



# THE INDIA OVERSEAS TRUST

Celebrating the East African Asian Diaspora



# British Ugandan Asians at 50

## *Commemorative Brochure*



The Madhvani  
Family

# SCIC Founder & President Mahesh K. Kotecha, CFA, Congratulates The India Overseas Trust on Completing the British Ugandan Asians at 50 Project



SCIC Founder & President

## Mahesh K. Kotecha, CFA

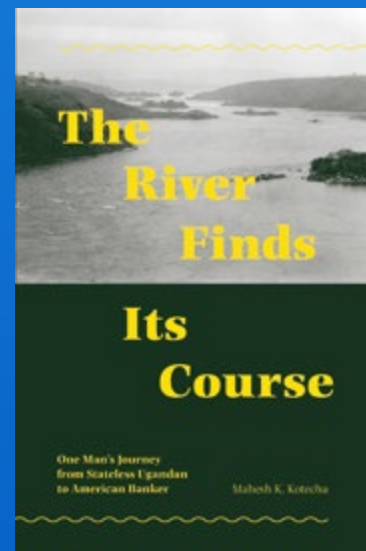
Structured Credit International Corp. (SCIC; [www.4scic.com](http://www.4scic.com)) is a New York-based capital markets advisor for financial institutions in Africa and elsewhere, helping them obtain credit ratings, access capital markets and improve capital and risk management. SCIC also advises on structured financings. SCIC clients include multilateral development banks, commercial banks and governments such as Africa Finance Corporation, West African Development Bank, East African Development Bank, Central American Bank for Economic Integration, Nordic Investment Bank, Interamerican

Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Bank, Bank of Uganda, Bahamas, Ecobank, Access Bank (Nigeria), First Bank of Nigeria, Ecobank, ICICI, HDFC Credila, and IFAD, among others.

**Mahesh K. Kotecha** was born and brought up in Jinja, Uganda. He earned a BS at California's elite Harvey Mudd College and an MS in management from MIT. Kotecha's forthcoming autobiographical book, *The River Finds its Course* is edited by **Giles Foden**, author of *The Last King of Scotland*. It is about growing up in Jinja and ending up on Wall Street.

The eldest son of a Jinja school teacher, **Lilavati K. Kotecha**, and an accountant, **Kanjibhai C. Kotecha** (Mulco), he won a scholarship in 1966 to study in the US. As Idi Amin expelled Uganda's Asians in 1972, including his parents and brothers, his UN career ended when he became stateless. The New York Fed set him on the path to US citizenship. He joined S&P to rate countries and banks.

There, a chance dinner in Helsinki led him back to Africa as a Member of the International Advisory Panel of the East African Development Bank. Parlaying these connections, he became a banker on Wall Street, pioneering CDOs and fostering credit ratings for African governments, thereby helping midwife a \$300-billion market for African Eurobonds. He now advises leading African financial institutions on credit ratings and capital markets access.





## 'BRITISH UGANDAN ASIANS AT 50' SOUVENIR COMMEMORATIVE BROCHURE



A British family welcomes a Ugandan Asian mother and baby into their home

On 4th August 1972, Ugandan dictator Idi Amin issued his notorious edict that the Asian population of Uganda had just 90 days to leave the Country. Each family was permitted to take only £55 and one suitcase per individual. In the months that followed, around 27,200 people who held British passports were admitted to Britain. The Uganda Resettlement Board accommodated them in 16 resettlement camps before assisting them to find jobs, housing and schools for the children.

The Board was assisted by an extraordinary mobilisation of volunteers, both organisations (under the banner of the Co-ordinating Committee for the Welfare of Evacuees from Uganda) and private individuals. The British Ugandan Asian Community survived those traumatic early months and has gone on to make extraordinary contributions to the commercial, professional and cultural life of Britain, out of all proportion to its size.

For two years between September 2021 and August 2023, the India Overseas Trust (a registered charity) ran an ambitious programme of activities to mark the 50th anniversary of the Ugandan Exodus: filming oral histories, mounting a touring exhibition, and holding panel discussions and other events. (The Trust had previously led on national commemorations of the 25th and 40th anniversaries.)



The Uganda Resettlement Board. Praful R C Patel, its only Asian member, is seated R. Its Director, T A Critchley is seated second from L.

**This brochure is a permanent record of the 'British Ugandan Asians at 50' programme. It also contains a retelling of the British Ugandan Asian story for the information of newer generations, a tribute to the Trust's Founder and former Chairman Praful R C Patel, and many other features. We know that it will be a treasured keepsake for British Ugandan Asian families.**



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**My family and I pay tribute to the great work of the India Overseas Trust in telling the story of the British Ugandan Asian Community so well, and we wish the Trust every success in its future activities.**

**Dipesh Shah OBE & Annie Shah**



## **Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP**

Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party



It gives me great pleasure in extending my heartfelt congratulations on the successful finale of the 'British Ugandan Asians at 50' programme.

In 1972 the UK opened its hearts and homes to welcome 28,000 Ugandan Asians and gave them a place to call home. The Ugandan Asians didn't just settle in the UK but are a shining example of how by integrating, working hard and playing your role in society you can thrive in the UK.

We have seen a variety of events happen including oral history collections, panel discussions, displays at the National Archives and a special event at Buckingham Palace which showcased the contribution that Ugandan Asians have made to Britain. In the same spirit as in 1972, this was a group effort and collaboration between the Ugandan Asians and their British friends.

I commend all those who played a role in making this commemoration a meaningful and enlightening experience. Your efforts in preserving the history and stories of this significant period contribute to the rich tapestry of our shared heritage. It helped underline the importance of unity in our diverse society.

At a time when we see divisions around the world, it is even more important to highlight examples of unity and celebrate the diversity we have in the UK. The Ugandan Asians have become a part of the United Kingdom's story and I am proud of the contributions they have made in business, politics and philanthropy.

I wish you all a memorable closing event but let this not be the end. May the stories that have been captured be remembered for generations to come.

Yours ever,

**The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP**  
**Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party**

# British Ugandan Asians at 50 Final Programme Report

The British Ugandan Asians at 50 programme was made possible with a generous grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, together with contributions from many notable individuals with the British Ugandan Asian Community. The programme is now complete; this section sets out its many achievements.



The Project was launched on 18th September 2021 with the video release of a new poem, 'I Walk This Path' ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0nr2esGMk0&t=4s> ) by acclaimed Broadcaster and Author, Babita Sharma.

## Workstrand 1: Uganda Resettlement Board Reception & Reception Camps oral histories

### Tonfanau, Meirionnydd, Wales (interviews took place 19/20 March 2022):

- People's Collection Wales (a programme of the National Library of Wales) acted as the local partner organisation; the filmed interviews feature on its portal as well.
- Ten camp volunteers and staff were interviewed, including a nurse, a Round Table team leader, a woman who gave English language support to adults, a paid teacher, a paid housing officer, a youth organiser, and the Mayor of Dolgellau who as a young man volunteered to assist the army in welcoming the UAs.
- Three camp residents were interviewed, two of whom have settled in Wales.
- We sourced period photographs and other materials for the local exhibition.

### Stradishall, Suffolk (interviews took place 9/10 April 2022):

- A member of the Wickhambrook History Society acted as the local project leader.
- Eleven individuals were interviewed, including camp residents, volunteers, paid staff and a police cadet who staffed the camp switchboard.
- A local 6th form college sent 3 young people to conduct interviews. (Throughout the project, interviews were partly conducted by sixth-formers; the intergenerational aspect of the Project was central to its vision.)
- Exhibition content, including a doll and radio brought from Uganda, was assembled.



A member of the Ugandan Asian community being interviewed by a 6th former

### Heathfield, Devon (interviews took place 18 June 2022):

- Two local 6th-formers conducted the interviews in Allhallows Museum, Honiton.
- Fifteen interviews took place, with seven camp residents, seven volunteers and the Museum Curator.
- Photographs and other memorabilia were assembled for an exhibition.

All the filmed interviews feature on the <https://bua50.org> website and on our YouTube channel,

## Workstrand 2: Touring exhibition

A touring exhibition comprising pull-up banners and two sets of 17 panels was assembled. As well as quotes from the interviews and a linking narrative, this incorporated photographs by world famous war photographer/photojournalist, Mo Amin, of life in Uganda before and during the Expulsion, and a unique collection of photographs by Andrew Denny of daily life in a resettlement camp. Specific additional panels were created for the three focus camps of Stradishall, Tonfanau and Heathfield.

The exhibition was displayed at the following locations:

- School of Oriental and African Studies, London
- The Curve Theatre, Leicester
- Croydon Museum and Library
- Wickhambrook Memorial Hall, Suffolk, with a focus on Stradishall camp
- BAPS Shri Swaminarayan temple in North London and places of worship in Leicester, Peterborough and Luton
- Tywyn Library, Meirionydd, with a focus on Tonfanau camp
- The Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Honiton, with a focus on the Heathfield camp
- The Khoja Mosque, Birmingham
- Manchester Central Library
- Exeter Library
- Brent Civic Centre
- National Railway Museum
- The National Archives
- The National Eisteddfod, Boduan, North Wales

We estimate that well over 15,000 people viewed the exhibition, and feedback was highly positive.

Launch events with attendance totalling 400 people were held in Wickhambrook, Tywyn and Honiton, with tree plantings taking place on the site of the Tonfanau and Heathfield camps



One of the images featured in the Exhibition

### Workstrand 3: Panel discussions

On 20th June 2022 we held our first Panel Discussion on Ugandan Asian themes. This was as part of a conference called Narratives of Refugee Memories, organised by the South Asia Institute at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. A panel comprised of BUA50 Chair Alan Critchley, BUA50 Technical Adviser Paresh Solanki and renowned international cameraman Bhasker Solanki looked at how the media covers stories around mass migration, with a particular focus on the Ugandan Asian story.

An enthusiastic audience were shown our launch film 'I Walk This Path' and a teaser film of excerpts from our interviews thus far. Feedback was excellent, one person commenting that they had previously known very little about the voluntary effort in 1972. The event was concluded by a fascinating keynote speech by Former Ambassador Professor Mike Molloy of Carleton University, Canada, who in 1972 was part of the team in Kampala processing applications for Canadian residence by Ugandan Asians.

The second panel discussion took place at the Curve Theatre in Leicester on 4th August 2022, the 50th anniversary of the announcement of the Expulsion by Idi Amin, as part of South Asian Heritage Month. It was chaired by Rajiv Popat of ITV Central and the speakers were Sir Peter Soulsby, Leader of Leicester City Council; Sophie Kanabar, a Uganda evacuee and successful Business Development professional; Jasvir Singh OBE, Co-Founder of South Asian Heritage Month; Colin Grimes, former Deputy Head Master of Jinja Secondary School; and Chandni Mistry of the Curve Theatre. An audience of around 200 responded positively, asking several questions and offering personal reminiscences. The discussion was followed by the performance of two Expulsion related plays in the Curve's Finding Home programme.

On 16th November 2022, BUA50 Chair Alan Critchley and India Overseas Trust Vice-Chair Mihir Patel participated, alongside Professor Saima Nasar of Bristol University, and former camp resident Chandrika Joshi, in an online panel discussion hosted by Dr Shezan Mohammedi of Carleton University, Ontario, as part of its 'Beyond Resettlement' conference looking at the Ugandan Asian experience in Canada.

The fourth panel discussion was planned for 17th September at London's Guildhall but this was postponed out of respect for the period of national mourning following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The rescheduled event took place at the National Archives, West London, from 4pm on Saturday 26th November 2022. It was moderated by BBC presenter, author and BUA50 Project Committee member Babita Sharma, and the panel comprised Dr Maya Parmar



The audience numbered around 80



Professor Mike Molloy



Discussion at the Curve Theatre



The BUA50 panel at the Carleton University conference



(Honorary Research Fellow, University of Exeter) and Ugandan expellees Prof Akbar Vohra, Lord Jitesh Gadhia and Sukhpal Singh Ahluwalia. The discussion was preceded by a Cream Tea reception, and featured the Touring Exhibition and a selection from the National Archives' own documents relating to the Expulsion. A total of 138 people attended, despite a Rail Strike and the distance of the venue from central London.



Panel discussion at the National Archives

A highlight of the event was a powerful and moving contribution by audience member Charles Powell, who was Operations Manager for the British Caledonian airline during the airlift from Entebbe in 1972, and described the chaos and trauma of those final weeks leading up to the Exodus. (Mr Powell has subsequently been interviewed and the film of his interview features on the website and YouTube channel.) Dr Mohamed Keshayjee spoke about the lessons that could be learnt from the Ugandan Asian Expulsion by those involved in the reception of modern refugees.



Charles Powell

The final panel discussion took place in the British Library on Saturday 10th June, as part of the Jaipur Literature Festival. Moderated by



**Congratulations and thanks to Mihir K Patel and all the team at the India Overseas Trust for completing the Ugandan Exodus 50th anniversary programme.**

**A job well done!**

**Chandrika, Rajeev, Kavita, Zail & Sena Patel**

BUA50 team member and travel writer Meera Dattani, the panel was titled 'The Double Diaspora: British Ugandan Asians at 50', and traced the emotional and physical travel faced by the double diaspora – East African Asian migrant communities who have had to face double uprootings across continents. It featured three prominent writers who spoke of memory, morphing identities, grit and survival: Neema Shah, author of *Kololo Hill*; Hafsa Zayyan, author of *We are all Birds of Uganda*; and Ram Gidoomal CBE, author of *My Silk Road: The Adventures and Struggles of a British Asian Refugee*.

## **Workstrand 4: Other events**

A debate in the House of Lords on 27th October 2022, called by Lord Popat, drew attention to the many and varied achievements of the Ugandan Asian community in the fifty years since arrival in the UK. 23 Peers spoke, including Ugandan Asian peers, Lord Hunt who as a student Conservative had been instrumental in influencing Party policy in favour of the expellees, and Baroness Hayman who in 1972 was a leader of the voluntary sector's Coordinating Committee for the Welfare of Evacuees from Uganda.



The late Praful R C Patel being presented to HM The King (also shown: Lord Gadhia, Jane Preece, Alan Critchley)

A National Reception to celebrate the achievements of the BUA community, planned by the British Asian Trust in collaboration with BUA50, took place on 2nd November 2022 at Buckingham Palace, coinciding with the exact 50th anniversary of the end of the 90 days ultimatum issued by Idi Amin on 4th August 1972. HM The King hosted the event, at which an audience of around 500 heard veteran journalists Jonathan Dimbleby and Jon Snow describing their coverage of the 1972 crisis; actor Sanjeev Bhaskar interviewing former camp resident Chandrika Joshi and former volunteer Jane Preece; BUA50 Chair Alan Critchley describing his father Tom Critchley's work as Secretary of the Uganda Resettlement Board; a gospel choir singing; and presentations from Lord Gadhia and others.

Before the event, thirty eminent East African Asians were presented to His Majesty, including Indian Overseas Trust Chair and instigator of the BUA50 programme, the late Praful RC Patel.

Working with the National Archives and former Tonfanau camp resident and storyteller Chandrika Joshi, we produced a resource for children, "The Yellow Bicycle", telling the story of one family's departure from Uganda in an engaging way. This has been added to the National Archives' 'Time Travel' online learning resource.

In October 2022, Plaid Cymru MP Hywel Williams tabled an Early Day Motion calling attention to the Tonfanau camp and Ugandan Asian contribution to Wales; a similar EDM will be posted on XXXX, calling attention to the fiftieth anniversary, the contribution of the community to national life, and the work of BUA50 and the late Praful R C Patel.

## **Website**

Over 300 official documents relating to the Ugandan Asian Exodus and the resettlement of Ugandan Asians held by the National Archives were photographed by the BUA50 team. A selection of these were uploaded to the website. The website also includes documents from the London Metropolitan Archives, which houses the records of the Coordinating Committee for the Welfare of Evacuees from Uganda, and the British Newspaper Archive.

## COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UGANDA-ASIAN EXPULSION AND RETURN TO UGANDA



Dear fellow Ugandans and my overseas Bazukulu, Greetings. As we conclude the global events of the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) and the group of 77 countries (G77) Summits currently taking place in Kampala, I am honoured to address you in the spirit of unity and remembrance of the traumatic events of August 1972 from which our country has recovered on account of our fights for freedom, equality and opportunity as resistance fighters of Uganda. It is with pleasure that I acknowledge the commendable work undertaken over the past two years by The India Overseas Trust in London to record and commemorate the Uganda Exodus in 1972. We were young people at that time and we resolved to fight Idi Amin in those days because of these evils that he unleashed on one of the most enterprising communities that had led the small Uganda economy then - the Asian community along with thousands of indigenous Ugandans.

The events which saw the expulsion of our Asian brothers and sisters from their motherland, Uganda, serves as a testament to the resilience and fortitude of those who faced adversity and overcame it. What may have been perceived as Uganda's loss in 1972 has undeniably become Britain and somehow, the world's gain. The indomitable spirit of the Asian community has left an enduring legacy, shaping the cultural tapestry of both Uganda and the United Kingdom.

In 1997, I had the distinct honour of addressing a gathering of these resilient brothers and sisters of at the BAPS Hindu Mandir at Neasden in London. The event, organized by that the late Shri Manubhai Muljibhai Madhvani was a reminder of the enduring connections that bind us across continents. During that event, I invited my brothers and sisters to come back to their Motherland and we have restored to the full what was lost in the difficult days of Uganda to them although nothing replaces the cultural, social and emotional displacement of those who went through these difficult events. Many of these have become a strong base on which our growing industrial and agricultural growth is fast rising.

Now, 25 years hence, I reiterate my invitation to the Bazukulu of our Asian community and call upon them to build a living bridge between their newfound homes in the United Kingdom and the cherished homeland of their forefathers in Uganda.

I welcome you with open arms. Come visit and invest in Uganda, your home. May this brochure preserve an essential chapter in our shared history and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the events that unfolded during that critical time. May it stand as a testament to the enduring bonds that connect us all.

Warmest regards,

**Yoweri Kaguta Museveni**

SSABALWANYI

President of the Republic of Uganda

## Other information about the programme

- Warwick Hawkins MBE of the social enterprise Faith in Society (<https://faithinsociety.org.uk>) was Project Administrator/Writer for the programme.
- The Project Committee oversaw the project and was chaired by Alan Critchley JP (son of the late T.A. Critchley, Director of the Uganda Resettlement Board). A list of its members is below.
- Many prominent BUA individuals became Patrons of BUA50; the list is below.
- A Steering Group allowed a wide range of interested individuals and organisations to input into programme design.
- Prof. Becky Taylor, Professor of Modern History at the University of East Anglia, was an advisor for the programme, with a particular remit to supervise the explanatory text for the website.
- A professional oral historian provided training for the sixth-form interviewers.
- The Living Refugee Archive is hosting the permanent archive; and People's Collection Wales is hosting the Tonfanau interviews.
- Specialist suppliers led on filming and editing, and on website creation.
- A specialist curator organised the touring exhibition, and the graphic design and production of boards was undertaken by Mayura Print (<https://www.mayuraprint.com>).
- Social media accounts were created:
  - <https://www.facebook.com/BritishUgandanAsians50>
  - <https://twitter.com/ugandanasiains50>
  - <https://www.instagram.com/britishugandanasiains50/>
  - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/britishugandanasiains50/>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-K9fM295Q1zT1iBTH6xZLA>
- A dedicated website (<https://bua50.org>), describes the project; links to footage of the interviews, a timeline and other resources; summarises the history of the period; and invites the public to contribute their own stories via a dedicated email address.





**THE RT. HON. SIR STEPHEN TIMMS MP**

**House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA**

**Tel: 020 7219 4000**

**Fax: 020 7219 2949**

*Labour Member of Parliament for East Ham*

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Mr Mihir K. Patel LL.M MBA  
Acting Chair, The India Overseas Trust

Our Ref: ST76259

22 January 2024

Dear Mr Patel,

I am very sorry that I shall, unfortunately, not be able to attend the Reception on 31<sup>st</sup> January, because of commitments that afternoon in Westminster. Please accept my apologies.

I would be most grateful if you could also pass my apologies on to everyone who attends, and convey my condolences on the death of my friend, Mr Praful Patel, who is so deeply missed by all of us. He was always genial and generous. I usually met him at least once every year, at the Diwali Pooja at London Sri Murugan Temple in Manor Park in my constituency. In 2012, it was specially dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the arrival of British Asians from Uganda, and Praful invited me to give a ten minute address on the subject. Alongside his illustrious business career and his political service, he was, rightly, particularly proud of his work as a member of the Uganda Resettlement Board from 1972 to 1975.

I would also like to express my strong support for the new extended role being taken on by the India Overseas Trust. The story of the British East African Asian diaspora is a remarkable and inspiring one – a community formed in the cruellest of circumstances which, through determination and hard work, has gone on to prosper and flourish. The task of representing and recording its histories is an important one, and I am very pleased that the Trust is taking it on. Please let me know if I can help in any way.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

**SIR STEPHEN TIMMS MP**



# British Ugandan Asians at 50 Patrons

We are delighted that the individuals in the following list supported British Ugandan Asians at 50 as Patrons.

- Mr. Sukhpal Singh Ahluwalia, Chairman of the Dominvs Group
- Cllr. Deepak Bajaj, former Lord Mayor of Leicester
- Mr. Peter Batey CMG OBE, Chair of the Sir Edward Heath Charitable Foundation
- Mr. Bob Blackman MP Harrow East
- Lord Boateng of Akyem and Wembley, former MP – Brent South
- Sir Peter Bottomley MP – Father of the House of Commons
- Rt Hon Baroness Virginia Bottomley PC DL of Nettlestone – volunteer
- Ms. Suella Braverman QC, MP for Fareham, former Home Secretary
- Mr. Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP for Slough
- Former Ambassador Mr. Niranjana Desai – former High Commissioner of India to Uganda
- Mr. Jonathan Dimbleby, renowned broadcaster – presented 'This Week' programme episode on the Exodus in 1972 from Uganda
- Lord Jitesh Gadhia of Northwood
- Mr. Barry Gardiner MP for Brent North
- Dr. Tarique Ghaffur CBE QPM, former Asst. Commissioner Metropolitan Police
- Cllr. Ravi Govindia CBE, Leader of Wandsworth Council
- Lord Hunt of the Wirral
- Mrs. Naseem Karsan – Former Director, Jordan's Cereals
- Dr. Nik Kotecha OBE DL, founder Morningside Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and Deputy Lieutenant for Leicestershire
- HE Nimisha J. Madhvani, High Commissioner of the Republic of Uganda to the UK and Eire
- Prof. Sir Ravinder Nath Maini, FRS, Imperial College
- Prof. Tidu Maini, former Pro Rector – Imperial College, Chief Scientific Advisor to the Qatar Foundation
- HE Mr. Amin Mawji OBE, Diplomatic Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network to East Africa & Trustee of the Aga Khan University
- Mr. Jay Mehta, MD – the Nanji Kalidas Mehta Group
- Mr. Yogesh B. Mehta, Chairman Pickford's Removals & Shaneel Group

- Mr. Manzoor Moghul MBE, Chairman Muslim Forum Leicester, author of "Idi Amin: Lion of Africa", former Mayor of Masaka
- Former Ambassador Mr. Michael Molloy – Deputy Head of Canadian Mission to Uganda 1972
- Princess Mpologoma of Buganda
- Mr. Willy Mutenza, Chair Ugandan Convention UK (UCUK)
- Mr. Neil O'Brien OBE, MP for Harrington, Oadby and Wigston
- Dr. Chai Patel CBE FRCP
- Lord Eric Pickles KT PC of Brentwood & Ongar, former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government during the 40th Anniversary and UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust issues
- Lord Dolar Popat of Harrow
- Baroness Usha Prashar of Runnymede CBE PC
- Shri RajRajeshwar, ISSC
- Mr. Dipesh J. Shah OBE, Chairman of National Highways
- Mr. Navin Shah CBE, former Chair of the London Assembly
- Mr. Virendra Sharma MP for Ealing & Southall
- Mr. Shahid Sheikh OBE – Director, Clifton Packaging/Midlands Chair – The British Asian Trust
- Lord Indarjit Singh of Wimbledon
- Sir David Steel KT KBE PC
- Mr. Subash V. Thakrar, Chair of the Attlee Youth and Community Centre, Tower Hamlets & past Chair London Chamber of Commerce
- Mr. Gareth Thomas MP for Harrow West
- Rt. Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP for East Ham
- Baroness Shriti Vadera of Holland Park
- Mr. Shailesh L. Vara, MP for Northwest Cambridgeshire
- Lord Rumi Verjee of Portobello
- Baroness Sandip Verma of Leicester, of IWC and 1928 Institute
- Baroness Sayeeda Warsi of Dewsbury PC
- Ms. Claudia Webbe, MP for Leicester East



**BRITISH UGANDAN**



1972 - 2022

**ASIANS AT 50**

In commemoration of more than 50 years of the Uganda Exodus and in acknowledgment of the efforts of that pioneering generation of British Ugandan Asians who made the United Kingdom their home.

**Family of the Late Kiritkumar Raojibhai Patel  
formerly of United Builders & Contractors and  
Mbende Cotton Trading Company**





## Message from The Rt Hon The Lord Steel of Aikwood KT KBE PC



*The Rt Hon The Lord Steel of Aikwood KT KBE PC, former Leader of the Liberal Democrats, the Liberal Party, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothians, and former Member of Parliament for Tweeddale, Ettrick, and Lauderdale, Roxburgh, Selkirk, and Peebles:*

I was glad to receive the invitation from The India Overseas Trust to attend their reception on Wednesday 31st January and really sorry that at 85, I am unable to attend. I am three years retired from Parliament after 32 years in the Commons and 23 in the Lords. I actually retired on the 55th anniversary of my by-election victory in March 1965.

As a boy I lived in Kenya when my father was minister of the Church of Scotland centred in Nairobi but serving the Scots in the overseas parish of Kenya and Uganda. Three years after becoming an MP in 1968 the then government legislated to withdraw the rights of Kenyan Indians to enter the UK. I strongly opposed the bill joined by the late Iain Macleod who, as Colonial Secretary, had given his word to the Community that this would not happen. Indeed I predicted that Indian passport holders could not be prevented from entering (as happened in 1972 with those in Uganda). I wrote my first book "No Entry" detailing the debates.

In 1972 I visited the UK High Commission in Kampala despite disapproval by the then government and witnessed for myself the distressing scenes at Entebbe Airport when departing Indians were robbed of their luggage and possessions. I continued to visit my friends in Kenya and Uganda until three years ago, including the Mehta family at Lugazi. I am full of admiration for the Asians who were expelled from East Africa and the success they have made of their lives here and the addition they have made to the UK life and economy.

**David Steel**  
Lord Steel of Aikwood

# British Ugandan Asians at 50 Steering Group

The individuals in the following list all represent organisations with an interest in the Ugandan Asian Expulsion; many of them contributed to the programme in different ways.

- Mr. Jafar Kapasi OBE, Honorary Consul General of Uganda to Leicester
- Mr. Vinod Tailor MBE DL, Deputy Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Uganda evacuee
- Dr. Manoj Chitnavis FRSC, Chair UK Association of Science Education, evacuee
- Mrs. Shardaben Manubhai Madhvani
- Mr. Himat Lakhani, founder Afro- Asian Immigration Advisory Service
- Mr. Arafat Jamal, UNHCR – son of the Late Dr. Vali Jamal
- Prof. Avtar Brah MBE, Birkbeck College – Professor of Sociologist & pioneer of Diaspora Studies
- Prof. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Middlesex University – Professor of Media, journalist, author & political commentator
- Prof. Akbar Vohra, Consultant in Anaesthesia, University of Manchester
- Prof. Yash Tandon, Professor of International Relations, formerly of Makerere University, Kampala
- Dr. Azim Somani, author “Shattered Lives: sitting on fire”
- Mr. Liakat Hashim, former President, Ismaili National for the UK
- Mr. Ashak Nathwani, Senior Lecturer – University of Sydney
- Ms. Rupal Rajani, former BBC Leicester, Uganda 50 Archive
- HE Dr. Atul M. Radia, Honorary Consul General of Mozambique to Uganda
- Mr. Anoop M. Radia, Community Leader
- Mr. Jinesh B. Patel, former MD Gulf Finance House
- Mr. Shibir V. Karia, Businessman – Uganda Returnee
- Mr. BN Patel, Former Partner, Baker Tilly
- Mr. Ronak Paw, Secretary LCUKNL
- Mr. Dilip Unarket, Partner, John Cumming Ross
- Mr. Bakul Vyas PGDC, Grand Lodge of England & Wales
- Hon. Rajni Tailor, former President of the Indian Association, Uganda
- Dr. Sudhir Ruparelia, Business magnate & Uganda returnee

- Mr. Kshitij Gheewala, Auro Foundation Uganda
- Dr. Maya Parmar – Ph.D in Indian East–African Migration, Hadithi Stories
- Dr. Mohamed Keshavjee, Lawyer, author and AKDN
- Dr. Faisal Devji, University of Oxford – Reader in Modern South Asian History
- Mr. Jasvir Singh OBE – City Sikhs & The Faiths Forum for London
- Dr. Shezan Muhammedi – Ph.D in Ugandan Asian refugees in Canada, Researcher In-Residence at Carleton University
- Ms. Dolar Vasani, Expulsion@50 podcast
- Rt. Hon Mr. Keith Vaz, former MP for Leicester East
- Mr. Paul Dudman, University of East London – Archivist specialising in Oral Histories and Migration
- Mr. Ed Barlow, BBC – Producer of “A Very British History: Ugandan Asians”
- Ms. Sheena Bhattessa, Its PR – actor and personality
- Mr. Jaswant Naker, JK Foundation
- Mr. Harsheel Dodhia, Hon. Auditor IOT, KLSA
- Ms. Hafsa Zayyan – author “We Are All Birds of Uganda”
- Dr. Sophie Vohra, Historian with specialism in memory, identity, and commemoration at York University
- Mr. Subhash Sampat, Bhatia Community Leader and Harrow Police Council
- Mr. Samir Devani, MD Rx Securities
- Mr. Hussain Jessani – Head of the South Asia Studies Dept at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London
- Dr. Jai Chitnavis, Fellow – Trinity Hall, Cambridge
- Mr. Salim Fakirani, Government Counsel, Canada
- Mr. Vijay Thakrar, Acorn Capital
- Mr. Fiyaz Mughal OBE, Founder – Faith Matters
- Mr. William Mutenza, Chair, Uganda Convention UK
- Mr. Mahendra Dabhi, Heathfield Camp

# British Ugandan Asians at 50 Project Committee

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- Mr. Manesh Shah FCA, ATII (Treasurer)
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- Mrs. Ragini Annan (Committee Member)
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- Ms Meera Dattani (Committee Member – Social media)
- Mr Ali Fazel (Committee Member – Press officer)
- Mrs Lata Desai (Committee Member – Exhibitions)
- Ms Anna Dimdore (Committee Member – Research)
- Mr Mayur Seta (Committee member – Camp resident)

Late Bhagwanjibhai Amarshi Lakhani and Late Manglaben Bhagwanji Lakhani and family formally of Jinja would like to congratulate The Indian Overseas Trust on the 50th celebration of the resettlement of The Ugandan Asians

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Mahatma Gandhi

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# The India Overseas Trust Board of Trustees



## **Mihir K. Patel** (Chair-designate)

Mihir K. Patel, Acting Chair - A founding trustee of IOT, Mihir hails from a prominent British Ugandan Asian family and is a lawyer by qualification with an MBA in Finance. Instrumental in organising the 40th anniversary commemorations, he was also a trustee of Shri Vallabh Nidhi UK for a time. An entrepreneur and active in philanthropic work for the global Gujarati Diaspora for more than 3 decades.



## **Alan Critchley JP**

Alan Critchley's late father, Tom, was Director of the Uganda Resettlement Board in 1972-4 and Alan has been a powerful voice in making his achievements better known. He is an independent Social Worker and has had a variety of roles including Independent Chair of Safeguarding Adult and Children's Boards for Walsall, and Independent Safeguarding Chair at Dimensions UK, a Learning Disability organisation.

He is also an independent reviewer undertaking Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews. Alan was the Chair of British Ugandan Asians at 50. He sits as a Justice of the Peace in Essex.



## Frances Shepard

Dr Frances Shepard is an ethnomusicologist whose career is dedicated to community advocacy, music scholarship, performing arts, field research and documentation.

She is Director of PRSSV which she co-founded with the late internationally famous Indian musician Pt. Sharda Sahai. PRSSV is an educational charity and London based Examination Board specialising in Indian and other global music and dance traditions.



## Paresh Solanki

Paresh Solanki is a successful filmmaker and editor, specialising in championing social change through the power of media technology. His projects are diverse, including history (British Ugandan Asians at 50, World War One commemorations), health and community cohesion. He was a senior executive and producer/director at the BBC, where his roles included Editor of Asian Programmes.

After leaving the BBC, Paresh was among other roles the Inter Faith Network's Assistant Director, responsible for creating the annual National Inter Faith Week. He is a trustee of the Media Diversity Institute and a BAFTA, Royal Television Society, Royal Photographic Society and British Psychological Society member.

# The India Overseas Trust Board of Trustees cont...



## Lata Desai

Lata Desai is a community arts producer. Born in Kenya, married to a Ugandan Asian, Lata is a passionate researcher into the history of the diaspora. She has built an excellent track record and accrued considerable experience and knowledge in the management and delivery of arts and heritage projects, working in partnership with the public and voluntary sector and targeting a wide range of marginalised communities.

She was Exhibitions Lead for British Ugandan Asians at 50, and was also recently curator, researcher and project manager for a multi-dimensional project 'Gujarati yatra – journey of a people' which told the story of the journey of the Gujarati people in Britain.



## Manesh S. Shah

Manesh is a partner in PSJ Alexander & Co- 3rd generation Chartered Accountants (and grandson of late CM Shah and son of Shirish of Patel Shah & Joshi-Kampala and Mumbai).

He specialises in audits of both SME's and Multinational corporations and dealing with tax planning for Non residents of UK.





## Nisha Popat

Currently a Business Owner and a freelance cultural consultant, Nisha arrived in the UK as an expellee from Uganda at the age of 9. A banker by profession, her first role in local government was in community engagement. In due course she became a senior manager in Arts and Museums.

Her experience in this sector led to local, regional and national projects including East Midlands Renaissance and the development of the King Richard III Centre in Leicester. She was the driving force behind Navrang Arts' critically acclaimed 'Rebuilding Lives: 50 Years of Ugandan Asians in Leicester' exhibition.



## Warwick Hawkins MBE (Secretary)

Warwick Hawkins MBE was formerly a career civil servant with oversight of religious engagement and inter-faith activity. In this role he led for the Government in events to mark the 40th anniversary of the Ugandan Exodus.

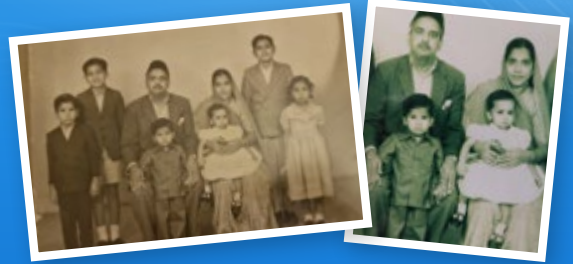
Taking early retirement in 2016, he set up a social enterprise to support faith-based social action in communities - Faith in Society (<https://faithinsociety.org.uk>).

He was instrumental in securing grant funding for the British Ugandan Asians at 50 programme, and went on to be its Project Administrator/Writer.

The Tailor family from Kaberamaido send their congratulations and thanks to The India Overseas Trust and to all who have worked so hard to make the British Ugandan Asians at 50 programme such a success.

**Warm best wishes,  
Madhuben  
Bhagwandas Tailor**

In the fondest memory of  
**Akberali Allibhai Kapasi**  
(Butiabawalla)



Born in 1917 in Jinjuda, Kathiawad, he migrated to Uganda at the age of 14.

He opened his first shop in Bugungu and the second in Butiaba, both on the shores of Lake Albert. The third and fourth shops were in Masindi, Bunyoro, specialising in hardware and building materials. He showed outstanding entrepreneurial skill in buying the Steam Ship Robert Coryndon to carry goods on Lake Albert.

He died in May 1980 in Leicester, leaving behind his wife Rubabbai, five sons, two daughters and two granddaughters.

On behalf of the Trustees of The Indo-British Cultural Exchange, I would like to congratulate The India Overseas Trust for the successful completion of the British Ugandan Asians at 50 project. The contribution made by the British Ugandan Asians has been well recognised by our reigning monarch, Charles III, and the British community at large. May the contribution of the British East African Asians continue indefinitely.

**Warm best wishes, Kanti Gohil,  
Chairperson, The Indo-British  
Cultural Exchange.**

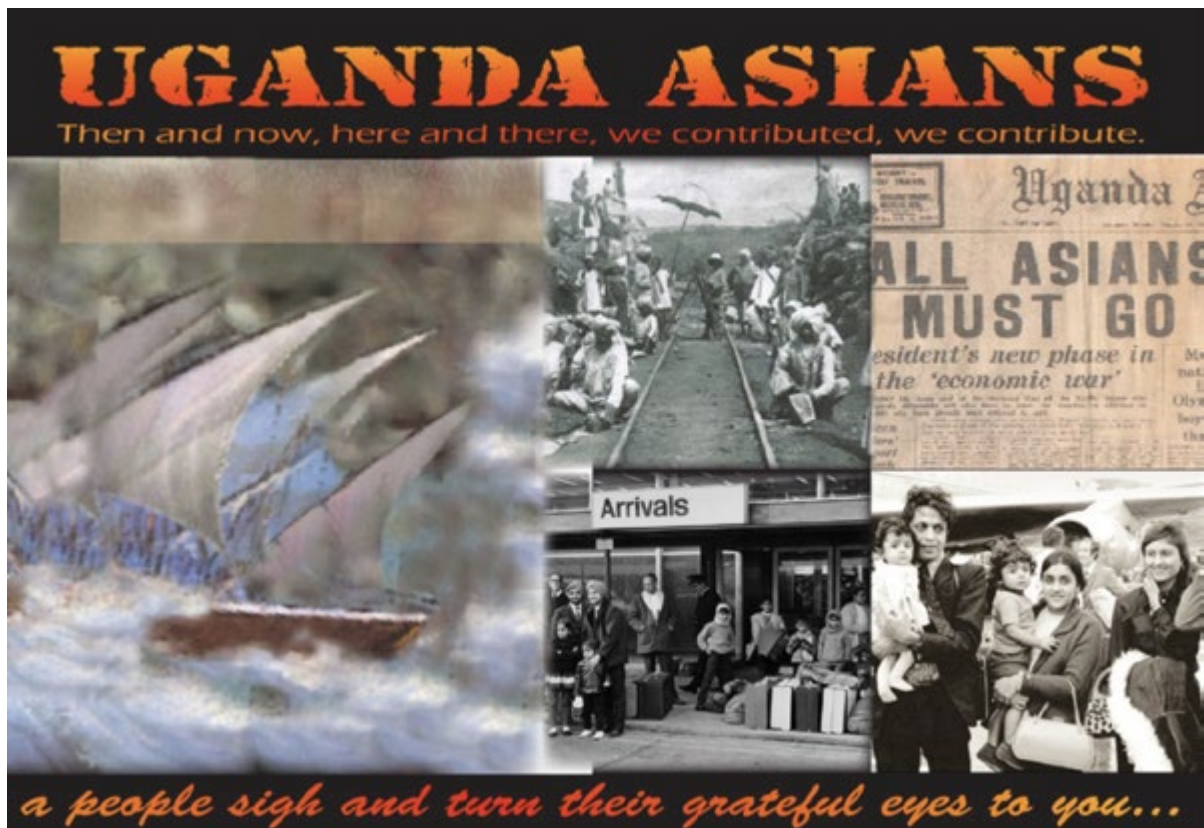


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& Mihir Paun, Sonia &  
Dipak, Aaryan & Sienne  
Chauhan**

**On behalf of the late Vali Jamal, his family extends its warmest congratulations to The India Overseas Trust on completing the British Ugandan Asians at 50 Project**



*'The radio keeps playing Leaving on a Jet Plane. Is it in sympathy with us or to say goodbye finally? The rain is relentless. I go out to the corridor to look at it, knowing I will never see rain like that again.'*

They came in dhows, they left on planes. Originating in India, they ended up in Britain, Canada and beyond. In between, for about a century, they built a railroad, an economy and a distinct culture in Uganda, until they were forced to abandon it in 1972. Vali Jamal never forgot Uganda. Over the course of decades, he collected stories and conducted research. He was driven by a love of this unique community, and by a fear that lives lived would become lives lost. Now his son is in the process of editing this unique work of over 2,500 painstakingly drafted pages. The objective is to make this vital story available to the widest possible public electronically, and in a limited print run for those who wish for a more tangible memento.

# History: Asian Life in Uganda before the Expulsion

South Asian people were initially brought by the British Empire to East and Southern Africa as indentured labourers in the late nineteenth century. In East Africa, including in Uganda, their main role was to build the railways. The British brought in over 34,000 workers from India, on three-year contracts. There were also draughtsmen, surveyors, accountants, clerks and supervisors. When the railway was finished over 6,000 Indians stayed on in East Africa.

Following in the wake of the railway workers, and expanding long-existing trade connections across the Indian Ocean, thousands of migrants from west India arrived. They were mainly traders and professionals, seeking to make the most of opportunities presented by the opening up of East Africa under British rule.

As the colonial government began to promote cash crops, Asians gained special trading privileges, including a monopoly on cotton ginning. Throughout Kenya and Uganda, Asian traders became ideally positioned to move into cotton trading because of their connections with Bombay's cotton industry. In 1919 Asians were buying and exporting half of Uganda's cotton crop to Bombay mills. Others established sugar plantations. By 1920 there were 12,000 Asians in Uganda, a population that had swelled by 1965 to 360,000.

The migrants also found commercial opportunities. The first Asian-owned shop opened in Kampala in 1903, and Asians went on to open businesses and engaged in trade across the country. Although many of the original migrants had been men, now whole families moved to the region.

The country owes much to the Indian trader and we consider that a broad policy of toleration should be adopted towards him. He has shown energy and enterprise and has assisted in the opening up of the more remote districts. He is also of value as an agriculturalist.

**Government of India dispatch, 20 October 1920**

The Indians are a noisy, enterprising, colourful set of people who are tenacious of their culture and connections abroad; they appear more prosperous than anybody else and seem to invest a great part of their prosperity in large families. Concentrated as they are in trading settlements, they stand out conspicuously against the rural African background, and it is not hard to see why they are envied and disliked by Africans and Europeans.

**Stephen Morris, British sociologist, 1956**

My father, Manubhai, and his two brothers, Indrakant and Subhas, ran a business in Jinja called African Ironmongers. It was set up by my grandfather, who was recruited from India to help build up colonies in African countries like Uganda. He initially worked on the railways, but always had a keen eye for opportunity.

**Viresh Patel, aged 8 in 1972**



Freedom of movement across the British Empire may have opened up opportunities for Indians in East Africa, but British colonial policy also used them as a 'buffer' between Europeans and Africans. Indians quickly established themselves in the middle rungs of government and the professions. This position was reinforced as the British prioritised their education over that of Black Africans.

Those who originally came to Uganda were from diverse backgrounds: Gujarati, Punjabi, Goan; Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Parsee and Sikh. People were further divided by caste, language, sect and class. Nevertheless, over time those living in the country forged a new identity of 'Ugandan Asian' that to some extent overrode these different identities.

Memories of Asian life in Uganda often mention its rich sociability. This life was supported not only by the population's economic success, but by cultural, religious and social institutions that were established in Kampala, Jinja and other towns. Worship in temples and mosques, social gatherings and sports and cultural events gave a structure to everyday life.

If there was mixing between Uganda Asians of different backgrounds, there was far less social interaction between Asian and African Ugandans. The British Empire's three-tier racial hierarchy concentrated Europeans, Asians and Africans in different part of the economy, and aimed to separate them socially. Outside the workplace each group led almost separate

My family actually owned a car business in Kampala, with showrooms as well as a garage for repairing cars. Meanwhile, another one of our family businesses was an upholstery. Everyone, including the men, knew how to operate a sewing machine; and my two brothers became expert upholsters. Although I was taught the same, I was more interested in the car side of business, so I focused all my energy on that.

**Ramzu Pirmohamad**

Ugandans – Black Ugandan Africans – didn't really trust Asians, and Ugandan Asians didn't really trust Black African Ugandans. Right? It's the unsaid thing. And Amin was part of the discourse going around in Uganda which created, gave him the environment to come to the forefront, in addition to Britain's bloody involvement in putting Amin into those positions. OK?... So, Britain has responsibility and it took some responsibility by taking the Ugandan Asians, but let's also be honest that Britain didn't open its arms to us and say, 'Immediately come in.' OK? It took public pressure, to get them to take us in. So yeah, they did the right thing in the end, but Britain's involvement in Uganda has a dirty history'.

**Fiyaz Mughal OBE, expelled from Uganda aged 18 months**



lives, with residential and cultural mingling discouraged. Each population had its own housing, schools, healthcare, social clubs, and even cemeteries and public toilets. However, by the time of independence, among younger generations there was the beginning of racial mixing.

The structural position of Asians in East African society made it easy for post-war African independence movements to position them as a problem. Although many Asians opted to take Kenyan or Ugandan citizenship on independence, their position in the newly created nations was precarious. Sometimes described as the 'Jews of Africa', nationalist politicians increasingly depicted them as social parasites, with Idi Amin accusing them of having 'milked the cow without feeding it'. As a result many Asian families across East Africa chose to retain their UK passports.

Following the independence of East African countries in the 1960s, the new governments introduced Africanisation policies designed to end Asian dominance of the professions, civil service and commerce. Africanisation was explained as a positive assertion of African rights and status in the post-independence era. But the policies deliberately targeted Asian businesses, and barred 'non-citizens' – mainly Kenyan and Ugandan Asians who had kept their British passports – from, for example, holding civil service jobs. Alongside this kind of state action, anti-Asian prejudice sometimes spilled over into violence.

With their future in jeopardy, many East African Asians opted to migrate to different parts of the world, even before they were forced to do so as in Uganda. The introduction of Africanisation policies in Kenya after independence in 1963 saw thousands of Kenyan Asians leaving. Many came to Britain, and formed the basis of its East African Asian population, who were to be important when the Ugandan Asians were forced to follow in their footsteps in 1972.

It was very strong, there was a very strong sense of community that came through what my mother said and my father said... It was a community pretty clearly that didn't have a sense of sectarianism around it... we had a sense of collective – we had a collective identity, which transcended religion.'

**Fiyaz Mughal OBE, expelled from Uganda aged 18 months**

My mother spent much more time at home—she was a housewife, as ladies in Jinja tended to be. Of course, she did lots of cooking and cleaning... Alongside many others, she often attended daytime sewing classes, run by the more talented women in town, and stitched clothes for young children. Additionally, if there was a wedding happening nearby, Mum would join other ladies in the local area and gather at the house of the bride and groom, to help prepare snacks, peel vegetables and cook—regardless of differences in religion. My parents were part of a close-knit community that felt like one big family.

**Memories of the life of Usha Patel**

I have vivid memories of my childhood in Jinja... I spent most of my free time playing freely and swimming at Amber Court with my cousins—we all lived nearby each other, so there was always someone with whom I could hang around, and I never felt lonely. I also spent plenty of time at the Lakeview Club, and watched many cricket matches at Jinja Recreation Club. Food was a big part of my childhood experience: I loved to eat kebabs, fried mogo, jalebi and gathiya, made by a vendor called Ali across from the local cinema. I can still taste them all now—it's funny how you don't forget the smells or tastes of their favourite foods, despite the passing of many years.

**Viresh Patel, aged 8 in 1972**

[I went to] a youth club for Asian boys and girls – the first of its kind – where we could socialize and play at romance away from the penetrating eyes of the old guard... Soon some white and black youngsters joined in too... I danced reels with [a young African] Charles; he held my hands, which didn't turn black, as we were warned they would by our elders. Oh, the agony and ecstasy of transgressive acts!

**Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *The Settlers' Cookbook***



**Navin, Manesh & Vimal Shah  
and the Team  
thank British Ugandan Asians at 50 and  
The India Overseas Trust on  
marking the 50th anniversary of  
the Uganda Exodus and  
highlighting the enormous  
contribution made by the  
British Ugandan Asian Community  
to Great Britain.**

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## TRIBUTE



In loving memory of our parents  
**Mohanlal Purshottam Popat**  
and **Rambhaben Mohanlal Popat**  
of Mohanlal Purshottam and Co.  
P.O. Box 318, Jinja, Uganda.



## TRIBUTE



**23 March 1927 - 17 December 2020**

### **Natvarlal Bhimbhai Desai**

*Jalalpore and Vadodra, India*

The Desai family of Kampala, India and the UK send their greetings and compliments to The India Overseas Trust, in memory of their late father Natvarlal Bhimbhai Desai, fondly known to all as Natubhai or NB.

NB was born in 1927 in Jalalpore and was brought up by his mother, having lost his father in childhood. He joined the Bank of Baroda in 1947, shortly before marrying our beloved mother Indiraben. The Bank posted him to Kampala in 1959 and he went on to serve the bank with distinction in cities across Uganda. When Idi Amin expelled the Asians in 1972, our father was one of the few who stood up to him, not leaving until 1974. He was then posted to the London branch of the bank, with the role of increasing the UK branch network in order to serve the displaced British Ugandan Asian Community. After leaving the Bank of Baroda he established the Equatorial Bank, and continued as its Managing Director until his retirement in 1992. Moving back to Vadodra in India, he enjoyed a fulfilling life in retirement, blighted only by the tragic loss of his eldest son Ashok to cancer. NB passed away in 2020 and is survived by his wife Indiraben, children Pragna and Asootosh, and grandchildren Hiren, Gira and Jaymini.





Originally from Kampala, Uganda, the Jessa Damani family finally settled in Peterborough, England and Toronto, Canada, although some of the brothers first found refuge in Austria, where they peeled potatoes in a camp for several months. The family thrived as business owners. Their legacy has been honoured by later generations though the philanthropic and entrepreneurial foundations they set up.



Speaking to the family of Husseinaly Mohammedali Jessa Damani, his son Abbasali Damani

said: "Our father took great pride when telling us the stories of back home. The difficulties he faced when leaving Ugandan deeply upset him when recalling events. The bravery of his family and friends, helping others carrying concealed valuables across the border. The hardship he endured with his brother in the Austria refugee camp, having never experienced snow and cold weather. The two jobs he worked in Toronto with his brother and the endless efforts they put in when setting up the businesses in Peterborough.

These stories created his legacy and this legacy carries on till today. My father received the Pride Of Peterborough award and that is a testament to the relationship he formed with every person he met. The legacy of the Jessa Damani family resonates deeply with all those who have heard the name and we honour all of them any way we can on a daily basis."

## The Mohammedali Jessa Damani Family

# History: The Expulsion

On 4 August 1972, Amin gave a wide-ranging speech to soldiers in Tororo, in the east of Uganda. Almost in passing, he declared that the country had no place 'for the over 80,000 Asians holding British passports who are sabotaging Uganda's economy and encouraging corruption'. In line with the wider trend towards Africanisation in this period, he stated that Uganda's economy should be in the hands of Black Ugandans. Five days later he confirmed his position, giving Ugandan Asians a maximum of ninety days to leave the country, else they would 'find themselves sitting on the fire'. Each individual was permitted to take what could be carried in one suitcase.

A week later he announced that the private sale of property by Asians – except personal clothing, radios, and furniture – was prohibited. All Asian-owned buildings, businesses, and industries would be confiscated by the government, without compensation.

As the deadline grew closer, panicked lines of people could be found outside the British embassy. There were not enough staff to process all the applications, and the British government had decided to prioritise the evacuation of 'Belongers' – white British nationals in Uganda. The Canadian Government established its own mission to process applications; following by a commitment by the Aga Khan to pay for the flights of Ismaili Muslims to Canada.

Soon after the announcement we tried to sell as many of the goods from our shop as we could, before shutting it down. At one point the army arrived, carrying guns, to make sure we had done so—we didn't risk reopening it to the public after that. But they would also show up randomly and ask us to open it so that they could help themselves to whatever they wanted. They never paid and we never asked them to. We were all very scared. We had to get rid of our household items too. We sat outside our house with our old clothes, toys, kitchenware and furniture, trying to sell it all. I recall lots of women doing this.

**Firoza, aged 20 in 1972**

My family and I decided we would go to the UK, and made our way to the British embassy to acquire visas. Given that my father already had a British passport, we didn't think there would be any issues. However, nothing prepared us to witness people sleeping outside the embassy. Understandably, they felt desperate enough to do so. We ended up waiting there for a full twenty-four hours, but we all got our visas in the end.

**Ramzu Pirmohamad**



Families where some members held UK passports but others had Indian or Ugandan passports, or those with special circumstances, were particularly anxious to have their cases resolved. But many families were split up, sometimes for months, sometimes permanently.

As the deadline drew closer and families tried to get their affairs in order out on the streets things were getting more unpredictable. Not only Ugandan Asians, but African Ugandans who were suspected of opposing Amin faced arbitrary violence and detention by the army.

As well as chaos in the streets and at home, expellees needed to negotiate a series of army roadblocks to reach Entebbe airport, and these became focal points for extortion and violence. Soldiers demanded that families open their suitcases, and took whatever items appealed to them. Some families had the foresight to offer bribes to the police to provide escorts.

I do remember, very vividly, going to a friend's place and finding that the house is empty – they are all gone, you know. And, you never knew who was leaving because people didn't say goodbyes etc. As soon as arrangements were made, they fled. Hearing tales of people being abused, people being harassed, their material possessions being taken away from them. We had a house help called John, a young man – probably eighteen – and he didn't come to work for few days. When he came back, he showed us his back where he had been lashed because he was taken by the police and for some reason, they wanted to know who does he work for.

**Chandrika Joshi**



The British government's reaction to Idi Amin's announcement was ambiguous. Were the Ugandan Asians UK citizens, immigrants or refugees? Changes in British immigration law in 1968 and 1971 meant that even though thousands of Ugandan Asians were still UK passport holders, they no longer had automatic right of entry to Britain. Edward Heath's government had promised that there would be no more mass immigration. Yet the international community, and voices within the Government and media, were urging Britain to honour promises made to Ugandan Asians on independence, and take the expellees in.

Three days after Amin's announcement, Race Relations minister David Lane said on the radio that Britain was already an 'overcrowded island', and confirming that immigration controls would remain firm. However, a high-level diplomatic mission to Uganda aiming to change Amin's mind was a failure. This led to Britain's envoy, Geoffrey Rippon, announcing from Kampala that 'we can bear the responsibility for doing the best for United Kingdom passport holders'.

This did not, at first, mean allowing the Ugandan Asians to come to Britain. Rather, the British government expended a good deal of energy in August and early September trying to persuade other countries – India, Zambia, a number of Latin American nations – to take them. It also explored the idea of giving direct cash payments to UK passport holders who were willing to go to India in return for giving up their British passports. Ultimately though, other nations were unwilling to accept the expellees unless the British government took responsibility for all UK passport holders. On 10 September Prime Minister Edward Heath confirmed that all UK passport holders would be admitted.

At this point the government established the Uganda Resettlement Board to organise flights and the reception and resettlement of the expellees. Three airlines coordinated ticketing and check-in arrangements, and the first plane arrived at Stansted Airport on 18 September 1972 with 193 passengers.

My family and I went about doing what needed to be done, but all the while, there was a real sense of fear and panic. Trouble had started to flare out in Kampala, often without warning. For example, one day, while in town trying sort things out, we got stuck in the thick of things: the army had started shooting at people. We hid in my friend's house. On that same day, two small children, whom I knew, were shot dead. Along with three other children from my family, they'd been playing outside when the army arrived and started shooting people at random. All five children hid as the army came closer, but at the last second, the three from my family decided to run and hide elsewhere. The other two were left behind in all the chaos and, unfortunately, paid the ultimate price.

**Ramzu Pirmohamad**

We got to the airport and my aunt, my masi, her daughter was probably four at the time, and she had a teddy bear, and then the soldier tried to take the teddy bear off her, and what my aunt done was to pinch her really hard [gestures pinching his arm] and she just screamed. So obviously the soldier said, 'Oh, what happened?' She goes, 'Sorry you have just taken her teddy bear away. You can't do that'. So he gave it back to her. And in there she had put all her jewellery [laughs]. And she got that out of the country that way. So you can see lot of the stuff – they were checking everything. So, we only had the clothes we were wearing and a few bits, you know, to take out of the country.

**Mayur Seta**



**Best wishes from**  
**R&R Property Investments**  
**(International) Ltd**



Best wishes from the  
Late Kantilal and Kantaben,  
Jayamin & Jayshree, Kanesh,  
Sheena, Markand & Akash Patel  
and family, formerly of  
Gulu, Uganda

Our compliments to  
Mihir K Patel and all the  
team at British Ugandan  
Asians at 50 for their  
energy and imagination  
in completing the  
programme, and  
delivering such a range of  
activities to celebrate the  
remarkable achievements  
of our Community since  
the Exodus.

**Mrs Praful and  
Dr Satish Patel**

**BRITISH UGANDAN**



**ASIANS AT 50**

Congratulations and thanks to Mihir K Patel and all the  
team at the India Overseas Trust for completing the  
Ugandan Exodus 50th anniversary programme.

**Dr Ashik & Dr Maya Amlani  
and Priyanka Patel**



We would like to congratulate  
The India Overseas Trust on their sterling work,  
marking the 50th anniversary of the winding up of the  
Uganda Resettlement Board

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# History: Arrival at UK airports, and initial distribution

Starting on 18 September and concluding on 9 November 1972 (the day after Amin's deadline), 15,093 passengers arrived at Stansted on ninety-two special flights, with a further 9,982 arriving at Heathrow, 913 at Gatwick and 204 at Manchester. British Caledonian, BOAC and East African Airways were involved in the airlift.

Early arrivals, interviewed by journalists as they came through the landing gates, told harrowing stories of being stripped of businesses, personal possessions and life savings, and of their harassment and humiliation on the way to the airport at the hands of the army. Articles with headlines such as 'Immigrants' Terror: "One word and we're dead": Amin's rampaging soldiers hold Asians to ransom', and 'Our Escape from Hell: Asians in fear of bloodbath', all served to establish the expellees as genuine refugees in need of safety.

They were entering a Britain of rising unemployment, inflation and economic uncertainty, and where racism and mistrust of immigrants was rife. They were exhausted, confused and fearful for the future. On top of all that, the weather in autumn 1972 was consistently wet and cold, and most of the expellees were wearing light clothing suitable for the African climate.

On arrival, the expellees were welcomed by paid welfare workers and volunteers from the British Red Cross, Woman's Royal Voluntary Service, St John's Ambulance and other voluntary organisations, and given tea and sandwiches at the airport. Following registration by Ugandan Resettlement Board officials, those who had nowhere to go boarded chartered coaches.

Nationally, the Uganda Resettlement Board had been tasked with finding suitable short-term accommodation at extremely short notice. Following negotiations with the Ministry of Defence, disused Army and RAF bases were made available in sixteen locations across the country. Most of the camps were in poor condition and had to be made ready; they also tended to be in isolated or rural locations, far from amenities or any major cities. The armed forces and voluntary organisations including the Round Table played a leading role in making the camps ready.

Over 3,000 expellees were sent first to the former air base at Stradishall in Suffolk, which acted as a holding camp until families were sent to other resettlement centres or

It was that big impression of driving past the base and just seeing so many displaced people, out there, lost – they looked lost. They were lost, weren't they, at the end of the day? And, yeah that does, it's stayed with me anyhow, and I know it has for probably a lot of other people as well. It's something you hope you never see again but as we all know the world is moving on and things are happening again.

**Alan Cordy, local resident, Stradishall, Suffolk**

Two or three things I can remember – one was getting off the plane and I was still in shorts and my knees were knocking [laughs] as I got off the plane, thinking 'Wow this is cold' and then being really pleased to get a coat like this [gestures pulling on coat], from where they were giving clothes away.

**Professor Akbar Vohra who was a child at Stradishall camp**

There were lot of local organisations involved, they rallied round very well. We were members of one organisation called Round Table and all the organisations in the area, Round Table, Rotary, everybody was asked to help by the local council. So we went down to the camp, quite a few of us. We went to the camp and we were quite appalled by the condition. I mean, the army had moved out of there quite a time before, so this was just a barren camp on a barren hillside. The accommodation was pretty awful. So we were assigned several blocks, we cleaned them basically and got them ready.

**Ron Isles, volunteer, Tonfanau camp**



found permanent accommodation. Although designed to accommodate 800, this camp held around 1,600 at its peak. Greenham Common outside Newbury accommodated another 1,700; Hemswell and Faldingworth in north Lincolnshire between them took another 1,600.

The coach or train journeys to the camps were often long and arduous – to Tonfanau in Wales it lasted nine hours, with arrival late at night. British Rail provided free sandwiches, though with limited understanding of the refugees' dietary requirements. Many expellees report that following their recent experiences with the Ugandan armed forces, they were terrified at the sight of the soldiers and police officers who had been tasked with helping them off the train and carrying their luggage.

At the peak of the reception process in late October and early November, the Board and the camps struggled to keep pace with the arrivals. Original government plans had been based on the expellees being met at the airports, taken to a reception centre and rapidly moved out into the community. But the UK's housing shortages, growing picture of unemployment and many of the expellees' unfamiliarity with British society and English as a language meant that things moved slower than hoped.

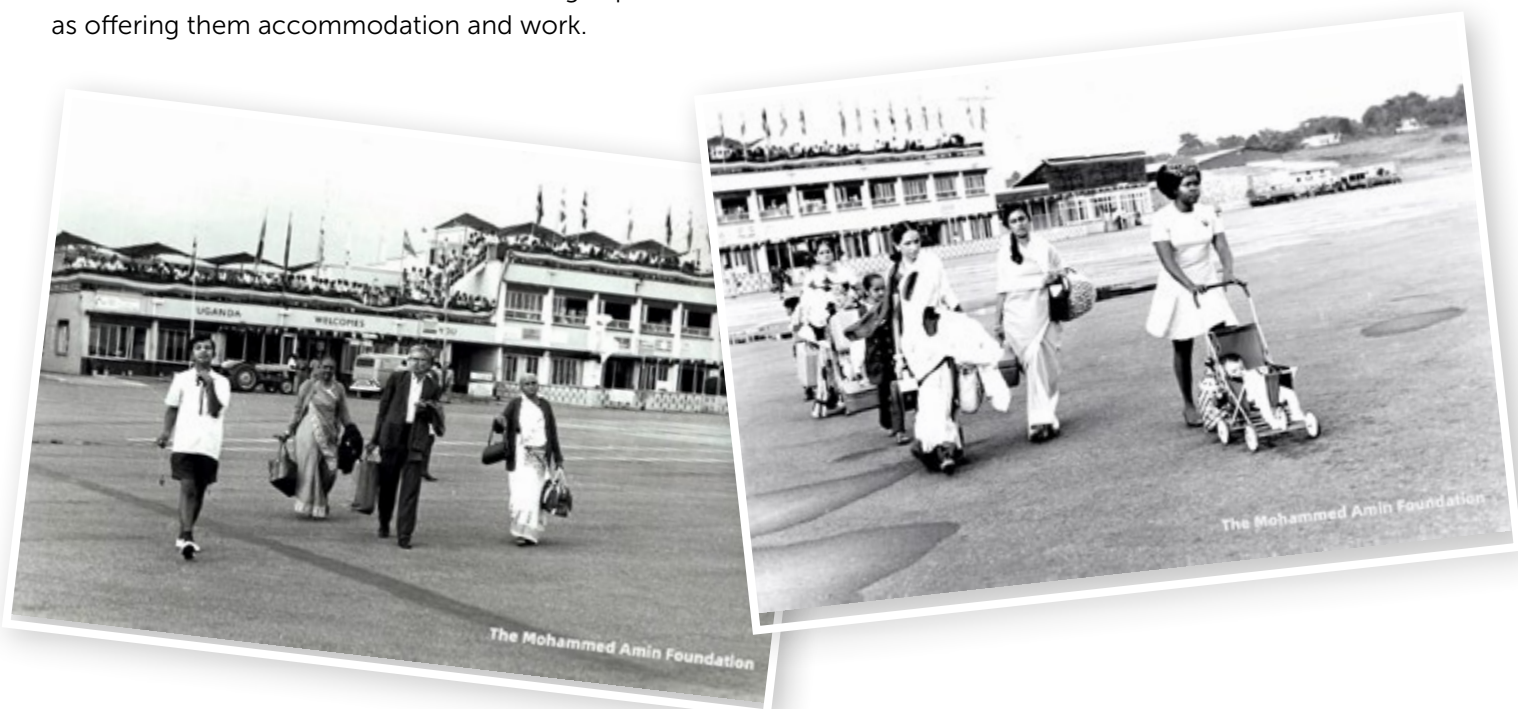
On the other hand, the expellees were entering a country with an established and growing South Asian, and East African Asian population, and where thousands of White British volunteers were keen to welcome the expellees, provide practical assistance and make the path to their resettlement smoother. The Asian populations of Leicester, London and Britain's other cities worked hard to raise money, collect clothes and furniture for the arriving expellees, as well as offering them accommodation and work.

We were very tired you know when we came to Wales, because it was a long journey. First we were put from the airport onto the coach and then we were transferred from coach to the train and it was a long journey. Sandwiches were dished out but they didn't know that some of us were vegetarians so somehow we were given ham sandwiches.

**Praful Purohit, resident, Tonfanau camp**

We must not put all the burden on the British Government or people. We must take responsibility and make preparations to help the people.

**Spokesman, Leicester's British Asian Welfare Committee, 16 August 1972**



The Karia Family sends its warm compliments to the India Overseas Trust on its work for the 50th anniversary of the Ugandan Exodus, and wishes it every success in its new role of celebrating the wider East African Asian Diaspora.

Late Vasantbhai, Smt. Ushaben,  
Shibir and Anup & Karia Family

BRITISH UGANDAN



ASIANS AT 50

Congratulations and thanks to all the team at the India Overseas Trust for completing the Ugandan Exodus 50th anniversary programme.

from a  
Well-Wisher

The India Overseas Trust apologises for the image of Mrs Zarina Mohamed Sakaria which previously appeared in this space.

Owing to a misunderstanding we had believed Mrs Sakaria to be deceased.

In fact she is still living, and we are pleased to wish her long life and good health.

# THE JASANI FOUNDATION IS COMMITTED TO PHILANTHROPY AND PLURALISM



The origin: In the heart of Borana, Gujarat, during the early 1900s, resided a family that stood as an epitome of harmony and benevolence - the Jasanis. Led by the patriarch Kanji bhai, a man revered as 'Kanji Mama' by the entire village, the Jasanis were the sole Ismaili Muslim family in Borana, yet their presence wove a tapestry of unity and compassion that transcended religious boundaries.

Kanji bhai, a man of immense generosity and unwavering faith, was the embodiment of a true patriarch. His four sons, Rahematullah, Shamsuddin, Sadruddin, and Sabjaali, and two daughters, Champa bai and Jena bai, grew up imbibing their father's noble values, carrying the spirit of unity and service forward.

Kanji Mama's warmth extended beyond his family, embracing the entire village. His home was a haven for all, and whenever a Borana girl stepped into the realm of matrimony, a 'mameru' (a wedding gift) from Kanji Mama was a cherished tradition. The spirit of giving extended to the preservation of Borana's heritage. For decades, the Jasani family meticulously maintained a 'deval', a sacred place of worship for Hindus, ensuring that the lamp of devotion remained perpetually lit. Tragedy struck when a devastating earthquake ravaged Borana, leaving Kanji Mama's ancestral home and the beloved deval in ruins. Undeterred, Kanji Mama's grandchildren, scattered across India, the USA, and the UK, rallied together to rebuild the deval, restoring a symbol of faith and unity to their beloved village. Their generosity extended further, as they dug a well near the deval, providing a lifeline of fresh drinking water to the parched community.

The legacy of Kanji bhai and his family continues to inspire generations. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren, guided by the values instilled in them, have dedicated themselves to empowering others. They have extended a helping hand to countless individuals, providing educational opportunities and assisting families in establishing themselves across the globe.

The Jasani family's story is a testament to the power of unity, compassion, and unwavering faith. Their unwavering commitment to serving others has transformed Borana, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of its people. Kanji Mama's legacy lives on, not just in the stones of the deval or the well that quenches the thirst of Borana's inhabitants, but in the countless lives touched by his family's unwavering spirit of generosity.

**Jasani Foundation funds projects in Uganda, UK, USA, Tajikistan, India and Pakistan.**

# History: Life in the Resettlement Camps

From early September 1972 and into October things moved quickly as the Uganda Resettlement Board put arrangements in place to receive up to thirty thousand Ugandan Asians. Although the Board had wanted to avoid using military camps as they weren't adapted for family life, these were the only places big enough to house, feed and support such large numbers of people.

Conditions varied widely between the sixteen camps. Nearly all were empty RAF bases, but much depended on how long they had been vacant and what they had been used for before closing. The camps in the worst condition, notably Piddlehinton in Dorset, only ran for a very few weeks.

Camp commanders, often with a colonial civil service or military background, were appointed as heads of the sixteen camps. Each also had a civilian administrator employed by the Uganda Resettlement Board. Uniformed voluntary organisations – the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, St John's Ambulance and the Red Cross, and other national voluntary bodies such as the Women's Institute and the YMCA, provided the backbone of the everyday work of the camps. Their numbers were added to by civil servants and local employment exchange workers who aimed to match everyone with accommodation and an offer of work.

At their peak each camp operated almost like a self-contained welfare state, providing all the services the Ugandan Asians needed to sustain them while they familiarised themselves with British life and as they began to think about the future. Stradishall, as the biggest of the camps, also created and ran its own school. In other camps volunteers ran activities and more informal lessons for the children, as well as providing language classes for the many Ugandan Asian adults who did not speak English.

Huts have been partitioned with curtains, and their only heating is from bottled-gas stoves. There are no kitchens capable of mass catering. Hot food is sent twice a day in insulated containers from the nearest resettlement centre, 25 miles away. Disposable cups and plates have to be used. Breakfasts are cereals, bread, butter and tea.

**John Owen, "Unsuitable' refugee camp to shut', Daily Telegraph, 27 Oct 1972**

Hot drinks and refreshments on arrival; medical examination, including if possible, mass X-ray procedures; documentation; interviews with heads of families, designed to ascertain their financial position, their family responsibilities, their skills, the educational needs of their dependants and whether they had relatives or friends to whom they could look for housing or employment, or both; assistance from the Supplementary Benefits Commission; care of babies and young children; care of the old, the sick and the handicapped; first aid centres transport within the airport and from the airport to the reception centres; transport to hospitals for those needing hospital treatment; telephone communication; general welfare; the issue of warm clothing to those needing it.

**R A Wilkinson, 'Establishment of a refugee camp'**



Basic furniture, appliances, utensils, bedding, crockery etc was provided by the army or requisitioned by the Ministry of Works. Local people, as well as people from right across the country, donated blankets, clothes and toys to make camp life more comfortable. Volunteers were also at the forefront of providing support, social and 'reorientation' activities, including teaching English or providing entertainment and visits to places of interest.

Food was a point of particular concern for the expellees. In a world where they had lost everything, familiar food was a point of stability. In some camps, poor quality food led to organised complaints to the camp authorities, the threat of food strikes and publicising the problems in the media. Rather than listening to these problems some camp commanders dismissed them, blaming the grievances on younger volunteers and 'troublemakers', who they simply moved to other camps. Elsewhere camp workers adopted a more flexible approach and included the Ugandan Asians in the menu planning and cooking.

In some areas surrounding the reception camps there was initially suspicion of the newcomers, but as the Ugandan Asians became a familiar sight around local towns, the welcome they received was generally a warm one. As the months went on volunteers and camp residents settled into a routine and in the process made friends and gained insights into their different ways of life. Camp staff and voluntary workers at Faldingworth and Hemswell camps attended the camps' Diwali and Eid celebrations, sitting on the floor through what one WRVS worker described as "nearly four hours of deafening music, wild dance and recitations – I didn't understand a word".



He had to beg and borrow for equipment. He was given a series of rooms over in the air base. They weren't actually proper classrooms. They had to be divided up with cloth screens like the sort you might find in a hospital. No desks were the same, they were all different style desks, chairs, big chairs, little chairs, but he got the school together and they started meeting as a school. And, on the Friday before, he had three staff, a school, no pupils; on the following Monday, he had a school, three staff, eighty pupils; and the following Friday – five days later – he had a school, three staff, and 1,200 pupils.

**Deborah Sheridan recounting her father's efforts as headmaster of Stradishall camp's temporary school**

In the evening, we went to the canteen and there was food there which was, you know... we thought, 'What is this? It's all meat and everything, you know, chicken and pork' – whatever it was. It was alien to us. A lot of us wouldn't eat that, you know, especially the elder lot. Obviously we had the mashed potatoes, beans and everything. And then a day later my mum and a group of ladies approached the manager and said, 'Look, we won't be able to eat this food. Is there any chance we can make our Indian food?' And he said, 'Yes, that's no problem. If you tell me what you need, we'll get everything.' So my mum and two ladies went to Cambridge to a local Indian shop and bought all the herbs and spices that needed to make all the food. My mum got six women who cut all the potatoes, all the other stuff they needed to make the food. My mum was the person in charge. She'd make the main masala to mix in the potatoes and all that. The ladies would you cook it and everything. So within two days, we were having an Indian meal every day. It was fantastic'.

**Mayur Seta who was a child at Stradishall camp**

Many camp residents were impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of some of the volunteers, such as Bunty Charles who led the WRVS at Heathfield camp, and Mrs R at one of the Lincolnshire camps "who on some days arrived at 8.00 in the morning and often left in the early hours of the following morning, taking everything in her stride and not once complaining about the long hours'.

It was not only the camp residents who benefited from the presence of the volunteers. Many of those who worked with the Ugandan Asians reflected how much they gained from the experience of volunteering.

As the months went by, most residents of the camps found homes and jobs. From a peak of 13,051 camp residents on 9 November 1972, by March 1973 only 1,100 people remained in the final two of the original sixteen resettlement centres. The last resettlement camp, Heathfield, closed on 24 March 1973. Many of the tensions and dramas which accompanied the reception and resettlement programme rapidly faded from the public mind and from political discourse.

In Wales, people were quite friendly but when we used to go to the town centre, we used to experience a little bit of racism, but not to the extent that it frightened us. But once they came to know that we are OK, they were alright with us.'

**Praful Purohit, resident at Tonfanau camp**

I feel really great about the fact that I can look back fifty years and say I did this, I was involved in this, I played my part. I feel that I learnt a truly valuable lesson to treat other people as I would wish to be treated myself and irrespective of what the circumstances were, if someone was in front of me and needed my assistance then they would get it, whatever way I could possibly deliver.

**Stephen Poulton, former police cadet, Stradishall camp**

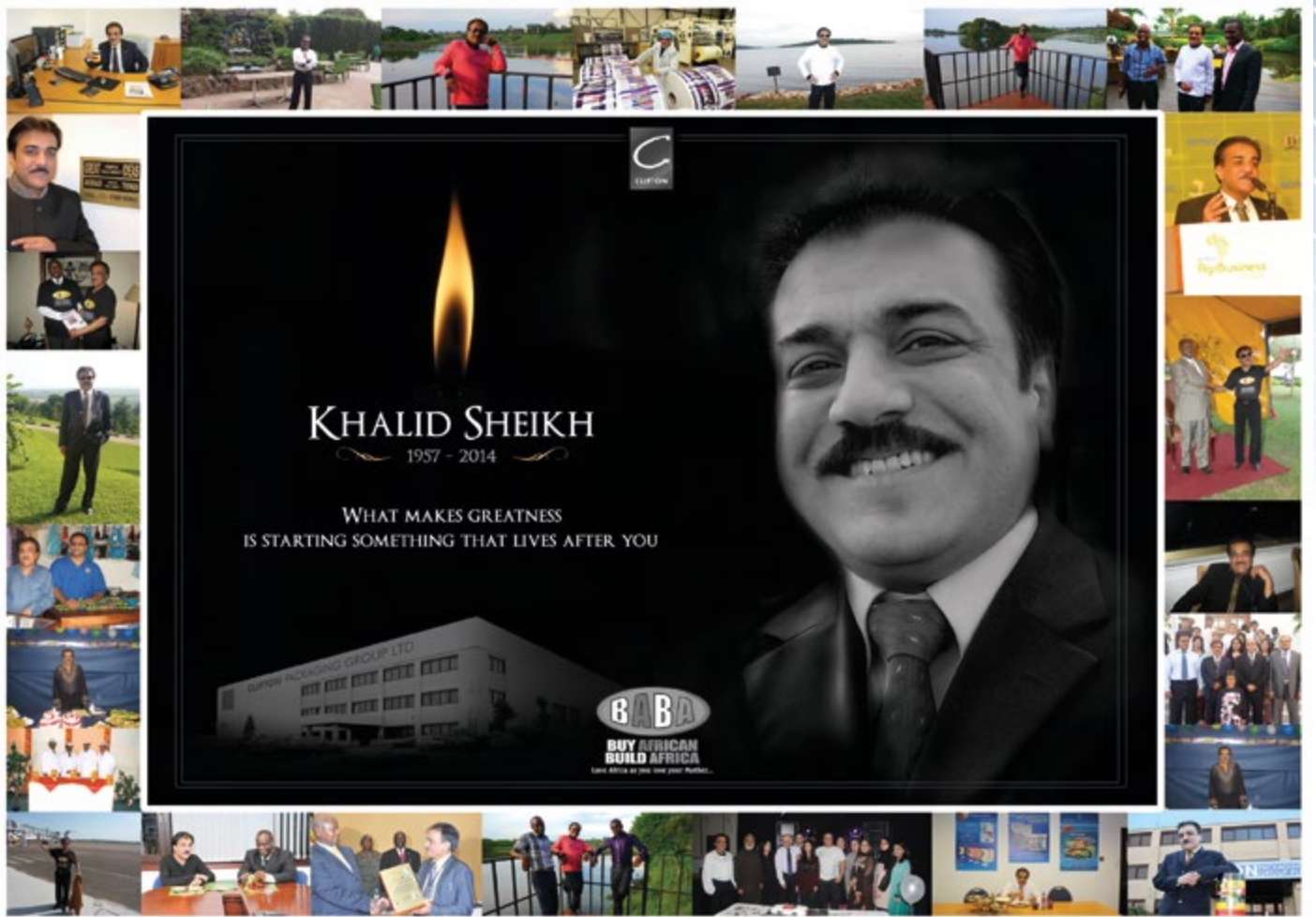
It was a very humbling experience for us to see it – we've never forgotten it'

**Ron Isles, Round Table volunteer, Tonfanau camp**

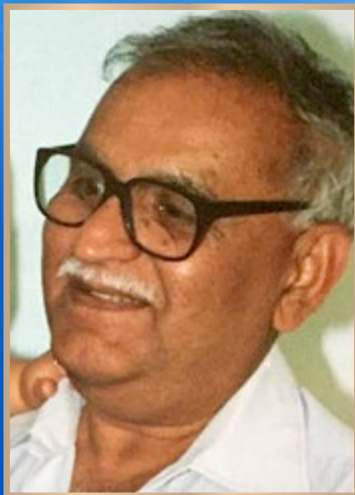
I think it was an example of efficient compassion if you like. I like to think it was. It was a great experience.

**Sheila Bailey, volunteer teacher at Stradishall camp**





## T R I B U T E



**23 April 1931 - 15 February 2006**

### Ibrahim Abdulbhai Vohra

*Kampala and Peterborough*

Born in Napad, Gujarat State, to Abdulbhai and Kulsumben. Ibrahim married Aminaben in 1950, followed his father to Kampala in 1953 and obtained British Citizenship in 1954. He worked in their car-accessories shop before joining a Ugandan Government office where, coincidentally, he prepared birth certificates of his children (Gulshan, Farook, Akbar and Mumtaz). Ultimately, he was manager of Michelin Tyres. He left Uganda, with family, on 27/09/1972, arriving at Stansted and encamping at Stradishall.

Within two weeks, he obtained a stocks-clerk position at Perkins Engines, Peterborough, and a council house. His family were amongst the first to move to Peterborough, living on Star Road and then South Street. He had 12 grandchildren: Altaf, Rubina, Karishma, Tabassum, Charlotte, Sophie, Joshua, Munazzah, Abdul-Wahab, Sara, Irfan, and Imran.

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Best wishes and congratulations to Mihir K Patel and his colleagues in the India Overseas Trust from the management and staff of Sanjay Foods.





This message of Loyal Greetings was sent to HM the late Queen, Elizabeth II, by the India Overseas Trust on the occasion of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.



**THE INDIA  
OVERSEAS TRUST**

A Commemoration of the 1972 Expulsion and  
A Celebration of the Diaspora's Achievements.



# THANK YOU



to Her Majesty The Queen, Her Majesty's Government of the day under Prime Minister Edward Heath and the present day under Prime Minister David Cameron, and the British People for honouring their obligation to British Citizens resident in Uganda following the expulsion of the Asian Community from Uganda by President Idi Amin as announced on this day, 4th August, in 1972.

The India Overseas Trust and the 40th Anniversary Commemoration Committee of the United Kingdom, on behalf of the Asian Community of Ugandan origin in the United Kingdom send loyal greetings to Your Majesty on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of your accession to the throne and the 41st Anniversary of the Expulsion from Uganda, and offer you our continued support and good wishes.

We also offer our heartiest congratulations to Her Majesty on the birth of her great grandchild and heir to the throne, His Royal Highness Prince George Alexander Louis of Cambridge, the son of Prince William the Duke of Cambridge and Her Royal Highness Catherine the Duchess of Cambridge on Monday 22nd July 2013.

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# History: Prejudice

From the moment that Idi Amin gave his expulsion order, some people in Britain expressed strong anti-‘immigrant’ views and concerns over the impact that the arrival of the Ugandan Asians would have on British society and culture. Others spoke up on favour of the Ugandan Asians and the right of UH passport holders to come to Britain.

In the press and wider media, and in Parliamentary Questions, four points of concern were repeated: the shortage of housing, unemployment, the ‘strain’ on social services, and a generalised feeling that the Asians did not “fit in” with “our way of life”. These attitudes were expressed in a number of ways. For instance, there was a spate of hoax letters carrying convincing-looking addresses of local hospitals and government departments, telling householders that under ‘emergency powers’ they had to take some expellees as lodgers.

The far-right group the National Front instigated a determined campaign against the Ugandan Asians, demonstrating outside some of the camps, asking its members to attend local council meetings to ‘make a big fuss’, and to ‘flood local newspapers with punchy letters protesting about the menace of Asian immigration’. It fielded candidates in local and national elections, including twenty-six in Leicester’s District Council elections of June 1973. It won no seats but attracted around 20% of the vote locally and 8% in the February 1974 Parliamentary elections.

But anti-Ugandan Asian feelings were not only expressed on the political right. Arthur Lewis, Labour MP for West Ham North, was at the forefront of asking questions in Parliament and the press, demanding to know if the expellees were going to jump the housing queue and get preferential welfare benefits. We can find records of the concern of individuals through the letters to the editors of local and national newspapers.

Leicester had already gained notoriety for taking out adverts in the Ugandan press, urging the expellees not to come to the city. In an effort to ‘dilute’ the impact of the expellees on housing, jobs and educational provision in

A Ministry vehicle will bring their luggage, consisting of six bed rolls and six prayer mats. It is imperative that the prayer mats be laid out facing East, towards Mecca. You will be required to provide all meals for these people, and the following food will be provided: 500 kilograms of rice; 100 kilograms of chapattis; 50 kilograms of mangoes; 250 kilograms of yams and 100 kilograms of curry powder, extra hot high Madras quality.

**Sample hoax letter, autumn 1972**

These nationals of ours will be pushed even further down the long, long, housing and employment registry of this country to make way for the unwanted ethnic groups of other countries...Our medical services can barely cope with the present population, and yet you gladly welcome 50,000 more immigrants. What a Mad Hatter’s Tea Party.

**Sample letters to newspaper editors, autumn 1972**

There was a jobcentre office on site, where we were all signed on for work. Everyone had an interview, and our skills were carefully noted so that we could be matched up with appropriate vacancies. Meanwhile, we were asked where we wanted to settle; although we were told clearly not to ask for London or Leicester, as they weren’t available options. I guess those cities were already overpopulated with Ugandan Asians, and we would need to be more evenly distributed.

**Ramzu Pirmohamad**

particular areas, the Ugandan Resettlement Board drew up a list of Red Areas – defined as places with an ‘exceptional concentration of New Commonwealth immigrants’ – where the Ugandan Asians were encouraged not to go, including Leicester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and parts of West London. It also identified Green Areas – parts of the country with a low number of existing new migrants, often with plenty of spare housing, including council housing. Expellees moving to the Green Areas could expect to be given housing, help with finding work and support after they had moved. Those choosing to move to Red Areas received nothing.

Being in a Green Area did not necessarily prevent the Ugandan Asians from experiencing racism. Some who had enjoyed friendly relationships with local people at the resettlement camps encountered prejudice and racism for the first time when they left them. Some felt that the support they got from the Uganda Resettlement Board had given them an unfair advantage in competing for jobs and housing.

Who the Ugandan Asians’ new neighbours, work colleagues and classmates were could make a huge difference. One family, who were given housing and work in Perth, nevertheless decided to move to London, to escape their neighbours who made ‘very racist remarks at them... [and made] them unhappy’. Even for those Ugandan Asians who managed to find themselves good jobs relatively quickly, work could be another place to experience racism.

Other Ugandan Asians reported a much better experience, with neighbours willing to support the newcomers with hospitality and friendly advice about life in the UK.

Red Areas may have struggled with problems, particularly of overcrowding and poor housing. But unlike many of the Green Areas, they offered plenty of opportunities for work. And, with their already-established South Asian and East African Asian populations, with their places of worship, social networks, and shops and cafes offering familiar foods, they provided something essential for the dislocated Ugandan Asians – the possibility of feeling at home.

One of the problems that did arise was that locally, people thought that... the papers were misreporting that the people that were coming in were coming in to beautifully furnished flats with refrigerators. Far from the case! I mean they got a chair each, they got a rotten table each, and a bed, that was about it.

**Ron Isles, Round Table volunteer, Tonfanau camp**

While completing my A-levels in the UK, I decided to take a year off and got a job at a telecommunications company. But after some time working there, I began to feel unwanted. I felt this way for various reasons, such as the fact that all of the more unfavourable tasks were consistently dumped on me, and it was apparent that this was racially motivated. I was lucky that my friends from Uganda lived nearby, and they certainly helped keep my spirits up— but at work, I was miserable. Against all sorts of racial prejudices, I quickly learned that my career wasn’t going to flourish, and that if I wanted to overcome this barrier, I had to educate myself further.

**Mukund Kataria, a teenager upon expulsion**

We had a coach to take us from Stradishall to Peterborough. We were shown around by a really nice lady, all the furniture etc. Next door neighbour were a retired couple. They showed my mum, my parents really how to light a fire (laughs), because we had never seen coal or lit a fire to warm yourself up. Showed us where the coal bunker was and how to order coal and things. So the neighbours were fantastic. The support we got to integrate, the support from people our own age and the neighbours was terrific.

**Professor Akbar Vohra, whose family was offered a council house in Peterborough**

# A WARM WELCOME TO PETERBOROUGH

Peterborough was the first city in the UK to actively welcome Ugandan Asians. Under the leadership of Cllr Charles Swift, the city council set aside housing and brought families from Stradishall Camp to see what the city had to offer. Most local people supported this, despite far-right harassment.



"We were working hard until I was 60 and my husband was 68. Now, we are just relaxing. Our boys are grown up, they're about 50 now, they've got degrees and they've got children, they're married now. And we are so happy now."



"This was us outside our first home in Peterborough. It was a Council house given to us when we moved."

Mo Dattoo



"We are very, very close with each other. And I think it's because we went through a very traumatic time together."

Rizwan Rahemtulla



"This is me at the Hindu Mandir. I have been involved in the mandir for fifty years doing seva and still to this day I am an active member. To me the mandir is an important part of my life but also brings together the Hindu community in Peterborough."

Manjulaben Seta



1970s

SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE KHOJA SHIA COMMUNITY, WHO WERE EXPELLED FROM UGANDA, SETTLED IN THE PETERBOROUGH AREA.

1978

THE FIRST PURPOSE-BUILT IMAMBARGAH FOR THE KHOJA SHIA COMMUNITY IN THE WEST, WAS CONSTRUCTED IN PETERBOROUGH.

"To come out with 'grateful' as a thought to encompass everything that has happened to me, has meant that I want to give back. I think we're a success story of the government, Peterborough City Council and the people of Peterborough themselves."

Professor Akbar Vohra, Consultant Anaesthetist, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Best wishes to the  
India Overseas Trust on marking the  
50th Anniversary of the Uganda  
Exodus and highlighting the valuable  
contributions made by British  
Ugandan Asians to the  
United Kingdom.



IN MEMORY OF

**SHRI NARSHIDASBHAI &  
SHRIMATI HIRABEN THAKRAR**

&

**SHRI RASHMIKANT THAKRAR**

*From*

**D I S H O O M**  
and the Thakrar family

# History: Rebuilding new lives in a new country

The Uganda Resettlement Board was responsible for a number of misjudgements and mistakes; these are documented in a report, 'A Job Well Done?', prepared by the Central Committee for the Welfare of Evacuees from Uganda. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged by many in the Ugandan Asian community that overall the Board achieved a remarkable success, in terms of setting up and running the camps, the speed of the expellees' resettlement, and the way in which a difficult process was generally managed fairly and efficiently.

The Board's final report showed that roughly a quarter of the expellees made independent plans immediately on arrival in Britain, and the rest – 21,987 people – went through one of the camps. Of these, around half found their own work or housing, often through family or friends. Ultimately just over a third of all expellees – 8,429 – were settled by the Board directly, across around four hundred local authority areas. Of these, 1,793 went directly into council housing in the Green Areas, while 2,437 were found private accommodation.

Some families, supported by local voluntary and social services, happily settled in their allocated housing in Green Areas, finding work locally and becoming part of the community. Not all families were as isolated as might have been expected. The Muhammed family who had been sent to Wick in the far north of Scotland, and who had 'the unenviable distinction of being the northernmost Uganda Asian family in Britain', found on arrival that there were already five Pakistani trader families in the town. In Wick, as elsewhere, existing networks of family, friends and co-religionists were central to the process of rebuilding the Ugandan Asians' life from scratch in a new country.

We had some good times here at Honiton. People were so good. When I left the camp, I was still 17. Obviously we left at the end of January, the camp was closing in February so we were one of the last families to leave, and there were a few families left as well, so we had to go to another camp called Doniford camp in Watchett, in Somerset. The reason being that two of my brothers got a job in Bristol in a small village called Thornbury outside Bristol. There was a job plus a council house, but our council house was not ready so we had to go to Doniford for about four weeks, I think it was. From there, once the council house was ready we moved to Thornbury and I still have some very good memories of Thornbury. We left Thornbury, we lived about three, four miles from Thornbury but we still lot of people there, and again the country did wonders for us lot.

**Teji Sond, resident of Heathfield camp**

So, my grandma worked in a lot of the local factories most of her life right until she was retired, working long shifts with people very closely who also supported them when they first came here. My auntie then went to work for the civil service – so also helping to give back to others – and my mum worked in the local prison which was turned into prison from the original camp! So, [laughs], so her journey coming from the first place they went to, to then working every day in the prison was pretty cool. So their lives are very connected to everything that happened.

**Vanisha Sparks, daughter and granddaughter of residents at Stradishall camp, now settled in Suffolk**



The Green Areas were not satisfactory for all families. The Board may have tried to guide people away from Leicester, Ealing and Wandsworth, but in reality it had little power. Time and again, expellees voted with their feet and moved to the Red Areas, because they had family living locally, saw opportunities to open businesses or get work, or were attracted by being able to worship together, celebrate important festivals and rebuild social networks.

For many expellees, this was a time of unrelenting hard work and of using family ties and community networks to establish themselves. All families needed find ways of making a living. For some, particularly the elderly, long-term sick, those with disabilities and those with limited English language, life remained difficult and they needed to continue to rely on family, community and state support for years to come.

Six of us moved into my brother's two bedroom house: my parents had one room, and my brother and his wife had the other, while my wife and I slept on a blow-up mattress. Money was tight, and our meals weren't big portions, but we always made sure my parents ate well. Soon, after hassling the council on a daily basis, I was granted a council house as well, into which my wife and I moved. Meanwhile, my older brother too got a council house, into which he and my parents moved.

As the expellees began to find their feet, Leicester, the city that had tried so hard to deter Ugandan Asians from coming, developed the largest East African Asian population in the UK, reaching nearly 60,000 by the end of the 1970s. The Belgrave Road district became the focal point for the new arrivals. Some started small shops and businesses because that is what they had always done; others were forced into it because racial prejudice stopped them from finding work that matched their qualifications and experience.

As well as working to establish themselves economically, many families focussed on supporting their children to do their best in school and college, so that they might take advantage of Britain's free education and gain professional and vocational qualifications.

Although the Ugandan Asian community is most commonly associated with entrepreneurial and professional success, they also played pivotal roles in Britain's trade union and labour movements. For instance, they were central to Leicester's famous 1974 Imperial Typewriters strike, precipitated when some of the South Asian female employees discovered they were being paid less for the same work than their white colleagues.

There was second load of Asian people coming to Wales. I and a friend of mine went as volunteers to receive them. And who do I see, but one of my best friends coming, getting off that train. I tell you what, that was the biggest, most joyous moment in my life when I saw him. We hugged... [cries]. As soon as I saw my friend, I asked straight away about my family: 'How are they? What are they doing? Is everything OK in Uganda?'. He reassured me that everything was alright, so don't worry about that. He was put in a room next to me. I didn't have any relations in the UK at all, but he had his sister and his brother-in-law. So as soon as he settled, he wrote to his brother-in-law who said, 'Don't waste your time in the camp. Come over here'.

**Praful Purohit, resident at Tonfanau camp**

We stayed at my cousin's house until my wider family decided where we should settle for good. It was agreed that we would rent a four-bedroom house in Kenton, Harrow, which was a fair distance from my cousin's in Mitcham. Since we all had very tight budgets, the families of my aunt and her sister resided with mine under the same roof for a few years, before my immediate family felt financially comfortable enough to buy our first home in Kenton.

**Rupal, aged 10 in 1972**

Things were starting to improve, although life was still very hard. We were taking on as much work as we could, which usually meant 18 hour shifts; and on some days, we'd even work for 24 hours straight. We'd often travel to London for work, too, refurbishing restaurants and commercial businesses. After about six to seven months into living in the UK, we'd saved enough money to buy our first workshop, on Carmarthen Road in Swansea. Unfortunately, the place wasn't in good condition – big rats could be seen crawling around – but it was a start towards building our businesses. And soon, we were able to buy a second shop in Castle Square; fortunately, this was a nicer area, and even more fortunately, there were no rats living in this shop!

**Ramzu Pirmohamad**

The very visible successes of Britain's Ugandan Asian community – perhaps most obviously embodied in Leicester's 'Golden Mile' – can hide the very personal costs of the trauma of sudden expulsion, total loss of livelihoods and a whole way of life, and forcible relocation to a very foreign country.

Nevertheless, within a few years, the Uganda Asian community were well on the road to rebuilding their lives. Many who had fled the regime of Idi Amin, experienced life in the resettlement camps and faced the challenges of settling into a new country, went on to excel in their chosen fields. In a remarkable story of triumph, the community has developed from a small, traumatised group that were not welcome in various cities, into one that has made a huge economic and social contribution to cities like Leicester and London, and to Britain as a whole.



I had to start working straight away. I worked in a fruit and veg shop in West London. I had never previously worked in my short life in Uganda. So it was an experience working in a fruit and veg, carrying boxes of apples, bags of onions, potatoes, bananas, in the winter of '72. Coming back home with aching back and complaining to my mum, 'I can't do all this'. That was a very good lesson from her, to say, 'Now you go into school. You are not going to give up your schooling, so go back to school unless you want to do this job for the rest of your life.' My mother said to me and my brother and sister, 'You've got to learn to stand on your own feet. Nobody is going to give you anything for nothing.' So that's the motivation that drove me to get the best education. The advantage was that the education was free here.

**Harish Mandalia, a child at Stradishall camp**

The sense of fear of being kicked out in that scenario, I think stayed with my mother. She carried that throughout her life. You know, 'Am I safe? Is somebody going to come in my house? Are we totally safe?' She was always worried about security. She would check her locks all the time and I knew that was coming back from the time in Uganda and the sense of fear that had permeated into her. The sense of trauma and dislocation is something that's not talked about within the Ugandan Asian experience. There is a lot of talk about, 'Well it was the right thing that happened in the end'. For some in the Ugandan Asian community they found their peace in the UK, but that's not the full story'.

**Fiyaz Mughal OBE**

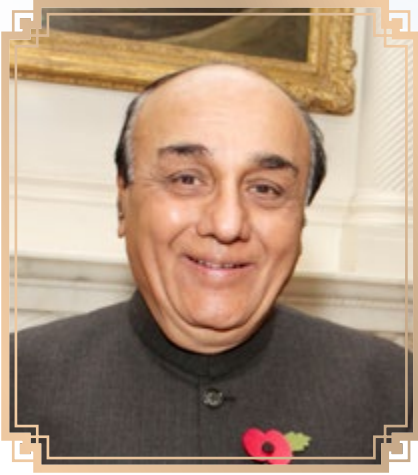
Leaving his home, and having to do so in such an abrupt fashion, really damaged my father. From then on, he never again spoke in Swahili; he never revisited Uganda; and even when he was in Kenya, right next door to his old home, he would decline his nephew's offers to drive him there. Dad never explicitly spoke about it, but the pain of leaving and starting from scratch, and the trauma of how it all occurred so fast, certainly stayed with him.

**Subhas Patel**



# Late Mr. Praful R.C. Patel

March 7th 1939, Jinja (Uganda) to August 16th 2023, Mumbai (India)



It is with profound sadness that The India Overseas Trust/British Ugandan Asians at 50 announces the passing of our Chair, Mr Praful R.C. Patel at the age of 84, in Mumbai on 16th August 2023 after a short illness. Born in Jinja, Uganda in 1939 and one of 9 siblings, he showed early leanings towards leadership and a later life in politics whilst at school.

Moving to the UK in 1958 to study Law and Economics, he quickly got involved in immigrant rights, Asian community affairs and the Labour Party. He was Founding Chairman of what is now BAPS UK, and his family was instrumental in establishing satsang in the UK under the guidance of his spiritual Guru, HH Yogiji Maharaj, whose first trip to the

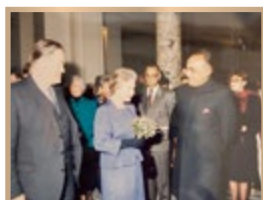
UK Prafulbhai organised in 1970 and thereafter, HH Pramukh Swami's trip in 1974.

He played an immeasurable and pivotal role during the Uganda Exodus as the only Asian member of the UK Government-appointed Uganda Resettlement Board, touching the lives of many more than the 28,608 British Ugandan Asians that went through the Resettlement Camps. Turning down an OBE as he had a strong moral objection to the term "Empire", he was invited instead to Buckingham Palace to have lunch with Her Majesty The Queen. His work with Hindu organisations includes the founding of the Leytonstone Shrinathji Haveli and Murugan Temple in Manor Park, and organising the pioneering visit by PP Murari Bapu to Kailash Mansarovar in 1997.

His love for the Arts manifested in the dance-ballet 'Nritya Natika Ramayan' which premiered in 1982 and was attended by His Majesty King Charles, then Prince of Wales. He was also PM Rajiv Gandhi's appointee to the Government of India's NRI Consultative Committee, founder of the International Ayurveda Foundation, and avid collector of Ganesha art with a treasure trove of over 6,000 pieces.

A life long member of the Labour Party, he stood as the Party's parliamentary candidate for Brent North in the 1987 General Election (the seat is now represented by Labour's Barry Gardiner). His tireless work in Community Affairs, Politics and Immigration advisory matters remains unmatched. A successful businessman as well as a philanthropist and true altruist, his ebullient character will be sorely missed. May his soul rest in eternal peace - Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

- The Board of Trustees, The India Overseas Trust



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# BEST WISHES

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# The Madhvani Family

Pioneers, sons of Uganda and survivors of the tides of fortunes



## A history of the Madhvani family in Uganda

- **1908:** Muljibhai Prabhudas Madhvani (14 May 1894 – 11 July 1958) aged 14 years old, arrives in Jinja, Uganda, to join his two uncles Vithaldas and Kalidas Haridas in their shop in Iganga and starts from these simple beginnings to learn about commerce and industry.
- **1911:** Muljibhai is entrusted to run a shop in Kaliro, Uganda, and is then asked in 1914 to open and manage a shop in Jinja.
- **1918:** Vithaldas Haridas & Company buys 800 acres of land in Kakira, Uganda. It would be another nine years before the sugar factory started operations there in 1930 with the crushing capacity of 150 tonnes of cane per day. Muljibhai starts procuring additional land from other European and Asian farmers to expand cultivation area.
- **1949:** The partners of Vithaldas Haridas & Co decide to separate and the Madhvani family acquires all the assets of the Kakira sugar complex in Uganda.
- **1957:** Kakira installs sprinkler irrigation for 2,800 hectares – at that time the largest in the world outside Cuba.
- **1958:** Muljibhai passes away leaving the Group in the capable hands of his two elder sons – Jayantbhai (14 July 1922 – 25 July 1971) and Manubhai (15 March 1930 – 17 May 2011), who steadily expanded and diversified business activities: over the next 12 years under Jayantbhai's stewardship, he takes the Madhvani Group to a global level with a quantum leap in growth.
- **1971:** Jayantbhai passes away and the Nation mourns... Manubhai takes up the mantle of the Madhvani Group and as head of the family.



- **1972:** President Idi Amin orders the expulsion of Asians from Uganda, irrespective of citizenship, giving them 90 days to leave the Country. Over the next thirteen years the Kakira sugar factory grinds to a halt.
- **1983:** the Obote Government passes the Expropriated Property Act. This enables the Madhvani family to apply for re-possession of all the industries developed by the Group pre-1972.
- **1985:** the Kakira sugar complex is formally returned to the Madhvani family (East Africa Holdings Ltd.), with the Government of Uganda finally holding 51% shares in 1987. Supported by loans of US\$59 million dollars from the World Bank, African Development Bank and Uganda Development Bank, rehabilitation of the Kakira Sugar Estate starts with sugar production resuming in 1989.
- **2000:** Having completed the rehabilitation of Kakira to pre-1972 level, the Madhvani family re-acquires 100% shareholding of Kakira Sugar Works (1985) Ltd. The Group then undertakes an expansion programme to 3,000 TCD with funding from the Netherlands Development Finance Company (Nederlandse Financierings-Maatschappij voor Ontwikkelingslanden – FMO).
- **2006:** Kakira expands further in phases and diversifies into generation of 'green electricity' from residual sugarcane biomass.
- **2007:** the Group completes construction of a new Power House and installs two new 45 bar boilers and a 21.5 MW turbo-alternator (as well as a second 3MW turbo-alternator) for increased in-house use of electrical power as well as sale of the surplus (up to 12 MW) to the Ugandan National Grid. For the next five years, the Kakira plant is upgraded and improved...



Late Manubhai M. Madhvani

- **2011:** Manubhai passes away and Mayurbhai takes the helm with the next generation of the family, Manubhai's eldest son, Kamleshbhai, as principal Joint Managing Directors with other family members.
- **2012-13:** capacity to crush 2 million tonnes of cane per year is achieved and electricity generation and supply to 32 MW with total generation of 51 MW.
- **2015:** Kakira undertakes the next phase of diversification to use the molasses by-product from cane processing to produce 20 million litres per year of Ethanol in a state-of-the-art new distillery plant. Kakira's distillery has the flexibility to produce Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA – for potable spirits) or Anhydrous Ethanol for blending with petrol as an automobile bio-fuel.
- **2018:** Further value addition by starting its own blending and maturation unit to produce a range of premium potable spirits from ENA. Kakira also introduces production of alcohol-based hand-sanitizer 'Kakira Klean' to assist Uganda for protective measures against COVID-19.



Currently, Kakira Sugar Ltd. is fully-owned by East African Holdings Ltd. and has been expanded in phases to its present capacity of up to 8,500 tonnes of cane per day (TCD). This translates to over 2.2 million tonnes of cane crushed per year to produce over 180,000 tonnes of sugar annually.

Sugar Cane is supplied to Kakira from its own nucleus estate surrounding Kakira and a managed estate at Kayunga, as well as more than 10,000 independent outgrower farmers who have been nurtured and developed by Kakira's management team since 1990.



***The Board of Trustees of The India Overseas Trust and the British Ugandan Asians at 50 Committee wish to acknowledge and thank The Madhvani Family for their generous and sustained support of our work both financially and otherwise.***



(From Left to Right): Mr Willy Mutenza of the UKUC, Mr Mayur M. Madhvani, Mr Badru Ntege Special Advisor to the President on Cyber matters, and a representative of the Kapeeka brand of dried foods, London Dec 2022

Mihir K. Patel (left) with Kamleshbhai M. Madhvani at the Presidential Breakfast hosted by CWEIC in London, December 2022



HE Nimisha J. Madhvani at NAM 2024



HE President Museveni visiting Kakira

## TRIBUTE

BRITISH UGANDAN



1972 - 2022

ASIANS AT 50

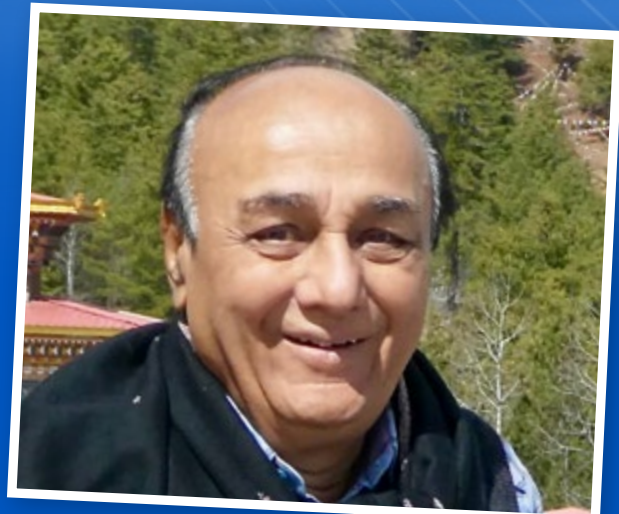
In commemoration of more than 50 years of the Uganda Exodus and in acknowledgement of the efforts of that pioneering generation of British Ugandan Asians who made the United Kingdom their home.

in remembrance of the late

**Praful R C Patel**

Founder Member, ICE

remembered by  
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In memory of the

# Late Dr Chandra Kant Patel

founding trustee of The India Overseas Trust



from

**Sarojiniben, Niharika and Niyati Patel**

**Geneva**

**The Mehta Group sends its congratulations to the India Overseas Trust and its acting Chair Mihir K Patel on the successful British Ugandan Asians at 50 programme, and looks forward to its new role celebrating the achievements of the wider East African Asian Disapora.**

**We also express our condolences on the passing of the late Praful R C Patel.**

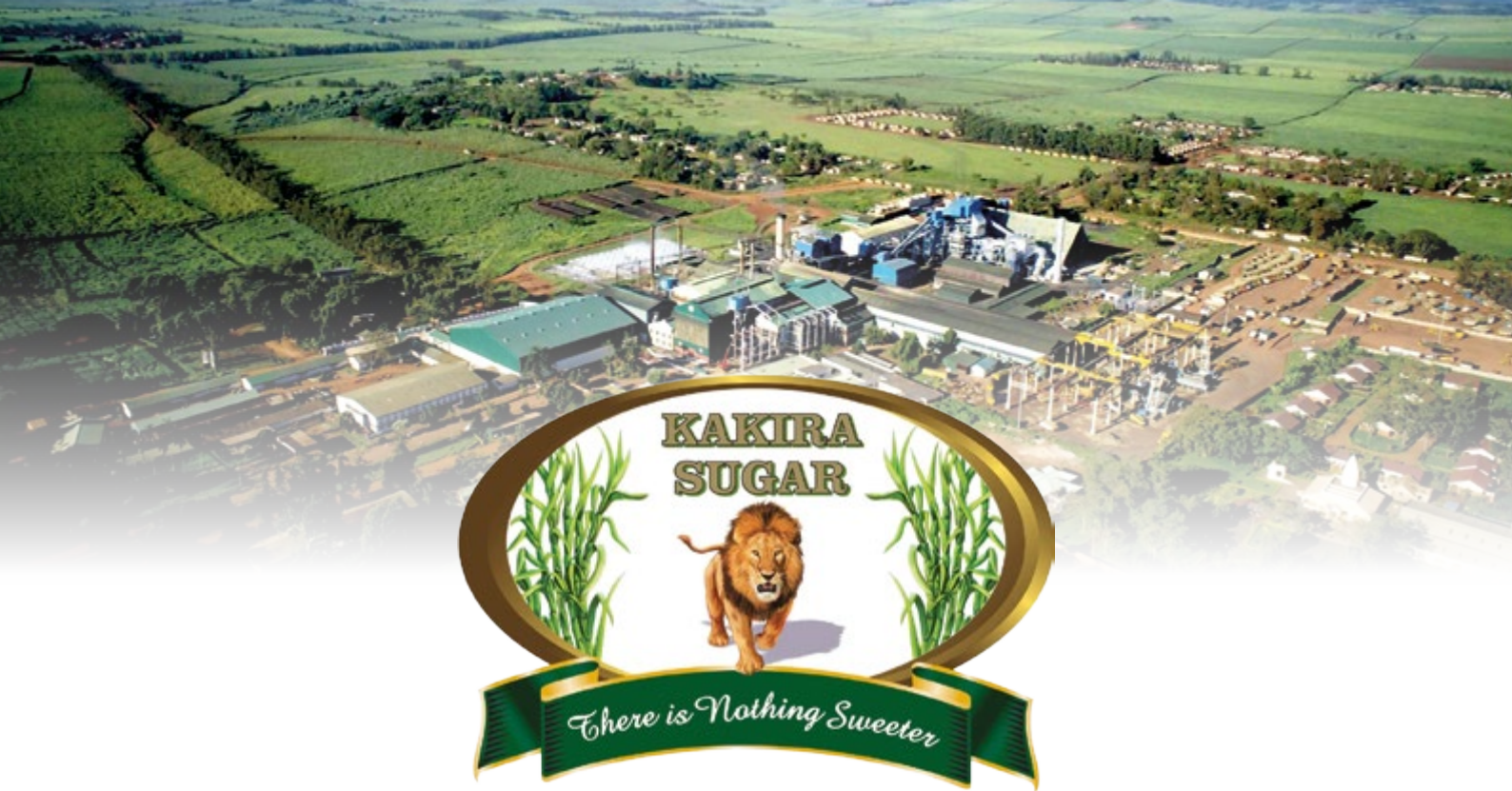


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The Madhvani Group and Kakira Sugar family would like to congratulate The India Overseas Trust on their programme ‘British Ugandan Asians at 50’, a much-appreciated tribute to the resilience of the British Ugandan Asian Community in 1972 and its many successes in the years that followed. The work is also a fitting culmination to the life and career of the Late Praful R C Patel.

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Kakira Sugar Limited is Uganda’s leading processor of sugarcane, with a state-of-the-art fully integrated complex to add value to every by-product.

**Kakira crushes over 2 million tonnes of cane per year to produce:**

Over 180,000 tonnes of sugar, half the national sugar production

51 MW of green electric power from bagasse – the residue from cane crushing

Over 20 million litres of high-quality ethanol from molasses

Premium potable spirits – an award-winning range of gin, rum and vodka

Sweets and confectioneries

**Our core product, Kakira Sugar, is extracted from cane grown on lush plantations on the fertile shores of Lake Victoria. The sweet crystals, with their distinctive flavour and rich golden colour, have sweetened foods and beverages all over Uganda since the 1930s.**

