



Hello Peter ,

New threats to freedom of expression are emerging.

As legal, political and digital pressures converge, it is becoming harder for independent voices to be heard and for civil society to participate in the debates that shape the future.

Our new 2026–2031 Strategy recognises the importance of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly for ensuring governments can fully respond to the priorities of the people they serve.

To mark the Strategy’s launch, we're pleased to share a perspective from investigative journalist Neha Dixit on the challenges facing freedom of expression today.

In her latest piece, Neha explores how threats to free expression are changing, why it is not just journalists who should be concerned, and what we can all do to protect civic space.

Read the full article
We hope you enjoy reading it.

With best wishes,
Commonwealth Foundation

We all have a role to play in protecting freedom of expression

BY NEHA DIXIT

Threats to freedom of expression are changing. The familiar dangers are still here: journalists and activists being jailed, publications shut down, and books banned. Many of my colleagues in journalism, along with scholars, lawyers, filmmakers, and activists, face these risks just for doing their jobs. Now, new legal, political, economic, and digital pressures make it even harder for independent voices to be heard.

Online harassment, targeted lawsuits, and corporate-political interests that weaken media independence are becoming more common. More people are starting to worry about who feels safe enough to speak up, and whether freedom of expression is only reserved for people with privilege who can afford to resist the crackdown by the state.

These pressures are quickly becoming normal. Anyone who speaks out for the public good can be targeted. Journalism is being criminalised and more often seen as unpatriotic. Women journalists now face abuse that used to be unacceptable. Political and business interests are mixing more, which raises tough questions about media independence. When public interest is no longer central to debate, it becomes easier to ignore or silence those who disagree.

‘Some people think freedom of expression only matters to journalists, but it affects everyone.’

Some people think freedom of expression only matters to journalists, but it affects everyone. It lets us question those in power



and take part in decisions that impact our lives. It means communities can speak up without fear, artists can challenge common beliefs, and citizens can hold institutions responsible.

As threats to freedom of expression change, our response must change too. The internet has reshaped public debate. People no longer depend only on traditional media that blocks reports on people from socio-economic margins. Instead, they turn to relatable and far more diverse voices on social media. This shift gives more people a chance to be heard.

From Page One

But digital platforms also make it easier for misinformation and division to spread. Algorithms, business interests, and politics can all affect which voices get heard and which are silenced. To protect freedom of expression now, we need to ensure that a wide range of views, along with solid journalism, can reach the public.

‘No single group can protect freedom of expression on its own.’

We cannot expect just a few brave people to carry this burden. Stronger connections between journalists, lawyers, artists, activists, and grassroots groups help make everyone more resilient. Governments must protect civic freedoms.

Tech companies also need to see that their choices shape

public debate. They need to be pro-people to survive. The rest of us have a role too. We should question false information, reject intimidation, and stay open to conversation, even when we disagree.

I was lucky to attend the 2024 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa, where leaders agreed on the Commonwealth Principles on Freedom of Expression and the Role of the Media in Good Governance. They confirmed an important point: freedom of expression is essential for democracy, and everyone should be able to speak freely without fear or unfair limits.

The real challenge now is to turn these promises into action. We can only build a stronger future together if people are free to organise, create, challenge those in power, and take part in decisions that affect their communities.

Neha Dixit is a journalist based in New Delhi, India.

Artificial Intelligence

The Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre

The Artificial Intelligence Innovation Lab STEM Centre, a dedicated space aimed at fostering innovation, practical learning and the development of emerging technology skills, was inaugurated on 20 August in the presence of the Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, Dr Avinash Ramtohol, at Cyber Tower 2 in Ebène.

On the occasion, a Memorandum of Understanding was also exchanged to mark the collaboration between the Ministry and the STEMpower, a nonprofit which provides expertise to Sub-Saharan African countries to establish hands-on STEM centres and self-sustaining lab-based infrastructure for learning Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

The Chief Executive Officer of STEMpower Inc, Mr Edwin Kumfa Ngalang, and the Head of the AI Unit, Mr Ramakrishna Mudaliar, were among the main attendees.

In his remarks, Minister Ramtohol reaffirmed Government's commitment to decentralise and democratise access to emerging technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI). He stated that the establishment of the AI Innovation Lab is aligned with the National AI Strategy and the FAIR Guidelines, launched in April this year, which seek to position Mauritius as a modern, high-tech and innovation-driven digital economy.

National AI Strategy

The Minister also recalled the setting up of the AI Unit in December last, noting that the Unit is already working on implementing the National AI Strategy in a bid to support the country's advancement in AI and other emerging technologies. "The new facility," he emphasised, "will provide an enabling environment for hands-on learning, experimentation and innovation, while equipping users with practical skills in AI and related fields."

The Minister further expressed appreciation to STEMpower Inc for its support in establishing the AI Innovation Lab and called for greater collaboration and similar initiatives to promote innovation and technology development in Mauritius.

For his part, Mr Ngalang congratulated Mauritius for successfully establishing a first-of-its-kind AI Innovation Lab which, he said, marks an important milestone for the country. He noted that the facility will contribute to advancing Mauritius' vision of integrating AI across various



Dr Avinash Ramtohol, Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation (centre), Mr Edwin Kumfa Ngalang, Chief Executive Officer of STEMpower Inc, (right), and Mr Ramakrishna Mudaliar, Head of the AI Unit (left).

sectors.

He indicated that STEMpower Inc has been sharing its expertise in AI and STEM education with some 163 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Mauritius. He also underlined the growing importance of STEM in a rapidly evolving world, as they would play a key role in shaping opportunities for future generations.

As for Mr Mudaliar, he is confident that additional AI laboratories will be established across the island, adding that such initiatives will create more opportunities for students, professionals and other stakeholders involved in the field of Artificial Intelligence.

The AI Innovation Lab comprises two sections, namely the AI Training Lab and the Electronic Lab. The AI Training Lab is equipped with 24 computers featuring Arduino IDE and Microsoft Office packages, while the Electronic Lab provides a range of electronic equipment for robotics, the design and construction of electronic circuits, smart energy monitoring systems and the development of AI artefacts.

The Lab will be accessible by appointment to students, experts, technology entrepreneurs and members of civil society from 0900 hrs to 1600 hrs, Monday to Friday.

GIS

Karma says: When you destroy someone's life with lies and promises, take it as a loan. It will come back to you with interest.

Gallery Visit

Hurvin Anderson at Tate Britain 26 March - 23 August 2026



From Mylene



Hurvin Anderson (b.1965) is a contemporary British painter born in Birmingham to Jamaican parents who migrated as part of the Windrush generation.

I went to see 'Hurvin Anderson at Tate Britain,' a retrospective covering 40 years of his career.

The exhibition features over 80 vibrant paintings including intimate interiors, which simply means paintings that focus on everyday, enclosed areas where people live, gather, or socialize.

I was struck by the similarities between the Caribbean - which features in many of his paintings - and Mauritius.

The lush greenery, the blue of the water, and even the window grilles.

Anderson was elected by his peers to become a Royal Academician (RA), a title that brings professional recognition, artistic influence, and access to important creative resources. RA members also have a say in how the Royal Academy is run. They are guaranteed space to display up to six works at the annual, Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, one of the world's best known open-art show. Members can also donate a work to the Acad-

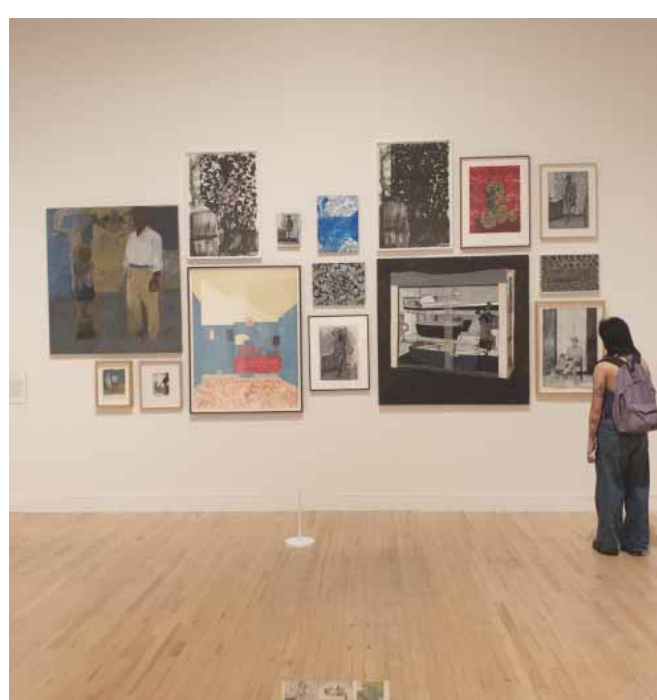
He often paints from photographs, combining personal snapshots, archive images and memories, even what he calls "unreliable ones."

Some of his personal photos could easily have come from the family album of the first migrants from Asia or Africa.

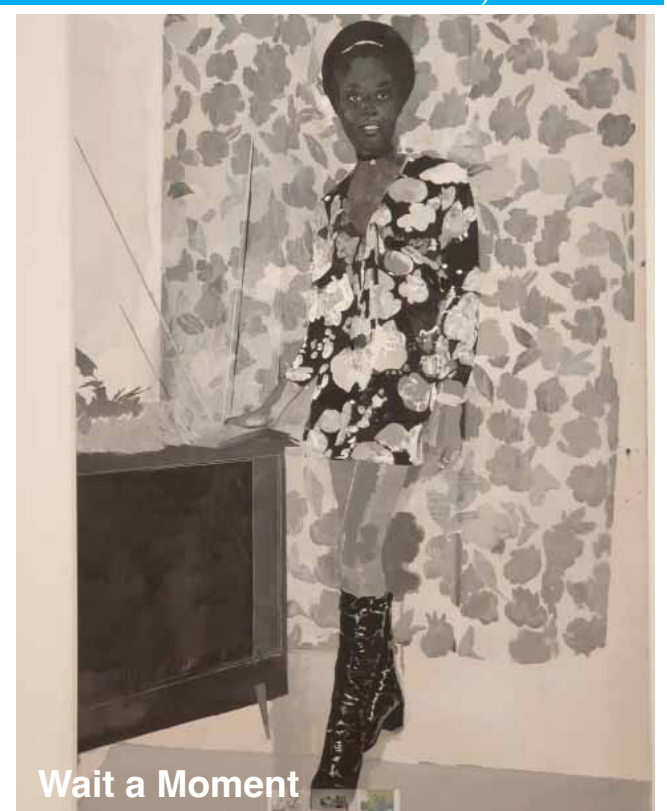
Royal Academician (RA)



Wrought-iron security grilles. Anderson's 'Welcome' series probes the boundary between public and private space.'



A visitor views paintings from Anderson's 'Arrival' series



Wait a Moment

Many ladies will remember this look: A floral mini dress, tights and patent knee-high boots, finished with a choker and the essential hair band. Standing beside the black and white TV complete with its aerial, it's a perfect snapshot of the era.

emy's collection, giving it a permanent place in British art history.

The number of living, full Academicians is limited to 100, so hats off to him. Becoming an RA is no mean feat, especially an artist of Jamaican background.



Siding (Name given by the artist)



On a Link-In post, Financial Services Minister Jyoti Jeetun talks of her participation at the 5th International ICS Conference

Twenty-five years in boardrooms have taught me one enduring lesson: **Governance is never truly tested in good times; it is tested when certainty disappears**

It was a privilege to share these reflections at the 5th International Conference of the The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), drawing on my journey through different boardroom roles — as Company Secretary, CEO, Executive Director, Non-Executive Director and Chairman. Those experiences have profoundly shaped my approach to leadership and public service.

From the 2008 global financial crisis and the COVID-

19 pandemic to geopolitical conflicts and today's increasingly VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world, every disruption has reinforced the importance of strong governance, sound decision-making and resilient institutions.

But governance is not about structures and compliance alone. Its true value lies in translating principles into actions through accountability, effective execution and delivery.

As leaders, we must navigate geopolitical uncertainty, sustainability, inclusivity and rapid technological change with agility and foresight. In doing so, we enable our in-

stitutions not only to withstand disruption, but to adapt, evolve and emerge stronger.

The conference was also a moment to reflect on the special Mauritius-India partnership, rooted in shared history and values, strengthened through decades of economic cooperation, particularly in financial services, and with Mauritius poised to serve as a trusted platform for India's long-term engagement with Africa.

My sincere thanks to ICSI for convening such a meaningful exchange on the future of governance, leadership and institutional resilience.



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Ministers' Faux Pas?

Health Minister Bachoo, and another, *sur la Selette*

Health and Wellness Minister Anil Bachoo, with every good intention, wanted to show the Mauritian people that he has every trust in the country's national health service.

So without any notice he took his personal private surgeon with him and got himself admitted to the public hospital in Port Louis at his own convenience. He underwent minor surgery, it has been reported.

Well, as could be expected, such an action does give rise to questions from one an all, namely from members of the public and political opponents. Was he on the hospital's long waiting list. Patients find themselves on the Waiting List for years with surgery postponed on several occasions. The Minister did not have to wait. He just came and received immediate attention.

The Opposition is asking for his resignation. *Il est dans du beau drap*, some are saying. His partisans, however, are saying it's simply a storm in a teacup.

Prime Minister Ramgoolam has enough on his plate to worry about such a petty local issue. He is dealing with important international matters that frequently demand his presence elsewhere. Like Donald Trump in America, he is saying, the country never had it so good, especially that Mauritius has reportedly been bankrupt for past 10 years under the previous administration.



Housing and Lands Minister,
Shakeel Mohamed

Hon, Shakeel Mohamed

Questions are also being asked about another prominent political figure. Housing and Lands Minister Shakeel Mohamed is facing public scrutiny regarding an apartment at Péreybère which he acquired for a sum of 35 million rupees.

He told the press that as a private citizen he obtained a bank loan to acquire the property some three years ago. He is criticised for purchasing residential accommodation on coastal lands which is in contradiction with his own Ministry's policy. He has of late been tackling bungalow owners for doing so

The leader main Opposition party, the MMM's Pravind Jugnauth, wants to know whether a proper valuation was effected by the Ministry of Housing to assess the actual value of the property.

The MMM leader also wants to know why this Péreybère property does appear on the list of the Minister's declared assets, as required by legislation.

Minister Mohamed is being accused of lack of transparency. **P.C.**

Is an invasion and destruction of humanity by robots a possibility?



The picture above of the robots lined up and paraded before the recent World Humanoid Robot Games in China is making people to think.

The robots are strictly disciplined and obediently comply with orders. It is feared that they can be used by their makers to attack and destroy like the drones are now being used as weapons of destruction.

On the other hand, however farfetched it may seem, it is also feared that these machines may become intelligent enough to wage their own wars independent of any human guidance. Are they a threat to the existence of humanity? **P.C.**



Ailing Health Minister Anil Bachoo

People You may know

Facebook almost everyday sends me lists of names whom the social media recommends connection as friends. Once you click Add Friend, these people are informed that you wish to connect. Most of the time, they don't give a damn about you, and don't bother to reply. Very frequently names of people who have passed away are also listed.

Perhaps my name is also listed on other people's Facebook Page.
I can be choosy as well.

Where does Facebook pick up the names?

