

# What's On Your Mind?

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## Teemal-ji: a compassionate, selfless man

### LETTER OF THE DAY

THE Indo-Trinidadian diaspora in New York and I are deeply saddened by the demise of senator Deoroo Teemal, who was also president of the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC).

In the diaspora, he is well known as a person who served Indo-Trinidadian culture with dedication and kindness. His leadership and commitment to Indian culture were inspiring, viewed as a pillar of strength and wisdom, dedicating his life to uplifting the Hindu community and beyond.

Teemal-ji was a compassionate and extraordinary human being, a man of humility with an unwavering commitment to making our society better. He served as a shining example of selflessness and compassion. I know the selflessness he carried and shared. He was also a thoughtful engineer who balanced an ethos of hard work with family care.

His tireless efforts as a leader and activist, and servant of the community have left an indelible mark on the lives of those close to Indian organisations, the NCIC in particular.

Teemal-ji's demise leaves

behind a rich legacy of leadership at the NCIC and tireless advocacy for ethnic (Indian) equality. He provided stable leadership to one of Trinidad and Tobago's most prestigious cultural organisations.

His passing is a deep loss to the NCIC and to all those whose lives he touched in T&T and to the Indo-Trinidadian community in the diaspora who are aware of his work. Tributes have poured in from political leaders and heads of organisations across party and religious lines, acknowledging his invaluable contributions to society.

He is remembered as someone who selflessly dedicated much of his life to promoting and propagating Indian culture. He was a man of deep commitment to his work and compassion towards the less fortunate. The humility he embodied aptly reflect the ethos he embraced.



**LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP:** Former Independent senator Deoroo Teemal.

He was known to endear himself to political, business, and community leaders in order to serve Indian culture and for the success of the NCIC. Though a mere two years as leader, he leaves behind a good legacy at the NCIC. He had earlier served decades in the executive. He also served in various religious and cultural organisations

like the Hindu Seva Sangh that he once led.

My first encounter with Teemal-ji goes back to the 1980s when he attended training camps where Guyanese Swami Aksharananda and Hindu intellectual Ravi Dev made presentations that impressed him. He spoke glowingly of our work on Indian culture and in pushing back against Burnham authoritarian rule. We met several times after, discussing the state of the Indian community in T&T and Guyana.

Teemal-ji always welcomed me with a smile, heard my views and provided suitable time for me to speak and be appreciated. In fact, he had a trademark smile with everyone, never really angry with anyone. Every time we met him, his zeal and commitment to the betterment of T&T and its people amazed me.

I cherished the support and

encouragement he provided in conducting opinion polls, telling me to ignore detractors and focus on my work. I will remember the many years of working with Teemal-ji in many programmes and projects, including organising conferences with Dr Primmath Goopta, who also worked closely with Teemal-ji. He encouraged the organisation of conferences on various aspects of the Indian diaspora.

Teemal-ji's most significant contribution to T&T was not leading an organisation or serving in the Senate or the programmes and projects that he inspired but the personal connections he made with so many people, including so many of us in the diaspora.

His legacy will continue to motivate many to serve our communities with humility and dedication. He will live on in our hearts. My condolences to his family, friends, and members of the NCIC, and many admirers. Om Sadgati! Om Shanti!

**Dr Vishnu Bisram**

IN A moment of national mourning and personal grief, it is unfortunate—and frankly disturbing—that the death of Independent senator Deoroo Teemal has become entangled in

partisan narrative.

While tributes and eulogies are natural expressions of loss, Independent Senator Anthony Vieira's remarks, which suggested that political toxicity and online trolling contri-

## Time to mourn, not play politics

buted to Mr Teemal's death, represent an unfortunate deviation from the dignity such a time demands. Senator Vieira's

statement, in which he referenced alleged political attacks as having affected Mr Teemal's health, ventures into speculative territory that is not only inappropriate but insensitive.

To publicly attribute a man's passing to the conduct of others, especially in a context as emotionally charged and politically divisive

as this, is a new and regrettable low in our national discourse.

Trinidad and Tobago is no stranger to vigorous debate, political rivalry, or sharp public commentary. These are features of our democratic DNA, woven into our identity, alongside humour, drama, and, yes, sometimes bacchanal. But there is

a time and place for everything.

The immediate aftermath of a person's death, when family members are grappling with raw grief, is not the time to assign political blame, however veiled or poetic the language may be.

We must consider the effect of such public remarks on Mr Teemal's grieving family, colleagues, and the wider community who respected him not as a political instrument but as a thoughtful and measured contributor to national life.

At a time when we should be celebrating his service and comforting those he left behind, Vieira's decision to frame the narrative around political persecution diverts the public's attention from what truly matters: the life, work, and legacy of Mr Teemal.

Moreover, such statements risk setting a dangerous precedent, one where the deaths of public figures are used as political leverage, and

where grief becomes another battlefield for partisan positioning.

This not only diminishes the humanity of the moment but also dishonours the very democratic ideals that both Mr Teemal and Senator Vieira claim to defend.

Political criticism is not harassment. Scrutiny of public officials, be they elected, appointed, or independent, is a cornerstone of democracy. To suggest otherwise is to imply that certain voices should be insulated from accountability. While the tone and platform of criticism may sometimes be harsh, that is the cost, and, indeed, the calling, of public life.

Let us allow his family to mourn in peace. Let us hold off, just this once, from weaponising grief for commentary or condemnation.

There will be time enough for debate. But now is the time for respect.

**Afzal Khan Barataria**



**ONE CARIBBEAN  
MEDIA LIMITED**

### NOTICE

#### Pursuant to Section 64 (1) (b) of the Securities Act 2012

One Caribbean Media Limited (OCM) announces the resignation of Mr. Michael Carballo from the Board of Directors of OCM, effective Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2025.

The Board of Directors wishes to thank Mr. Carballo for his service and contribution to the Company.

**Karlene Ng Tang**  
Company Secretary

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2025

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