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Merry Christmas

Eminent Toronto lawyer Chet Sharma is celebrating 40 years in the Legal Profession as an Immigration and Family Lawyer.

Chet was part of the well-known law firm Sharma and Sharma, which he shared with his late brother Roop, which for many decades provided expert legal services to many newcomers to Canada, especially Guyanese people who were trying to migrate.

The prominent lawyer remains one of the most respected lawyers in Toronto's Caribbean/ Guyanese community.

As we approach the holiday season, we at Equality would like to wish Chet and his wife Bhamini, both pictured here at a recent event, the happiest Christmas, and blessings for the new year.

These same greetings are being extended to all of our advertisers, readers and friends.

Enjoy the season, and be safe!

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Canada stands with Guyana



Global Affairs Canada has issued a statement saying it stands with Guyana in that country's border dispute with Venezuela.

The statement comes as the leaders of the two countries, Guyana President Irfaan Ali and his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro, met face-to-face and shook hands at a mediation meeting in St Vincent last Thursday (photo above).

In its statement, Global Affairs Canada said, "Canada has been closely monitoring recent developments following the consultative referendum on the Essequibo region that took place in Venezuela on December 3, 2023, and has been deeply concerned by growing tensions in the territorial dispute between Venezuela and Guyana. Canada stands with the Guyanese people and government in calling for the application of and respect for international law and strongly supports Guyana's territorial integrity. Canada salutes the diplomatic efforts of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) members in hosting a dialogue between the presidents of Guyana and Venezuela in Argyle, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, on Thursday, December 14, as well as the mediation role played by Brazil and the UN Secretary-General António Guterres. Canada reaffirms its support for Guyana's sovereignty and seeks a peaceful and diplomatic settlement of the dispute at the International Court of Justice. Canada recognizes Thursday's dialogue as a productive step toward maintaining peace.."

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EQUALITY NEWS **THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023 Mercy killing or murder? Toronto** woman on trial for death of daughter

By Nishad Sharma LJI REPORTER

In the ongoing trial of Cindy Ali, a Toronto mother charged with the 2011 death of her disabled teenage daughter, the prosecutor asserted during final arguments on Monday that the alleged murder was an act of mercy intended to end the girl's suffering. The defense countered, dismissing the theory as unfounded and rooted in stereotypes.

Cindy's counsel, James Lockyer, expressed concerns about the prosecution's theory, suggesting it perpetuated stereotypes about the lives of individuals with developmental or physical disabilities. Lockyer emphasized the stereotype, stating, "It really is a full stereotype."

Cindy Ali had previously been convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life without parole in connection with her daughter Cynara's death. However, after successfully appealing the conviction in 2021, she was granted a new trial, which commenced in October and is being presided over by Justice Jane Kelly.

Throughout both trials, Cindy maintained that Cynara died following a break-and-enter at their Scarborough townhouse on February 19. According to Cindy, she called 911 after two men dressed in black entered her home, claiming they were searching for a "package." She recounted that one of the men took her around the house while looking for the item and discovered Cynara lifeless upon her return to the living room. The men left, asserting they had targeted the wrong house and were never found.

The prosecution, led by Crown attorney Beverley Olesko, rejected Cindy's account of a home invasion and instead argued that she had smothered

> that a verbal argument took place between the female driver of a white

her daughter. Olesko contended that

Cindy staged the break-in to cover up

the alleged murder, which the prosecu-

tion claimed was an act of mercy. The

Crown's theory suggested that Cynara's

three seizures the night before the pur-

ported break-in prompted Cindy's fear

for her daughter's future quality of life.

result."

Woman charged after chasing man with a cutlass

chete, sustaining minor injuries as a

She has been charged with assault with a weapon and possession of a

Cindy Ali and daughter Cynara in happier times

Disputing the prosecution's stance, Lockyer characterized the theory as "not humanely believable" and labeled it "rank speculation." During cross-examination, Cindy vehemently denied the motive, asserting that Cynara brought joy to their family, and she would never consider taking her daughter's life.

The trial revolves around the court's interpretation of Cindy Ali's account of the home invasion and the prosecution's theory that it was a cover-up for a mercy killing. The proceedings continue as both sides present their final arguments.



with a machete — commonly called a cutlass in the Caribbean — in the parking lot of a Kitchener mall following a road rage incident on Sunday evening.

she allegedly chased a person around

A woman is facing charges after

According to Waterloo Regional Police, officers were called to Fairview Park mall at around 4:50 p.m. after receiving reports of a female chasing another person with a machete.

Investigators later determined

Nissan and a male driver of a silver Toyota in the parking lot. During the incident, police say, the female grabbed a large machete, exited her vehicle, and chased the male on foot throughout the parking lot.

"The white Nissan then drove into the side of the mall after the female exited, leaving the vehicle in drive," police said in a news release. "A male with the female driver intervened and took away the ma-

The state Merr

According to police, the female sustained serious injuries while "unsheathing the machete" and was transported to an out-of-region hospital.





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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

A sombre Christmas

It is difficult to wish everyone a happy holiday season when there is so much suffering in the world.

We just need to look at the Palestinians in Gaza, whose women and children are dying by the hundreds every day due to Israeli onslaught, and the war in Ukraine, where a similar scene is unfolding due to the Russian invasion, as examples.

They're the most highly publicized situations, on our TV screens each and every day. But other tragedies are unfolding daily that we don't usually hear about -- the plight of African migrants fleeing violence in their homelands on overcrowded boats for the European Union, many not surviving the trip but dying when these flimsy vessels overturn. Hundreds drown this way every month, but we rarely hear about them.

Then there are the hundreds of migrants from South America, many from countries where there is horrendous poverty, who make the trek daily through the most dangerous place on earth -- the Darien Gap, the land link between south America and the Americas, dodging rebels, bandits and drug dealers as they do so in their bid to reach the sanctity of the United States.

Many die during that crossing. But again, we hardly hear of them. This Christmas, as we enjoy the day with our family and friends, hundreds will be making this journey without knowing whether they will survive it. And in the USA, their eventual goal, one of the leading candidates for President in the 2024 election, Donald Trump, invoked Adolf Hitler when he said that such migrants are "poisoning the blood of our country."

Hitler's "Mein Kampf" used similar language about the Jews, who he later eliminated by the millions in concentration camps.

Yes, it's easy to shrug such comments off and say that it can never happen again, that our world learned from the atrocities of World War II. But have we?

When we look at what can only be termed the ongoing genocide in Palestine, and look at the same US support for the Israeli actions, then we can't be sure that Trump, if elected, will not act on his anti-immigrant convictions in a similar manner.

But what can we do?

As ordinary world citizens, we can raise our voices in protest, even if it means being called antisemitic. But one doesn't have to be anti-Jewish to be against the slaughter of innocent civilians in Gaza.

We can also call for action to be taken to help the migrants fleeing Africa and South America make safer passages.

Doing nothing and saying nothing

is tantamount to approval. And we know our readers don't approve of that. So let's raise our voices.

But let's try to end on a cheerier note. It is Christmas, after all, and this is a time, as another year comes to a close, when we should give thanks for life, for family and friends, and to those who have supported us.

We are grateful for all of those -and particularly, here at Equality, as we celebrate our 43rd year of publication this week, we are indeed thankful to those readers and clients who have kept pace with us and kept us going at times when it seemed almost impossible to do so.

Our clients are the ones who make this paper possible, so you can get your weekly read of the news that matter to you. To them, we say thanks, and we'd like to single out a few for special mention. The Charley brothers (Mississauga and Scarborough), as well as attorney Chet Sharma, have been with us since day one, supporting Equality for 43 years.

The major grocery stores like Danforth Foods and Superking have also been long advertisers in this paper, making it possible for us to print every week, even as other papers like ours have stopped printing altogether, or have resorted to once-a-month print schedules.

Equality prints every week, which is a massive financial undertaking. And we're only able to do it because of the support of our advertisers. Please thank them by supporting them, too.

The Equality family is grateful. And we wish you and your families a happy, safe and healthy Christmas.

And you can trust us to remain vigilant for you, whether it is news from back home, around the world or right here at home.

Merry Christmas. And God bless.

Send us your letters

Equality welcomes letters to the editor from all of our readers. If you have an issue you would like to air in public, or an opinion to offer, please submit your letter to the editor to Equalitygroup@rogers.com.

Please note that all letters are subjected to be edited for space and to ensure they meet our legal requirements. Letter writers must include contact information, which will be withheld from publication, so we can contact the writer to ensure the authenticity of the contribution.

Remembering legal luminaries, Prem Persaud and Nandram Kissoon

Dear Editor,

The country lost two legal luminaries this month — Judges Prem Persaud and Nandram Kissoon. They were in a sort of way legal institutions serving the nation for decades on the bench and in other capacities. They were eminent and respected judges.

They had tremendous knowledge of the law and had great skills on the bench, as lawyers told me. Hardly anyone could be more worthy of being lawyers and judges than them. Lawyers are inspired by their eloquence.

I was fortunate to meet both separately long after they left the bench. I was left in awe by their legal knowledge and sharpness in thought. ments at the Privy Council, UK Supreme Court, and the supreme courts in India, Australia and elsewhere). They rattled off rulings of precedent setting cases in the UK and India.

They were familiar with all the tall figures in law in India such as the late Judge Singhvi and late senior advocate and law minister Ram Jethmalani. I was also dumbstruck by the depth of knowledge of Hinduism, its many scriptures and its philosophical underpinnings, of Shri Nandram Kissoon.

He, like his politician brother, was distinguished from so many other Indian intellectuals by his depth of knowledge of Hinduism and Indian political thought. I have not come across many who knew the Hindu scriptures as well as him and his brother Jailall — absolutely brilliant scholars in the Hindu scriptures and philosophy and on Indian political thought and Hindu thinkers.

As best as I could remember and from what lawyers who practiced before them said the duo did not compromise their integrity.

They were praiseworthy of those of us in the diaspora who championed free and fair elections in Guyana, and who lobbied the international community to help restore democratic rule in Guyana.

Prem Persaud and Nandram Kissoon were very warm and friendly to me. Prem Persaud had a lot of institutional knowledge of politics as well as culture. Some time ago, Dr Baytoram Ramharack had started writing the biography of Mr Prashad who founded Prashad Nagar.

I suggested he speak with Prem Persaud, son-in-law of Prashad. I informed Prem Persaud to expect a call from Dr Ramharack. Prem was very helpful and the biography is now at press and will be out soon. Nandram invited me to his farm in Hope, but I never found time as I was always tied up with one research project or another.

Prem Persaud and Nandram Kissoon will be long remembered for their warmth, friendliness, incisive thinking, and intellect and competence in law. My belated sympathy to their families.

They were extremely bright and well read on the law (of legal judg-

Yours sincerely, Vishnu Bisram



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P&P Insurance Brokers donates \$2M to 10 organisations

P&P Insurance Brokers Limited on Friday afternoon made its annual Christmas donations to 10 organisations in Guyana.

According to a press release, the company has been making donations to several organisations over the past 17 years to assist them in their humanitarian relief work.

In brief remarks, Executive Director of P&P, Vikash Panday said that when the idea was conceived 17 years ago, it was with 10 organisations at \$100,000 per organisation making it a \$1,000,000 donation.

"Over the years, P&P has progressively increased the amount and this year made donations of \$200,000 each to 10 organisations making a total donation of \$2,000,000," the press release said.

It added that Panday said that it is a manifestation of the company's commitment to giving back that they have been able to not only make these donations every year but have been able to double the amount from the time they started to now.

Further, Panday said that this would not have been possible without the success of the company and he thanked all his clients for their unwavering support over the years.

He said that all through its existence, P&P has been known as a company that was always willing to assist in various causes.

He commended the representatives of the various organisations for the work that they do and urged them to continue playing their very important role in society.

The organisations benefitting from the donations are: Bless the Children Home, Canaan Children Home,



Vikash Panday and Jaya Panday with representatives of the various organisations that received \$200, 000 each

Ptolemy Reid Rehab Centre, Uncle Eddie's Home, Friends of the Archer's Home, The Dharam Shala, Cheshire Homes Guyana, Hauraruni Girls Home, Bal Nivas Shelter and Joshua

House Children Centre. Panday extended Christmas greetings to everyone and in response, the representatives of the various organisations extended similar sentiments and

thanked him and P&P Insurance for their continued generosity and support over the years, the release added.

Grinch steals packages from Hamilton woman twice in 2 days

By Niraj Sharma LJI REPORTER

A Hamilton resident expressed as-

28% of surveyed Canadians reporting being victims, up from 24% in 2021 and 20% in 2020. Anderson suggested using tracking numbers to monitor deliveries, providing courier instructions, and filing police reports for stolen packages.

Concerned about the rising trend, Hamilton police offered tips for secure deliveries, including having packages delivered to work, arranging deliveries to trusted relatives or friends, utilizing local post office services, shipping to a store, requesting a signature confirmation, and asking carriers to hide packages. Major carriers such as Amazon, Canada Post, and UPS also offered solutions to mitigate theft risks, including alternative delivery locations, flexible delivery options, and photo proof of delivery. Despite these measures, porch theft continues to be a prevalent concern during the holiday season.

tonishment after her Christmas orders were stolen from her front porch not once, but twice in just over 24 hours. Tylar-Leigh Corkum, residing in Hamilton's Corktown neighborhood, was eagerly awaiting the delivery of a hat and track pants on Sunday, Nov. 10, while spending time with her children at home.

The courier, Apple Express, left the \$100 gift on her front porch around 11 a.m., without providing a drop-off notification or knocking on the door. Realizing the delivery had arrived by 1 p.m., Corkum went outside only to find her porch empty. "In under two hours, it was gone, and I was home," she exclaimed, adding, "My jaw dropped."

The following day, another package delivered by Uni Uni was left on her front step, and she received a noti-

fication while at work. An hour later, she discovered that this package, too, had been stolen when her mother, who lives next door, attempted to retrieve it.

Feeling violated and suspecting a targeted theft, Corkum considered having packages sent to a post office but found this option unavailable for certain online purchases. Despite the incidents, she refrained from contacting local police, citing a lack of evidence and skepticism about their assistance. Hamilton police emphasized the

importance of reporting package thefts, referring to Operation Amagone, which resulted in 56 charges and three arrests related to package theft in 2021. Corkum, though receiving refunds for some items, expressed frustration at not having the intended Christmas gifts and admitted a loss of Christmas spirit, contemplating discontinuing online shopping.

Amid growing concerns about package theft, FedEx Canada spokesperson James Anderson noted an increase in "porch pirates," with



THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023

The Economy & Finance | JB's Insight Guyanese should not be distracted by Maduro's obsession with Guyana

At the meeting between President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and President Maduro, the Attorney General & Minister of Legal Affairs, Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall, S.C., revealed that, that President Maduro had in his possession volumes of documents. Many of those documents were reportedly compilation of public commentaries in the local media, in relation to the ExxonMobil (XOM) and the Production Sharing Agreement (2016). These are largely adverse commentaries and criticisms in regard to ExxonMobil's operations here in Guyana.

With that in mind, it is worth noting that the Nicolas Maduro regime, like his predecessor, is a strong anti-American government especially the U.S multinational corporation, ExxonMobil. There is a background that underpins this view—as to why Maduro is unusually hostile towards ExxonMobil in particular.

To this end, over the past two decades, Venezuela has changed to become a problematic country from an investment perspective. Venezuela's political and economic history supports the assertion that Venezuela has and continues to be a risky place to make investments, especially for political reasons.

During the mid-1990s, Venezuela's national oil company, PDVSA, implemented a policy known as the Apertura Petrolera (oil opening), which sought to mobilize the capital, technology, and managerial capabilities of international oil companies in order to maximize the production of crude oil while simultaneously reducing drastically the fiscal burden on hydrocarbons exploration and production activities. Of note, the policy achieved its objectives to a large extent. Production by Venezuela was a key factor behind the oil price collapse of 1998, and the paltry fiscal income generated by some of the Apertura era projects made them the most unfavorable-for the State-in the history of Venezuela's petroleum industry. The standard bearers of the Apertura were four large, costly, and complex projects dedicated to the production upgrading (i.e., partial refining) and marketing (as synthetic crude) of extra-heavy oils. Three of these projects were at the centre of arbitration proceedings that ConocoPhillips (COP) and ExxonMobil (XOM) initiated against Venezuela at the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) in late 2007.

These arbitrations featured some of the largest claims ever to have been made against a State by international investors: US\$30 billion in the case of COP and more than US\$15 billion in the case of XOM. COP and XOM alleged that, in changing the fiscal conditions for the upgrading projects, and then restructuring them along the lines sketched above, the Venezuelan Government rode roughshod over their vested rights, treating contractual undertakings "as the proverbial scrap of paper" that they can disregard at their convenience...breaking all the commitments...made to induce investment.

In other words, XOM and COP contended that Venezuela, inter alia, legislative amendments enacted changes to the fiscal terms of the investment agreement that were more favorable to the country which jeopardized the stability of and security of their long-term investments. According to XOM and COP,





Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

their legal proceedings were prompted by a commitment to uphold the principle of sanctity of contract. The oil companies would have bargained with PDVSA to obtain protection for their investments through specific compensation mechanisms, which made explicit reference to a limitation of liability on the part of PDVSA, and provided that foreign investors would be deemed not to have suffered any adverse economic consequences from government measures when the price of crude oil exceeded a certain threshold level.

In 2007, an arbitration panel awarded ExxonMobil US\$908 million in compensation for Venezuela's nationalization of its assets, less than 10% of what the company sought in the long legal battle against Venezuela. In 2017, country by the United States. This view is not an improbable hypothesis considering the geopolitics of oil, and it is a view that is also held by other experts.

It is interesting to note that Venezuela's GDP as of 2012 stood at US\$372 billion, which experienced a rapid decline in the years thereafter, to a low of US\$92 billion in 2022, a regression to where the country was since 1998—that is, more than two decades ago.

With the foregoing in mind, readers would recall that in previous writings, this author had argued that the Venezuelan President, Nicolas Maduro's recent statements and threats revealed the obvious-that is, he wants Guyana to become a failed State like Venezuela by becoming anti-American and treat ExxonMobil in a similar manner that Venezuela did in the past. Therefore, Guyanese should not be distracted or concerned for one bit, about Maduro's obsession over Guyana's domestic affairs. He (Maduro) has his own domestic affairs to take care of, such as an ailing economy to turnaround, and an election to face in 2024.



EQUALITY NEWS

Joel Bhagwandin

a World Bank tribunal eventually ordered Venezuela to pay ExxonMobil \$1.4 billion in damages.

One news report carried in one of the local newspapers, namely, the Kaieteur News on December 22, 2019, cited a report by Globovision which stated that Venezuela's politicians are of the opinion that ExxonMobil is behind all the heavily imposed sanctions on the



THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023

Canadian worried about parents forced to flee home in Gaza

By Akim Shazad Lji reporter

EQUALITY NEWS

Ahmed Abudaya is deeply concerned about the well-being of his parents in Gaza, fearing that constant airstrikes and the rapid spread of respiratory and bacterial infections among displaced civilians may prove fatal. His 78-year-old father and 68-year-old diabetic mother, who has run out of medication, were forced from their home due to the Israel-Hamas war, facing dire living conditions that include severe bacterial infections caused by contaminated water.

Doctors Without Borders reported a significant increase in respiratory infections among patients in Gaza's remaining clinics, primarily due to prolonged exposure to cold and rain. In overcrowded shelters with limited sanitation facilities, diarrhea is widespread, particularly among children.

Abudaya's parents are currently living in a crowded home with approximately 30 people, 20 of whom are younger than 16 years old. The living conditions are deplorable, lacking clean drinking water and proper hygiene facilities. Despite sporadic phone calls with his parents, Abudaya is deeply troubled by the harsh reality they face.

This situation marks the second time Abudaya's father has been displaced, reigniting past traumas related to the Palestinian "nakba" in 1948. Originally from Gaza, his father had left to study in Egypt as a teenager, worked in Kuwait and Libya, and later retired in the United Arab Emirates before returning to Gaza almost a decade ago.

Abudaya has been tirelessly seeking help from the Canadian government, as well as Egyptian and Israeli officials, to evacuate his parents from Gaza. He has applied for a temporary visa, though challenges exist as most extended family members in Gaza do not qualify.



Esam Abudaya and Yosra Abudaya

Abudaya pleads for Canada's assistance in facilitating the evacuation of civilians from Gaza, emphasizing the urgent need to relocate his parents to ensure their safety. While the federal government is considering options to bring extended family members of Canadians out of Gaza, the controlled border crossing from Gaza into Egypt poses a significant obstacle. The ongoing conflict has resulted in a devastating toll, with thousands of Palestinians killed and widespread destruction, while Israel reports casualties among its soldiers during the ground offensive.

Hate crimes in Canada spike since Gaza war

By Niraj Sharma Lji reporter

Since the onset of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7, Toronto has witnessed nearly 100 reported hate crimes, more than double the number reported during the same period last year, according to data released by Chief Myron Demkiw during a Toronto Police Services Board meeting. The figures reveal a significant increase in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes, with 56 incidents classified as antisemitic (up from 18 in the same

period last year) and 20 categorized as anti-Muslim/Palestinian (up from two in 2022).

Chief Demkiw expressed the police's commitment to ensuring the safety of all communities, including Palestinian, Muslim, and Jewish populations, amidst the rising hate crimes. The Hate Crime Unit has expanded from six officers to 20 investigators and eight district special constables, and an online form



for reporting hate-motivated graffiti has been launched.

Despite making 43 arrests and laying 96 charges related to hate crime occurrences since October 7, the police emphasize their relentless pursuit of those perpetrating crimes against any group or community. The reported hate crimes in 2023 have increased by approximately 41% compared to the same period in 2022, totaling 338 incidents.

Noah Shack, Vice President of Countering Antisemitism and Hate with the UJA Federation of

Greater Toronto, highlighted the disproportionate impact on the Jewish community, urging unity among various communities to stand against hate. The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center and the National Council of Canadian Muslims also expressed concern about the alarming trajectory of antisemitism and hate crimes, calling for vigilance and decisive measures to ensure community safety and security.

10THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023EQUALITY NEWSConcerns over charging stations asCanada rolls out new EV car standards

By Nishad Sharma

Debbie Nightingale's Ontario farm has become a unique destination, attracting visitors not only for the chance to interact with her friendly goats but also to charge their electric vehicles (EVs). Nightingale installed a two-port EVcharging station last year with the help of a federal tourism recovery grant. Recognizing the importance of sustainability and the limited availability of EV chargers in her area, Nightingale contributed to building a local charging infrastructure.

The federal government's net-zero targets for the future aim for all new light-duty car and passenger truck sales to be zero-emission by 2035, requiring a nationwide network of public charging ports. A recent announcement outlines new regulations, compelling automakers to earn credits by selling electric or hybrid plug-in vehicles or installing more charging stations. Environment Minister Stephen Guilbeault emphasized a combination of private and public funding to expand the charging network.

Despite the growing need for more public charging infrastructure, there is concern about the current shortfall. Brian Kingston, President and CEO of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, stressed the necessity of significantly increasing public charging and multi-unit residential charging across the country to achieve the 2035 electrification goal.

Natural Resources Canada estimates a requirement for 442,000 to 469,000 public charging ports by 2035, with current data indicating only 10,425



Experts are concerned whether there are enough charging stations in Canada to meet the surge in demand

charging stations and 25,246 charging ports as of December 1. An internal report in August highlighted that fewer than one in five federally funded chargers were operational.

The federal government faces calls to play a more organized role in collaboration with other stakeholders to bridge the gap between current infrastructure and future requirements. Josipa Petrunic, President and CEO of the Canadian Urban Transit Research & Innovation Consortium, believes the auto sector, equipped with charging port data, should lead the infrastructure development. She suggests that the industry should innovate and integrate charging services, similar to Tesla's approach. While debates continue on the role of the federal government versus the private sector in infrastructure development, it is evident that a collaborative effort is needed to accelerate the growth of charging infrastructure and support the electrification of vehicles across the country.

Family hopes Nathan will come home for Xmas

By Akim Shazad LJI REPORTER

Eight months have passed since Nathan, a 37-year-old native of Waterloo region, went missing, leaving his family in anguish. The family is organizing a vigil in Waterloo this weekend to rekindle hope that Nathan is still out there somewhere. Nathan disappeared on May 12, last seen around 7 p.m. near Jane Street and Sheppard Avenue West in Toronto, leaving behind his cellphone and wallet at home. Despite extensive efforts, there have been no confirmed sightings of Nathan since his disappearance. In an attempt to keep hope alive during one of Nathan's favorite times of the year, the family decided to hold the vigil this weekend. Nathan's cousin, Jason Babcock, shared that Christmas was a cherished time for him, and the vigil aims to convey to Nathan that they are still searching for



and family.

Describing Nathan as a fun-loving individual passionate about sports, especially the Toronto teams, and an enthusiast of wrestling, Babcock expressed the family's wish that Nathan or anyone with information about his whereabouts might learn about the vigil and join the gathering. While lead investigators in Toronto continue their efforts, the family remains desperate for any information that could lead to Nathan's discovery. Babcock urged people to spread the word about Nathan's disappearance, particularly around wooded areas near Jane Street and Sheppard Avenue. Anyone with information is encouraged to contact the Toronto Police Service's Missing Persons Unit or Crime Stoppers. Media relations officer Victor Kwong emphasized the importance of community cooperation in sharing information that could aid the ongoing investigation.

Nathan: missing for the past eight months

him and hoping to bring him home for the holidays.

The vigil, scheduled for Saturday at the K-W Naval Association in Waterloo, will commence with a prayer session. Attendees will have the opportunity to share photos of Nathan and recount stories about him, creating a gathering reminiscent of Nathan's joyful Christmas celebrations with friends

EQUALITY NEWS **THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023**

AG: Guyana ceded no ground to Venezuela in Argyle agreement

ATTORNEY General (AG) and Minister of Legal Affairs, Anil Nandlall, has called out those who are attempting to misconstrue the Argyle Declaration, noting that Guyana significantly gained from the meeting between President Dr Irfaan Ali and his Venezuelan counterpart, Nicolas Maduro.

The meeting was held on Thursday last at the Argyle International Airport in St Vincent and the Grenadines, resulting in the 'Argyle Declaration' where the two states, among other things, agreed not to use force against each other.

In a post on his Facebook page, the AG wrote: "Guyana came away from the Argyle engagement without ceding any of its positions but gaining much. We now have to wait and see whether the commitments made on paper will convert themselves into actions. In the regrettable event they are not, their expression on paper will only serve to solidify Guyana's position for future engagements."

He further highlighted the fact that some individuals are taking offence to the terms 'dispute' as opposed to 'controversy' and 'territory in dispute,' in reference to the issue at hand, the AG underscored that "the matter has since evolved."

While emphasising that the matter is squarely before the International



Attorney General Anil Nandlall

Court of Justice (ICJ) for adjudication and the Court has assumed jurisdiction over the matter, Nandlall said that the jurisdiction of a Court of Law is activated only to resolve legal disputes, not controversies.

Addressing the ruffled feathers owing to the terminology, the AG made reference to the judgment handed down by the ICJ when granting the Provisional Measures.

"The Court itself used the term

"dispute" and "territory in dispute" seamlessly and interchangeably. Therefore, this objection is one overtaken by events and bears no merit," he wrote while adding that in an earlier post, he warned many against "reckless speculative pontification" on this matter and then reiterated those admonitions.

Speaking more on the misguided rhetoric being spread, the AG pointed out the several volumes of documents that President Maduro had with him at the meeting and its aim to promote the Bolivarian Republic's rhetoric.

"Many of those were compilations of public statements made on this matter, critical commentaries on the operations of Esso Exploration and Production Guvana Limited (EEPGL) and the several legal proceedings filed in relation thereto - all extracted from the local media," Nandlall wrote while adding that those are materials which Venezuela is using to boost their narrative.

"Whatever weight is placed upon them, they certainly do not and will not assist Guyana in any form or fashion," he said, while stressing that, in the future, those who wish to travel the road by making reckless statements, or taking such actions, become alive to the consequential reality," he said.











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EQUALITY NEWS

New UG wing named for fallen soldier

THE University of Guyana (UG) and one of its key development partners, the Greater Guyana Initiative (GGI), on Friday turned the sod for a three-part project which includes the construction of a new and modern stateof-the-art Science and Technology Building at the University's Turkeyen Campus.

The other two parts of the project will include retrofitting of labs in the faculty over the next few months and the addition of three new labs into the existing Faculty of Engineering building.

All of this go towards the university's five main goals – creating 50 per cent of the lab - teaching spaces currently needed; extending the disciplines offered in STEM by the Faculties of Engineering and Technology and the Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences; doubling the number of graduates in engineering in three years in keeping with the high demand for UG trained engineers; providing purposebuilt facilities for staff and students, promoting collaborative cutting-edge research and problem focused interdisciplinary teaching; and supporting the first International Accreditation of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology which is due in 2024.

The project is part of a larger US\$2.1M five-year collaboration between UG and the GGI which was negotiated in 2019 by UG's Office of Philanthropy, Alumni and Civic Engagement (PACE). The GGI comprises of the Stabroek Block co-venturers' – ExxonMobil Guyana Limited, CNOOC Petroleum and HESS Corporation.

"The project represents an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Faculty of Engineering and Technology (FET) and the Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences (FEES). The

THE University of Guyana (UG) 15,000 square feet space has been deone of its key development part-signed as shared

> spaces to facilitate areas of work where synergy exists for these faculties, including water and energy sustainability through use of solar energy and information technology. It will include labs, new classrooms and offices," a press release from UG noted.

> Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr Paloma Mohamed Martin underscored the importance of the facility, noting that it will boost the capacity of the university to produce the quality and quantity of engineers that are needed.

> The VC further explained that over the past six to seven years, the university has seen a massive increase in the number of applicants to the engineering and other technical programmes being offered and to keep up with this demand, such a facility is very much needed.

> She added that several new pathbreaking projects aimed at further developing the university and its students and staff have been in implementation phase over the last 14 months and are now ready to be launched very early in 2024.

> ExxonMobil Guyana Limited Country Manager, Alistair Routledge, who spoke on behalf of the GGI said: "I am delighted to be here for the sod-turning event at this pivotal moment. I stand here on behalf of ExxonMobil Guyana, CNOOC and Hess as the Stabroek Block co-venturers'. What brought us here to Guyana was to explore for and develop the natural resources in the form of oil and gas in the country. Thankfully for all of us we have been successful in that journey and because of that we are in this great position where we have also been able to set aside funds to support these kinds of projects."



UUG officials at the breaking of the ground for the new wing

Project Oversight Lead and Head of Department of Civil Engineering at UG, Dr. Kofi Dalrymple, in presenting an overview of the project, stated that the project is part of a larger plan to equip the Faculty of Engineering and Technology, along with its interdisciplinary partners, specifically the Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences, to serve the country.

Dr. Dalrymple explained that the project provides for the retrofitting of the existing Faculty of Engineering and Technology facilities to address issues and adapt to new learning approaches.

He said: "Our labs are in dire need of upgrade. To train the engineers of the future, we need facilities that foster learning, cutting-edge research centres, and well-equipped classrooms that create an environment to stimulate curiosity and foster hands-on learning experiences."

He noted that the project will seek to modernise the facilities to serve as incubators for innovation, allowing aspiring engineers to engage in ground-breaking research and development projects. Dr. Dalrymple added that the project will allow for the expansion of the existing FET laboratory noting that the student enrolment rate has almost tripled, but the facilities remain the same.

"The faculty has estimated the need for an additional 23,000 square feet in new lab space. This project will add a much needed 5000 square feet. We also are adding new expanded labs for Petroleum and Geology–areas of priority for our faculty and our country," he said.

According to the release, "subsequent to verifying that Brigadier Gary Beaton of the GDF who was also laid to rest on Friday morning along with four other servicemen who tragically lost their lives last week, was a graduate engineer of the University of Guyana's Faculty of Engineering and Technology, the university proposed to name a wing of the building after the fallen hero."

The university will also introduce the Five Heroes Award in the names of all of the five fallen servicemen, a university-wide award for students who are officers, servicemen or reserves who attain a high academic profile from 2024.

Hundreds of children benefit from Police Commissioner's gift drive

OVER the weekend, Commissioner of Police Clifton Hicken hosted his gift drive, whereby some 1,000 gifts were distributed to children at the Police Sports Club Ground, Eve Leary, Georgetown. Commissioner Hicken noted that although they are focused on the pressing issues related to work, this drive is a way of creating memories for children and instilling in them that it is okay to come to the police for any help they may need in the future. He explained that he understands the outcome of not molding children, leaving them unsupervised and what can happen if that gap is not bridged. Commissioner Hicken further said, "My experience may not be for the others, and so what I'm trying to do is to ensure that whatever changes are taking place, and the value we're bringing with these changes, are across the board."



Commissioner Hicken being interviewed at the gift drive

The activity was held on Saturday ahead of Christmas to place smiles on the faces of hundreds of children from across the country. In addition to children of police ranks and youth and scout groups from across the Police

Regional Divisions, members of the public also benefitted from the gift drive.

EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023 Mahaicony rice farmers will soon benefit from access to irrigation water

Rice farmers and residents of Mahaicony River and surrounding areas in Region Five who are experiencing water woes will soon have an adequate supply of irrigation water as mechanisms will be implemented.

This was highlighted at a farmers' meeting spearheaded by Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha at Green Mill, Mahaicony Branch Road, Region Five, on Saturday.

During the meeting, farmers expressed concerns about the Mahaicony River's saline water intrusion, freshwater availability and excavation works to be done.

The minister pointed out that the government is working hard to make sure that procedures are in place to deliver irrigation water because the extended dry period is expected to last until the first quarter of 2024.

Minister Mustapha said the farmers would be provided with immense relief in response to their concerns guaranteeing their continuous output.

He also added, "I want to see all the lands under cultivation, especially in our rice sector... Within three days, you will get the water... Two pumps are there already... We have to monitor it. The main thing is that the creeks are running salt. We will look at that. We will put all systems in place to get it done."

According to Minister Mustapha, the ministry will look at several possibilities to determine how to modify the system so that rice farmers have access to irrigation water.

"For the right bank people, we will try to get one [bowser] from GuySuCo that will designate this over so you can get water constantly... until we get the system cleared back. We will look to see where we can modify them," the agriculture minister committed to the farmers.

To keep an eye on the river's salinity levels, the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) was assigned to conduct four salinity tests every day.

Minister Mustapha also suggested that a rotation system can also be implemented to ensure all the farmers are provided with irrigation. In addition, the situation with the farmers will be constantly monitored by the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), GRDB, and the Mahaica, Mahaicony, Abary (MMA). In a few weeks, Minister Mustapha and his technical team will return to the area to make sure the systems installed are operating well and giving the farmers access to enough water. To date, approximately 190,000 acres of land have been prepared across the country for rice cultivation.

Additionally, some farmers, who requested excavation works to be conducted, were informed that a machine would be made available on Monday.

The minister was joined by the Chairman of NDIA, Lionel Wordsworth, CEO of Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), Dr Dwight Walrond, Regional Chairman, Vickchand Ramphal, other heads of agencies and representatives of GRDB and MMA.



Agriculture Minister Zulkifar Mustapha



He reiterated that Regions Five and Six are slated for the construction of massive Hope-like canals.

Minister Mustapha said that some 40,000 acres of rice are being cultivated in the Mahaicony area.

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Guyana Appeals Court throws out appeal by APNU against recount decision

ON Monday, the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) faced another defeat as the Court of Appeal (CoA) dismissed their appeal related to Election Petition 88 of 2020, and upheld that there was no breach of the Constitution by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) to make the elections "a sham or a travesty" as claimed by the petitioners.

The High Court had rejected this petition two years ago, citing serious non-compliance with the Constitution of Guyana, electoral laws, and other infringements.

Acting Chancellor of the Judiciary Justice Yonette Cummings-Edwards, along with Justices Dawn Gregory and Rishi Persaud unanimously upheld the decision of Chief Justice (ag) Roxane George, S.C.

Using the foundational principle of democratic societies where elections are won or lost in the ballot box and not in the judicial system to bolster his argument, Justice Persaud said: "A crucial pillar of any democratic society is one in which supreme power is vested in the people, and exercised by them, directly or indirectly, through a system of representation, usually including periodically held free and fair elections."

Similarly, Justice Gregory explained that there was no breach, viola-



Former President David Granger (c) and his attorneys

tion or non-compliance by GECOM of the Constitution or the laws governing elections such as to make the elections a sham or a travesty as claimed by the petitioners.

"I agreed with the Chief Justice that in its implementation, GECOM did not act unlawfully," she affirmed, while maintaining that the petition failed to establish grounds to vitiate the elections.

Justice Cummings-Edwards highlighted that GECOM was expected to operate within the confines of its power, particularly during a time when the Parliament was in recess.

"I find no breach of the separation of powers doctrine," she added.

The Appellate Court found that

GECOM's power to issue subsidiary legislation in the form of Order 60 was exercised within the acceptable legal parameters, and that there was no trespass upon the province of Parliament.

Regarding costs, Senior Counsel Roysdale Forde suggested that each party bear its own costs due to the significant public importance and constitutional value of the issues.

He noted that the case affected elections and the need for clarity, especially with another contested elections approaching.

Attorney-at-Law Douglas Mendes, representing the General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), argued that the applicants should be ordered to pay costs.

He cited the clear terms in which the matter was dealt with, and the additional costs incurred by his client.

In the end, the Court awarded costs in the sum of \$150,000 in favour of the four respondents who participated by way of submissions.

The applicants, Claudette Thorne and Heston Bostwick, filed the appeal 18 months after the Chief Justice had handed down her decision.

Forde, in representing the petitioners, argued that the Chief Justice erred in law and misdirected herself in applying the doctrine of strict compliance.

Another claim was that she failed to consider the objective of the petition, based on the content of the Affidavit of Service.

In this matter, petitioners Thorne and Bostwick contended that the elections were unlawfully conducted, and/or that the result of the elections, if found to be lawfully conducted, were affected by unlawful acts or omissions on the part of GECOM.

They relied upon the grounds that Section 22 of the Election Laws (Amendment) Act 2000 is unconstitutional, and that by extension, Order 60 of 2020, which authorised the elections recount process, is invalid, null, void, and of no effect.





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Guyana continues to raise money to preserve forests

ALTHOUGH world leaders did not arrive at a consensus to establish a market-based mechanism for forestry preservation, Guyana will continue its work to preserve its standing forests and secure financing to do same through the sale of carbon credits in a voluntary market.

At a press conference last week, following the conclusion of the 28th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), Vice-President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo maintained that Guyana will continue its work to preserve its standing forests.

He noted that while Guyana has entered a voluntary market which will see the country raising US\$750 million for preserving its forests, a structured mechanism could create a 'greater incentive' for Guyana and other developing countries.

At a minimum, Guyana could earn US\$2.5 billion more in the next 10 years. Guyana had hoped to champion the cause for the establishment of market-based mechanisms to promote forest conservation.

For those who may not know, the voluntary carbon market gives companies, non-profit organisations, governments, and individuals the opportunity to buy and sell carbon offset credits. A carbon offset is an instrument that represents the reduction of one metric tonne of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases or emissions.

"We will continue doing our work in the voluntary market ...but right now you have no compliance market. I am very saddened because you have some really great practices in a lot of countries, particularly in Africa."

"We thought that advancing the carbon markets will create greater incentives for countries that are forested to enand the Government of Guyana, whereby the oil giant opted to purchase about one-third of all Guyana's credit (issued and anticipated) up to 2030.

The country's forests store 19.6 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide.

"We managed to get our entire forest certified, credits were issued, and we traded 30 per cent of those credits for US750 million," he reiterated.

Already Guyana has received its first payment of US\$75 million from its first sale and 15 per cent of this has been allocated to indigenous communities across the country for various community projects.



Vice President Jagdeo at COP28

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sure that they can raise money through the market mechanism to out compete alternate use and therefore preserve their forests without taking away the forest as a development tool in the arsenal of these countries. People live in the forest; they earn from the forest. The forests are not museum pieces for anybody in the northern part [of] our world and we had a setback on that," Dr. Jagdeo added.

Guyana recently earned US\$750 million for protecting its forest in its first sale in the voluntary market.

The government was recently able to certify the entire forest at the jurisdictional scale through the Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART).

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Detroit moves to buy Scarborough LRT trains scrapped by TTC

By Akim Shazad LJI REPORTER

16

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is nearing the completion of a deal to sell its Scarborough Rapid Transit (RT) trains to Detroit, according to transit officials on both sides of the border. The Detroit Transportation Corporation's board approved up to \$1 million USD for the deal on December 12.

The Line 3 Scarborough RT trains will be repurposed for use in Detroit's public transit service, known as The Detroit People Mover. Detroit will cover the shipping costs as well. The Detroit People Mover shares a similar setup with the Scarborough RT, which was permanently shut down in the fall following a July train derailment.

The deal involves approximately five entire train sets, and Stuart Green, spokesperson for the TTC, confirmed that the train cars are still in good condition. The issue with the Scarborough RT trains was related to the tracks, not the vehicles themselves. Detroit has its own tracks, making the acquisition a "win-win for everybody" and avoiding sending the trains to a scrap yard.

Green mentioned that two full trains will be retained by the TTC for a museum outside the city and for archives in Toronto. The Scarborough RT, a 6.4-kilometer rapid transit line with six stations, opened in 1985 and was officially closed in August 2022 following the derailment.

Stuart Green, spokesperson for the TTC, said the train cars are still in good condition and that the deal involves about five entire train sets. The problem with the Scarborough RT trains was the



Scarborough LRT trains, said to be no good for the TTC, will now be part of the Detroit People Mover system

tracks, not the vehicles themselves, he said, adding Detroit has its own tracks.

"Really, it's a win win for everybody and better that than just simply sending these things to a scrap yard because you know, there's there's certainly a nostalgia piece to it," he said.

Green said the TTC will keep two full trains for a museum outside the city and for archives in Toronto. A report presented at the TTC board meeting in September indicated that broken and loose bolts were responsible for the July 24 derailment that sent five people to hospital with minor injuries.

A rear car of a four-car train, travelling southbound, separated from the rest of the train and derailed after leaving Ellesmere station for Lawrence East station. When the derailment happened, the Scarborough RT was already 10 years past its design life.

After the derailment, the TTC implemented bus replacement service.

Line 3 was a 6.4-kilometre rapid transit line with six stations that opened in 1985. The TTC announced on Aug. 24 that the line would close permanently.

Toronto police board approves \$20M budget hike

By Niraj Sharma Lji reporter

On Tuesday, December 19, 2023 at 7:27 p.m. EST, the Toronto Police Services Board unanimously approved a 1.7 percent increase in the police's net operating budget for the next year. This adjustment aims to elevate their funding to nearly \$1.2 billion, representing a \$20 million increase from the 2023 budget. In a report presented to the board on December 11, the police outlined that the budget augmentation would enable them to hire approximately 300 new uniformed officers by the year's end. The goal is to enhance 911 response times, and an additional 100 staff members will be hired to fill civilian roles.



over the past year. He pointed out the alarming fact that it takes an average of 22 minutes to respond to the highest priority calls, with 60 percent of the time lacking available units for emergency responses. On the contrary, the Toronto Police Accountability Coalition, represented by former Toronto Mayor John Sewell, suggested that money could be saved by diverting crisis-related calls to specialized care centers. Sewell emphasized that this approach would not only be cost-effective but also provide better services to those in need. He argued that community agencies are better equipped to handle situations involving homelessness or drug addiction.

Chief Myron Demkiw emphasized that community feedback prompted the budget increase, emphasizing the necessity to adapt and address the city's

Toronto Police Headquarters at 40 College Street

unique challenges effectively. He expressed the commitment to maintaining Toronto as the best and safest place to live, work, and play.

Demkiw justified the need for more funds by pointing to an uptick in emergency calls, reported hate crimes, violent carjackings, and the city's population growth.

During the deliberations, numerous individuals presented arguments both in favor of and against the budget increase. Jon Reid, president of the Toronto Police Association, highlighted the challenges officers face in keeping up with an 18 percent surge in 911 calls

It's worth noting that the 2024 police budget has not yet received final approval; it awaits review by the city's budget committee in the upcoming year.

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EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023 US says land border between Guyana and Venezuela should be respected

The U.S. has reaffirmed its "position that the land boundary between Venezuela and Guyana should be respected unless – or until – the parties reach a new agreement – or a competent legal body decides otherwise."

US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken reiterated the US' position during a call with Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira on December 13th. The US' comments come as Guyana's President Irfaan Ali and Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro met at the meeting brokered by Brazil, CARICOM, the UN and CELAC, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines last week.

Blinken, according to Miller, also thanked Brazil for its diplomatic leadership in seeking a peaceful resolution of the dispute between Venezuela and Guyana over the Essequibo region.

Meanwhile, Ali, in a press briefing moments ago, insisted that both sides are committed to ensuring the region remains peaceful amid high tensions over a dispute involving the Essequibo area of Guyana.

The two leaders met at the airport in Kingstown, in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, alongside representatives from CARICOM, the Caribbean political and economic union, Brazil, the United Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, (CELAC).

Wearing a band that showed a map of the entire Guyana, Ali insisted that his country is committed to promoting investments and the development of its sovereign space and insisted that the government wants the International Court of Justice to rule on the contro-



Guyana President Irfaan Ali and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro shake hands over the agreement

versy once and for all. "I made it very clear that Guyana has all the right to... approve of and facilitate any development, any investment, any partnership, any trading, any collaboration, any cooperation, to issue any license and the granting of any concession within our territorial space and within our sovereign space," Ali said. PM of St Vincent & the Grenadines, Dr Ralph Gonsalves, meanwhile, read the Argyle Declaration for Dialogue and Peace between Guyana & Venezuela. The two sides agree "to directly or indirectly, not threaten or use force against one another." "Both agree any controversies will be resolved in accordance with international law" and "will refrain from via words or deeds escalate any conflict or disagreement arising from any controversy between them."

They will meet again in Brazil within 3 months.

UK envoy reiterates support for Guyana during visit

THE United Kingdom (UK) reiterated its support for Guyana's "territorial integrity" during a meeting on Monday.

David Rutley, the UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Americas and Caribbean, and Presi-



sponsibility for Finance Dr. Ashni Singh; Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mr. Hugh Todd; National Security Adviser Captain Gerry Gouveia; Chief-of-Staff of the Guyana Defence Force Brigadier Omar Khan; and the Director of Presidential Affairs Mrs. Marcia Nadii Sharma were also part of the meeting. During his visit, the UK minister was also set to engage ambassadors from the United States, Canada, and the European Union (EU) to discuss international support for Guyana. According to a statement from the Office of the President, while in Georgetown, Minister Rutley was also expected to hold talks with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)'s Secretary-General, and meet business leaders to hear how they have been affected by the situation. The UK parliamentarian had previously visited Guyana in March, when he was a passenger on board the inaugural direct British Airways flight from London, and attended the launch of the British Chamber of Commerce.

dent Dr. Irfaan Ali, met at State House.

In a press statement, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) quoted the parliamentarian as saying that the UK will continue to work with partners in the region, as well as through international bodies, to ensure the territorial integrity of Guyana is upheld.

The statement further welcomed the talks between Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and President Ali in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on December 14, when the leaders pledged there would be no escalation of conflict.

Rutley, who is also the Minister for the Americas, Caribbean and Overseas Territories, said: "I am in Guyana, a fellow Commonwealth member, to offer the UK's unequivocal backing to

President Ali with David Rutley during the latter's visit this week

our Guyanese friends.

"The border issue has been settled for over 120 years. Sovereign borders must be respected wherever they are in the world. We welcome the recent agreement by Venezuela in St. Vincent to refrain from the use of force and any further escalation." He was accompanied by the FCDO's Americas Director Robert Tinline, and the United Kingdom's High Commissioner to Guyana Jane Miller.

Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips; Senior Minister within the Office of the President with re-

The full Argyle agreement for peace in border dispute

CARICOM, the Community of Latin PRESIDENCY / AFP) / RESTRICTED American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Brazil and the UN brokered a peace deal between Guyana and LAN PRESIDENCY / MARCELO Venezuela and both sides signed off on GARCIA" - NO MARKETING NO the Argyle Agreement. Here's the full details of this agreement:

"THE JOINT DECLARATION OF ARGYLE FOR DIALOGUE AND PEACE BETWEEN GUYANA AND VENEZUELA

On Thursday, December 14, 2023, in Argyle, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and His Excellency Nicolas Maduro, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela held discussions on matters consequential to the territory in dispute between their two countries.

These discussions were facilitated by the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Pro-Tempore President of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Dr. The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, and the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica and Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit. Prime Ministers Gonsalves and Skerrit, together with H.E. Mr. Celso Amorim, Special Adviser and Personal Envoy of H.E. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, acted as principal Interlocutors. Also present were Honourable Prime Ministers of the Caribbean Community, namely: the Honourable Philip Davis, Prime Minister of The Bahamas; the Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados; the Honourable Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada; the Honourable Philip J. Pierre, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia; Honourable Terrence Drew of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Dr. The Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

STVINCENT-VENEZUELA-

On Thursday, December 14th, MARCELO GARCIA/VENEZUELAN TO EDITORIAL USE - MANDATORY CREDIT "AFP PHOTO / VENEZUE-ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS - DIS-TRIBUTED AS A SERVICE TO CLIENTS

> Attending as Observers on behalf of His Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations were Their Excellencies Earle Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Miroslav Jenca, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. In addition, His Excellency Alvaro Leyva Durán, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia and Mr. Gerardo Torres Zelaya, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Honduras, in his capacity as CELAC Troika, also participated.

> All parties attending the meeting at Argyle, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterated their commitment to Latin America and the Caribbean remaining a Zone of Peace.

> Guyana and Venezuela declared as follows:

> Agreed that Guyana and Venezuela, directly or indirectly, will not threaten or use force against one another in any circumstances, including those consequential to any existing controversies between the two States.

Agreed that any controversies between the two States will be resolved in accordance with international law, including the Geneva Agreement dated February 17, 1966.

Committed to the pursuance of good neighborliness, peaceful coexistence, and the unity of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Noted Guyana's assertion that it is committed to the process and procedures of the International Court of Justice for



SVG PM Ralph Gonsalves

the resolution of the border controversy. Noted Venezuela's assertion of its lack of consent and lack of recognition of the International Court of Justice and its jurisdiction in the border controversy.

Agreed to continue dialogue on any other pending matters of mutual importance to the two countries.

Agreed that both States will refrain, whether by words or deeds, from escalating any conflict or disagreement arising from any controversy between them. The two States will cooperate to avoid incidents on the ground conducive to tension between them. In the event of such an incident the two States will immediately communicate with one another, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC), and the President

of Brazil to contain, reverse and prevent its recurrence.

Agreed to establish immediately a joint commission of the Foreign Ministers and technical persons from the two States to address matters as mutually agreed. An update from this joint commission will be submitted to the Presidents of Guyana and Venezuela within three months.

Both States agreed that Prime Minister Ralph E. Gonsalves, the Pro-Tempore President of CELAC. Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, the incumbent CARICOM Chairman, and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil will remain seized of the matter as Interlocutors and the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres as Observer, with the ongoing concurrence of Presidents Irfaan Ali and Nicolas Maduro. For the avoidance of doubt, Prime Minister Gonsalves' role will continue even after Saint Vincent and the Grenadines ceases to be the Pro-Tempore President of CELAC, within the framework of the CELAC Troika plus one; and Prime Minister Skerrit's role will continue as a member of the CARICOM Bureau.

Both States agreed to meet again in Brazil, within the next three months, or at another agreed time, to consider any matter with implications for the territory in dispute, including the above-mentioned update of the joint commission.

We express our appreciation to Prime Ministers Gonsalves and Skerrit, to President Lula and his Personal Envoy Celso Amorim, to all other CARICOM Prime Ministers present, to the officials of the CARICOM Secretariat, to the CELAC Troika and to the Head of the **CELAC PTP Secretariat in Saint Vincent** and the Grenadines, His Excellency Dr. Douglas Slater, for their respective roles in making this meeting a success.

We express our appreciation to the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for their kind facilitation and hospitality at this meeting."

GUYANA-DIPLOMACY-ESSEQUIBO

This handout picture released by the Venezuelan Presidency shows Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro (R)shakes hand with Guyana's President Irfaan Ali(L) during a meeting in Saint Vincent and The Grenadines on December 14, 2023. The presidents of Venezuela and Guyana arrived Thursday morning on the Caribbean archipelago of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for a meeting aimed at easing tensions over the territorial dispute around the Essequibo, which has long pitted their two countries. - RESTRICTED TO EDITO-RIAL USE - MANDATORY CREDIT "AFP PHOTO / VENEZUELAN PRES-IDENCY / MARCELO GARCIA" - NO MARKETING NO ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS - DISTRIBUTED AS A SERVICE TO CLIENTS (Photo by



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THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023

EQUALITY NEWS



Badshah on stage

Bollywood rapper Badshah says fame 'is a little uncomfortable'

If you're dancing along to bangers at a Bollywood club night, chances are there'll be a song by Badshah.

The rapper has dominated the Indian music scene for almost a decade, with hits such as Abhi Toh Party Shuru Hui Hai, Kala Chashma and Baby Ko Bass Pasand Hain.

You might think the man with the "it's your boy Badshaaah" catchphrase would be "the happy guy" at the heart of any party.

But he admits the attention is hard.

"You will never find me in the centre of room, you will always find me in the corner," he tells BBC Asian Network. "I love the fact that a lot of people love me and I feel the love. But the fame is just a little uncomfortable."

The 37-year-old has had multiple hits in the UK's Official Asian Music Chart and starts his UK tour in London later on Saturday, but he's bigger than just his music.

He's also regularly seen in TV adverts, social media campaigns and even hosting talent shows.

That rise though, has not been smooth sailing. Instead, he admits struggling with his mental health and says he wishes he'd sought professional help much earlier than he did.

"Therapy is important.." he said.





ARIES (March 21 - April 20): It's not like you to coast along with your brain in neutral but your head does seem to be someplace else at the moment. Make a conscious effort to focus on issues that are of some importance and leave the insignificant stuff to lesser minds.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): Make an effort to reflect on your options over the next 24 hours and then make a final decision about where to invest your time and energy. Opportunities to improve your professional standing will be coming your way very soon, so be ready for them.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): Some people love making a drama out of a crisis, but you are not some people so don't get caught up in the raw emotions that are swirling about all over the place at the moment. Stay calm and strive to see the facts behind the frenzy.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): With Mars moving through the work area of your chart you don't lack for energy, but are you making the best possible use of it? Stop rushing here, there and everywhere and look at your options in a little more depth over the next 24 hours.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23) You have never been the sort to lack confidence and you are not about to go weak at the knees just because you have been handed a challenge that will test you to the limit. On the contrary, you intend to show the world what you are made of.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): Just because a task is tedious and time-consuming does not mean it is unimportant and you must go all out today to make the best possible job of what you have been entrusted to do. Your reputation for reliability is about to soar even higher.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): You need to get your act together and get down to the kind of serious work that even your rivals and enemies will praise you for. Most of all though you need to bear in mind at all times that principle will always be more important than profit.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): You are about to get the chance to join with like-minded people and take part in something that not only makes you feel good about yourself but helps make the world a better place as well. Opportunities like this come rarely, so make the most of it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): Good things come to those who wait, so be patient and don't try to force an issue that will work itself out in the right way and at the right time. It won't be easy for you to curb your enthusiasm but it will be profitable in the long-term.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): If there is something you should have finished by now then what occurs before the end of the week will help get it done. Then and only then will you be in a position to move on to the kind of ambitions that truly inspire you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): The message of the stars today is that you need to get your act together before the Sun changes signs on the 22nd. If you clear the decks today there will be fewer hold-ups later on when speed of action is not an option but a must. PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): You need to get over the idea that you must make plans that are both detailed and wideranging. In fact you need to get over the idea that you need to make plans at all. Take life as it comes and trust that the universe will guide you.

- * Work
- * Money
- * Love
- * Court Case
- * Depression
- * Enemy
- * Drinking
 - * Visa
 - * Jealousy
 - * Children
- n * Health
- y * Marriage
- * Divorce * Lucky Number * Husband-wife





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Heroes Highway named in honour of fallen GDF airmen

In a poignant ceremony held on Sunday, the newly completed Eccles to Great Diamond four-lane highway was officially commissioned, assuming the title of "Heroes Highway."

This commemorative renaming pays homage to the five valiant Guyana Defence Force (GDF) servicemen who tragically lost their lives in a helicopter crash on December 6.

The names of the fallen servicemen – Brigadier Gary Beaton, Colonel Michael Shahoud, Lt Col Michael Charles, Lieutenant Colonel Sean Welcome, and Staff Sergeant Jason Khan – now stand eternally etched in the road's history, symbolizing their unwavering dedication to duty.

President Dr. Irfaan Ali delivered an address, emphasizing the highway's profound significance.

"This highway is dedicated to the life, work and memories of our five great servicemen. We honour them with this highway, we want their children to grow up knowing that their fathers were legends," he said.

The President reflected on the honor and integrity that defined these servicemen, who perished while fulfilling their duty, leaving behind an enduring legacy of strength, hope, and courage.

The event drew a distinguished gathering, including several cabinet ministers, notably Prime Minister



President Ali and other dignitaries at the sign for the Heroes Highway in honour of the fallen GDF soldiers

Brigadier Mark Phillips, along with government officials and esteemed members of the diplomatic community.

Their presence underscored the collective mourning for the fallen heroes and the importance of the occaCommissioner of Police Clifton Hicken, accompanied by members of his Elite Leadership Team (ELT), senior and junior officers, and ranks of the Guyana Police Force, also participated in the solemn ceremony.

The Top Cop extended heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the servicemen, recognizing their ultimate sacrifice in service to the nation and its citizens.

Christmas treats for well-behaved inmates in SVG prisons

sion.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines' correctional facilities are rolling out their Annual Christmas Treat. This initiative is part of the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force's (RSVGPF) efforts to foster a positive atmosphere and reward good behavior among inmates during the holiday season



50II.

The Royal St Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF) has announced that as part of its rehabilitation mission and to promote and recognize positive behavior among incarcerated individuals, the annual Christmas celebration will kick off this month at both His Majesty's Prisons and the Belle Isle Correctional Facility.

Starting from December 13, 2023, to January 2, 2024, the program will allow inmates in all facilities to receive snacks and fast-food items from relatives and friends.

This concession is restricted to weekdays, specifically between 9 am to 1 pm. The approved items for this period include a variety of fast-food options like KFC, and Subway, and local favorites such as Roti.

The treat extends to home-cooked

The Belle Isle Correctional Facility in St Vincent and the Grenadines

meals on three specific days: Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day.

During these days, between 9 am and 3 pm, families can bring homecooked meals, including cake, accompanied by non-alcoholic beverages like Malt, Coco Cola, and Hairoun soft drinks.

Not all inmates will automatically

be eligible for these privileges.

The program is specifically designed for those who have adhered to prison regulations and exhibited good behavior. Relatives and friends interested in providing meals are advised to contact the Prison Department in advance to ensure the intended recipients qualify for this initiative. In keeping with security protocols, all meals are subject to standard security checks.

Additionally, meals must be brought in disposable containers.

This requirement underscores the balance between maintaining security within the facilities and offering a semblance of holiday spirit to the inmates.

EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023

Mottley accepts invitation to join UN Global Adaptation Board

The Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, has accepted an invitation from Ban Ki-moon, 8th Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the Board of the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA)and Professor Patrick Verkooijen, CEO of GCA to become a member of the Advisory Board.

On accepting the invitation, Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados said: "For those who are becoming increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and for whom the current system isn't working, the stakes couldn't be higher. I look forward to working with the Global Center on Adaptation to ensure governments engage with greater urgency to fix a broken financial system and fulfil their commitment to double adaptation finance by 2025."

Ban Ki-moon commended the Prime Minister's work to reform the global financial system through the Bridgetown Initiative, a proposal for the



Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley

creation of new instruments and the reform of existing institutions to finance climate resilience and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): "Prime Minister Mottley is shaking up the status quo to ensure inclusivity and that resilient finance will enable the GCA and climate vulnerable states to address the climate crisis effectively. I look forward to working closely with Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley at GCA to ensure funding reaches those who need it the most through our innovative and ground breaking adaptation programs."

Professor Patrick Verkooijen, CEO of the Global Center on Adaptation said: "The world's poorest and most climatevulnerable nations are falling into a destructive debt and climate disaster trap. The economic cost of climate disasters in developing countries is projected to reach as much as \$580 billion a year by 2030. I look forward to working with Prime Minister Mottley to break this vicious cycle. We need far greater investment in climate resilience – money invested in climate adaptation today will reduce the cost of dealing with climate disasters tomorrow.

The Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) is an international organization that works as a solutions broker to accelerate action and support for adaptation solutions, from the international to the local, in partnership with the public and private sectors. Founded in 2018, GCA operates from the largest floating office in the world, located in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. GCA has a worldwide network of regional offices in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Beijing, China with an Africa office due to open in Nairobi in January 2025.

CARIBBEAN ROUNDUP

Private sector joins regional fight against Dengue

In a groundbreaking move to combat the alarming surge of dengue cases across the Caribbean, two private companies have joined forces in an ambitious project aimed at curbing the spread of the deadly virus.

Orbit Services Partners Incorporation, a Barbados-registered firm, has entered into a strategic partnership with Verily, a San Francisco-based health technology company, to release specially bred mosquitoes with bacterium capable of blocking the dengue virus.

Orbit chairman Anthony Da Silva revealed that the two companies have been diligently working on this collaborative endeavor and have engaged with government officials in the Caribbean region.

Reports are that the companies have been meeting with government officials in the region as they hope to launch the project early next year, said Orbit The process involves infecting mosquitoes with Wolbachia within a controlled laboratory environment and subsequently releasing them into the wild.

As these mosquitoes reproduce, they pass on the bacterium to their offspring, effectively preventing the dengue virus from replicating within the mosquitoes' gut.

Da Silva emphasized that the partnership has been in the making for the past three years but encountered unexpected delays due to the global pandemic.

The proposal is currently pending approval from individual Caribbean nations, marking a critical step in the project's progression.

The Caribbean, along with the Americas, has witnessed an alarming surge in dengue cases this year, surpassing a grim milestone with over four million reported cases—the highest number recorded since the inception of dengue record-keeping in 1980. Williamson, who was living in Cayman and had been reported missing since July 6, 2022.

The remains were found clad in clothing that matched the description of what Williamson was last seen wearing: a black top, jeans over grey Manchester United shorts, and black Jordan slippers.

The Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) has not released the cause of death.

Reports are that an anthropologist has been brought in by the Health Services Authority (HSA) to closely examine the remains, providing critical assistance to the ongoing investigation.

Forensic samples have also been collected for comprehensive examination and analysis.



chairman Anthony Da Silva.

The initiative aims to target several nations grappling with dengue outbreaks, including Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Maarten, St. Martin, Suriname, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.

Similar projects employing the Wolbachia bacterium have already yielded positive results in various parts of the world.

Missing Jamaican found dead in Caymans

The Cayman police have confirmed that the body discovered in the dense mangrove wetlands of East End last week is that of a Jamaican man. The deceased has been identified as Adrian



Port Royal on short lost for UNESCO Heritage Site designation

The now sleepy fishing village of Port Royal, Jamaica, may soon be added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UN-ESCO) World Heritage List.

Nomination is currently in process for the town to be inscribed as a world archaeological site, according to the island's Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Hon. Olivia Grange.

"The archaeological site of Port Royal, including terrestrial and underwater, are currently going through UN-ESCO's World Heritage nomination," she said recently.

Minister Grange said that a file containing the management plan, maps, and other important information supporting the nomination will be submitted at the end of this month.

"The final submission of the nomination is to be done at the end of January in 2024, when we will know if that site will be declared by UNESCO," she said.

Grange said that Port Royal is the first of its kind to be placed on the World Heritage List of 17th Century English settlement underwater archaeological sites.

Founded in 1494 by the Spanish, it was once the largest city in the Caribbean, functioning as the centre of shipping and commerce in the Caribbean Sea by the latter half of the 17th century.

During that time, Port Royal was home to privateers who were encour-



Port Royal is known as the "city that sank" after an earthquake in 1692

aged to attack Spanish vessels, at a time when smaller European nations were reluctant to attack Spain directly. As a port city, it was notorious for its gaudy displays of wealth and loose morals. It was a popular homeport for the English and Dutch-sponsored privateers to spend their treasure during the 17th century. Pirates from around the world congregated at Port Royal, coming from waters as far away as Madagascar. It once had the reputation as "the wickedest city in the West."

It was destroyed by an earthquake on June 6, 1692, which had an accompanying tsunami, leading to the establishment of Kingston, which is now the largest city in Jamaica. Severe hurricanes have regularly damaged the area. Another severe earthquake occurred in

1907.

Today, Port Royal is known to postmedieval archaeologists as the "City that Sank". Renowned archeologist Robert Marx considers it the most important underwater archaeological site in the Western hemisphere.

The Minister added that Jamaica has other sites on the World Heritage tentative list.

Integrity Commission, Rowley in war of words

The Integrity Commission of Trinidad & Tobago has raised concerns over recent remarks made by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley.

According to reports, Dr. Rowley accused the Commission of intentionally attempting to tarnish his



reputation.

His allegations surfaced after he received information indicating that he was once again under investigation.

This marks the third instance in Dr. Rowley's political career where he finds himself under the scrutiny of the Integrity Commission for potential breaches of the Integrity in Public Life Act.

The Act is designed to ensure transparency and accountability among public officials.

The investigation is the second since Dr Rowley became prime minister in 2015.

In response to inquiries from Guardian Media on Friday regarding this latest investigation, Dr. Rowley expressed his concerns, asserting, "The Integrity Commission, acting in concert with others, is deliberately attempting to tarnish my reputation by attempting to find ways to associate me with contracts and awards that I have had absolutely nothing to do with."

T&T Prime Minister Keith Rowley

Reports are that the investigation was initiated in to a company owned by Dr. Rowley's close associate, response to allegations surrounding contracts awarded Allan Warner.

Jamaica explains absence from **Guyana-Venezuela border talks**

Jamaica's Foreign Affairs Minister Kamina Johnson Smith took to social media to respond to criticism over the country's absence at last week's meeting between the presidents of Guyana and Venezuela in St. Vincent, where other CARICOM leaders were present.

Scores of Jamaicans at home and across the diaspora, as well as the opposition People's National Party criticized the Jamaican government for not being present at what was regarded as an important regional meeting on Thursday.

But Minister Johnson Smith later responded to the backlash, saying "there is no need to be concerned.

"I see some people asking why JA wasn't present. Firstly, not a CARICOM mtng. 2ndly, please note the countries present were generally from Sth and East Cbean having special concerns or relations w/ Vzla/ALBA," she said in a post on social media site X, formerly known as Twitter.

She also noted that Prime Minister

Andrew Holness was leading talks in the north on Haiti.

Ouestions about Jamaica's involvement in efforts to quell tensions between Guyana and Venezuela were also posed to Dr. Amery Browne, Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Foreign and CARI-COM Affairs, a day after the meeting in St. Vincent.

"Jamaica, as another founding member of CARICOM, has been part and parcel of these efforts, part and parcel of the dialogue, the analysis, the recommendations, etc.," he said.

"Jamaica was one of those, and there are others, who did not participate in yesterday's event. But, certainly, in the emergency meeting and certainly in the work of CARICOM, that I've chronicled ... Jamaica has been working with the family in that regard," Browne said.

Following face-to-face talks on Thursday, President of Guyana Dr. Irfaan Ali and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro both committed to peace in



Kamina Johnson Smith

its border dispute over the oil rich Essequibo region, which makes up two-

thirds of Guyana.

The meeing in St. Vincent was facilitated by Ralph Gonsalves, the prime minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines: Roosevelt Skerrit, Dominica's head of government who is also the chairman of the CARICOM; Brazil; and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Regional prime ministers present were Bahamas' Philip Davis, Barbados' Mia Mottley, Dickon Mitchell of Grenada, Philip Pierre of St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis' Terrence Drew and Dr Keith Rowley from Trinidad and Tobago.

In a declaration after the talks, Ali and Maduro agreed, among other things, that they will not threaten or use force to deal with any controversies between them and that they will refrain from escalating any existing tensions.

They also agreed to meet in Brazil within the next three months.

UF student killed during visit home for Christmas

Shadedra Williams, a 23-year-old Jamaican who attended the University of Florida in the United States, has become the latest victim of a car crash in Caribbean island.

Reports are that the tragedy occurred on the Mandela Highway in St Catherine, Jamaica, on Saturday.

According to reports, the accident occurred around 5:45 am.

Williams was a passenger in a Mercedes Benz SUV, heading toward St Catherine when the vehicle struck the rear of a parked truck.

The impact caused the SUV to spin out of control and collide with a Suzuki Vitara traveling in the same direction.

Williams suffered critical injuries during the incident and was pronounced dead at the hospital.

The crash did not cause any other serious injuries, as reported by the police.

The Public Safety and Traffic Enforcement Branch (PSTEB) of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, led by Assistant Commissioner of Police Gary McKenzie, has initiated a thorough investigation into the crash.

The primary concern is to ascertain whether dangerous driving led to the fatal accident, especially since the SUV had just passed a speed checkpoint at Six Miles.







Shadedra Williams — was in Jamaica for Christmas holidays

According to Superintendent Lanford Salmon from the Public Safety and Traffic Enforcement Branch, the driver of the vehicle in which Miss Williams died reported that other motorists were

racing, and a near miss with his vehicle led to the crash.

Williams who is from Four Paths in Clarendon, had only recently returned to the island for the holidays.

EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY DECEMBER 21 2023 New dress code coming for public visits to T&T go'vt offices in 2024

A new dress code will be in effect for people coming to do business at various Trinidad and Tobago government offices next year.

The announcement was made in a statement issued by the Public Administration Ministry on Monday.

The statement said, "A new inclusive client/visitor dress code policy for government offices in Trinidad and Tobago will be instituted nationwide from January 15, 2024."

After extensive research, the ministry continued, the policy was approved by Cabinet.

The ministry said the policy included a standardised dress code that aligns with the principles of fairness, decency, respect for cultural diversity, clarity and consistency, as well as safety.

"The policy was guided by public feedback on a number of key issues including the denial of service, non-alignment of dress-code policies in offices across the Government of the Republic of TT, as well as research on global trends towards a more-relaxed dress code."

Public Administration Minister Allyson West said, "We have listened and completed the research to ensure that a more inclusive, culturally-sensitive policy is instituted. The focus is on equitable treatment, mutual respect and safety, as well as on providing, and not denying service."

The new policy applies to all clients

and visitors to government offices in Trinidad, including all ministries, departments and agencies, whether inperson or virtually.

The policy also extends to clients and visitors to government offices under the purview of the central government in Tobago.

But the ministry said, "The policy does not apply to non-offices including schools, police stations, hospitals/health centres, courts etc."

> The new policy includes: Face-to-Face Visitation

1. Appropriate coverage: Refrain from wearing clothing that exposes the body in any kind of vulgar manner; the upper body (chest) must be covered and the lower body covering must not be higher that mid-thigh. Swim wear, sheer clothing and entering bareback are not permitted.

2. Decency: Avoid wearing clothing or accessories that display inappropriate or obscene messages or pictures that may be offensive to others or which contain signs or symbols of gangs or groups that are a threat to security.

3. Appropriate footwear: Footwear is mandatory. Do ensure that footwear does not pose a safety concern ie contains proper soles and grip to prevent the risks of slippage and falls.

4. Head and face coverings are allowed: Headwear, once it does not obscure facial features and allows for full view of the face. Where facial coverings



Minister Allyson West

including masks, facial shields and niqabs are worn, people may be checked further by security personnel. If facial features are not visible/are blocked, the individual may be required to remove the mask/facial shield briefly to facilitate confirmation of his/her identity.

In the case of niqabs, individuals will be checked in a separate area.

In cases where a breach of the above dress code criteria occurs, prior to denying access to services, the client/visitor should be given the opportunity to express a legitimate reason for non-compliance.

In unique circumstances where an individual's belongings are destroyed due to fire or flood, a customer service representative can attend to that person and seek the necessary approval to facilitate access to service.

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Clients/visitors must ensure that the criteria/requirements of the dress code are checked before visiting government offices to conduct business.

There are also requirements for clients/visitors to adhere to the dress code criteria for picture identification services for the following areas:

1. TT national identification card – Elections and Boundaries Commission, National Security Ministry:

• Shoulders must be covered

• No contact lenses

• Eyelashes must not obscure the eyes

• No headgear unless it is for religious purposes

• No piercings on the face (only ear piercings are allowed)

2. Requirements for passport – Immigration Division, National Security Ministry:

• Shoulders must be covered

• Headwear is not allowed (exceptions will be made for religious purposes only)

• The colour of clothing must be in contrast with the background. White tops are not to be worn.

• Beards are permitted once it represents the person's everyday appearance.

• Dark glasses are not allowed except if the person suffers from a disability

IDB signs pandemic fund agreement with Caribbean

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (Carpha) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) signed a technical co-operation agreement for the Pandemic Fund dedicated to helping low- and middle-income countries become better prepared for future pandemics.

A Carpha statement last Thursday said its executive director Dr Joy St John and the IDB's country representative for TT Carina Cockburn signed the Pandemic Fund Technical Co-operation Agreement at the Scarlet ibis Room, Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre earlier that day. The Pandemic Fund was established in 2022 and was formally launched under Indonesia's G20 presidency at the G20 meetings in Bali in November 2022. The fund has a governing board, which, in July, approved grants in 37 countries across six regions, the statement said.

in shaping and strengthening global architecture and governance on all major international economic issues."

Hosted by the World Bank, the Pandemic Fund, "finances critical investments to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response capacities at national, regional, and global levels, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries," its website said. It said the devastating social and economic cost of the covid19 pandemic highlighted the "urgent need for co-ordinated action to build stronger health systems and mobilise additional resources for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response." Caribbean countries – is seeking to reduce "the public health impact of pandemics through strengthened integrated early warning surveillance, laboratory systems, and workforce development."

On Thursday, Carpha said the Caribbean had experienced many infectious disease outbreaks in recent years, including covid19, cholera, chikungunya, dengue, norovirus, H1N1, monkey pox, sars and zika. It said pandemic prevention, preparedness and response needed to be improved not only at a national level but also at a regional one, "as functional regional capacities can achieve the economies of scale and necessary co-ordination/integration that small territories cannot achieve on their own." It said chairman of Carpha's executive board and Dominica's Minister of Health, Wellness and Social Services Cassanni Laville delivered remarks with Health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh, Pandemic Fund project director Dr Lisa Indar and executive head of the Pandemic Fund Dr Priya Basu in attendance among others.

ment as saying, "We must ensure that decisive plans are laid for future generations, which will assist in the strengthening of capacity to prevent, detect and respond to public health emergencies.

"Today's historic public signing ceremony for the Pandemic Fund Technical Co-operation Agreement, is a major and fundamental step toward the attainment of these goals, as the formalisation of this agreement will allow countries in the Americas to adopt the necessary technological systems needed for emergency and early response warning systems."

The G20 or Group of 20 is a forum made up of government representatives from 19 sovereign countries, the European Union, and the African Union. Its website says, "It plays an important role A July 2023 statement said the fund raised \$2 billion in seed capital from 25 sovereign and philanthropic contributors.

In May this year, the fund closed its first call for proposals and received 179 applications from 133 countries. There were single-country proposals and multi-country proposals.

The multi-country proposal of which TT is apart – along with ten other

Deyalsingh was quoted in the state-

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Hetmyer dropped, WI aim to clinch T20 series vs England

MISFIRING batsman Shimron Hetmyer and a laboured Alzarri Joseph have been replaced by Johnson Charles and Oshane Thomas for the final two T20 Internationals against England at Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba on Tuesday and Thursday.

This was confirmed in a Cricket West Indies (CWI) statement on Monday, which named the 15-member squad ahead of both matches.

Hetmyer has been ineffective with the bat, scoring one and two respectively, in the first two T20Is, and did not make it into the playing squad for the third.

Joseph, however, had commendable hauls of 3/54 and 3/39 in the first two but went wicketless for 50 runs in the third.

"The selection panel is resting fast bowler Alzarri Joseph in consideration of his workload including the forthcoming all-format tour of Australia in January and February. He is replaced in the squad by fellow pacer Oshane Thomas.

"Johnson Charles, the experienced batter is also called into the squad to replace Shimron Hetmyer," the statement read. England staged an impressive fightback in Grenada on Saturday to grab their first win of the series (2-1) despite the hosts posting the venue's highest T20I target of 222/6.

An opening stance of 115 in under 12 over from Phil Salt (109 not out) and captain Jos Buttler (51) set the stage for England's largest T20I run chase in the Caribbean, as they rallied to 226/3, with one ball to spare.

Altogether, the 448 runs aggregated by both nations in the third T20I are the most in any T20I match hosted in the region. The previous highest was 428 runs in Bridgetown in 2022, also during a T20I between West Indies and England.

If victorious on Tuesday, the maroon will win the series with the final contest to play on Thursday. However, if England win, Thursday's result determines the series winner.

The last time both nations met in a T20I series was in January 2022, when West Indies won 3-2.

But having won their first One-Day International series over the English, since 2007, ten days ago, West Indies are intent on closing off this year on a high,



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Shimron Hetmyer — dropped by selectors

with another T20I series win over their European rivals.

West Indies have done well with the bat so far for the series. In the first tie, vice-captain Shai Hope (36) top-scored, with Kyle Mayers (35) chipping. The pair combined with skipper Rovman Powell's quick-fire, unbeaten

31 from 15 balls, in addition to, Andre Russell's blistering 29 from 14.

In the second match, opener Brandon King led his charges over the line with an unbeaten 82 from 52 while Powell supported his quest with a speedy 50 from 28.

The last match in Grenada on Saturday, which WI lost, saw Nicholas Pooran (82) step up, Powell (39) deliver with another fine showing alongside Sherfane Rutherford (29).

However, Pooran's heroics with the bat were overshadowed by Salt, Buttler, Harry Brooks blistering 31 from seven and Liam Livingstone's 30.

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