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**ENERGY EXPO:** Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali and Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley cut the ribbon to officially open the International Energy Conference and Expo in Georgetown on Tuesday, as St Vincent Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves and others look on. Almost 200 exhibitors and over 800 delegates are scheduled to be part of the second edition of Guyana's annual Expo, which runs until Friday. This year's event has 60 speakers and is being held under the theme, "Harnessing Energy for Development." See more stories inside



**CARICOM MEETING:** Haiti is said to be high on the agenda as the heads of the Caribbean community meet in The Bahamas this week. Among the special guests at the CARICOM meeting is Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured here with his Barbadian counterpart Mia Mottley. Trudeau has less than two days with leaders of the Caribbean economic and political bloc. The leaders of small island nations will be bringing climate change, migration and food insecurity to the table. Bahamian Prime Minister Philip Davis said, however, that Haiti will still be a "priority" during the three-day meeting.



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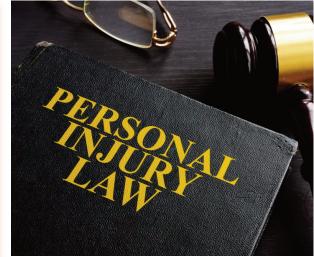
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### Scenes from the International Energy Expo

Equality News is on the ground in Georgetown, Guyana, to cover the International Energy Conference and Expo which opened on Tuesday and runs to Friday February 17.

The conference has attracted more than 800 delegates from around the world, and features more than 200 exhibitors.

Companies and manufacturers from across Guyana joined their coun-

terparts from the Caribbean region and farther afield — including a large delegation from Canada — at the Expo, where they showcased their goods and services to the world.

Equality Publisher Bhaskar Sharma is in Georgetown for the event, and had the opportunity to meet many of the movers and shakers at the conference. Here are some pictures:



President Dr Irfaan Ali greets Bhaskar



Having a conversation with Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo



Showing an Equality display to Attorney General Anil Nandlall



With Anand Beharry, chairman of GBTI Bank



With businessman Azzurdin Mohammed of Team Mohamed's



With Golnvest boss Dr Peter Ramsaroop

## **Energy NL, Canada-Guyana** Chamber sign agreement

By Vasant Phillip

LJI REPORTER

THE Canada Guyana Chamber of Commerce (CGCC), on Tuesday, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Canadian energy industry association, Energy NL, to facilitate technical support and knowledge exchange.

The signing took place at the Marriott Hotel in Georgetown, on the sidelines of the 2023 Energy Conference and Expo.

The agreement was signed by Chief Executive Officer of Energy NL, Charlene Johnson and CGCC President, Anand Beharry.

Beharry said that the agreement is primarily about Energy NL helping CGCC navigate the energy sector and avoiding pitfalls through the lessons already learnt by Energy NL.

"The people of Energy NL are excited to teach us, and ensure we don't get to the pitfalls that they did," Beharry

to represent the supply and service sector of the energy industry.

Today, Energy NL represents over 460 member organisations worldwide which are involved in, or benefit from, the energy industry of Newfoundland and Labrador. Energy NL members provide products and services for the energy sector, and associate members include petroleum companies, trade associations, educational institutions and government bodies and agencies at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

According to Johnson, the MoU will allow for the organisations to come together to make the most of the challenges, the transformation and the opportunities, so as to take advantage of shared experiences, know-how and desire to succeed for the mutual benefit of their respective membership.

"For many years, Energy NL members have come to Guyana to share our expertise and exchange knowledge. In many ways our energy sectors are very similar. Guyana has an offshore oil and gas sector which has provided new op-Energy NL was Founded in 1977, portunities and benefits; it has been



Chief Executive Officer of Energy NL, Charlene Johnson and CGCC President, Anand Beharry

transformative. Newfoundland and Labrador experienced that transforma-

"Guyana is in the midst of a financial renaissance which is altering the economy and improving the lives of Guyanese people. A changing economy can be a challenging economy. And that is just one area that the Energy NL and the CGCC can collaborate on through shared experiences, talent and commitment to succeed," Johnson said.

### Racial remark leaves player with sour result

A 16-year-old high school basketball player from Selkirk, Man., is speaking out after he says an opposing player made a racial remark during a game last Thursday night in Oakbank,

Joel Masse, who is Cree and a Grade 10 student at Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School, says his performance in the game suffered after hearing the comment.

"I played terribly," he said in an interview. "It was just like a gut punch."

Joel said it happened during a junior varsity boys basketball game on Feb. 9 between his Lord Selkirk Royals and the Springfield Sabres at Springfield Collegiate Institute.

He said his team was running an inbound play called a flat, with Joel set up to receive a pass for a quick score, when a player from the opposing team made the remark.

"My coach said, 'Let's do a flat Joel.' And then the student was like 'black Joel' and pointed at me in a hurtful way," Joel said. "Is there something wrong with being Black? I didn't get

Joel said he immediately told a referee, who then assessed the player with a technical foul.

He said the referee stopped the game to talk to both benches, when he said an opposing coach questioned the

"'Oh, is this a foul? It's just words," one of the coaches said," according to

"We continued playing after that. I continued playing, which kind of hurt. I don't want to play a sport when I'm hurt."

Before the game even started, Joel said he saw racist graffiti on the wall of the boys' change room at the school.

"After the game, I was just sad," he said.

His mother, Grace Masse, wasn't at the game but heard about the incident afterwards from Joel as well as from her oldest daughter and niece, who were at the game watching.

She said the graffiti in the change room seems to have set the stage for Joel before he even started to play.

"Him being called 'black Joel,' when I heard about it, kind of triggered me," Grace said.

"As an Indigenous woman, a lot of the things told to me was ... this kind of stuff to make you feel like as if the colour of your skin ... there's something wrong with being darker."

On Sunday, Grace said she already brought the issue to the attention of the Lord Selkirk School Division and planned to contact Springfield Collegiate Institute (SCI) in Oakbank. She wrote about the incident in a social media post seen by the Sunrise School Division, which oversees Springfield Collegiate.

Joel Masse said after the game, his cousin confronted an opposing coach, who he said denied any racial remark was made.

Sunrise School Division superintendent Cathy Tymko said in email that the inbound play call was heard by other players and spectators as "black" as opposed to "flat."

"An SCI player expressed astonishment that the play would be called 'Black student name,'" Tymko wrote. "Coaches, conveners and refs discussed and debriefed the details and confirmed that the play name had not been questioned in a negative or derogatory way or in any way that intended harm."

Tymko wrote, "Regardless of intent, if it was perceived as harmful, the school and division would absolutely work to correct any miscommunication, misinterpretation, and/or misgivings



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#### **EDITORIAL & OPINIONS**

## Time to level the playing field

Guyana's Dr Irfaan Ali, the country's President, has lent his voice to a growing number of small state leaders who are seeking a seat at the table when coming to global issues such as food security and climate change.

Like his colleague, Barbados' Mia Mottley did during her address to the United Nations in 2021, Ali has said now is an opportune time for a "new world coalition" to bring balance to the international debate around the issue of climate change, food security, and energy security.

He made his remarks on a major stage -- the International Energy Expo in Georgetown, which opened this week. With over 800 delegates representing some 200 exhibitors present, including a substantial delegation from Canada, he said inequality in the approach to critical issues have hindered the development of small states, and they should be given a seat at the table on any discussions since theirs were the countries most affected by deci-

sions made by bigger states.

He asked the energy expo audience to consider, for instance, the realistic positioning of issues as it relates to global CO2 emissions based on data which shows that South America, Central America and the Caribbean combined, account for just 3.6 per cent of emissions, yet suffer the most due to extreme climate change events.

Adding that the 10 largest economies that account for 62.7 per cent of CO2, Ali said it was important that developing countries put systems in place to ensure that they can continue to progress under changing circumstances.

As a Region, the President said there should be a collective approach to overall development. He highlighted the drive of CARICOM and its food-security measure, which Guyana is spearheading, while he also spoke of other regional opportunities, including the longevity of electricity from natural gas in Guyana, Trinidad and Suriname

and the energy corridor among Guyana, Roraima (Brazil) and Suriname.

He said that even though Guyana is now an oil producing nation, it is still focused on plans to De-carbonize the future.

He said Guyana demonstrated global leadership on how natural resources can be sustainably harnessed more than a decade ago. He cited the country's Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030, as a main action in its "development platform," while explaining about how it was enhanced to ensure that Guyana stays "true to morals and principles when it comes to the issue of climate change."

There's no question that Dr Ali, like Ms Mottley, is right.

For too long, small developing states have had to bear the brunt of decisions made around far-removed boardroom tables by leaders of countries that often do not experience the harsh reality of climate change.

Both Ali and Mottley have said this is not fair, and it is time for the narrative to change to include smaller states at such tables to ensure any decisions made take all the players into account.

The facts speak for themselves: almost 63 percent of CO2 emissions from from the largest 10 economies in the world, while those that suffer the most from such emissions account for just over 3 percent.

Allowing the big economies to dictate how the smaller ones should move forward is akin to telling someone with a gun where to shoot you so it might hurt less, or won't kill you.

That's just not right.

Dr Ali is right on track with his comments. That he made them during an energy conference that is focused on fossil fuels is remarkable, because it means he has taken the fight directly to them.

Let's hope the world sits up and listens.

### UN needs to introduce special disaster fund

Dear Editor,

AS I watched the devastation in Turkey and Syria caused by the recent deadly earthquake, I could not help but reflect on our own vulnerabilities in the face of potential natural disasters caused in large measure by the effects of climate change.

And even though we have to consider ourselves fortunate not to have experienced any disaster of the magnitude seen in other parts of the world, we have to continue to do our part in terms of disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts.

Such catastrophic disasters as in the case of Turkey and Syria require the collective response of the global community.

Credit must be given to those countries and international agencies that have already been rendering valuable assistance. In times of disaster, there should be no room for narrow thinking

Assistance should be sought and accepted from all quarters, regardless of political or ideological differences.

Given the scale of deaths and destruction that could result from natural disasters, I am of the view that a special disaster fund should be set up by the United Nations.

A small reduction in global military spending of one per cent by the industrialized world could release billions of dollars for disaster-mitigation efforts. This admittedly, is wishful thinking given the entrenched military positions of the major powers.

In this regard, credit must be given to those individuals and groups that have been risking their own lives to come to the rescue of those trapped under the rubble.

Already, over 20,000 persons have perished but many others were saved, thanks to rescue efforts of so

many people

The full scale of the destruction is still to be determined, but from all indications it is one of the worst in recent times.

The disaster in Turkey and Syria is all the more worrying when seen against the man-made disaster in the Ukraine-Russia war in which tens of thousands of lives have been lost and billions of dollars wasted in infrastructural destruction.

The billions of dollars spent on the war could have made a huge difference in relief efforts and poverty alleviation. All of that is now, as it were, water under the bridge.

In fact, global military spending is increasing significantly as a result of heightened tension caused by the war in Ukraine.

Yours respectfully, Hydar Ally

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# Woman slashed in face in latest TTC subway attack

**By Niraj Sharma**LJI REPORTER

Yet another person has been attacked while riding on the public transit system in Toronto.

Police said a woman was injured Sunday evening after she was allegedly slashed in the face during an altercation at Spadina subway station.

The incident happened around 6:34 p.m. That's when a woman got into a "verbal dispute" with three people she didn't know, according to a police news release.

Investigators say a man spat in the woman's face and repeatedly pushed her, before pulling a knife and slashing her, causing facial injuries.

All three suspects then took off, police say.

The first man is described as about five feet, 10 inches tall with a slim build and "black, puffy hair." He was last seen wearing a grey jacket with a fur hood, a grey sweater, a blue mask, grey sweatpants and black running shoes. Police say he was carrying a six-inch knife with a "jagged edge."

The second male is described as about five feet, seven inches tall and ap-

proximately 16 to 19-years-old, with a slim build and short, "puffy black hair." He was last seen wearing a black winter jacket, a grey hooded sweater, black jeans, black and white running shoes and a white mask.

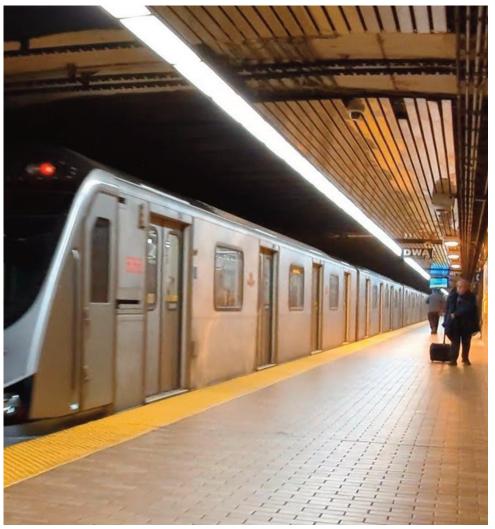
The female is described as about five feet, four inches tall, 120 pounds, and approximately 14 to 17-years-old with a slim build. Police say she had long black hair in a pony tail, and was wearing a black puffy jacket, grey sweatpants, white and black running shoes, and was carrying a large brown, leather purse with gold straps.

Shaken by Toronto transit attacks, riders say they don't feel safe — but doubt more police will help

Toronto police deploying dozens of officers to patrol city's transit system after surge in violence

Anyone with information is asked to contact Toronto police or Crime Stoppers.

Late last month, Toronto police announced the addition of upwards of 80 police officers to the city's the transit system every day, in a response to a series high-profile, violent attacks on the TTC.



The Spanida Subway Station where the attack occurred

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## Barbados-Based Logistics Hubs To Support Caribbean Food Security

The supply and distribution of food and disaster relief items to Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states will soon be facilitated by two separately-managed regional logistics hubs, both based in Barbados. In a region in which extreme weather, US import dependency and regional barriers to trade are ongoing threats to food security, the two facilities\* will bring a promise of strengthened regional supply chains and logistics capacities as well as heightened intra-regional trade and efficient distribution of humanitarian assistance in the event of disaster.

Caribbean agriculture and fisheries are disproportionately exposed to climate impacts on weather patterns, air and sea surface temperatures, and freshwater availability—threats that are compounded by the region's \$5 billion food import bill, representing 80% of all food consumed.

According to the United Nations, countries in the Caribbean suffer annual losses from storm damages— measured in in property, crops, and livestock—equivalent to 17% of their GDP.

COVID-19 supply chain impacts and the effect of the war in Ukraine have contributed to a 46% increase in moderate to severe food insecurity in the region between February and August 2022— the highest rate since 2020—leaving 57% of the population struggling to put food on the table.

But there is hope for improved resilience amidst growing global uncertainty.

According to Prime Minister, Mia Amor Mottley, Barbados is ideally placed from a geographic perspective, to serve as a trans-shipment point "from which you can reach multiple countries in both the Caribbean Island chain and in coastal Latin America."

The hubs provide hope for a new intra-regional logistical network that is efficient, continuous, sustainable, and safe, leading to reduced import dependence and improved climate resilience.

Speaking in Trinidad & Tobago in August 2022 at the second regional Agri-Investment Forum, Chairman of the CARICOM Private Sector Organization, Gervase Warner described food security as "a critical issue for our own survival. It is very clear to us we are not going to get help from our colonizers of the past, we are not going to get help from big developing countries. This is our problem for us to address."

In a statement made during the inaugural Agri-Food Investment Forum and Expo in Guyana in May 2022, Prime Minister Mottley indicated that the Caribbean needs "an efficient supply chain that is safe and secure, and not necessarily one that is driven by imports."

The Barbados-Guyana food terminal and state-of-the-art abattoir, as provided for under the Saint Barnabas



Barbados' Prime Minister Mia Mottley with Executive Director of the World Food Programme, David Beasley

Accord between Barbados and Guyana, will house Guyanese produce for local consumption and serve as a trans-shipment point for exports. The facility could serve as a cushion in the event of shocks that impact food security, while also supporting the regional import substitution program, "25 by 2025" which aims to cut food imports by 25% by 2025.

The launch of the facility could also spur investment in a previously declining segment of the economy.

Over the past few decades, the sizeable economic contribution of sectors such as tourism, have marginalized the agriculture sector, leaving the Caribbean highly dependent on extra-regional food imports. Transportation and import costs have resulted in high food prices, with the Caribbean ranked second highest globally for the cost of a healthy diet and third for an energy sufficient diet.

Consequently, with 80% of food consumed being imported from outside the region, the Caribbean has become highly vulnerable to food systems disruptions and external shocks, with scarce foreign reserves being expended on imported, highly processed foods that have been connected to the region's high rates of non-communicable diseases. In many cases, large amounts of imported fruits and vegetables could be substituted with locally and regionally grown foods, but intra- regional barriers to trade and logistical and transport issues have prevented the movement of food within the region.

According to Barbados' Agriculture

Minister, Indar Weir, ground is to be broken in early 2023 for the development of the 7-acre facility, which will serve as a food logistics hub and trans-shipment point for produce originating in Guyana— a major agricultural producer in the Caribbean. The facility will also accommodate about 45 containers, land for crop production, a processing and packaging plant, cold storage facilities and a reservoir that will hold 20 million gallons of water.

"It [The Barbados/ Guyana Food Terminal] is aimed at developing an important trans-shipment hub for food here in Barbados to move on to different hotel chains in other Caribbean islands, and to move on to Miami," said Guyanese President, Irfaan Ali in his feature address at the opening of Barbados' Agro Fest agricultural festival in May 2022.

Improving logistics performance from the perspective of customs, transport through ports, internal connections, and the provision of advanced logistics services should be well received in the region, as there is massive room for improvement. As a point of reference, it is much easier from both a financial and a logistical standpoint to trade in agriculture products between the Caribbean and the United States than it is to trade identical products within the region.

"With all that you are producing, if we can't get it to the island chain in a manner that is quick and affordable, then it is of no use," said Prime Minister Mottley of the necessity for infrastructural improvements to facilitate the intra-regional movement of food.

Elizabeth Riley, Executive Director of the Caribbean Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA) has said that "the existing multi-hazard environment in which the region operates has created the need to strengthen the emergency logistics response." As the second most hazard-prone region in the world, having suffered over \$22 billion in disaster-related damages between 1970 and 2016, effective end-to-end supply chain management of relief assistance is critical for the disaster resilience of the region.

A Regional Logistics Hub and Centre of Excellence, which broke ground in August 2022 at Grantley Adams Airport in Barbados, will operate as a central location for emergency logistics coordination for the English-speaking Caribbean and tracking assets and relief items in the wake of disasters. Once operational, it will support air and sea operations, and will serve as a prepositioning and response center and trans-shipment point for relief items.

The hub, which was developed as a partnership between the World Food Programme (WFP), the Government of Barbados and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), will also serve as a "center of excellence" with the role of strengthening the logistics and emergency response capacities of practitioners in emergency logistics, warehouse and fleet management and last-mile delivery, including targeting and distributing assistance.

## Canada is 'a dangerous place to visit,' says Russian Ambassador

By Niraj Sharma LJI REPORTER

From a Russian perspective, Canada is a dangerous place to visit.

At least, that's the view of Russia's ambassador in Ottawa.

"Canada today is a very dangerous country for Russian citizens," Oleg Stepanov said in a Russian-language interview last Friday.

"I would not recommend it for tourism, education or business."

Stepanov told state news agency RIA Novosti that Canada keeps sanctioning people, which he deems to be an arbitrary response to the conflict in Ukraine.

He also claimed that Russians in Canada are regularly experiencing racism and bemoaned what he said are daily protests outside of Russia's Ottawa embassy and its consulates in Montreal and Toronto.

"Russian-Canadian relations are now in a deep freeze," Stepanov was quoted as saying.

He took aim at Canada's intent to forfeit US\$26 million held by a firm owned by Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, which would be the first case under a new law that allows Ottawa to take possession of funds from sanctioned people and divert them to victims of wrongdoing.

Ottawa has yet to actually file its court application. Stepanov said the idea amounts to an attack on property rights.

However, Stepanov added that most Canadians treat Russians well, and Moscow's travel advisory for Canada only warns of street gangs and a "rather harsh climate."

He also claimed that Russia has been unable to open a consulate in Van-

Global Affairs Canada did not respond to a request for comment on Monday.

Stepanov said Russia is open to dialogue with Canada if it stops echoing U.S. policy, but Ottawa has said that change will only happen when Russia ends its invasion of Ukraine, and compensates that country for losses.

Earlier this year, a Russian woman living in Ottawa, Elena Pushkareva, said Stepanov denied her consular services over claims that her participation in a pro-democracy Facebook



Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov: Canada-Russian relationship in a deep freeze

amounted to a security risk.

Last year, Russia summoned Canada's ambassador in Moscow over claims that the RCMP and Global Affairs inadequately responded to security concerns, such as security footage that suggests someone threw a Molotov cocktail over the fence of the Ottawa embassy.

cused Russia of sowing chaos globally and summoned Stepanov over social media posts against LGBTQ people.

Last summer, a bicycle painted blue and yellow sat outside the embassy for weeks until a group spray-painted it black on Aug. 16.

The group also painted a large Z on

The Trudeau government has act the sidewalk and lamppost, which is a sign indicating support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. One passerby posted photos of the group, which appeared to have arrived on the scene in a car with diplomatic plates.

> Stepanov's interview last week called out the Canadian public for taking photos of diplomatic cars.





# Agriculture Innovation Programme earns over \$10 million

Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha has announced that the Government's Agriculture and Innovation Entrepreneurship Programme (AIEP) has earned more than \$10 million to date.

The initiative was launched by President Dr Irfaan Ali in January 2022, at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC).

The President had stated that the flagship undertaking would stimulate and promote significant economic growth to the benefit of young agriculturists.

During an outreach at Black Bush Polder, Corentyne, on Saturday last, Mustapha stressed the success of the innovative venture, and shared several plans for its expansion.

"The project already earned more than \$10 million. On a monthly basis and a weekly basis these crops are being sold to the oil and gas industry, to the hotel chains in our country," the Minister said.

More than 100 young graduates of the University of Guyana and the Guyana School of Agriculture are engaged in the shade house farming initiative, growing crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and romaine and iceberg lettuce.

Initially, about 25 shade houses were to be established for the cultivation of three high value crops. However, the success of the programme prompted the Government to invest further in the initiative.

By the end of 2022, 120 shade houses were constructed to support the production. The Administration aims to engage a further 100 new young agri entrepreneurs and increase the production of the crops by 50 per cent.



A worker in one of the shade houses that is part of the innovation programme

The ambitious goal will benefit young people by providing them with employment opportunities, and boost the country's economy by increasing food security and exports of high-value crops. The AIEP is a game-changer for Guyana's agricultural sector, and it is expected to have a significant positive impact on the country in the short and

long term. The Government's commitment to investing in the programme is a clear indication that it is dedicated to revolutionising the agriculture sector and positioning Guyana as a major player in the global market.

"When you look at the agriculture sector, the prospect is very bright, we must not have a tunnel vision and just concentrate on cash crop and rice production and believe that is all. We have to move on, consolidate, expand and diversify," Mustapha told residents.

Looking to the future, the Government has allocated \$200 million in its 2023 budget for the expansion of the youth farming programme this year.

## Scholar facing more child rape charges

Nezaam Ali, the Muslim scholar who, in 2019, was jailed for 45 years for raping a nine-year-old boy, is once again on trial for a similar offence at the Sexual Offences Court in Demerara.

Accompanied by his lawyer Dexter Todd, he was arraigned before Justice Priya Sewnarine-Beharry, before whom he pleaded not guilty to a charge alleging that he had engaged in sexual activity with a child by abusing a position of trust, contrary to Section 18 (3) (a) of the Sexual Offences Act.

It is alleged that between December 2 and 31, 2011, in the county of Demerara, he engaged in sexual activity with a six-year-old boy by penetrating his anus with his penis while being a teacher—Imam at the Muslim Association Masjid at Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown.

The charge further alleges that Ali, called "Mufty", "Mufti" or "Muffie", knew, or could reasonably be expected to have known, of the position of trust he had held in relation to the said boy.

Attorneys-at-Law representing the prosecution: Simran Gajraj, Latifah Elliot and Rbina Christmas, have also presented an alternative count against Ali, for the offence of rape of a child under 16 years old, contrary to Section 10 (3) of the Sexual Offences Act. That charge states that he engaged in sexual penetration of the child between the aforementioned dates. The trial of this accused is currently ongoing before a mixed 12-member jury.

On March 13, 2019, Ali was unanimously found guilty of sexual penetration of a nine-year-old boy by abusing a position of trust between December 5 and 31, 2011. In his defence, he had denied committing the

crime, claiming that he suffers from erectile dysfunction.

In sentencing the convict, trial Judge Navindra Singh had, among other things, considered the fact that Ali had taken advantage of an underprivileged boy, and that the sexual abuse had occurred within



Nezaam Ali

the walls of a Masjid.

Ali had appealed his conviction and sentence, and had also applied for bail pending the hearing and determination of that appeal, but was denied bail by the Chief Justice.

In his notice of appeal, Ali has asked the Court of Appeal of Guyana to set aside his conviction and sentence, alluding to several misdirections given to the jurors by the Judge.

In one of his grounds of appeal, he claimed that Justice Singh had failed to adequately put his defence to the jury, and that the Judge had

misdirected the jury with regard to the medical evidence.

As it is, he is still to face trial for six more counts of child rape. Besides the boy he was convicted of raping, he is accused of sexually molesting the six-year-old boy and seven other boys.

# Guyana on world stage at International Energy Expo

THE International Energy Conference and Expo Guyana 2023 is an opportunity to showcase Guyana, not only its vast offshore resources but investment opportunities across all sectors, according to Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat.

Minister Bharrat appeared on Grenada's WPG10 on Monday night to discuss the International Energy Conference and Expo, which commenced Tuesday,

The Natural Resource Minister said that over the next few days, Guyana is the place to be.

"We have a number of experts in the oil-and-gas sector; a number of potential investors and a number of international companies that are making their way to Guyana right now as we speak," Minister Bharrat said.

He added that there will be several Caribbean leaders for the opening ceremony.



Minister Vickram Bharrat (2nd from left) with officials at the opening of the Expo on Tuesday

"I must say, it (International Energy Conference and Expo Guyana 2022) was a major success, and we are aiming to make 2023 even bigger," Minister

He related that they have been incentivising and working to ensure that the non-oil economy grows at the same time as the oil economy does.

"If you look at those stats in 2022, Guyana has been reported as the fastest-growing economy in the world, with a 62.5 per cent growth rate. And, significant to that is our non-oil growth rates recorded at 11.5 per cent. It is actually the second highest in the world," Minister Bharrat said.

He added that they are proud of this, so they are promoting Guyana, as well as showcasing its non-oil resources.

"We are bringing opportunities to potential investors, both local, regional, and even to the international investors, as well as those who may be coming to our shores. The idea is to showcase Guyana, I must say," Minister Bharrat said. The International Energy Conference and Expo Guyana 2023 is in its second year, under the theme, "Harnessing Energy for Development", and will run until Friday, February 17, 2023.

According to a press release, the 'expo' will assemble Heads of State, government officials, policymakers, academics, industry professionals, and global energy thought leaders.

Some of the onboard partners of the International Energy Conference are CNOOC Petroleum Guyana Limited (CPGL), Hess Corporation, as Diamond Sponsors for the second edition of the event, and GTT as a Platinum Sponsor for the second edition of the event.

It was added that Mobile Money Guyana (MMG+), GTT's sister company, will also be the official payment partner for local transactions for the Conference and Expo.

## #1 African spiritual healer Mr Sety.

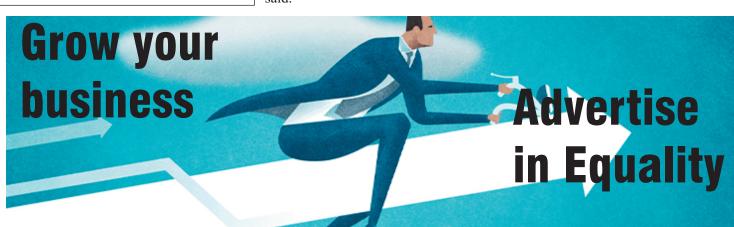


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Brian Tiwarie, OMC, AA - CEO

## 20 Canadian companies at Guyana Energy Expo as interest spikes

WITH Guyana experiencing rapid economic growth owing to the booming oil and gas sector and investments in other sectors, Canadian companies are now turning their heads in this direction to capitalise on the array of opportunities that are available.

Canada's High Commissioner to Guyana, Mark Berman made the disclosure during a recent interview with the Department of Public Information, describing Guyana's transformation as 'phenomenal'.

The High Commissioner explained that although the oil and gas sector plays a major role in this transformation, the government's ambitious agenda of developing other sectors is an integral part.

"They [government] have got a very, very ambitious plan and agenda for growth, infrastructure and you know, as you start to develop the country, as you start to build bridges and roads, and new sources of energy like the gas-to-shore and potentially the hydro projects and renewables, then you're creating work and you're creating opportunities for other sectors," he related.

The High Commissioner said investments in health, education and other sectors for 2023 will also present newer opportunities.

Moreover, Berman pointed to the government's attractive incentives for investments.

With Budget 2023 containing several transformational projects, Canadian companies are looking to capitalise on the various sectors

"If you look at the very ambitious plan, the incentives for foreign investment, the money that is coming into the country, these are all driving a healthy economy," he asserted.

Mining, agriculture, agriculture technology, healthcare, renewable energy, green technology and infrastructure are some of the prominent sectors Canadian companies are looking to capitalise on.

"For instance, there is a company right now called Instream, they have a license for technology for river turbines which is perfect for Guyana. When you look at the remote areas with the river capacity there, you can build and you can grade turbine energy, depending on the needs of the areas... they have already signed an MOU with Iwokrama for a pilot project," High Commissioner Berman alluded.

There is also a major interest in the oil and gas sector with over 20 Canadian companies slated to attend the four-day Energy Conference and Expo 2023, which will be held at the Guyana Marriott Hotel from February



Canadian High Commissioner to Guyana, Mark Berman

14-17.

"They are not all oil and gas, there will be some others as well, some renewables and tech companies from the East Coast who are involved in the en-

ergy sector," the High Commissioner related.

The diplomat is urging foreign companies to capitalise on these opportunities.

"Come down to Guyana. Don't try to do this remotely, I mean, it's evident after two years, personal contact is essential," the High Commissioner highlighted.

### 800 delegates at Energy event

ALMOST 200 exhibitors and over 800 delegates are scheduled to be part of the second edition of Guyana's annual International Energy Conference and Expo, which opened at the Marriott Hotel on Tuesday, and runs until Friday.

President, Dr Irfaan Ali delivered the keynote address at the opening ceremony, which included remarks by at least two other heads of state: Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Keith Rowley, and Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Ralph Gonsalves.

President of Suriname, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, is also scheduled to speak; however, he is likely to present virtually. Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, is also likely to present virtually.

This was according to the Director of Communications, Alex Graham and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the conference and expo, Kurt Baboolall, during a press briefing on Monday.

The event has 30 confirmed sponsors, while the expo will have some 188 booths, comprising 70 international entities and 83 local businesses.

According to Baboolall, preparations for the event are on schedule, and thus far there have been no challenges except the weather.

cept the weather.

Graham related that based on three critical benchmarks, this year's conference has seen marked improvement, and that is in the areas of commercial performance, having con-

tent that drives individuals to want to come and participate in the conference, and making the necessary organisational improvements that drive the conference.

"We are rolling out for example a number of new technologies to help with access, movement, security, and overall efficiency. Those are not the only three, but if we took those three metrics, I believe we are doing better than we did last year," Graham said.

However, Graham acknowledged that the conference is not at optimum performance in all of the areas it needs to be, and the company is working on further improvements as the years continue.

"We still have space to keep improving how we are doing this. And we have people who are dedicated to working at this all the time," Graham said.

However, Baboolall related that the value for the client has increased, notwithstanding the cost remaining the same.

"In a way, they're getting more. Last year, we had 120 booths, this year we have close to 200; our sponsorship has increased, we are seeing exhibitors going into sponsorship and that is a key indicator that they see value in doing business, they see value in presenting themselves here," Baboolall said

Last year at the inaugural hosting, the event landed 32 sponsors and saw 822 conference attendees, which included members of the diaspora and had 153 exhibitors.

## Col: Lowenfield acted as a 'lone ranger' in election fraud

ATTORNEY-General Anil Nandlall, S.C., has said that former Chief Election Officer (CEO), Keith Lowenfield, acted as a "lone ranger" during the 2020 General and Regional Elections in defiance of directions from both the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) and the courts.

When Nandlall took to the stand on Thursday as the final witness to appear before the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (CoI) into the events surrounding the 2020 elections, he said that the former CEO blatantly made decisions and employed procedures in direct contradiction to the law and the will of GECOM.

On March 14, 2020, he submitted the elections report to the GECOM Chairman on the basis of declarations made by the Returning Officers in the 10 Electoral Districts, in accordance with Section 96 of the Representation of the People Act.

Nandlall told the CoI that those declarations and the elections report were placed in abeyance to pave way for a national recount after allegations of electoral fraud had erupted during the tabulation of results in District Four.

In June 2020, the recount was completed, and it showed a PPP/C victory.

The AG explained that Lowenfield, in his first elections report, stated that he could not determine the credibility of all votes. As such, he invalidated thousands of votes, giving the APNU+AFC a supposed "victory."

On June 23, 2020, Lowenfield submitted another report which invalidated credible votes which were counted by GECOM returning officers.

In the report, Lowenfield said he was guided by the decision of Esyln David (a private citizen who had challenged the credibility of the recount).

Lowenfield claimed that based on the Court of Appeal decision, he invalidated about 100,000 votes.

This matter was then taken to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) which later invalidated Lowenfield's move to discard votes, and elucidated what constituted a "valid" vote.

Nandlall added that on June 26, 2020, Lowenfield submitted another report with inflated data and claimed that he acted "constitutionally."

On July 11, 2020, the former CEO submitted another report which contained inaccurate data. At that time the recount was being conducted.

This led to a challenge filed on July 14, 2020, by APNU+AFC, who had approached the courts in an attempt to deter the swearing-in of a PPP/C gov-

This application was dismissed and was challenged in the Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal later ruled on Jones' petition and determined that the recount was legitimate and should be



Former Guyana Chief Elections Officer Keith Lowenfield

used to declare the winner of the elec- a "lone ranger." tions.

Furthermore, it was highlighted that the CEO's actions should not stall the declaration any longer as he was not

"... one court ... [said] he donned the cap of an investigator, judge and executor all in one and I think the CCJ admonished him that he is not the lone ranger," Nandlall told the CoI.

Backed by several court rulings, he explained that Lowenfield misconducted himself by breaching the laws and the election commission.

## **EV** Charging Solutions a win for **Guyanese environment**

THE environmental benefits of going electric are clear, and local tech giant STARR Computer plans to introduce a universal electric vehicle (EV) charging solution in Guyana within the first half of 2023 as the government removes the 14 per cent value-added tax (VAT) on the importation of new electric vehicles (EVs).

This is according to President of STARR Computer, Mike Mohan, in an interview with this publication at Guyana's second International Energy Conference and Expo at the Marriott Hotel on Tuesday.

Although Mohan doesn't have a booth at the conference, he collaborates with three agencies: AmCham Guyana, GTT, and WASA Enterprise.

He noted that the proliferation of eco-friendly electric vehicles is becoming an irresistible trend, and the government has already taken note in keeping with its commitment to developing the country along a low-carbon pathway.

All forms of electric vehicles, he said, can help improve fuel economy, lower fuel costs, and reduce emis-

Additionally, he said the government would also support businesses that invest in more environmentally friendly vehicles by increasing the write-down allowance

applicable to all EVs to 50 per cent annually.

Underscoring that Guyana is at the very beginning of its electric vehicle transition, Mohan said his company would be offering charging systems this year and in multiple versions, including the EV-Flex Lite Level 2 Station for home users and the EV-Fleet Level 2 Charging Solution for communities and small shopping malls, along with the EV-Fast Level 2 Charge Station that is suitable for revenue generating business which can full charge between 15 to 60 minutes.

He explained that the STARR-LOOP EV charging solution aims to help reduce the country's carbon footprint by promoting and supporting the growth of EVs and chargers in the country.

"The solution includes the option of a 10KW solar installation that will allow consumers to charge their vehicles for free. In addition to creating employment opportunities for renewable energy installers, the initiative aims to generate revenue for users and help Guyana create an increased surplus to its green economy," Mohan em-

The STARR Computer President said that the global EV market size reached 18.1 Million Units in 2022 and expects to reach 148.4 Million Units by 2028.





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## Cricketer Sarwan expands his Amazonia Mall in EBD

FORMER West Indies cricketer and Guyana captain Ramnaresh Sarwan continues to extend his Amazonia Mall at Providence on the East Bank of Demerara with the aim of creating more jobs for his fellow Guyanese citizens.

The proprietor of the Amazonia Shopping Centre held a simple but elegant ribbon-cutting ceremony on Saturday to launch the opening of a "new wing," which is one of the latest investments at his business.

Some of these stores in this new wing include FabFlowers, Tashman, Dental Stuart, Mandiis, SfihaWorld, Madd tea, CT Williams technologies, Inc.

Sarwan said it was very pleasing to see that his vision and hard work for over 15 years continue to become a reality.

"I am happy that I can contribute to Guyana by providing employment for my fellow countrymen and their families. As Guyana's economy continues to grow, I feel really proud and happy to know that I have not only contributed in the sports department, but that I am also doing my part to better our society as well.

"Business is one thing, but making a difference in people's lives is another and that touches me more than anything else. This mall was always built with a family-oriented type of concept in mind," the former cricketer said.

The now thriving businessman said he is in the process of organising some bouncy houses and other family and kids-oriented activities that will be set up in the courtyard.

As it relates to the adults' entertainment, Sarwan mentioned that he is currently setting up a bar on the outskirts of the new wing area.

"I am trying to cater for everyone's needs in a safe and secure atmosphere. I was very careful with setting up the bar; I wanted to ensure that kids were not going to be around or exposed to an environment that had alcohol around. So, I had to take my time and design it in such a way that it would not have an impact on the families that are on the outside. I had to ensure that everyone was comfortable."

Sarwan extended his gratitude to the current business owners for their patience while the new wing was under construction. He also welcomed the new business owners and thanked them for choosing Amazonia Mall.



The Amazonia Mall in East Bank Demerara

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## Hess expresses confidence in Guyana

Chief Executive Officer of global oil, gas and energy company, Hess Corporation, John Hess has expressed pride at being able to contribute positively towards Guyana's growing oil and gas sector and the development of the country as a whole.

Hess was giving his remarks on the Macro Oil and Gas Industry, and an outlook for Guyana at the International Energy Conference and Expo 2023, at the Marriott Hotel on Tuesday.

He highlighted that Guyana will play an important role in ensuring an orderly energy transition, noting that the country has a unique opportunity to be a role model for oil-producing countries, as well as developing countries around the world.

"Oil and gas will be needed for decades to come. I know President Biden [President of the United States of America] talks that it will be a while—maybe ten years. But at the end of the day, it's going to be decades to come. And oil and gas are fundamental to ensure an affordable, just and secure energy transition," Hess said.

He lauded President, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali's 'outstanding' spokesmanship on the transitioning to sustainable energy and the role oil and gas are playing in bringing shared economic prosperity to the people of Guyana.

The CEO also brought attention to



CEO of Hess Corporation, John Hess at the International Enegry Conference in Georgetown

the much-needed oil Guyana will be able to supply that is essential to achieving global energy security and economic growth.

He reiterated points made by President Ali, on the need for increased investment with regard to the energy sector, and the need for climate, energy and economic literacy.

Hess also lauded Guyana's achievements in the oil and gas sector,

noting the presence of over 11 million barrels of oil offshore Guyana, with more than 30 new discoveries since 2015.

"It is a remarkable achievement that the country is already producing more than 380,000 barrels per day of some of the highest value low carbon crude oil in the world, with a line of sight to be producing over 1.2 million barrels per day by 2027," he stated.

The CEO believes Guyana will become one of the largest crude oil producers in the world, which is a phenomenal achievement.

As Guyana's oil production continues to increase, the Government of Guyana is committed to ensuring that the country's growing wealth is invested in sustainable development and an enhanced quality of life for all citizens.



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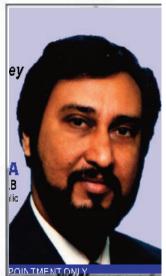
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## Trudeau to meet Caribbean leaders at 44th CARICOM Summit

THE CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), food security, climate change, climate finance, health, and security will be among the major topics under discussion when CARICOM Heads of Government meet in The Bahamas from February 15-17.

The three-day meeting will be held under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister of The Bahamas Philip Davis, and opens at the Atlantis Resort, Paradise Island tomorrow. It will also see Plenary sessions begin the following day at Baha Mar in New Providence, and, according to CARICOM Secretary-General Dr. Carla Barnett commence with Heads of Government placing emphasis on the progress the Community is making on the CSME, long regarded as the Region's flagship programme.

CARICOM Assistant Secretary-General, CARICOM Single Market and Trade, Ambassador Wayne Mc-Cook emphasised that the Single Market and Single Economy are important aspects of the regional integration architecture, and as such must be given constant attention.

The Heads of Government are expected to take action on an amendment to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas to cater for mergers and acquisitions in the Community. They will also be updated on work that is being done on the two core CARICOM trade instruments, these being the Common External Tariff (CET) and the Rules of Origin (ROO). That work is expected to be completed by the middle of the year.

And, given the importance the Community attaches to agriculture, Heads of Government will discuss the progress being made to achieve regional food and nutrition security.

Those discussions will be held against the backdrop of the latest report of the CARICOM Ministerial Task Force on Food Production and Food Security which signalled that collectively, Member States had achieved 57 per cent of the target to reduce the region's high food-import bill by 25 per cent by 2025.

Heads will have engagements with special guests, including the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, and the heads of international financial and trade organisations. In announcing his attendance at the Summit Prime Minister Trudeau said: "Canada and the Caribbean Community share strong ties between our peoples, common values, and a strong commitment to fighting climate change. I look forward to meeting with the leaders of CARICOM to discuss how we can continue to work together to support the people of Haiti, strengthen the Caribbean region, and build a better future for people and



**CARICOM leaders are meeting in The Bahamas** 

businesses in Canada, the Caribbean, and around the world."

In The Bahamas, which is celebrating its 50th Independence Anniver-

sary this year, Heads of Government will be briefed on CARICOM's own Golden Jubilee observances this year. The Caribbean Community was established on July 4, 1973, with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas.

# Exxon starts work on Wales Gas-to-Energy project

OIL and gas giant ExxonMobil has been pushing ahead with key infrastructural works needed to facilitate the construction of the multimillion-dollar Gas-to-Energy project at Wales, West Bank Demerara (WBD), the company's local President, Alistair Routledge, said.

Routledge provided an update on the project during a press engagement held on Thursday at ExxonMobil's operating centre in Kingston, Georgetown.

"We have been progressing early works in Region Three. Some of you may have seen bridge improvements, roads, laydown areas (and us) bringing a lot of sand in to begin the preparation of the land over there for that development. A lot is going on," Routledge told reporters.

Though these works have commenced, ahead of the facility's construction, the official said the company has not yet settled on its Final Investment Decision (FID) since it is currently awaiting the outcome of a review from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

ExxonMobil Guyana submitted a revised Field Development Plan (FDP) for the Liza field, in the Stabroek Block offshore Guyana, to incorporate facilities and plans to export gas from the field to onshore.

Currently, about 380,000 barrels of oil are being produced from the Liza Phase One and Lize Phase Two projects in this block. Now that the natural gas reserves will be tapped to supply the Wales project, the FDP has been modified.

The company has already completed an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and received the Environmental Permit in November 2022.

"We are in the review process with the Ministry of Natural Resources currently on the Field Development Plan and the update to the licence for the Liza field. Once we have gone through that step, we'd be able to make all the Final commitments, Final Investment Decision (FID) around all the investments that are needed," Routledge said.

He, however, highlighted that the company has determined that it can supply up to 50 million cubic feet of natural gas without impacting the quality of oil in any significant way.

The Gas-to-Energy Project will see a 200km 12-inch diameter pipeline channelling natural gas from the Liza Phase One and Liza Phase Two Floating, Production, Storage, and Offloading (FPSO) vessels to a power plant and Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) facility that will be built in Wales, on the West Bank Demerara.

ExxonMobil's local affiliate, Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Limited (EEPGL)- the operator in the Stabroek Block, and its coventurers are constructing the pipeline. That pipeline will be landing on the West Coast Demerara shore and continue approximately 25 kilometres to the NGL and power plant facilities. It has an estimated cost of US\$1 billlion and is cost recoverable.

The power plant and NGL facilities will be funded by the government. Last December, the Government of Guyana and US-based integrated energy solutions group – LINDSAYCA – in partnership with a local firm – CH4 Group – signed a US\$759 million contract for the construction of the facilities.





Police and tax officers outside the BBC offices in New Delhi

## BBC's offices raided by India's tax department after documentary

Indian tax authorities have raided the offices of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the country in the wake of a documentary that examined Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role in 2002 anti-Muslim riots, according to the BBC.

In a tweet, the BBC news department's press office on Tuesday said the tax authorities were "currently at the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai and we are fully cooperating".

A source at the company said that employees' laptops and mobile phones had been seized. Those in the offices at the time of the raid were not allowed to leave and employees scheduled for night shifts were told not to come in pending further advice, the source said.

The tax department did not respond to emails, messages and calls seeking comment.

India's foreign ministry on January 19 said the documentary was "propaganda".

The BBC has stood by its reporting in the programme, saying it was "rigorously researched according to the highest editorial standards" and contained a wide array of voices and perspectives.

The raids come weeks after Modi's government banned the documentary – titled India: The Modi Question – that probed his role in the anti-Muslim riots in 2002 in the state of Gujarat, where he was chief minister at the time.

More than 1,000 people, most of them Muslims, were killed in one of the worst incidents of religious violence in independent India. The violence erupted after a train carrying Hindu pilgrims caught fire, killing 59.

The documentary, which was not officially made available in India, but was uploaded on several social media platforms and shared widely, also revealed for the first time an unreleased United Kingdom government report that said the events had "all the hallmarks of an ethnic cleansing". The report said Modi was "directly responsible for a climate of impunity" that led to the violence, and that he had ordered senior police officers not to intervene.

But the Indian leader has rejected accusations

Indian tax authorities have raided the offices that he did not do enough to prevent the riots. He has since been cleared by India's top court.

The Editors Guild of India, which calls itself a non-partisan association of editorial leaders, said it was deeply concerned by the visits by the tax officers

"It is distressed by the continuing trend of government agencies being used to intimidate and harass news organisations that are critical of the ruling establishment," it said in a statement.

It said the department similarly searched the offices of the media outlets NewsClick, Newslaundry, Dainik Bhaskar and Bharat Samachar in 2021 following their "critical coverage of the government establishment".

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said Indian institutions worked independently and the tax department was "within the law in looking into tax compliance".

"India is a vibrant democracy where no one is above the law," said BJP spokesman Gopal Krishna Agarwal.

The main opposition Congress party condemned the tax department's action.

"The IT raid at BBC's offices reeks of desperation and shows that the Modi government is scared of criticism," politician and Congress party General Secretary KC Venugopal wrote on Twitter.

"We condemn these intimidation tactics in the harshest terms. This undemocratic and dictatorial attitude cannot go on any longer."

Efforts by the government to block the documentary's spread on YouTube and Twitter have created a political maelstrom for Modi ahead of general elections in 2024.

Authorities and university officials have also sought to stop screenings of the documentary, with police in New Delhi most recently arresting students who had gathered to watch the film, which tracked Modi's early years as a politician and his rise through the ranks of the governing Hindu nationalist BJP.

International rights groups have accused Modi's government of suppressing free speech.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): The more confusing the world around you gets the less concerned you seem to be. Is it a case that you no longer care? Of course not. You're just smart enough to recognize that most events are simply not worth wasting time and energy on.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): You need to be more of a team player, especially on the work front where to make the most of your own ambitions you need to help others with their ambitions as well. It's the old story: the more you help others the more you help yourself.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21):** This is an important time of year for you and if you are not yet sure what you should be doing all will become clear over the next few days. You must be patient though. Mercury, your ruler, will guide your actions when the time is right.

**CANCER** (June 22 - July 23): So many of your current fears are simply not worth devoting time and effort to but you won't recognize that for sure until the Sun moves in your favor again on the 18th. Between now and then make a conscious decision to worry less.

**LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23):** If you need to win someone round to your way of thinking now is the time to explain to them why you see things the way you do. Yours may be the minority outlook but since when did the majority have a monopoly on the truth?

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): You need to make some sort of change to your working routine and you need to make it soon. Decide what needs to be updated and decide how best to do that – then get on with it. Don't waste a moment on doubts or second thoughts.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): You would be the first to admit you've had an easy ride of late but there's no need to be defensive about it. The Sun in the dynamic sign of Aquarius will put wings on your feet this week. Fly as high and as fast as you can.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): You can sense that your luck is about to turn, and indeed it is, but don't make any major decisions or take any major risks just yet. The restrictions that have been holding you back will disappear of their own accord come the end of the week.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)** Don't hesitate to let friends and family and workmates know what you believe, what you desire and what you expect of them. The best way to avoid misunderstandings is to be totally open and honest about your own thoughts and desires.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): The planets warn you will need to be on your guard over the next 24 hours. It's likely that a colleague will try to trick you today but they can only succeed if you are too lazy to protect your own interests – and Capricorn is never lazy!

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): Before you begin something new over the next 24 hours you must ask yourself one simple question: is it absolutely necessary? According to the planets you could waste a lot of time and energy pursuing goals that are of no real importance.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): Your confidence in your own abilities is high at the moment and will get higher still when the Sun moves into your sign on the 18th. Start planning your next big project and make it one that challenges your skills to the maximum.



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# Guyana firm secures IDB loan to boost country's solar output

IDB Invest has signed a revolving credit facility with Guyanese firm, Farfan and Mendes (FMCG Inc.) to develop and expand its commercial and utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) energy-generation capacity.

The US\$5 million loan, which has a five-year tenor, will be used finance the company's working capital needs to advance the use of renewable energy here in Guyana.

IDB Invest's revolving working capital facility will allow FMCG Inc. to optimise its cash-conversion cycle, strengthen the relationships within its value chain and mitigate foreign-exchange risk by bridging the cash-flow gap between payments made to suppliers and payments received from clients.

The financing deal is aligned with Guyana's Low-Carbon Development Strategy 2030, which calls for the generation and usage of clean-energy resources.

It also strengthens IDB Invest's commitment to working with the private sector to increase investments in renewable energy iin Guyana and across Latin America and the Caribbean, driving action on climate change.

The project is expected to contribute to five of the United Nations'



Farfan and Mendes has secured a US\$5 million loan to expand its solar generating capacity

Sustainable Development Goals, namely: No Poverty (SDG 1), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9) and Climate Action (SDG 13).

Farfan and Mendes is an industry leader in providing equipment and services to various sectors, including

agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, oil and gas, and mining. Since its establishment in 1967, the company has been at the forefront of technology adoption, and has successfully adapted to market changes through diversification as a business model.

Its partnerships with leading companies such as Crosbie Group, Soventix Caribbean and Concrete Canvas etc. products and services to clients.

Through the company's Sustainability
Strategy, and a proven track record of
success, Farfan and Mendes is helping

have enabled it to offer a wide range of

to realise the Low-Carbon Development Strategy ambition that renewables will account for over 70 per cent of installed generation capacity by 2040 in Guyana.

### Gonzalves: Guyana a leader in climate change fight

Guyana has been identified as a leader in the region's fight against climate change and fostering advancements in the energy sector.

This sentiment was expressed by Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr Ralph Gonsalves, at the opening of the 2023 International Energy Conference and Expo on Tuesday at the Marriott Hotel, Kingston.

Prime Minister Gonsalves highlighted that Guyana's new-found oil wealth will facilitate the building of a "modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy" that can bring development to all citizens.

Dr Gonsalves said the industry is one that requires strategic navigation. In this regard, he noted that Guyana can be a leader.

This leadership role, he noted, is duplicated in the region's continued endeavour to achieve food security, lauding the government's policies to simultaneously reduce carbon emissions and utilise the country's resources for the benefit of all.

"From the Guyanese government, there is a concept of integration which holds great promise for the region and for Guyana to play an important role in that integration movement," Dr Gonsalves said.



SVG Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves at the Energy Expo in Georgetown

These sentiments were echoed by Dr Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, who added that Caribbean countries reserve the right to utilise their oil and gas resources to spur economic growth.

The International Energy Conference and Expo 2023 was officially declared open by His Excellency, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali.

The president conducted a walkthrough of the exhibition, accompanied by ministers of government.

The mega event provides the platform for various stakeholders to extend the conversation on, oil and gas investments, renewable energy, climate change mitigation other concerns regarding the energy sector in Guyana and the region.

It will see the involvement of some 200 exhibitors showcasing the promise of sectors such as agriculture, tourism, mining and forestry, and just over 800 delegates and sponsors.

The next four days will also see professionals networking and exchanging ideas for the future of energy conservation, and development.

It is intended to showcase Guyana's massive potential for growth in all sectors, driven in part by the burgeoning oil and gas sector.

This year has seen a significant hike in participants from 130 last year to 200 in 2023. This year's energy expo is being held under the theme 'Harnessing Energy for Development', and is in keeping with the government's commitment to utilising the country's oil and gas resources for the benefit of all citizens.

# Businessman dies after rushing into fire to rescue grandson

A Guyanese businessman, Rajendra Mohabir, 60, popularly known as 'Slowie' was killed on Sunday afternoon after going back into his burning house at Seventh Street, Windsor Forest West Coast Demerara (WCD) to save his grandson he believed, was still in the building.

The child however had already escaped to safety. Before family members could have stopped Mohabir, he had already entered the burning building and later became trapped in the flames

Mohabir's two-storey building which housed a grocery store and church on the bottom flat reportedly caught fire around 14:00hrs.

According to initial reports Mohabir, his wife, grandchild, and daughter were in the top flat at the time and were unaware that the building was on fire.

Church members were the first to run out of the building, while his son, and the pastor of the church, ran upstairs to alert his family. It was reported that they had all exited the building safely but amidst the panic and confusion, Mohabir could not locate his grandson.

Believing that the child might still be trapped in the building, he ran back inside to find and save his grandson, but ended being trapped after the entire building quickly became engulfed in flames.

His son and other persons reportedly ran behind him to save him but they were unable to do so and reportedly sustained injuries.

In a cell phone recorded video, a woman could be heard weeping and shouting "meh nah see Raj me nah see Raj (Mohabir)".

Other persons were heard crying as well while neighbours assisted in saving the family's car.

Firefighters had arrived at the scene shortly after and did their best to extinguish the blaze but failed to save Mo-



Mohabir's home being engulfed by flames

habir or the house.

After hours of searching, firefighters eventually found a small portion of Mohabir's charred remains in the burnt building.

The cause of the fire is not known at this time, but some of the church members alleged that there was low voltage and a power outage in the area that caused some sparks.

### **Looters raid Parika Market after fire**

A devastating fire which ravaged the Parika Market on Friday afternoon and left mostly rubble has left many vendors counting their losses. However, firefighters managed to save a few stalls.

Vendors saved whatever items they could from their stalls before completely evacuating the burning market; however, looters took advantage of the chaotic environment and cleared the stalls of the remaining items.

Police Commander Mahendra Siwnarine, said that his ranks were able to recover some items that were looted on Saturday. Some of the recovered items are clothing and electronic equipment.

According to reports, the stolen items were reportedly found "in a community" located behind the market. The name of the community was not revealed.

The looters are yet to be found.

Fire at the Parika Market reportedly started around 15:30h on Friday.

The blaze spread quickly across the market destroying stalls located to the front of the market and even those opposite.

Although Investigations are still ongoing to determine the cause of the fire, it is suspected that a welding spark from ongoing construction works at the market might have gotten into contact with flammable materials and started the fire.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Nigel Dharamlall has committed to assisting the vendors in their rebuilding efforts. On Saturday, the minister met with the affected vendors.

"The fire at Parika Market was devastating. Our government is committed to ensuring our vendors rebuild. We have charted a way forward following discussions with those on site today (Saturday). The cleanup has begun", Dharamlall stated.



Aircraft parked at the CJIA terminal



## **SVG Radio personality Colin** Graham collapses on live radio

In St. Vincent, an opposition political activist and radio personality, Colin Graham, was rushed to hospital on Monday after he fell ill and collapsed while conducting his radio program.

Graham was hosting the opposition New Democratic Party's (NDP) "New Times" program, on NICE Radio, when he collapsed in the studio, Douglas De Freitas, the station's manager told listeners. He said the program, which is broadcast on weekdays would be suspended until Tuesday.

A worker at the station found Graham in the studio and her screams in reaction were broadcast live as she appealed for help for the broadcaster.

"It is still very concerning to all of us who were listening to the program this morning, as I was, for his family and I believe for all the people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who would be very concerned and worried this morning," NDP President and Opposition Leader Godwin Friday said.

"We got to the studio shortly after. He was sitting up. The party's general secretary has taken him to the hospital," Friday said and asked listeners to keep Graham in their prayers.

"We are still very concerned; very worried. We are all very concerned for him. It is good to know that he was speaking," Friday said, adding "let's hope and pray that this is something that will be resolved soon and that Colin will be back as soon as possible".

He said the most important thing now is for Graham to be checked out by medical staff at the hospital.

Graham has become the second "New Times" host to fall ill live on radio. In 2012, then host of the program was incomprehensible for about 12 minutes live on air after suffering a stroke in the NICE Radio studio.

He died two years later.

In August 2020, communications professional Samuel Jeremiah George better known as Jerry S. George died during a live broadcast of his "Early in the Morning with Jerry S. George" after telling his co-host, "I'll step out of the frame, eh. Okay? You go ahead."



Colin Graham: second host to fall ill while live on air

## 15 Haitians face deportation from Grenada

The Grenada government Monday said it will deport 15 Haitians, who entered the island as a group tourist on Sunday because immigration has determined they will be a burden to the pub-

Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, who is also the minister for national security and immigration, told a news conference that the Haitians had arrived on a flight from neighboring Trinidad and Tobago.

"So, the immigration officers in their normal routine checks were able to ascertain to make the determination that in fact, they will be a charge on the public purse if they were in fact permitted to enter the state," said Prime Minister Mitchell, noting that the decision was based on the amount of cash in the possession of the Haitians when they arrived.

He said because Haiti is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARI-COM) grouping, there are very specific and limited grounds that can be used to prevent a CARICOM national from entering a member state.

"One of which is a charge on the public purse and the second will be in broad terms, national security risk, in this case, it was purely on the basis of a charge on the public purse," Mitchell said, indicating that the Haitians were unable to stay in a hotel for at least one

"If you are not a citizen of Grenada and you come to Grenada, you can only



**Dickon Mitchell** 

be staying at a hotel for at least one night unless you have a friend or family, and in the absence of friends or family it means that you have to be able to afford a hotel at least for one night.

"If you don't have cash or credit card that allows you to afford a hotel for one night, it means you don't have a

place to stay, and if you don't have a back on Monday night. place to stay and we let you into our community what is going to happen, it means we as a state will have to take care of you," he said.

Grenada is hoping to send them Bahamas from Wednesday.

Mitchell acknowledged that the political and economic situation in Haiti will be discussed at the three-day CARICOM summit to be held in The



# Barbados lawyers concerned over police recordings

The Barbados Bar Association (BBA) is calling for "swift and strong action" to immediately address what it says are issues affecting the rights of persons in police custody.

In a statement, the BBA said this includes protocols governing the conduct of attorneys' confidential communication with accused persons.

It said its call comes against reports of an "alarming complaint" it had received of an incident on February 4 at a police station involving a suspected recording of a private conversation between an attorney and her client.

"A person in custody has a constitutional right to legal counsel, and that consultation is governed by principles of attorney-client privilege. While the association is informed that the matter is currently under investigation, we urge that the investigation be completed with dispatch, and the results be made known in the coming days," the BBA added.

It said there should be a dedicated meeting room which must be fully private, must be cleared of all items and only contain a desk and seating, and attorneys must be afforded an opportunity to inspect the room prior to conducting an interview.

"In the past, our members have repeatedly raised a number of issues affecting the rights of persons in police



The Barbados Bar Association says it is concerned over the rights of clients

custody. The time has come for stakeholders to work together to address these issues, not in a reactionary manner, but address them in their totality.

"These and other steps can and

must be immediately implemented to begin to restore what could be seen as a serious breach in trust, confidentiality and the fair and due process of the law," the BBA said, adding it will await the re-

sults of the investigation before making any further comment.

The police have not responded to the BBA statement.

## 150 people charged under new JA gun act

Jamaican police have charged 187 people for violating the new Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act that could result in penalties ranging from 15 years to life imprisonment.

"Since the new Act came into effect, just about 348 charges have been laid against 187 persons for various offences. For January, 131 charges have been laid against 75 persons under this Act, "said Police Commissioner Major General Antony Anderson.

The legislation establishes a dual regime, distinguishing between prohibited weapons or unregulated firearms and activities connected thereto, and firearms that are duly authorized or registered.

It also outlines the objectives that speak to establishing a framework that prohibits firearms and ammunition that are illicitly traded, and which regards possession of those prohibited firearms and ammunition as the foundation on which other heinous and violent crimes are committed.

Breaches of the new Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act, 2022, which is now in effect, will result in penalties ranging from 15

years to life imprisonment, and Anderson noted that the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), through local and international partnerships, seized 796 weapons in 2022, the highest gun seizure since 2017.

"Since February 4, 130 illegal

guns have been seized, which is a 24 percent increase over the corresponding period of last year. The collaboration with our local and international partners extends to all areas of transnational organized crimes."

Illegal firearms feature in 85 per-

cent of murders and violent crimes committed across the island. Last year, Jamaica recorded 1498 murders in 2022 and so far this year, the authorities said 86 people have been killed as compared to 137 last year.

## Student kidnaps ex-girlfriend

A 20-year-old Jamaican student of the University of the West Indies (UWI) is to appear in court on Monday after he was charged for allegedly holding his ex-girlfriend captive and torturing her for three days.

Matthew Hyde of Braemar Avenue, Kingston, is charged with assault occasioning grievous bodily harm.

The police say other charges against him are being considered as the probe continues.

According to reports, Hyde allegedly held his 19-year-old ex-girlfriend against her will in his room on a block on the UWI Mona campus, where he brutally beat her and burned her all over her body with a clothes iron.

The incident occurred between Monday, February 6, and Thursday, February 9.

The woman was later rescued, a police report was made, and Hyde was taken into custody and later charged.

The police are seeking to interview a female student



**UWI Mona Campus in Jamaica** 

of the university whom they believe could provide information about the incident.

# Central Bank: T&T did better than other economies in 2022

THE Central Bank suggested TT's economy had outshone most of the world last year with a healthy non-energy sector and now seemed set to have a great year ahead based on an ongoing surge in natural gas production, according to the Economic Bulletin for January 2023 issued on Monday.

A table in the report (Summary of economic indicators) said in fiscal 2022 the TT economy had grown by about 4.1 per cent, far ahead of the world (3.4 per cent), advanced economies (2.7 per cent) and emerging and developing markets (3.9 per cent.)

This was reflected in a synopsis titled Overview and Outlook.

"Domestically, economic activity improved in the second quarter of 2022, reflecting a resurgence in non-energy sector performance."

It said Central Statistical Office (CSO) data indicated TT's real GDP grew by 6.6 per cent (year-on-year) in the second quarter of 2022.

"Growth in the non-energy sector was strong at 10.5 per cent, while the energy sector declined by 2.5 per cent."

This came against a backdrop of the Russia/Ukraine war plus fallout from the covid19 pandemic both pushing up global food and energy prices as reflected in global rates of inflation not seen for decades, which many central banks curbed by raising interest rates which dampened business activity and consumer spending.

Despite that, global energy commodity prices remained elevated from July-December 2022, although easing in recent months.

Domestically, the report said TT faced accelerated inflation in 2022, driven by external and local supply-side factors.

"The surge in international food commodity prices, supply disruptions and adverse local weather conditions helped to push headline inflation to 8.0 per cent (year-on-year) in November 2022 – the highest rate since late 2014 – compared to 4.9 per cent in June."

This rise in headline inflation included a 13.8 per cent surge in food inflation plus a 6.6 per cent jump in core inflation.

Unemployment stood at 5.4 per cent by the third quarter of 2023. Official reserves stood at a healthy \$6.8 billion, worth 8.6 months of import cover.

Comparing the first quarters of fiscal 2021 and 2022, it said the Ministry of Finance recorded a \$2 billion surplus in October-December 2022, compared to a \$653.9 million surplus in 2021. "Energy revenue doubled, outstripping the fall in non-energy revenue and the increase in expenditure between these two quarters."



T&T's non-energy sector includes a number of locally manufactured products

The general government debt fell by about \$1 billion, from \$129.7 billion in September 2022 to \$128.8 billion in December 2022.

In the non-energy sector, the report said, "Even as economic activity picked up and credit growth expanded, liquidity remained ample.

"Private sector credit growth expanded in the second half of 2022, driven by robust corporate lending and a rebound in consumer loans."

In its outlook, the report said the IMF's 2023 forecast was for 2.9 per cent global economic growth, some 0.2 per cent better than forecast last October, driven by growth in China upon lifting its covid19 restrictions plus decent performances in the United States and the Euro area.

The report said the TT economy was expected to be bolstered by the energy sector in 2023.

"Natural gas supplies will be boosted by key upstream energy sector projects such as Shell TT's Colibri, De-Novo's Zandolie and bpTT's Cassia Compression.

"Over the short term, energy prices are anticipated to remain elevated but may experience some softening."

Likewise the report was optimistic about TT's non-energy sector, due to increased business activity and consumer demand.

"The pace of this recovery will depend in large measure on the extent of business confidence, and relatedly on how much progress is made in improving the ease of doing business in TT. "Barring a major resurgence in the covid19 pandemic, the restart of national festivals and ancillary activities, such as the return of cruise ships, are anticipated to be components of a more durable and broad based recovery."

The reported said a "strong growth in natural gas production" – at 20 per cent – had boosted LNG production by 64 per cent while outweighing a 4.3 per cent drop in crude oil volumes, (seemingly year on year.) Gas production rose from 2,378 million cubic feet per day

(mmcf/d) to 2,854 mmcf/d, while crude oil volumes fell from 60,500 barrels per day to 57,900 bpd, between the third quarters of 2021 to 2022.

For petrochemicals, the report said a 9.2 per cent drop in ammonia production outweighed a 1.2 per cent rise in ammonia output.

Momentum in the non-energy sector likely slowed in the third quarter of 2022, especially in wholesale, retail and manufacturing, although transport and storage improved.



# Windies spinner Motie (7/37) wrecks Zimbabwe

LEFT-ARM spinner Gudakesh Motie had his most memorable day in international cricket, grabbing a seven-wicket haul for West Indies on the opening day of the second Test match against Zimbabwe at the Queens Sports Club in Zimbabwe on Sunday.

Zimbabwe could only muster 115 as Motie, in just his third Test match, ended with remarkable figures of seven for 37 in 14.5 overs. It was Motie's first five-wicket haul in Test cricket.

Fast bowlers Jason Holder (2/18) and Alzarri Joseph (1/29) grabbed the other wickets for West Indies. Batting for Zimbabwe, Brandon Mavuta scored 38 off 52 deliveries.

In response, West Indies closed on 133/4, for a first innings lead of 18 runs

West Indies were cruising on 86/1

in the final session, before losing three late wickets.

Raymon Reifer cracked four fours and one six in his knock of 53 off 86 balls before being run out. Opener Tagenarine Chanderpaul, who scored a double century in the first Test match, contributed 36. Kyle Mayers (eight) and Roston Chase (five) were at the crease for West Indies at stumps. Mavuta had a solid day for Zimbabwe ending with 2/24 in ten overs.

The winner of the second and final Test will win the series as the first Test ended in a draw.

Summarised Scores: ZIMBABWE 115 – Innocent Kaia 38; Gudakesh Motie 7/37, Jason Holder 2/18 vs WEST INDIES 133/4 – Raymon Reifer 53, Tagenarine Chanderpaul 36; Brandon Mavuta 2/24



West Indies bowler Gudakesh Motie

### West Indies women lose T20 World Cup opener

West Indies women lost their opening ICC Women's T20 World Cup match against England by seven wickets at Boland Park in Paarl, South Africa on Saturday.

Batting first, West Indies totalled

135/7 with opening batter and skipper Hayley Matthews top scoring with 42 from 32 balls. Shemaine Campbell scored 34 while Chinelle Henry (14) and Afy Fletcher (10) were the only other two batters to get to double fig-

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Hayley Matthews of West Indies

ures.

England bowled well and had a positive start from opening batter and skipper Hayley Matthews, who struck 42 from 32. Shemaine Campbell scored 34.

The English bowling proved superior with Sophie Ecclestone (3/23), Sarah Glenn (1/20) and Katherine Sciver-Brunt (1/23) among the wickets.

Set at 136 for victory, England showed clear intent and raced to 138/3 in 14.3 overs to seal a confidence-boosting, opening World Cup win.

Sciver-Brunt smashed an unbeaten 40 (one six, six fours) from 30 balls while opener Sophia Dunkley (34) and Heather Knight, who blasted 32 from 22, also championed to chase.

Henry (2/30) was the pick of the bowlers for West Indies with Fletcher (1/22) bagging the next.

The maroon women meet India next, on Wednesday, at Newlands in Cape Town from 9am (TT time).

In Friday's first T20 World Cup match, Sri Lanka beat hosts South Africa by three runs.

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