two brothers born abroad. As the family grew, so did an emotional rift, with Danticat recalling her parents' visit, telling Jaggi, "I felt that was the first time I saw my father; I was very distant with him."

Joseph gave Danticat the first books that she read, which helped to fill the lacuna left behind by her parents, and compensated for his lack of demonstrativeness – "[We] were loved, but not cuddled", she tells Jaggi. Writing in her 2002 essay *My Personal Journey*, Jaggi notes how Danticat's narrative delves even further into absences and lacunae, that Joseph's house was a place of shelter, but also of emptiness, with a sad, lingering anticipation. In Danticat's words, the house was "filled with children whose parents had migrated to other countries – the US, Canada, France, the Dominican Republic – promising to send for them as soon as they were settled abroad". She adds, it was a "house full of kids in which we vanished... I retreated into silence. Children are resilient, but you get layers of sadness and melancholy."

While her parents paid for private school, it was a place of "hard beatings", Jaggi tells us; also imperial and colonising, with Danticat noting, "[If] you spoke Creole not French, the teacher didn't hear you". However, there were glimpses of sunshine in her early life, with Danticat recalling summer visits to the mountains of Léogane, and her grandmother narrating stories in Creole after sundown. Says Danticat of

Lucretia jumped out of sleep without knowing why. She lay in bed, wide awake, and scared. She listened to her dad's snoring in the next room. Her mom would have shaken him awake if the disturbance had interrupted her rest. Maybe the snore had drowned out the noise that had jumped Lucretia out of sleep, or perhaps she had experienced a bad dream. She refused to glance at the clock for fear of the midnight hour.

Cold sweat pasted her nightgown and light cotton bedcover to her body. She felt a slight tug of the sheet at her foot. She tried to convince herself that the subtly shaking bed resulted from either the overactive imagination of a thirteen-year-old or the pounding of fear in her heart. Or was it an involuntary shiver from trepidation? Lucretia froze and moved only her eyeballs to scan the darkness for evil, even though she prayed not to encounter it.

Scratching under the bed cut her breath. The family did not have mice since her dad had sealed the vent between the ceiling and the walls with fine metal mesh, which resisted the little annoying animals' attempts to gnaw through it, attracted by bread and other covered goodies in the kitchen.

Even though Lucretia had seen evidence of mice droppings, she had never had personal encounters with them like the neighbor's kids.

The children had complained of mice slicing the outer skin off the soles of their feet while they slept. They had even shown proof of the surgical skills of the little critters' scalpel-sharp oversized upper incisors.

Another series of scratches stiffened her body. She clutched her throat to stifle a scream. Lucretia pulled up her legs and rolled on her side into a fetal position to keep her body in the center of the bed, away from the edges and whatever unknown forces lurked in the dark space underneath.

"Oh, my God!" Lucretia gasped. "The Ouija Board!"

Lucretia had always made sure to tell it 'Goodbye' at the end of each play session with her friends. She wondered if she had forgotten on the last occasion and left the portal open for some evil force to sneak into the world of the living.

She tried to push terror out of her mind with the logic that the scratching may have come from giant tropical cockroaches that fly around and into homes at dusk before homeowners have a chance to close their windows for the night.

With sleep completely gone out of her eyes, She closed them and used her memory to search back in time to activities that may have produced a bad dream that had scared her awake.

Recollection took her back to a recurring nightmare she

these memorable moments: "I loved the vibrant interaction between teller and listener." Also, she heard stories about her grandfather and his resistance to the US occupation: "These things are not written anywhere. Sitting with an older person tells you another side."

Danticat was already writing as a nine-year-old in Haiti. Three years later, at 12, she left Haiti for New York, moving to Brooklyn in 1981 to join her parents in a heavily Haitian-American neighbourhood, *Wikipedia* tells us. Britannica notes Danticat encountered some difficulty adapting to life in the US due to her "Creole language and Haitian dress and manners". It adds, "Partly as a way to escape these unpleasant situations, she wrote stories, a practice she had started at an early age".

It was her parents' hope she would enter medicine, *Britannica* adds; however, Danticat had other ideas, and graduated from Barnard College in New York City in 1990 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in French Literature. Later, she worked briefly as a secretary, and in 1993, convoked with a Master of Fine Arts degree from Brown University, Rhode Island. Britannica notes her Masters' thesis was a part autobiographical account of the relationships between several generations of Haitian women. She was 25 years old when it was published as *Breath, Eyes, Memory* in 1994. Jaggi tells us sales for *Breath, Eyes, Memory* hit six figures after it was chosen by Oprah Winfrey for the TV book club in 1998.

Danticat followed *Breath, Eyes, Memory* with *Krik? Krak!* in 1996; it was a finalist for the National Book Award. *Britannica* notes her second novel, *The Farming of Bones* (1998), uses as its title the Haitian term for harvesting cane, and was set against the background of the massacre of Haitian emigrants by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1937.

Danticat's third novel, *The Dew Breaker* (2004), her third novel, "alludes to a Creole phrase for a hitman, who comes for his victims before the dew", Jaggi notes. She quotes Danticat

saying the book offers a way to "look at the human face of the [Duvalier] dictatorship. We knew the Tontons Macoutes, went to school with their children. I wanted to explore the aftermath on another generation." *Wikipedia* also notes *The Dew Breaker* to be "a collection of short stories that can either be read together or separately, and detail the intermingled lives of different people in Haiti and New York". It also quotes *The New York Times*, which said: "Each tale in *The Dew Breaker* can stand on its own beautifully made story, but they come together as jigsaw-puzzle pieces to create a picture of this man's [a member of the Tontons Macoutes] terrible history and his and his victims' afterlife."

Also among her books is *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (2010), which is a collection of essays, according to *Britannica*, "concerning the hazards of writing about Haiti while living in the United States". *Britannica* adds Danticat also wrote a segment of the film *Girl Rising* (2013), a collection of ten parables about young women from around the world seeking education under difficult circumstances. It adds the novel *Claire of the Sea Light* (2013) "spirals outward

from the disappearance of a young girl to tell the stories of the friends and neighbours searching for her in the Haitian seaside town of Ville Rose".

Danticat's *Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation* (2015), is a children's book about a young Haitian immigrant to the US whose mother is imprisoned for not having proper documentation. Her *Untwine* (2015), is a novel for young adults, and looks at "the ramifications of a tragic accident that befalls a pair of twins", according to *Britannica*. In *The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story* (2017), Danticat recounts her own mother's passing, while exploring how other writers have depicted death.

Wikipedia tells us that although Danticat lives in the US, she still considers Haiti to be her home.

Sources for this exploration: *The Guardian*; *Wikipedia*; and *Britannica*.



Edwidge Danticat

The Supernatural The Terror Within



used to have during her summer vacation with her grandparents in the village where they lived.

In the days before electricity came to the village, the old neighbor next door had died. Lucretia's natural seven-year-old curiosity sent her crawling out of bed and tiptoeing to a second-floor window to peek down through the neighbor's open window. Her heart thumped at the sight of the shrouded corpse lying on ice in an aluminum body tray in the living room of the one-story wooden house next door.

Lucretia gasped with fright when the dead woman's evil eyes flipped open and glared at her with eyeballs that reflected the orange light of the full moon shining on her bony, wrinkled face. Throughout her life, the old woman was suspected of performing black magic rituals against her alleged enemies.

Lucretia scrambled back to bed on weak knees and a churning stomach. An instant fever made her delirious. Her grandma heard her loud moans and thrashing around on the bed. Her grandmother came over to investigate and called Lucretia's grandfather with panic in her voice. They calmed her and brought her over to their bed, where they performed some religious rituals to settle her down. She stayed in their bed for the rest of the night.



Kamil Ali

Sleeping between her grandparents for the next week gave Lucretia comfort. Still, it did not stop the nightmares from invading her dreams and making her scream whenever the old lady's face contorted into a snarling clown with loud eerie and haunting giggles that deafened her.

During the days, Lucretia glanced over her shoulders often and never wandered away from her grandparents during her waking moments. She jumped at every unexpected sound.

Unlike previous vacations in the country which ended too soon, Lucretia welcomed the sight of her parents halfway through her holidays. She needed to get away from that Satan worshipping neighbor.

After Lucretia returned to the city and never returned to the village for vacation, the nightmares gradually faded over time and disappeared completely.

Now, six years later, Lucretia was faced with another horror that she had unwittingly created as an experiment.

At the funeral of a dead relative whom she perceived as a lover of children, she had no fears when she followed her parents to view the body in the coffin.

Once at the deceased's head, she stared at the closed eyelids and requested the relative's protection as a spiritual guide and guardian angel to watch over her.

Nothing happened for a few months, but she found that the clown face had started creeping back into her dreams and frightening her awake, making her tense whenever she heard a strange noise. She was sure that the clown had awakened her, even though she had not remembered the nightmare.

Had the evildoer slipped back into Lucretia's world by deceit? There was only one way to find out.

Lucretia took a deep breath and steeled her nerves. She hopped off the bed in a blinding flash of movement and snatched the Ouija game box from under the bed and dived back onto the bed. She instantly moved the game-piece to 'Goodbye'.

The game shook violently. A blood-curdling screech emanated from it and faded into the depths of hell, dispelling Lucretia's fears forever.

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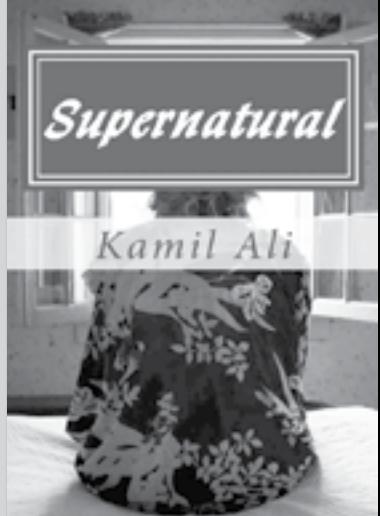


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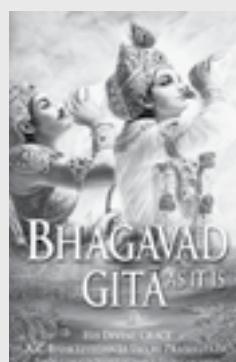
Kamil Ali was born in Kingston, a suburb of Georgetown, Guyana (British Guiana at the time of birth).

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TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Stranded nationals seek a way home

Port-of-Spain – Attorneys representing the 32 Trinidad and Tobago nationals currently in Suriname were last week finishing applications to submit to Minister of National Security Stuart Young for their clients to re-enter Trinidad and Tobago.



Minister of National Security
Stuart Young

Trinidad and Tobago's borders were locked down last month in an attempt to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Both nationals and non-nationals are not being allowed entry.

Attorney Gerald Ramdeen said all members of the group in Suriname, who travelled there on official duties, had no issue with self-quarantine when they return.

"We are in the process of doing the ap-

plications right now. What I want you to know is that all of them have agreed to go into quarantine, or abide by whatever other measures the State has in place, or requires them to do. Once we have completed the applications, it will be sent to the minister immediately," Ramdeen last week.

Ramdeen said his intervention on behalf of the nationals stranded in Suriname was in response to a letter from Minister Young. In that letter, Young stated whoever wanted to return to Trinidad and Tobago should make individual applications to him.

However, once an application is made by an individual, it does not necessarily mean the minister will allow entry. Young has the legal authority to grant or refuse access to anyone into the country.

Last Wednesday, Ramdeen and attorney Umesh Maharaj issued a pre-action protocol letter to Young over his decision to close the borders, which had the effect of preventing the 32 nationals from re-entering this country until further notice.

Maharaj and Ramdeen said the policy was exceptionally "uncaring and callous and is opposite to that of every other civilised state battling the global pandemic".

According to the attorneys, the 32 nationals have not been experiencing any symptoms of the COVID-19 virus. They were in Suriname in professional capacities, working in the oil and gas and services sector on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago-based companies.



Attorney Gerald Ramdeen

In the letter, both attorneys stated: "While other countries treat as paramount the safety and security of their citizens wherever they may be, this government prides itself on transferring the responsibility to ensure the safety and security of its citizens to other sovereign states."

Last week, Young said: "I accept that I have a discretion under the Regulation to permit the entry into Trinidad of aircraft carrying passengers. That discretion will be exercised having regard to the individual circumstances of each case, and the need to balance the hardship which may be caused to persons wishing to enter Trinidad and Tobago, on the one hand, and the pressing responsibility to protect and safeguard the health and well-being of all residents, on the other."

Based on this response by Young to another stranded national, that Ramdeen said his clients decided to file individual applications for exemption.



Pundit Parasram Maharaj



Archbishop Fr Jason Gordon

Religious heads urge faith, purpose

Port-of-Spain – Religious leaders in Trinidad and Tobago last week urged nationals to utilise the down-time during the national two-week shutdown to reconnect with others, experience faith, and find purpose. The leaders made the call for unity and introspection during 'A Day of Prayer with Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley'.

Leaders of different faiths called on the population to give in to love and hope rather than fear and despair, and to view the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown of non-essential services as a God-given chance for rebirth into a better people.

Religious heads joined Rowley and his wife, Sharon. The event was streamed on social media.

Its aim was to provide services to people who would have turned to their faith for comfort, but were now housebound due to self-isolation to prevent spread of COVID-19 coronavirus.

Included were heads of the Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Catholic and Baptist faiths. Each representative issued a common message of hope, and that God in-

tended for Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the world, to emerge renewed from the scourge of the coronavirus. It was a time to stop and review what is important, the religious leaders said.

Among the leaders was Pundit Parasram Maharaj, who expressed confidence that the country would navigate its way out of the COVID-19 crisis. Pundit Maharaj noted that Trinidad and Tobago has faced many challenges before, and always emerged strong. He gave the reassurance it can do so again.

In performing Sunday Mass, Roman Catholic Archbishop Fr Jason Gordon said the shutdown until April 15 should be viewed as God's attempt to "bring us out of our grave".

Gordon said the country was already living a "death", as it witnessed a rising murder toll and declining quality of life. It was a "death" far worse than what is being promised or threatened by COVID-19.

Being closed-in together, while presenting challenges, was also an opportunity for healing and forgiveness within families and relationships, Gordon said.

Now panic buying for medications

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago's pharmacies were last week hit with panic buying, causing pharmacists to voice concern that immune booster and regular medications could run low.

On Friday Pharmacy Board president, Andrew Rahaman, said the trend of people buying medication three and four months in advance, and suppliers running low, were becoming major concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic has created uncertainty for many patients, and they were consequently stocking up on medication, he said.

Said Rahaman: "For those who can afford, instead of buying one month's supply, they are buying three and four months in advance, [which is leading to]

a higher demand. I foresee it will cause other drugs to run out from the wholesalers. When people were buying one month at a time, it gave the wholesalers and pharmacies time to replenish the quantities. The way they are buying now may create a problem."

Rahaman said the demand for regular medication to treat diabetes, high blood pressure, and other ailments, outside of the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme, is now at an all-time high as customers have little confidence that their medication will be available.

He added that unlike many supermarkets that limited the number of items a customer can purchase during the panic buying frenzy, his board is yet to take a

decision to limit the quantity of medication customers can buy.

Earlier this month India restricted export of some of its drugs in a move to ensure a supply to its population. India supplies medication to Trinidad and Tobago, including some on the CDAP list.

Apart from medication, Rahaman said there is also an increase in sales for immune boosters.

"All the immune boosters are running low, and in some pharmacies there is no more. A lot of things for fever, especially for children, you can't get; the brand names are not available. Quite a few things have become scarce already, and we cannot get our stocks replenished," he said.

Rahaman noted the shortage of immune boosters is not only affecting the pharmacies, but suppliers are now reporting shortages.

Persad-Bissessar praises health care workers

Port-of-Spain – Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar last week expressed gratitude to health-care workers on the frontline in Trinidad and Tobago leading the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. She also urged non-essential personnel to stay at home in order to flatten the curve.

She praised healthcare workers, thanking them for being the nation's heroes, saying, "Our healthcare professionals have been doing an amazing job, and I want to thank them. To all our nurses, doctors, paramedics, and hospital staff who are all on the front line of this national fight, you are national heroes," she said.

Persad-Bissessar also addressed the nation, saying, "My friends, I know that many of you are worried at this time... I urge everyone to remain calm. Now more than ever we must be our brothers' and sisters' keepers."

Last week it was announced by the government that a third person had died from the coronavirus. Persad-Bissessar said the latest death was sad news, while expressing condolences to the deceased person's "family, families, friends and loved ones".

"[I] pray that you find comfort in this time of sorrow," she said.

Persad-Bissessar also emphasised the importance of working together while engaging in physical distancing to contain this virus. She said the example of dire consequence is notable in other countries when the simple guidelines, such as hand-washing,



Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar

self-isolation, and physical distancing, are not followed.

Said Persad-Bissessar: "Let us ensure our healthcare system is not overwhelmed, and we have many more persons recovering."

She added, "My fellow citizens, at this critical time, we must all play a part in the national fightback against COVID-19. We must all face this crisis together."

She also reminded nationals of Trinidad and Tobago's watchwords: Together we aspire. Together we

achieve, saying, "Together, we will emerge from this crisis a stronger and more united people."

Persad-Bissessar said in this "time of great uncertainty, we turn to prayer to find solace and hope".

She added: "Let us lift our hearts. Let us show the strength in our diversity, many different religions, praying for our country. I encourage everyone to keep our nation, our health care and frontline workers in our prayers daily. Stay safe everyone! And may God bless our nation."

Chaos with lockdown order - Moonilal

Port-of-Spain – Oropouche UNC MP Dr Roodal Moonilal said last week the announcement by the government of a stay-at-home order caused "mass confusion and panic". He added it led to a mad scramble where persons overwhelmed groceries and other business places.

Last Thursday the government announced that only essential services would be able to operate; it released a list the next day.

Said Moonilal: "It was unbelievable to hear the leader of the government announce in typically hard-talk fashion a national lockdown of non-essential services in one breath. And in another, tell us that he did not know what is essential and what is not, because they were still working that out."

He added, "So, the Prime Minister provoked national panic."

Moonilal said the list revealed on Friday was so general that the implementation of the policy could lead to serious abuses by law enforcement.

"It seems that the non-essential people are the unemployed and the limers," he said.

Moonilal also cited what Chamber of Commerce chief executive Gabriel Faria said, that there was no consultation with the business community on the stay-at-home order.

He also noted there was no need for the three-day delay between the announcement and the implementation of the stay-at-home order, since the virus was given three days to roam free.

"This 72-hour period is a deadly delay," he said. Additionally, the virus



UNC MP Dr Roodal Moonilal

would not wait until "the Cinderella hour" of midnight... to infect persons and threaten health and lives.

Moonilal said the shopping malls and other shops could have been closed immediately upon the announcement on Thursday.

"The government appears to be making policy as they walk into the press conferences. They have the habit of making uncooked policy announcements," he added.

He also criticised the "obscene defiance of the lockdown" by Finance Minister Colm Imbert.

Last week, Imbert sent out a release stating that "notwithstanding the restrictions on activities that were announced" by Rowley, the offices of the Board of Inland Revenue would remain opened to allow taxpayers to make quarterly payments on corpo-

ration and income tax that were due.

"That would entail lines at BIR and that is a complete defiance of the government's own policy," Moonilal said. He also noted the date of the declaration of the coronavirus as a dangerous infectious disease by the President was January 31, 2020.

He said when the Prime Minister was sprinkling powder on all those close to him on Carnival Monday and Tuesday, it was one month after the government had declared the virus to be "dangerous, infectious and certain to come to Trinidad and Tobago".

Moonilal said notwithstanding the "lockdown", there has been no discernible sign of increased patrols along the southwest peninsula where illegal and unscreened migrants continue to come in, posing a serious health threat.

Let us win this war - Rowley

Port-of-Spain – Invoking the metaphor of war against the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley last week called on nationals to "take cover", saying the best offence was defence by retreating and staying at home.

Rowley made the call during an address to the nation on Sunday night, hours before the country was shut down for two weeks until April 15.

He warned that COVID-19 will continue to infect more people, and possibly claim more lives.

"We expect that in the coming weeks the situation will change, not for the better, because the models show that we expect more infections and possibly more loss of life. What we are trying to do is to minimise those numbers by our response and behaviour, which simply said withdraw and isolate," he said.

Rowley drew his metaphor from the two World wars, pointing out that outside of the Port-of-Spain General Hospital at Memorial Park, there is a memorial that holds the names of many who fought to defend Trinidad and Tobago.

"There are names there from the Great War of 1914 to 1918, the First World War, and there are names there from the Second World War 1939 to 1945, those who lost their lives in defence of the people of Trinidad and Tobago," he said.

He added, "We are at war today. The difference between this war and those world wars were that those who picked up arms to defend us carried guns, fired bullets. The war that we are fighting now is an invisible enemy, a microbe pathogen that you will not see with the naked eye," he said.

Rowley said soldiers in both wars were injured by incoming bullets and cannons and the casualties were immediately seen. However, when the COVID-19 struck, it took days before casualties emerged.

Then, during the wars, the instructions were to aim and fire, Rowley said. "Today the instructions are to take cover, meaning stay home.



Dr Keith Rowley

Do not congregate. Isolate and quarantine yourself," he said.

With COVID-19, the enemy passed from one person to another silently, he noted. Also, during the war years, fighters were selected for their height, strength, and weight.

"Today every single one of us has to be a soldier because the enemy could come from any one of us; therefore, we have to be extra careful," he said.

Rowley noted the elderly were vulnerable to the virus because their immune systems were weaker. However, also troublesome is recently young children are also emerging as vulnerable.

"The most wide-ranging law in this war is the law of common sense," he said. It was his hope common sense would prevail in the population.

Said Rowley: "In this war, the main weapon is basic hygiene. That is not written in any law. Even if it's written,

the law cannot guarantee that hands will be washed and faces will not be touched. Such is the nature of the response today going forward, that is the antidote that is present and, until a vaccine becomes available, it's the best and only weapon we have, so please let common sense prevail and let personal responsibility be your contribution."

S&P lowers T&T's credit rating

Port-of-Spain – Following the global collapse of oil and gas prices in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, S&P Global Ratings last week lowered Trinidad and Tobago's long-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings to "BBB-" from "BBB". However, S&P noted that Trinidad and Tobago's outlook is stable.

At the same time, S&P Global Ratings lowered its short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings to "A-3" from "A-2". S&P Global Ratings also revised down its transfer and convertibility assessment to "BBB" from "BBB+".

According to S&P Global Ratings, the decision to revise downwards Trinidad and Tobago's sovereign rating was based on expected lower oil and gas prices over the next several years that it estimates will impact the government revenues and lead to larger increases in net general government debt.

S&P Global rating said the stable outlook balances the risk that lower hydrocarbon prices may lead to

greater deterioration in the country's growth, external finances, or interest burden, with its expectation that the government's financial assets will provide a safeguard for economic volatility.

"The stable outlook reflects our expectation that lower oil and gas prices will lead to larger increases in net general government debt, a fall in exports that will contribute to a moderate current account deficit, and an economic contraction in 2020. Nevertheless, we believe that the government's liquid external assets provide some flexibility to mitigate the impact of lower prices," the report read.

Trinidad and Tobago is expecting to have a (TT) \$5 billion shortfall in revenue in this fiscal year due to the impact of lower demand for energy and with it a massive fall in oil and gas prices.

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The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

The strange tale of actor Raj Kiran - lost and found

By Reena Daruwala

Remember that hauntingly beautiful melody "Tum itna jo muskura rahi ho" and the shy faced, sensitive actor in Mahesh Bhatt's acclaimed film *Arth*, as he cuts a small pastry to celebrate the birthday of Shabana Azmi's character in the film? That man is Bollywood actor Raj Kiran, who at the time showed great promise with his histrionic ability, and who then seemed to fall off the face of the earth.

For 10 years, no one knew where Raj Kiran was but with the efforts of his co-stars from the past, such as Rishi Kapoor and Deepti Naval, he was located – at a psychiatric facility in Atlanta in the United States. This led to the splashing of news headlines all over the news channels "Hero Pagalkhaane Mein" screamed *Aaj Tak*, "Actor Raj Kiran found in mental asylum in US" says a CNN IBN news headline. In turn *NDTV*'s reportage of the mysterious actor was Raj Kiran – *Languishing in an Asylum*.

Raj Kiran Mehtani is probably best known for his portrayal of Raj in the film *Arth* where he plays the role of the man with unrequited love for Pooja (Shabana Azmi), and his portrayal of Ravi Verma in the cult Bollywood film *Karz* – the role of the man who is killed by Simi Grewal's character and who is reincarnated as Monty Oberio (Rishi Kapoor). In *Karz*, clever use was made of the resemblance that Raj Kiran and Rishi Kapoor had to each other, to create the saga of reincarnation.

Additionally Raj Kiran had acted in films such as *Shiksha* (his first film), *Yeh Kaisa Insaaf*, *Patita*, the commercial success *Ghar ek Mandir*, the critically acclaimed *Hip Hip Hurray*, *Ilzaam*, *Teri Meherbaniyan* and many others. He has done character roles in over a hundred films and was an acknowledged talent in Bollywood.

After his stint in Bollywood that lasted about a decade (from



Raj Kiran

1970 to about 1980) movie audiences saw and heard little of him. After he disappeared from the film firmament, he was reportedly deserted by his family and became mentally unstable and for a decade or so was presumed dead.

His family consisted of wife Kathija Nachiyar and son named Tipu Sultan and brothers Govind Mehtani and Ajit Mehtani. Kiran's family supposedly deserted him because of his

mood swings and this was the breaking point for him.

Some years ago actress Shabana Azmi had met him in a mental asylum in Mumbai when he seemed confused but then showed some signs of lucidity. She then hoped of her colleague's recovery.

Deepti Naval posted a message on her *Facebook* page, "Looking for a friend from the film world his name is Raj Kiran — we have no news of him — last heard he was driving a cab in NY city if anyone has any clue, please tell."

Similarly Rishi Kapoor, his *Karz* co-star, who remembered Raj as a clever and well read person whom he got along really well with, wondered where the actor had disappeared to and was disturbed about his colleague's whereabouts. "How can a colleague with whom I shared some really good times just vanish from the face of earth? I decided to look up Raj's elder brother Govind Mehtani to find out about Raj," Kapoor was quoted as having said.

Raj Kiran was then staying and working at the institution in Atlanta, where he paid for his treatment by working there as well, it was discovered.

Rishi Kapoor wanted to bring Raj Kiran "back where he belongs", presuming that once a fine actor always a fine actor should be able to recreate a place for himself in the film industry. He issued a personal assurance that he would help the former actor reestablish himself in the industry.

Mahesh Bhatt recalls the similar case of Parveen Babi when she had a mental breakdown and then died tragically. Parveen Babi had demonstrated symptoms of schizophrenia and had even filed petitions in Mumbai courts naming Bill Clinton and Amitabh Bachchan as accused who were supposedly trying to kill her.

These are sad tales of individuals unable to handle the pressures of the arc lights or perhaps just the personal pressures of life; whose misfortunes are bandied about in the press simply because they are or were at some point in the public arena.

While Parveen Babi was beyond help, one wished that there was hope for the really fine actor that was Raj Kiran – that that smiling visage will once again grace the silver screen.

Bollywood gets better at portraying crimes against women, but still has miles to go

With the four men convicted of raping and murdering a young woman being hanged, one chapter in India's history of aggravated sexual assault has ended but the framework in which the violence took place still exists, albeit a little weaker – and Bollywood, say experts, is a critical pillar of that structure.

A bewildering number of mainstream Hindi films, right from the 60s to the 90s, figured graphic portrayals of rape with lascivious villains and helpless heroines.

And while things have changed with films such as "Pink", "Thappad" and the post #MeToo-set "Guilty" that deal with consent, domestic violence and society's treatment of rape survivors, sexual violence against women is still used as a tool to forward the story of the protagonist, mostly male, in films as recent as "Kaabil" and "Simmba".

This concept is known as "fridging" in cinema.

"Bollywood has normalised rape... Masculinity is an important narrative device in Bollywood cinema: strong masculinity and the threats to it," sociologist Sanjay Srivastava told *PTI*.

"There is a long history to this, particularly relating to the division between "good" and "bad" women where rape was frequently presented as an instrument of control. Bollywood has presented rape as a relationship between men: if a woman is raped, it is the men of the family who are insulted because (they feel) they have been unable to "protect" the women of the family," he explained.

In film historian SMM Ausaja's view, only a few Hindi films focus on the crime. In most cases, the plot becomes more about the "hero" extracting revenge from the bad guys.

"It's always just an element of the narrative and to draw the revenge story forward... in "Andha Kanoon", for instance, Rajinikanth's sister was raped and then the revenge story goes forward. There are so many movies like that," Ausaja told *PTI*.

The December 16, 2012 gangrape, which sparked nationwide protests and led to a change in India's rape laws, also inspired introspective documentaries and a Netflix series "Delhi Crime" focusing on the police investigation into the crime,

Of the six accused, one allegedly committed suicide in Tihar jail while another, a juvenile, is out after serving a three-year sentence.

"Delhi Crime" is probably the only fictionalised account that engaged with the topic in a sensitive yet matter-of-fact approach, a narrative style that "Broadchurch" and "Unbelievable" employed to critical acclaim. While the former is a British series set in a fictional English town in Dorset, the latter is an American show based on a 2015 news article.

Canadian Indian filmmaker Richie Mehta, in an earlier interview to *PTI*, said he did not want to depict the crime in the series neither in visuals nor audio form.

"I was very clear from the beginning that I didn't want to



A still from 'Thappad'.

showcase the rape scene because I wanted the series to be about the procedure, not the crime," the "Delhi Crimes" director said.

"We weren't harnessing the pain, we were harnessing the strength of being able to catch the culprits," actor Shefali Shah, who fronted the critically-acclaimed show, had said.

The incident was also the focus of British filmmaker Leslee Udwin's documentary "India's Daughter", which was banned in India. The documentary featured an interview with Mukesh Singh, one of the convicts who was executed last Friday, confessing to the crime.

In Hindi films dealing with the topic of rape, there is a trend of replacing men with women as avengers.

"Mom", starring Sridevi, and "Maatr" with Raveena Tandon, which released back-to-back in 2017, revolved around the leading women avenging the gangrape of their daughters.

Rani Mukerji's 2014 film "Mardaani" features a female cop fighting a gang of women traffickers and in the 2019 follow up, a juvenile rapist, a character derived from real life incidents. Mukerji said the "Mardaani" franchise was born "out of the rage" the country felt after the gangrape.

"The first film was obviously, born out of the rage that we felt for Nirbhaya. I think as a country, we all were quite angered and shaken up. Because that was the first time through the me-

dia, we actually got to know the gory details of what happened to that woman," the actor had said in an interview at the time of the film's release.

According to Tandon, Indian cinema has started portraying gangrape cases in a sensitive manner.

"We have become quite aware and sensitised towards the issue, which wasn't probably so in the '70s and '80s. The trend started changing in the '90s. It is something that now whether it is our filmmakers, actors, everyone portrays this sensitively. It is an issue which needs to be taken up even more seriously," she told *PTI*.

Bollywood has often been called out for using harassment as a wooing method and the industry does not fare well in its dealing with crimes related to women.

Innumerable films have used "fridging" as a plot device – the most notable being "Ankush" in 1986 and "Mohra" in 1994. And more recently, Hrithik Roshan's "Kaabil", Sanjay Dutt-Aditi Rao Hydari's "Bhoomi" and Ranveer Singh-starrer "Simmba" in 2018.

There are some standout films. Rekha-Vinod Mehra-starrer "Ghar" in 1978, for instance, dealt sensitively with the subject with the dynamic between a woman who has been gangraped and her husband, shorn of the excessive melodrama that is a part of so many films.



Sehwag's early dismissal, India's defensive shell, Ganguly's form and crowd jeers - the rollicking Day 5 had all the makes of a gripping thriller that culminated in Pakistan's series-levelling victory

Forgotten classics: India vs Pakistan, 2005, Bangalore

By Vineet Anantharaman, Cricbuzz

On a scale of life's realities that range from underplaying to stretching the truth, India-Pakistan is brutally amplified exaggeration. Everyone has an opinion and each one of that everyone wants it to be heard. From heads of states to wannabe heads of states; from NGOs to the UN; from right-wing extremists to wannabe right-wing extremists; from television experts to television experts turned YouTubers; from poster worshippers to TV smashers, you can't not have colour in your buildup.

Alas, that's where the colour ends, for when the action slips into the whites, it's more often than not either dull, or anticlimactic, or one-sided, and simply disappointing.

Not Bangalore 2005, which took place 15 years ago last week.

This was a time when the FTP between these two teams was being honoured, and they were playing each other a little too frequently. It was the return tour, the one where the 'friendship of 2004' was being reciprocated with hospitality.

Pakistan, still under the hangover of the humiliation of conceding the series to India at home without any real fight, were 0-1 down in a three-Test series, a scoreline that could just as easily have been 0-2 had it not been for an utterly un-Pakistan rearguard at Mohali. Chinnaswamy gave them the hope to equalise. In fact, from 1995 to 2010, Chinnaswamy gave every visitor more than just hope. It was the perfect host, where the home side just wouldn't win.

Anil Kumble had been a thorn in this Pakistan side. It's not that their batting came with a reputation for being sensible, but Kumble had thus far made a bunny out of the one guy who tried to be – Inzamam-ul-Haq – dismissing him seven times in as many matches. "He has got more than 450 wickets, and not all of them have come against us," Inzamam tried to justify after losing the second Test in Kolkata.

"I am confident we can draw level at Bangalore. All our batsmen are in form, we just need to be stronger in the mind and need a combined effort."

Meanwhile, the curator in-charge had taken it upon himself to put the city's road contractors to shame, churning out a sleeping beauty of a track with the potential to last an entire season. He'd clearly gone down the overt defensive route; maybe the Indian think-tank had gone down this route too. They'd rather keep the 1-0, secure the series, secure their jobs, secure their homes from the chances of being vandalised.

So Pakistan chose to bat. Inzamam was the superstar, Younis Khan his sidekick, and together, they were just poetry. That's what Test cricket allows, the survival of the fittest and the fattest in equal measure. Pakistan eventually finished with 570 in just under two days, something that's usually enough to eliminate one of the three possible results. Just not when Virender Sehwag is in the opposition ranks.

Sehwag in his mood does no poetry, he does a rap, throwing punch after punch while making practically everyone who dares to come midway look like a fool. On day three, while he was whistling around at a strike-rate of nearly 80, the others were prodding, pushing, chipping, doing what you're meant to do in a Test match.

The punches then sting a lot more during the pressers when he comes up with, "I found no-one difficult today". Which made one wonder who would take more offence – the Pakistani bowlers or his fellow batters. Seam, pace, bounce, spin, sledges, he had the same answer for everything en route his double-ton – a smack.

But the rest of the Indian batting collapsed to hand over a significant lead before Shahid Afridi cut loose and Inzamam decided to gamble with the declaration, giving India a sniff with a target of 358 on the final day.

"We will definitely go for a win," confirmed VVS Laxman at the end of day four while speaking to the press. "The start is very important. The way Sehwag plays, anything is possible."

Ten minutes into the morning, and with a couple of plays and misses already, Gautam Gambhir decided to poke a little harder at an Abdul Razzaq delivery that was already angling across. It found a crack, deviated some more, and had a loud woody sound as it went past the bat. It could only have been the edge.

Simon Taufel didn't hear it.

A couple of balls later, Sehwag flirted at a Mohammad Sami lifter. Inzamam couldn't take it any longer. It was Sehwag on this occasion after all, and the Pakistan captain jumped from first slip, charged halfway down the pitch and let out a massive appeal in the umpire's face, angrily waving his hands as he did so. Lo and behold, he got exactly what you get with such pressure appeals: a one-match ban.

The first hour was seen out without casualty for India's sake – albeit with a lot of fuss. Then came the twist.

Gambhir tapped one gently into the leg-side, Sehwag aimlessly wandered down the pitch, Razzaq charged in from mid-on with one stump to aim at before swooping in to throw that stump down. Sehwag had once said the calling between him and Gambhir was "*aankhon aankhon me*" (with eye contact only). Alas, this one could've been averted with some use of the mouth.

One expected India to slow down, but they went the entire extreme and just shut up shop. To put things into context, they were going at 3.67 runs per over while Sehwag was around, and 1.91 after he departed. Such is the shell that Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid went into that they simply refused to put anything away.

"I was upset at that point because I knew that my dismissal meant that we would not win," Sehwag would go on to write in his newspaper column a couple of days later. "I saw myself as the only batsman who could score at four-an-over since the rest of our batsmen are more correct and conventional Test cricketers. In my mind I felt that the rest would be able to draw the game but I was the only one capable of winning it."

Wide half-volleys, drag downs, full tosses, looped up stuff – they left everything, and when they bothered to use their bat, they blocked.

"The moment they lost Sehwag, they went on the defensive and that surprised me. That helped us set attacking fields. I did not have to worry about giving away runs and could concentrate on wickets," Inzamam said at the end of the match.

Sixty three balls was all Dravid could middle his defence for, before the 64th was a slight explosion off a good length from offie Arshad Khan, taking the glove for Younis at silly point to go

one-handed. Laxman didn't last long either, and in between, as if to prove how desperately they'd gone into a blockathon, played out a period of 52 balls with Tendulkar in which not a single run was scored.

Sourav Ganguly, on the back of a horrible run of scores through the series, came to the middle to join Tendulkar with approximately 45 overs left to be played out. It was the last known batting pair.

A section of the crowd began shouting, "We want Karthik, we want Karthik" as Ganguly walked out. A few of them even had a congratulatory poster ready for when he touched double digits. Ganguly didn't let them have the joy of using it, scratching around for a while before going for an expansive drive to a googly that he just hadn't read.

"I didn't know what happened. I hadn't heard the ball hitting the stumps and I was waiting for the umpire's confirmation," Ganguly said later. Yes, bowled right through the gate. And the Chinnaswamy booed. They could see this coming from a distance.

The equation: 40 overs. Five wickets. A session and a half. Never mind the runs.

More men crowded the bat, seven of them now. Tendulkar kept blocking. Dinesh Karthik dared not do anything else. Just moments before tea, Sami unleashed a fierce short one at Tendulkar who fended it away awkwardly to short leg. It was a regulation catch, but Asim Kamal found a way to juggle it a couple of times and still not hold on.

Rule one of Indo-Pak cricket, you don't drop Sachin Tendulkar. Rule two of Indo-Pak cricket, you don't drop Sachin Tendulkar. Rule infinity of Indo-Pak cricket, you don't drop Sachin Tendulkar. India lived to fight on.

More blocks. More maidens. More men around the bat. Nearly an hour is seen off.

Afridi kept firing them in, and after every ball that beat Ten-



Virender Sehwag

dulkar, smiled as if looking for acknowledgement. The master was happy to oblige, often nodding in appreciation. Just over an hour remained, and Afridi got one to go straight on. Sachin groped, gloved and Kamal had his redemption. Afridi set off on a celebratory run to square leg. Inzamam had never run faster in his life to hunt someone down, not even that Toronto heckler in the stands.

"Perhaps playing for a draw was not such a good idea since most of our batsmen are cast in the stroke playing mould. Even at tea, the general mood was that we would scratch out a draw. The possibility of defeat dawned on us when Sachin Tendulkar got out. There were still 20 overs left and we knew that the remaining batsmen would not be able to play out time with umbrella fields in operation," Sehwag continued in his column.

Yes, India didn't survive.

Kumble tried, even putting his more illustrious batsmen to shame with his batting approach, but India were all out 25 minutes short of stumps. Pakistan equalised, clinically.

Unlike the mad slogging of the first innings that triggered the Indian dismissals, these were all attritiously-executed ones under the pressure that was built up, ball by ball. And this was the weakest a Pakistan side had been in a decade, without a bowling spearhead, under a captain one loss away from being sacked, with the wounds of having been blanked 0-3 in Australia still fresh, against a number two-ranked Indian side playing at full strength. They could give themselves some credit.

It is curious then why nobody really talks about this match over some of the other mundane games in the rivalry. Perhaps because the footage is lost somewhere in the change of broadcasters; perhaps because Chennai 1999 was still very close for comparisons; perhaps because a standing ovation given to the opposition makes for better storytelling over the Indian captain being jeered by his own crowd.

"We had decided to play normal cricket and weren't thinking about the target. After lunch we got a bit defensive and lost a few wickets as a result. It wasn't a conscious effort to get defensive but it cost us the game," Ganguly said at the end of it.

More boos. That's the animal spirit an India-Pakistan game brings out even in the most civilised of places. So what if Pakistan played better, you're just not allowed to lose. See – brutally amplified exaggeration of life's realities. But it better be nothing else.



Four stroke: Fredericks after a powerful strike, his eyes on the ball as it races to the boundary

Fredericks took on giants Thompson, Lillee Prowess with the bat made him a metaphor for success

By Romeo Kaseram

Roy Clifton Fredericks was born on November 11, 1942, in Blairmont, Berbice, in what was then British Guiana. As David Foot writes in *The Guardian* (September 7, 2000), he was "blessed with good eyes, fast feet and sturdy forearms", a combination that made him an ideal subject for the cricket bat, which "as in the case of so many boys from the Caribbean, [was] the natural metaphor for progress".

Standing at five feet four inches tall, in a word, he "announced himself in top-class cricket with 127 and 115 in the 1967 Shell Series match against Barbados, P. M. Walker writes in *Wisden* (November 11, 2019). Walker notes that in the following season, Fredericks scored a "patient 57" against MCC, a performance that "earned him selection for the West Indian party that toured Australia".

If as Foot tells us, the bat was a metaphor for a young Caribbean man's progress, then Fredericks was well on the way to a successful career. Walker notes that Fredericks averaged 33.87 during the Australian tour, with a highest score of 76. By 1969, he was flourishing at the wicket, and in Walker's words, "was the only batsman in the West Indian party to score over 1,000 runs" in what was a short tour. He averaged 45.28, scoring three centuries, with a highest score of 64 in the Tests.

Writing in the website *cricbuzz.com*, Bharath Ramaraj invokes the David versus Goliath trope in describing Fredericks attacking the formidable Australian pacers, telling us he was "a diminutive left-handed opening batsman, who stood up to the mighty fast bowlers of 1970s with aplomb". He adds, "Even now... cricket lovers romanticise Fredericks pulling and hooking Jeff Thomson and Dennis Lillee with bravado to notch up a sparkling knock of 169 in just 145 deliveries in a Test match played at the WACA in 1975-76."

It was a century that inspired the rest of the team, with Fredericks reaching 100 in 71 balls, then the quickest time ever. The groundswell from Fredericks achievement lifted the West Indies to its only Test win, taking the match by an innings. However, Australia won the series 5-1.

So inspiring was Fredericks' knock that former Australian captain, Lindsay Hassett, described it as the finest innings he had seen, Ramaraj tells us. Similarly, Foot is all praise for Fredericks' punishing batsmanship, saying, "[There] was nothing more exhilarating or courageous than his century off 71 balls on his way to 169 against Australia at Perth during the 1975-76 series. Thomson and Lillee were never made to feel more impotent. That was truly great batting."

Fredericks was certainly in the zone during that Australian innings, for as Foot tells us, the "congenial left-hander" and was "happiest when going for his shots". He adds, "A voracious hooker, he remained fallible – keeping fine and long legs in business – to the short-pitched ball. But there was much of merit: the wristy aggression, the generous array of strokes on both sides of the wicket, the disregard for reputation."

Fredericks played for Glamorgan 45 times from 1971-1973. According to Foot, it was a "memorable debut for the county",

with Fredericks scoring 66 in the first innings, and 145 in the second. The performance opened Glamorgan's door, and he was immediately given his cap. With his opening teammate, Alan Jones, Fredericks later figured prominently in an opening stand of 330 against Northants at the St Helens ground in Swansea, Foot recalls. As Jones later said, and which Foot quotes, "I should say that two thirds of the runs came from 'Freddo' – he really was a great player when on song. He had this terrific belief in his own ability and there were wonderful occasions when no one could bowl at him. Yet there was no holding back when the ball had been pitched short – he'd go for a big one whether it was the first or last ball of the day."

But Fredericks was not always "on song"; at the other end of the wicket resides survivability through dogged determination and cautious, defensive batting. In Foot's words, Fredericks did not "always succeed, because of that sense of impetuous adventure". In Walker's examination of coverage of the 1971 season, he notes *Wisden's* commentary on Fredericks' bravado with the bat, noting that, "There were some who even believed that Fredericks' adventurous approach was an embarrassment. He was a law unto himself, but let it be also admitted that Fredericks brought a breezier and fresher gust of gaiety to the cricket grounds of South Wales. His two innings at Swansea against Northamptonshire and Yorkshire will remain in the memory of cricket cameos for all time if only for the joyous abandon of his batting."

Wisden's archive adds, "It is this quality above all others that endear and yet infuriate both spectators and county colleagues, for Fredericks has two sides to his cricketing nature. The brilliant cavalier who either makes a quick fifty or is caught on the boundary in the first over of a match, and the watchful sheet anchor role he has so often adopted for the West Indies. His 150 against England in the second Test at Edgbaston in the 1973 season which took him eight and a half hours is a classic example of this Jekyll and Hyde character. But let it not be forgotten that it rescued his team from a potentially losing situation and he received the Prudential-Wisden award."

Foots sums up Fredericks' batting, saying, "[He] was often brilliant, occasionally erratic. Only that slight suggestion of moodiness separated him from our great batsmen; there were moments when his reflexes and instinctive movement were sublime."

In his career spanning 20 years, Fredericks' metaphor for success as a Caribbean boy with the bat is evident in the 16,384 runs that he scored, with an average of 45.89. His best innings was a double century, 250 runs, which he scored for Guyana against Barbados in Bridgetown; in all, he scored four double centuries. He played Test cricket from 1968-1977, was an opening batsman, scored 4,334 runs, notching eight centuries, and 26 half-centuries.

Fredericks died in New York when he was 57, on September 5, 2000, following throat cancer surgery. At the time, he was participating in cricket programs for Guyana's Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Culture in the administration of Forbes Burnham.

ICC postpones World Cup qualifiers due to Covid-19

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Thursday that all qualifying events for the 2021 Twenty20 World Cup and 50-overs version in 2023 that were scheduled to be held before June 30 have been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The flu-like virus has infected more than 550,000 people around the world and killed over 25,000 since appearing in China at the end of last year. The pandemic has also brought global sport to a standstill and the ICC said in a statement the World Cup qualifiers would also be impacted.

"The decision has been taken in conjunction with members and in line with the relevant government and public health authority advice," the ICC said.

All qualifiers scheduled to take place before July in Kuwait, South Africa, Namibia, Spain, Papua New Guinea, Belgium, Malaysia and Finland are affected, the statement added.

"In light of the significant global health concerns at the current time and the restrictions on movement imposed by governments across the world, the ICC has taken the decision to postpone all events up until the end of June subject to further review," Chris Tettley, ICC head of events, said.

"Work will continue on contingency plans and options for both men's qualification pathways. We will provide updates in due course on these plans and decisions on the staging of the remaining events this year."

India will host the T20 World Cup, a revamped version of the former Champions Trophy, in October-November of 2021. It is not to be confused with this year's T20 World Cup in Australia.

India will also hold the 50-over World Cup in 2023.

Ireland v Bang series postponed

The seven-match series between Ireland and Bangladesh in May has been called off because of coronavirus.

The games were scheduled to be held in Belfast and England.

"We've a responsibility to protect the wellbeing of players, coaches, fans and wider community," said Warren Deutrom, Cricket Ireland chief executive.

The announcement comes five days after Ireland's six-game tour of Zimbabwe, scheduled for next month, was called off due to the pandemic.

Cricket Ireland and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) have agreed to postpone the series in line with advice from both Irish and UK governments around international travel, sporting events and mass gatherings.

"Once the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic was understood, and the advice of both Governments and partner boards was sought, it became increasingly unlikely that this series could proceed as scheduled," added Deutrom.

"We will not hesitate to take a safety-first approach to our operations over coming months."

"We will continue monitoring the situation, and will liaise as necessary with relevant sports bodies, public health agencies and our stakeholders here and abroad, and provide further updates on the home season in due course."

"We would like to thank the Bangladesh Cricket Board for their helpful cooperation in reaching this decision, and we shall work with them at establishing new dates for the series when we are all in a position to plan for the future with greater certainty."

ECB contemplates coronavirus checkpoints at cricket grounds

The England and Wales Cricket Board could install coronavirus checkpoints and isolation units at grounds in order to resume the game behind closed doors.

English cricket has shut down until at least 28 May but the ECB is looking at playing internationals with no fans. England's Test series with West Indies is due to start at The Oval on 4 June,

"We're mapping out what international matches would look like behind closed doors," ECB director of events Steve Elworthy told the *Guardian*. He said this would require a sterile "bubble" to ensure the identification of anyone in the vicinity with the virus.

The government's initial advice around mass gatherings prior to the current lockdown was 500 people or fewer, and Elworthy is using that as a basis for discussions. "That was guided by the potential impact on critical services like paramedics and doctors," he said.

"You would likely have to work within that number [which would be made up of essential matchday staff]... then you have to think about medical provisions, creating a safe and sterile environment around that venue, so that everyone who comes in is clear."

"So it's how you test them at the gate, the isolation units that you have to put in. These are considerations we are thinking about."

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