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# THE FACES OF TRAGEDY

These are the faces of the May 21 tragedy in Mahdia, Guyana — all young victims of a fire at a school dormitory that claimed 19 lives instantly, and a 20th just on Tuesday. The last victim (at right) is Sherana Daniels, 14, who succumbed to her injuries at the Georgetown Public Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit (ICU). President Dr. Irfaan Ali has announced a Commission of Inquiry into the fire. A 15 year old student of the school has been charged with 19 counts of murder (up to press time) and has been remanded into custody. *Story inside.*





**Perspectives of development in Guyana.**

Dr Fred Sukhdeo,  
Page 10



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The image features a map of the Caribbean region with various islands and territories highlighted. A network of magenta lines connects several key locations, representing flight routes. The locations include Havana (Cuba), Nassau (The Bahamas), Providenciales (Turks and Caicos Islands), Grand Turk (Turks and Caicos Islands), South Caicos (Turks and Caicos Islands), Santiago de Cuba (Cuba), Ocho Rios (Jamaica), Kingston (Jamaica), Cap Haitien (Haiti), Port-au Prince (Haiti), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), San Juan (Puerto Rico), Tortola (British Virgin Islands), Antigua (Antigua and Barbuda), St Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent, Grenada, Barbados, and Georgetown (Guyana). A compass rose is located in the lower-left quadrant of the map. Below the map, a white interCaribbean Airways aircraft is shown on a sandy beach. The aircraft has 'interCaribbean' written in blue on the side, 'CARIBBEAN' in colorful letters, and 'Captain Hugo M' in green. The tail number 'THM' is visible on the front landing gear. The interCaribbean Airways logo is in the bottom right corner of the image.

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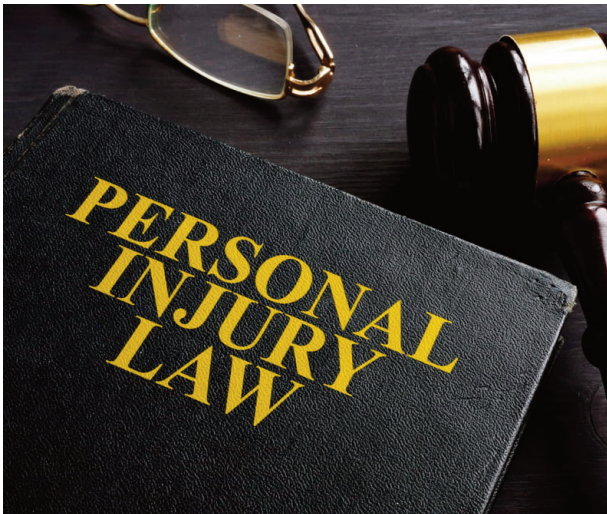
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# Condo owners losing money on investment, says CIBC report

By Niraj Sharma  
LJI REPORTER

According to a recent report by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) and real estate research firm Urbanation, last year marked a significant turning point for investors in newly-completed condos in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). For the first time, more than half of these investors found themselves losing money on their rental properties, and experts predict that this trend will persist.

The study found that only 48 percent of leveraged condo investors who had purchased pre-construction units with the intention of renting them out were able to achieve positive cash flow in 2022. The majority of investors faced a situation where the rental income generated by these newly-completed units was insufficient to cover mortgage costs, condo fees, and property taxes.

CIBC's Benjamin Tal and Urbanation's Shaun Hildebrand, the authors of the report, noted that this shift towards negative cash flow represents a significant change in investor behavior. They anticipate that the situation will worsen in the coming years as the completion of increasingly expensive new condos, which were presold to investors in the past few years, adds to the challenge.



Condo owners are losing money on their investment, says a new report from CIBC

The researchers suggest that a decrease in interest rates and an increase in rents could alleviate some of the financial burden for investors in the future. However, they caution that these factors alone will not be enough to prevent the deterioration of investors' financial situations. The outlook for prices and the credit environment will also play a crucial role in determining investors' decisions. If financing options remain accessible and prices continue to rise, some investors may choose to hold onto their rental properties despite the negative cash flow.

Tal and Hildebrand believe that

the limited housing supply and minimal prospects for improvement have deterred investors from selling their properties. Developers in the GTA have the capacity to deliver a maximum of around 20,000 units per year, which represents only marginal growth for a condo stock that is approaching half a million units.

The researchers note that any investors willing to sell their properties would encounter a tight resale market. However, if investors become hesitant to invest in pre-sales, the demand for new condos will decrease, leading to a decline in new construction, deliver-

ies, and ultimately, rental supply.

This report from Tal and Hildebrand follows the findings of Rentals.ca research, which revealed a significant increase in average advertised rental prices in April compared to the pandemic lows of April 2021. Average rents across Canada rose by 9.6 percent compared to April 2022. In major cities, average rents for one-bedroom homes ranged from as high as \$2,787 in Vancouver to as low as \$1,091 in Regina, with the national average reaching \$1,811.

# Ottawa eyes rules on natural health products

A new plan to force hospitals to report adverse effects of “natural health products” such as herbal remedies and supplements has come as a surprise to manufacturers, who say they were blindsided by the proposed change.

The federal government included the plan in the 2023 budget bill, which is still making its way through the House of Commons.

It would see natural health products fall under the same category as pharmaceuticals when it comes to how they are monitored once they are on the market.

They would be incorporated into Vanessa’s Law, which was passed in 2014 to improve the reporting of adverse

health reactions.

It was named after 15-year-old Vanessa Young, the daughter of a Conservative member of Parliament, who died in 2000 after her heart rate had been affected by medication that was prescribed by her doctor.

Putting natural health products under that framework would require hospitals to report on any unintended consequences associated with them, so that Health Canada can recall them or order fixes if necessary.

The provisions had been discussed before, said Aaron Skelton, president of the Canadian Health Food Association. But “there was nothing that would have

indicated to industry that it was imminent,” he said.

“The industry and the association were both caught off guard when we saw that included in the budget.”

The debate about whether to include natural health products in Vanessa’s Law when it was first introduced generated “quite the discussion” on Parliament Hill at the time, Sen. Judith Seidman, who sponsored the original bill in the Senate, told her colleagues at a recent committee hearing.

The government at the time decided against doing so.

Since then, several high-profile tragedies that saw parents and patients eschew conventional medicine in favour of natural remedies have prompted a renewed national conversation about the regulation of natural health products in Canada.

Vanessa’s Law would also let Health Canada demand that manufacturers make changes to their labels and recall unsafe products.

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# Unconscionable to politicise grief

*Editorial from the Guyana Chronicle, May 27 2023*

IT is an unconscionable act to capitalise on the grief of the Mahdia tragedy for political mileage, and in times of devastation, leaders need to rise above partisan interests and work towards uniting the country, providing solace and hope to those in need. Only through genuine unity and collective resilience can a nation heal and emerge stronger from tragedy.

To politicise the grief of those affected by the tragic Mahdia dormitory fire, less than one week after 19 children lost their lives (the toll is now 20), as many families await the recovery of those who are still hospitalised with injuries, is something along the lines of insanity, since there is a time and place for everything.

Opposition Leader Aubrey Norton allegedly during an appearance in a media outlet in Trinidad and Tobago tried such.

Norton, who heads a party that is strongly accused of attempting to rig the 2020 elections as the world watched on in condemnation, is also facing significant backlash from members of the public after he called for the resignation of Minister of Education, Priya Manickchand; Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony and Public Works Minister, Juan Edghill following Monday's tragic fire at Mahdia.

Across social media platforms, members of the public took to the comment section and called out Norton for these remarks. Some persons questioned how such an action would help the situation even as they called Norton out for playing politics with such a delicate situation.

In one comment, one person stated, "Why does everything have to be political? These leaders have no dignity and jump at every opportunity to defame the other."

Nevertheless, the country will overcome this current devastation, as President Dr Irfaan Ali has announced that the government will be launching a Commission of Inquiry (CoI) to investigate the causes and circumstances of the Mahdia fire.

The Head of State said: "We will never forget these children. They will remain in our hearts forever. But we will overcome this tragedy. Of this, I am confident and even more so because we are a resilient people." Dr Ali called on the nation to band together, and find comfort in unity.

Tragedy strikes deep at the core of a nation, shaking its foundation and leaving its citizens in a state of vulnerability and grief.

In such times of immense suffering, it is imperative for political leaders and their supporters to rise above personal agendas and come together in pursuit of national unity.

However, regrettably, some leaders and their acolytes succumb to the temptation of exploiting these tragic events, particularly the deaths of innocent children, as a means to gain political mileage and sow divisions within a nation.

Tragedy, especially when it involves the loss of innocent lives, commands reverence and respect. The deaths of children represent an exceptional sorrow that touches the hearts of every citizen, irrespective of political affiliations.

Exploiting such tragedy for personal or political gains undermines the dignity of these events and tarnishes the memory of those who have perished. Political leaders are responsible for demonstrating empathy, compassion, and sensitivity, ensuring that tragedy remains a unifying force rather than a divisive one.

By exploiting the deaths of children for political advantage, leaders and their acolytes betray the trust of the people they are meant to serve. Citizens look to their leaders for guidance and solace in times of tragedy, seeking reassurance that their nation will emerge stronger and united.

When leaders instead use these devastating events as tools to further their own agendas, trust is eroded, and cynicism takes its place. The resulting division only compounds the existing pain and hampers genuine healing and reconciliation prospects.

Exploiting tragedy in pursuit of political points inevitably leads to increased societal polarisation and fragmentation. By capitalising on the grief and anger of the affected citizens, leaders risk exacerbating existing divisions, pitting one group against another. This dangerous path can have far-reaching consequences, undermining social cohesion, and hindering efforts to rebuild and move forward as a united nation. Political leaders must resist this temptation and prioritise unity over short-term gains.

In times of tragedy, nations require leadership that can bring people together, transcending political boundaries to foster healing and resilience. Instead of seizing these opportunities, leaders who exploit tragedy for personal gains squander valuable chances for national healing and growth. By redirecting the focus away from the collective good towards their own interests, they perpetuate the cycle of pain, preventing the affected society from moving towards a shared vision of a better future.

Exploiting tragedy, particularly the deaths of children, for political gain is an unethical act that undermines the principles of compassion, unity, and trust. Political leaders and their acolytes must recognise such actions' destructive consequences and prioritise the nation's well-being over personal ambitions.

## We will rise from the ashes

Dear Editor,

Kaieteur News – The tragedy that took place at Madhia where 19 lives were lost and a number of others injured will forever be etched in our memory. The fiery death and destruction that befell us has left a traumatic scar on all of us, not just the families in Madhia; that indelible scar would be left with us for a long time. But amidst our sorrow and grief, we look forward to a better tomorrow, as we repair and rebuild our community from this tragic loss.

The tragedy itself will not go away so easily, but will stay on with us for a long time. We mourn our loss with dignity, not without hope, but with renewed strength and fortitude as we look toward the future. We cannot undo the past but we can and will redouble our focus as we learn from this horrible past event, and move forward with renewed purpose to ensure that this does not happen again.

So, we rise from the ashes as time would heal and move us on to a brighter day, one that would be life fulfilling for our children and their children coming

after them.

Respectfully submitted,  
Neil Adams

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# Using farmland for housing a really bad idea, farmers tell Doug Ford

By Nishad Sharma  
LJI REPORTER

Building much needed homes on precious farmland is a bad idea for Ontario, farmers are telling Premier Doug Ford.

As a result, the Ontario government is considering backing off from proposals that would allow more housing to be built on Ontario's dwindling farmland, according to a report on CBC news.

Leaders of a range of farming and agricultural groups met with senior government officials last week to raise their concerns about proposed changes to provincial land-use policy that Ford and his ministers have said will spur new home construction.

The contentious proposals are part of the government's overhaul of Ontario's land-use guidelines, floated last month by Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark. At the time, Clark called his plan "housing-focused" and said it would create more homes in both urban and rural communities.

On Monday, Clark told the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in a letter the CBC News said it obtained that he



Building housing is not the best use for farmland, farmers in Ontario have told Premier Doug Ford

"clearly heard the concerns" and promised "to look at alternatives" to the changes he'd proposed.

Farmers say the proposals as they currently stand have the potential to lead to hundreds of thousands of homes on prime farmland.

"That is an awful lot of urban people moving to the countryside and having to deal with the issues of farming

that they're not used to," said Mark Reusser, a turkey farmer in Wilmot Township, less than a 10-minute drive from the western edge of Kitchener.

Reusser says farmers are concerned that putting more homes on and adjacent to farms would lead to conflict with new non-farming residents over the odour, dust and noise that comes with raising livestock or growing crops.

"Agriculture works better when it is somewhat distanced from people, especially people who are from an urban setting originally and who are not used to those things," Reusser said in an interview on his farm.

"We're also concerned that (building housing) is probably not the best use of farmland," he said. "It will never be farmland again once there's a house on it."

The most contentious change would allow the owners of agricultural land to carve out up to three housing lots on each farm parcel, a policy known as severance. Ford and Clark indicated their intent is to make it easier for farmers to build homes for their adult children on their land.

"The number one complaint that I get when I go to the farms is, 'I want my kids to stay on the farm,' and there are certain jurisdictions that won't allow you to build an additional residence," Ford told the legislature on Monday.

"It has never been our intention for severed lots to be transferred or sold to non-family/farm owners," Clark said in his letter Monday. "Any ambiguity regarding our intentions will be clarified, eliminated and resolved."

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The Economy & Finance | JB's Insight

# Tom Sanzillo is a Genius Financial Analyst, he extrapolates magical numbers



Joel Bhagwandin

I am writing in reference to an article published in the Sunday May 28th edition of the Kaieteur News, with the caption “countries within pathway of potential oil spill from Guyana have US\$140 billion in economic activity at risk”. The article quoted international financial analyst, Tom Sanzillo. The analyst in a recent article argued that the Caribbean countries within close proximity, produce more than US\$140 billion annually largely based on their maritime and tourism sectors.

Editor, I am deeply perplexed as to how this genius international financial analyst arrived at his number of over US\$140 billion for a few CARICOM countries, when the total GDP for the entire CARICOM as of 2022 is an estimated US\$100 billion, the tourism sector of CARICOM accounts



Tourism accounts for 16% of the Caribbean’s GDP

for about 16% of GDP which will translate to US\$16 billion. The marine sector accounts for 1.5% of global GDP which stands at approximately US\$100 trillion. In the United States, the marine sector accounts for about 1.7% of GDP.

So, we can safely extrapolate that the regional marine sector accounts for 1.5% of the region’s GDP which would translate to US\$1.5 billion giving rise to a total of US\$17.5 billion for the two sectors combined, thereby accounting

for 17.5% of the region’s GDP.

With the foregoing in mind, Tom Sanzillo, who did not demonstrate how he arrived at US\$140 billion, as I have done above, has effectively inflated his number by 700%.

More so, his argument is framed within the context of what an oil spill liability would look like in any such event. However, he has failed to consider to what extent will the capping stack minimize the impact of a spill once deployed within the prescribed timeframe as per the Environmental Permit.

It would be good for Tom to provide some clarifications and explanations on his calculations as well as a proper assessment of an oil spill risk considering the risk mitigation strategies in place.



## Candlelight vigil held at Toronto Consulate for Mahdia victims

The parents of Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali (left) were among dozens of people who attended a candlelight vigil at the Guyana Consulate in Toronto, in memory of the 20 victims of the May 21 Mahdia school fire. The event gave Guyanese in the Canadian Diaspora the opportunity to mourn the loss of so many young lives alongside their fellow Guyanese at home.

On the night of May 21, a fire broke out in a secondary school dormitory in Mahdia, Potaro-Siparuni, killing 18 students and the young son of a caretaker on the spot. A 20th victim succumbed on Tuesday at hospital in Georgetown. The fire was among the deadliest involving school dormitories in the last 30 years



# President Ali’s heartfelt ‘letter to Guyana’s children’ urges empathy

On the anniversary of Guyana’s Independence last week, President Dr Irfaan Ali wrote a touching letter to the nation’s children, invoking sympathy for the 19 young victims of the Mahdia fire on May 21.

Following is the complete letter: “ON this the 57th Independence Anniversary of your homeland, you are asked to share the pain, bear the sorrow and shoulder the responsibility of helping each other, supporting each other and uplifting each other.

The 19 souls from different homes, different families and communities banded together in pursuit of their dreams and hopes, shattered by the instant nature of death.

This tragic day must bring all of you closer together in your schools, value your friendship, share abundantly your love and kindness, shoulder each other’s pains, counsel each other with wisdom and pressure each other only with good thoughts and actions. Learn from mistakes, remember your God and lean on his mercies and favours.

Never forget the fragility of life, open yourself to good counsel, be respectful, pay tribute to your teachers, reach for the most distraught among you and give them your hands of friendship, share from your abundance among those who least have and always remember this is your home in which you were gifted life and among you lies the fabric of nationhood.

Children of the future will inherit the pains and sorrows, the wisdom and truth, the honour and dignity and the success that must come with it.

Let not circumstances spoil this inheritance, let not short-term joy be the replacement for hard work and present not your self-interest at the detriment of the collective. Bind yourselves in a universal whole in which peace, contentment, love, patience and mercy are the flames of your existence.



President, Dr Irfaan Ali comforts children at the scene of the May 21 school fire

It is these times of trials and hardship that would test you, your resolve and your sense of purpose. Dig deep and uproot all that strangles you internally and breathe fresh air into your system that the new day brings and the understanding that together you will succeed, together you will overcome and together you will inherit this home into your care and safe keeping.

In the meantime, we the custodians of this baton to be passed on to you, pledge to nurture it and create in it opportunities through which all of you will flourish with the realisation of your hopes and aspiration.

To our children of Mahdia Secondary and the dorms, you must have

many thoughts and questions but know that our collective shoulders as a nation are yours. Your sorrow is ours and your pain we share.

The horizon at this hour appears grey and the clouds of rain fill your tears and the songs of the birds, the freshness of the wind, and the existence of life bring a heavy burden.

Of those angels among you we have lost to the gardens of heaven let not their spirit, love and earthly presence be lost. You must now take their dreams, their aspirations and their hope and realise them so that, through each of you, they will live, they will shine and their parents and loved ones will find peace in your successes and your

presence. Forget not the beautiful memories, cherish the times you shared, knowing at all times your family is all of us. All of us belong to one mother- this land – our land, Guyana the free.

Oh motherland guard these your children, strengthen them in your bosom and let them know how worthy they are; strengthen them in their heritage, enrich them with the sunshine and shelter them from the rains. Oh this we ask thee great mother Guyana the free.

God Bless our Motherland! God bless the people of Guyana! I thank you”.

## International team proposes holistic prison reform

AN international team of four experts has arrived in Guyana to offer the government a proposal for prison reform, by way of a project called ‘Holistic Prison Ministry’.

Their approach focuses on the concept of moral rehabilitation, aiming to provide inmates with a sense of purpose, and support their transition into law-abiding citizens.

The team was brought here under the patronage of Region Three Private Sector Inc. (R3PSInc) and its head, Halim Khan.

The team consists of Dr. Joanne Spence, a psychologist from Trinidad and Tobago; Dr. Desmond Khan from Canada, who specialises in biofeedback, and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Ms. Marjorie Beazer, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Principal Consultant of the Lead Center for Public Policy, Advocacy, Justice, and Social Change, of California; and John Duggan, who holds a Doctor of Ministry degree, from Canada.

The team is experienced in addressing mental health issues such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression, which are often prevalent among incarcerated individuals.

In a recent interview, Beazer stated that they represent a larger group of individuals in Canada, and are in Guyana to help facilitate and collaborate with the people and the Government of Guyana in producing holistic and sustainable changes through the lens of criminal justice, leading to better outcomes for communities, individuals, and the country.

“One of the primary reasons we have a correctional system is to do just that; correct behaviour, which includes the way I think, the values I hold, the attitudes, and the principles that govern my life,” she said, adding:

“When we take a holistic approach to doing that, we achieve better outcomes. These outcomes are sustainable, measurable, and benefit not only the person and their family but also the community.”

Born in the British Virgin Islands, and currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Jamaica, Beazer brings her expertise as a former counsellor in prison in Antigua and Barbuda, as well as her background in criminal justice and counselling.

She highlighted the significant impact holistic approaches can have on young inmates, in terms of preventing them from falling back into a life of crime.

Beazer also currently chairs a technical committee

in Jamaica, where they are working on first-time standards for the correctional sector.

“We have the opportunity now to incorporate concepts such as faith, not just where we look at rehabilitation normally; it is skill building... I’m going to teach you a trade, but we don’t focus on character building,” she said, adding:

“Faith can do that, as well as work within the scheme of psychosocial, health and wellness, that’s what we are here to do.”

She said there is a trend worldwide, and in the Caribbean as well, where there is an uptick in the number of incarcerated females.

“She is a caregiver; she is the one who has children. When you snatch mommy out of the home and incarcerate her, what happens to the children? That caregiving responsibility resides within her, generally,” she explained.

She said that in the context of prison, it was originally designed for men, so a woman’s unique needs would need to be addressed, so that when she comes out, she, too, is ready to be reintegrated.



# Ali's recent visit renewed momentum in Guyana-India relations

PRESIDENT of India, Droupadi Murmu, on Friday, in her Independence Day greetings to the people of Guyana, the government and President Dr. Irfaan Ali, said that the recent visit made by local officials to India provided new momentum in Guyana-India relations.

"The recent visit of Your Excellency to India and other high-level engagements have provided a renewed momentum to India-Guyana relations. I am confident that the deep bonds of friendship between our two countries will be further strengthened and diversified," President Murmu stated.

President Ali visited India for seven days in January 2023. Upon returning, he said that working groups had been established and would have begun work immediately to push the collaborative agenda in several areas discussed during the trip.

"We have already written to the Government of India outlining the working group, the names that we are proposing to be part of that working group following the OAS model with the US and CARICOM," he said.

President Ali also noted India's keen interest in investing and working with Guyana in several areas, namely agriculture, technology, security and even on the oil and gas front.

During the seven days, he said he met with the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, and they discussed cooperation in several areas.

Dr. Ali related that the Prime Minister had shown an interest in visiting Guyana this year to fast-track a lot of the planning in areas they have identified for collaboration.

In addition to this, President Ali said that, in a meeting with Prime Minister Modi, they discussed the shared vision and commitment to various global topics, which include climate change, food security, energy security, human resource development and building out a platform through which they can create a better global environment that supports peace and development.

He added that in relation to agriculture and food production, that stood as a



Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali with Indian President Droupadi Munmu

strong pillar underpinning discussion, as this is a key element of Guyana's development aspiration and a key element of the leadership that the country is providing in the region.

"There was tremendous interest in having close collaboration between the two governments on research and development, technology transfer, building out of our agri-food system, the ecosystem surrounding our food production and agriculture, and enhancing the productivity of our agricultural sector," President Ali said.

Further, the ongoing transformation of Guyana's healthcare system was also discussed as ways in which India can collaborate with local authorities here, especially as the government intends to push the use of telemedicine here.

Those collaborations would also see training and advancement of the human-resource pool, such as the nurses and laboratory technicians, among others.

Meanwhile, he mentioned that discussions were also held in relation to the security and defence sector.

India, Dr. Ali related, has a very strong investment in defence technology and, as such, discussions surrounded this along with the training of Guyanese in this field.

He said that the two countries could collaborate in this regard to further the modernisation of the Guyana Defence Force and the Guyana Police Force in terms of equipment transformation to have a defence capability that functions on an improved technological platform.

## DNA results used to identify victims of Mahdia fire

THE government has obtained DNA results matching the names of 13 bodies from the Mahdia fire tragedy that were previously not visually identified, the Ministry of Health on Friday confirmed.

Their bodies will now be released to families of the deceased for funeral arrangements. Arrangements have been put in place by the Guyana Police Force for families to take possession of bodies when and where, in accordance with their wishes.

The Government of Guyana is providing assistance and support to all families for funerals over the following days.

DNA analyses were conducted on 14 bodies: 13 bodies of girls from the Mahdia fire and one body of a boy child who died in the fire as well.

The samples from the forensic specimens were obtained from 13 bodies by a Specialist Pathologist through a bilateral arrangement between Guyana and Barbados, while another forensic specimen was obtained from a young boy and was taken by Guyanese Pathologist Dr Nehaul Singh. These specimens (obtained) were compared to DNA samples taken from par-



Adonijah Jerome



Andrea Roberts



Arianna Edwards



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Delicia Edwards

ents and siblings.

The DNA analyses were conducted by the Pathology Laboratory of the internationally-recognised Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, in New York City. Dr Carlos Cordon-Cardo, Professor and Systems Chair, and internationally renowned for DNA analyses, led a team of experts in conducting the analyses.

"The Government of Guyana is grateful for the forensic examination and analyses that were done by a pathologist from Barbados, Dr Shubhaker Karra Paul, who came to Guyana under the auspices of the RSS.

The government is also grateful to Dr Nehaul Singh for completing the initial set of post-mortems in Mahdia. The Government of Guyana expresses its gratitude to the Mount Sinai team that has been working with Guyana over the last year. The Mount Sinai team graciously and generously contributed their expertise to complete the DNA analyses in record time. The Government of Guyana is also grateful to the Hess Corporation for providing transportation to air-dash and rapidly transporting the specimens and samples from Georgetown to New York," the Health Ministry noted.



# Long term support for persons affected by Mahdia fire: PM

PRIME Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, on Friday, said survivors of the recent Mahdia fire and their families are currently undergoing counselling, spearheaded by the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.

Providing an update on the situation, Prime Minister Phillips pointed out that the therapy is long-term and aims to assist the families with coping.

“We will continue to remain in contact with these families during this difficult time. This counselling is not a short-term or a one-off activity,” the prime minister disclosed.

In addition to the medical and psychosocial interventions facilitated by the government, ministers have been assigned to the grieving families to provide the necessary support.

“We have a list of ministers who are working with each family. As you know, families were brought to Georgetown, along with patients, and the government is funding the upkeep of those families, in terms of allowances; financial assistance for the time that they will be in Georgetown, including accommodation, meals, and transportation to the hospital to see their loved ones,” Prime Minister Phillips said.

Additionally, personal care hampers were distributed to the families in



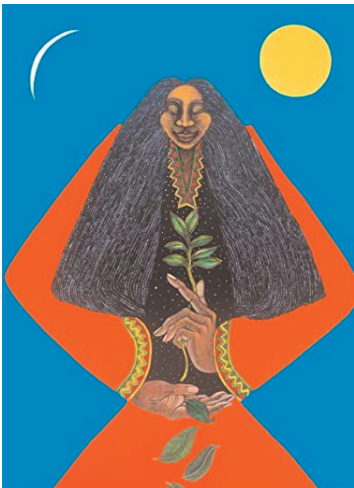
PM Phillips lays a wreath at a memorial for the victims of the Mahdia school fire

Georgetown as well as those that remain in their villages.

“We have provided food hampers, not only to the families but to the villages as well. We have had the Civil Defence Commission ferrying food items into Micobie, Karisparu, Chenapou, and El Paso,” the Prime Minister said.

He added that these efforts will be duplicated in other villages in Region Eight that are also affected by the tragedy.

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## Pilot facing trafficking charges

ORLANDO Charles, a 45-year-old pilot and businessman of Lot 45 Middle Street, Georgetown, is to be charged by ranks of the Guyana Police Force's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Unit, with 16 counts of trafficking in persons, Contrary to Section 3(1)(i) of the Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Act, No. 2 of 2005.

According to information from the Guyana Police Force (GPF), Charles, between November 1, 2022 and May 18, 2023, trafficked 16 Venezuelans between the Mazaruni River in Region Seven and Georgetown.

The victims reported the matter to the Guyana Police Force, and members of the Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Criminal Investigations Department Headquarters immediately conducted an investigation.

Subsequent to the investigation, legal advice was given by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for Charles to be charged with 16 counts of trafficking in persons.

“The Guyana Police Force's TIP Unit, in efforts to combat trafficking in persons, will continue to work with other stakeholders to conduct intelligence-led operations, spot inspections, awareness, and training in every region of Guyana,” the GPF said.



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# 2,000 part-time jobs coming for hinterland regions, says VP Jagdeo

PERSONS residing in the hinterland regions are set to benefit from an additional 2,000 job opportunities, with the introduction of the government's part-time jobs initiative there.

The programme, which was launched in several coastal regions in 2022, is already being rolled out in Region One (Barima- Waini), and Bartica, in Region Seven (Cuyuni- Mazaruni).

General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo made the revelation at his weekly press conference on Thursday at Freedom House, on Robb Street, Georgetown.

Dr. Jagdeo, who also serves as the country's Vice-President, explained that this is in addition to the 2,500 persons who are employed as Community Service Officers (CSOs).

"At the end of the day, they would probably have, with the 2,500 CSOs and the part-time job workers, close to 4,500 persons," Jagdeo noted.

He further explained that persons in Region Eight (Potaro-Siparuni) and Region Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo) have already been identified to benefit from the programme.

"Those still have to be rolled out, but they will be, over the course of the next few months, so they would be implemented. And this is in addition to the 2,500 CSOs that we have rehired," Dr. Jagdeo said.

In Budget 2023, the government earmarked \$10 billion to expand the programme.

The well-crafted employment initiative allows one person per household to work in public agencies for 10 days



Guyana Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo

per month, and earn \$40,000.

Since its commencement, over 11,000 individuals have been employed under the initiative in several regions. About 2,000 residents have already gained employment through the massive

recruitment drive in Regions Two (Pomeroon-Supenaam) and Three (Essequibo Island- West Demerara), respectively.

The government has also provided 4,000 residents of Region Six (East

Berbice-Corentyne) with part-time jobs, and more than 1,000 persons in Region 10 (Upper Demerara-Berbice). The Administration is aggressively pushing to provide 50,000 jobs over five years, as promised in its Manifesto.

## Ali in Brazil for South American Summit



PRESIDENT Dr. Irfaan Ali on Monday arrived in Brasília, Brazil, for a Summit of South American Leaders being hosted by President Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva.

According to the Office of the President, while there, President Ali is expected to have bilateral talks with President Lula.

Guyana and Brazil established diplomatic relations in August 1968, and enjoy strong ties of friendship and cooperation.

President Ali, in early 2022, had listed several areas that are critical for both countries to move their relationship forward, including energy and food security, telecommunication, infrastructure, integration, and trade.

The Guyanese Head of State had said that in addition to oil and gas, expanding opportunities in the other non-oil natural resources sectors such as bauxite will create an opportunity for a direct link to northern Brazil and further afield that can "create an excellent platform for us to develop an integrated project".

Here, Dr Ali is greeting on arrival by President Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva



# Guyana’s Agri-invest forum and Expo to return in October

GUYANA’S Agri-Investment forum and ‘expo’ is set to return this year as the government and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) forges ahead with its food security agenda to reduce the region’s food import bill by 25 per cent by 2025.

Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha disclosed that October has been set as a tentative date for the event.

“We are looking to hold it tentatively in October. I am hoping this year that we will do it in agriculture month and we will make it bigger, better and have more international companies plus regional,” Mustapha said.

According to him, this year’s forum will see officials engaging investors and key stakeholders within the agriculture sector to secure funding a new project proposal entitled “Building Food Security through Innovation, Resilience, Sustainability and Empowerment, curated by Guyana’s President Dr. Irfaan Ali, who holds the responsibility for Agriculture and Agriculture Development in CARICOM.

The project which includes the expansion of hydroponics, the process of growing plants in sand, gravel, or liquid, with added nutrients but without soil, was presented to CARICOM’s heads of Government at the 44 Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government held back in February.

“Generally, we are looking at investments in the Caribbean and you know the President would have already made two presentations to CARICOM, one in the high valued crops in terms of shade house and hydroponics in terms of the leafy vegetables and vine crops,” Mustapha said adding:

“We are looking for funding and hopefully all the countries and all the territories can start that programme.”

According to a communique issued at the end of the February’s conference, the Heads of Government had requested that the CARICOM Secretariat accelerate its efforts in the mobilisation of resources towards the achievement of the 25 by 2025 initiative.

They also requested the CARICOM Private Sector OrganiSation Inc. (CPSO) to hasten the pace of implementation of its various agricultural investment projects.

Earlier this year the CARICOM Ministerial Task Force on Food Production and Food Security (MTF) had informed that CARICOM members have

collectively achieved 57 per cent of its ‘Vision 25 by 2025’ target thus far.

This was after countries submitted reports detailing their production data for 2022 for targetted commodities, as CARICOM moves towards lowering the regional import bill by 25 per cent by the year 2025.

Products such as cocoa, dairy, meat, root crops, fruits, and poultry have already reached 96.13 per cent, 84.36 per cent, 72.28 per cent, 70.91 per cent, 70.77 per cent, and 70.19 per cent, re-



spectively, for the targetted production volume set for the year 2025.

Countries such as Guyana, Belize, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Dominica, and Jamaica have made significant advances in the production of commodities such as ginger, turmeric, corn, soya bean, root crops, fruits, cocoa, poultry, meat, fish, table eggs, and dairy.

Several priority areas have been identified for 2023.



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Earlier this month, Hemsley Fraser Canada, and ActionINVEST Caribbean Inc. (ACI) co-hosted the highly anticipated **Future-of-Work Part 2: Building Effective Strategies to Enhance Learning** event.

This event explored innovative approaches to learning and development in response to the evolving demands of the workforce.

During the event, participants were treated to engaging presentations and thought-provoking discussions led by industry experts.

Ms. Rita Sookrit, Vice President and Learning Lead at Hemsley Fraser Canada, addressed emerging workplace trends and challenges. She highlighted the importance of building effective learning strategies that align with evolving needs and showcased the role of digital transformation in shaping the future-of-work. Her insights provided participants with valuable guidance for navigating technological advancements and shifting skill requirements.

Ms. Camille Deokie, Founder and CEO of Camille’s Academy, spoke about the initiative to bridge the gap for students entering post-secondary education or the workforce — a project spearheaded by Hemsley and ACI.

Ms. Rodlyn Semple, ISO lead consultant of ACI, delivered a presentation on the significance of implementing robust Quality Management Systems (QMS) and adhering to ISO standards. She emphasized how these frameworks can streamline processes, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure consistent quality across products and services.

The event concluded with the exciting official launch of the Hemsley/ACI Digital Resource Platform — featuring courses in leadership, coaching, and much more.

The Future-of-Work event left participants inspired and equipped with valuable insights to shape their learning initiatives in response to the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Presenters and attendees posed for this group photo:



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# Qatar lends Guyana US\$350M to complete highway to Parika

AS government pushes ahead with its development plans for Region Three, Qatar has loaned Guyana US\$350 million, which will be used to extend the Crane to Schoonord four-lane highway to Parika.

This was disclosed on Saturday by President, Dr. Irfaan Ali, during a community meeting held for those living within the Malgre Tout/Meer-Zorgen area.

“I just came back from Qatar and we have secured US\$350 million to continue that road through to Parika...we have more or less concluded arrangements for a new loan that will see the continuation of the highway all the way to Parika,” President Ali announced.

Earlier this month, the Head of State led a delegation on an Official Visit to Qatar during which there were several bilateral discussions and engagements which centred on matters of interest to both countries.

Contracts valuing \$11.8 billion were awarded in September 2022, to several contractors by the Ministry of Housing and Water for the construction of a four-lane highway from Schoonord to Crane.

The contractors are VR Construction Inc., Avinash Contracting & Scrap Metal Inc., L’Heureuse Construction and Services Inc., GuyAmerica Construction Inc., AJM Enterprise, Vals Construction, Puran Bros Disposal Inc., and JS Guyana Inc.

The project, expected to be completed before 2024, will see the construction of 4.1 kilometres (km) of a dual carriageway reinforced concrete road with an emergency lane as well as 2.4 km of road rehabilitation and upgrade.

It will also feature two roundabouts, 11 reinforced concrete box culverts, 36 pre-stressed bridges, and road signage and markings.

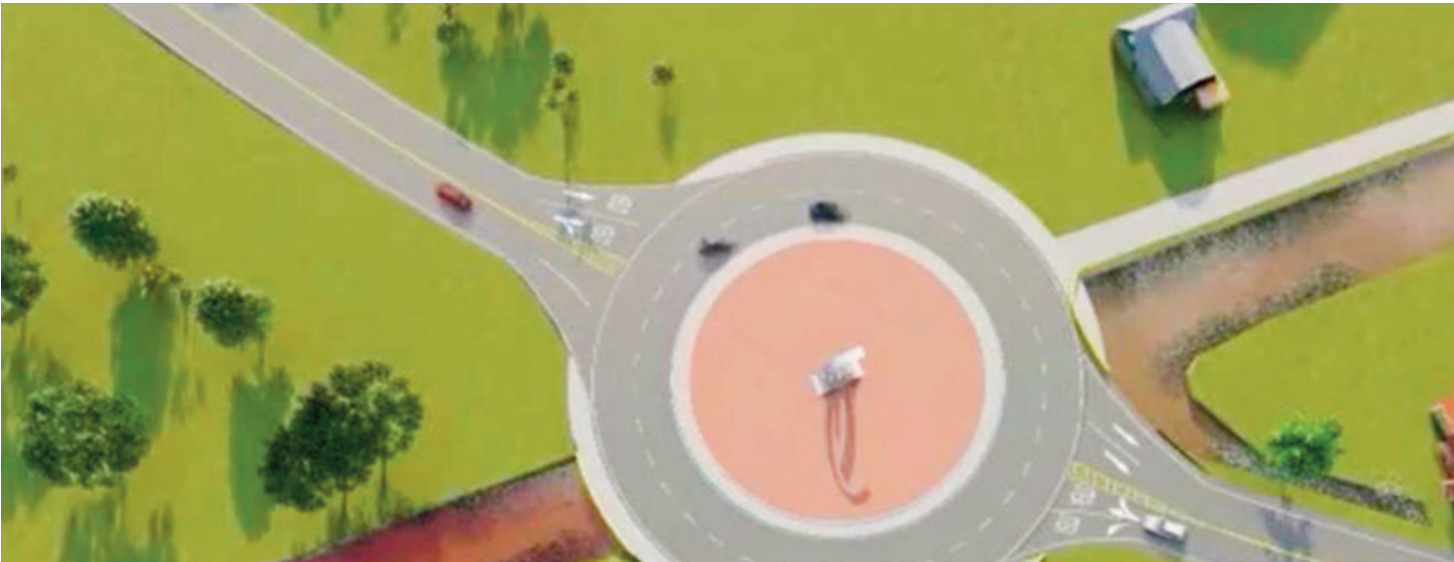
A new roundabout will connect the West Coast Demerara Highway to the new Schoonord to Crane highway. The road is expected to be ready by year-end.

Prior to the signing, President Ali had signalled government’s intention to extend the highway to Parika.

According to President Ali, the highway was necessary to ease traffic congestion along the West Bank and West Coast of Demerara and to help speed up development in the region.

This road link, President Ali had said will open thousands of acres of land for housing, massive agriculture and agro-related projects, and tourism and other related activities.

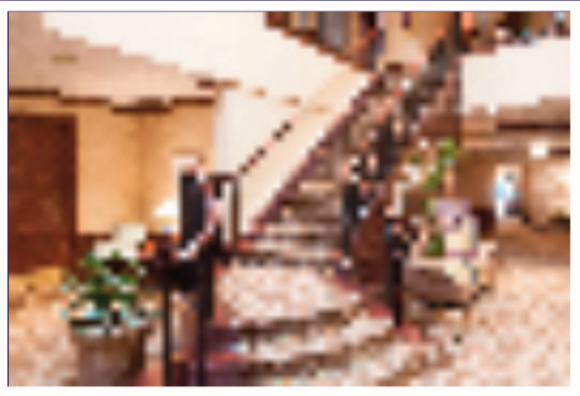
The construction of this particular road is merely a component of a broader plan to modernise the country’s infrastructure and create myriad alternative and more convenient linkages.



The four lane highway that would run from Schoonord to Crane in WCD

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# Massy spends US\$244 million on three major Caribbean acquisitions

ONE of the Caribbean’s largest conglomerates has spent about a quarter of a billion US dollars on three major acquisitions over the last six months.

This has been revealed by Robert Bermudez, chairman of the board of directors of the Massy group, headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago but with significant assets in Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean, Jamaica, and Guyana.

In a statement released along with the unaudited consolidated financial highlights for the half-year ended March 31, Bermudez described the first half of the 2023 financial year as a “very important period”.

According to the chairman, the conglomerate spent US\$244 million (BDS\$488 million) acquiring controlling interests in three major enterprises, including one in the United States.

“Strategically, the Group set out in 2019 to divest non-core businesses and assets and to focus future investments on its core portfolios on Integrated Retail, Gas Products, and Motors and Machines,” the Massy chairman explained.

In this regard, he pointed out in the regulatory filing that in December 2022, Massy acquired Rowe’s IGA Supermarkets in Jacksonville, Florida for US\$47 million (BDS\$94 million). In January, the company spent US\$57 million (BDS\$114 million) to buy Air Liquide’s operation in Trinidad and Tobago, while it signed a major agreement to acquire IGL Jamaica for US\$140 million (BDS\$280 million).

If the IGL deal is approved by the Fair Trading Commission in Jamaica,



One of the chain of Massy Stores supermarkets in Trinidad

Massy will consolidate its position as the leading LPG business in the Caribbean.

Bermudez said approval of the agreement was expected and the transaction should be closed in the third quarter of the current financial year.

“Financially, the Group continues to perform commendably,” declared Bermudez who is retiring as Massy chairman and will be replaced by Robert Riley.

He added that third-quarter group revenue from continuing operations grew by 11 per cent to US\$1 billion.

This was propelled by 16 per cent growth in revenue from integrated retail which is benefitting from its acquisition of Rowe’s IGA supermarkets in December 2022,” Bermudez outlined.

Group profit before tax from continuing operations grew by 17 per cent to reach US\$77.2 million (BDS\$154.4 million), while group after-tax profits from continuing operations increased by 19 per cent to reach US\$52.5 million (BDS\$55 million).

As part of the group’s centennial celebrations, the company known as

Neal & Massy before its rebranding has committed to an employee share ownership initiative to ensure all employees can eventually participate in ownership of the company.

“The response has been tremendous,” Bermudez outlined in the chairman’s report which accompanied the financials.

He added that in Jamaica, all employees have already been granted their shares.

## Streetlights for all communities by 2024: Ali

PRESIDENT, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali has announced a transformational plan that will see streetlights being installed in every community across the country in 2024.

During an outreach in Region Three (Essequibo Islands-West Demerara) on Saturday, President Ali noted that in every region, street lights have been raised as an issue for many persons.

And since the government is aiming to develop communities, an integrated plan has been devised to begin the installation of street lights for each community street, after Guyana’s new power plant is completed and operationalised.

“We have promised that the cost of energy will come down by 50 per cent, and by the time we get there, starting from next year, we will roll out a national plan in which every single street and almost every single post across our country will carry a streetlight, which will improve security and enhance the conditions of [the community],” Dr Ali

said.

The President indicated that the move to provide streetlights is part of a long list of projects on which the administration has embarked, to improve the country at the community level.

This includes housing construction; the renovation of several public buildings and hospitals; the expansion of several main roads into highways; the construction of bridges and drains, and a national road-enhancement project, which saw more than 1,100 community roads identified and awarded for construction in 2022.

A strong commitment to improve infrastructure, ensuring enhanced quality of life for citizens, and improving safety and security have been consistently demonstrated by the government since assuming office in August 2020.

Already, the fruits of its investment have been witnessed both globally and internationally, as Guyana has skyrocketed to one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

The administration continues to

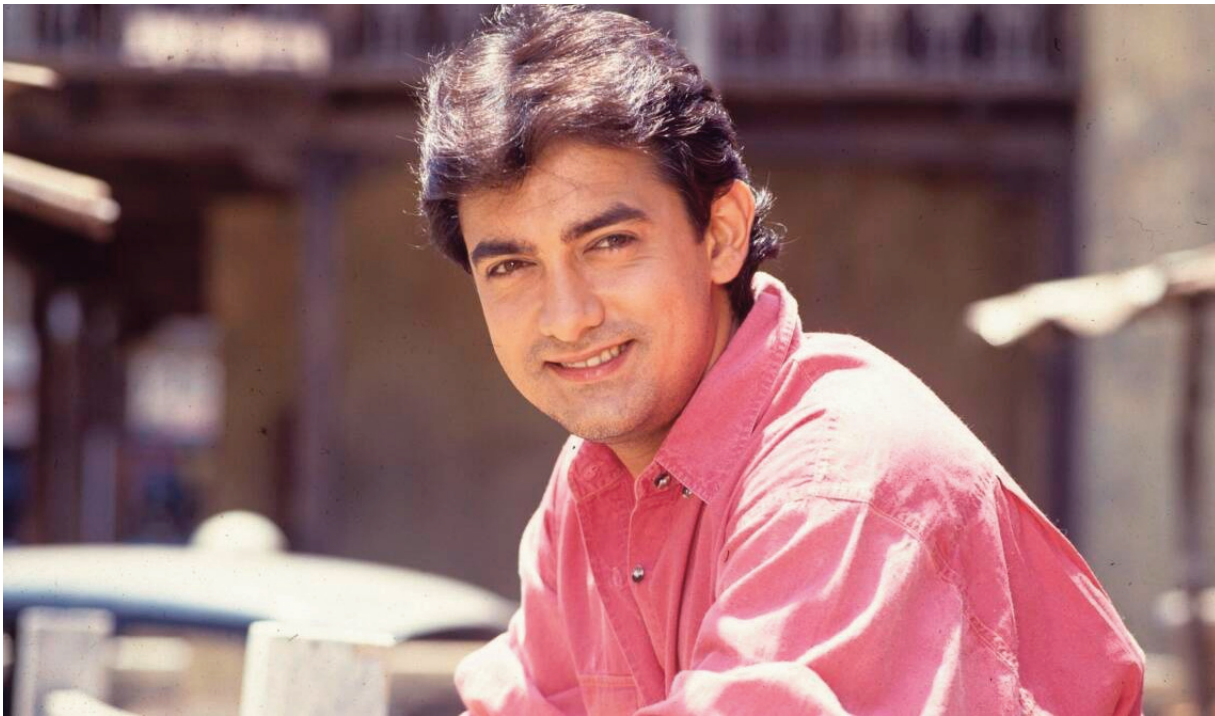


Every Guyanese community will have streetlights by 2024

make prudent investments in areas of necessity, to improve the atmosphere of

the country, and make it one that is competitive in the world.





Aamir Khan: profitted from Wresters’ stories but hasn’t stepped up to help

# Top stars knocked for not supporting Wrestlers’ protest

Amidst the ongoing wrestlers' protest in the capital, several Bollywood actors have come under fire for their stoic silence on the matter. Shortly after shocking photos and videos of the athletes being detained went viral, Twitterati were visibly appalled and slammed B-town actors for posting about the new Parliament building, but saying nothing about the protest.

Accusing Bollywood stars of using these wrestlers' stories to 'make money', a Twitter user wrote, "Bollywood gets box office collections by making movies on them but when they actually need help .. can't see any biggie helping!"

Another addressed a tweet to Aamir Khan say-

ing, "Dear Aamir Khan @AKPPL\_Official, you profitted off their story with Dangal, isn't it time to stand up and help the same wrestlers?"

"These Bollywood celebs will otherwise leave no opportunity to pick up middle-class topics to make blockbuster movies or the biopics of our wrestlers or other heroes. Where are these spineless people now? Why is no support coming for the real ground-level Dangal," another asked in a tweet.

Another said, "Aamir Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Parineeti Chopra.. all have run to play roles in movies based on stories of Indian sporting stars. Where are they now? Priyanka had also spoken out for Black Lives Matter."



**ARIES (March 21 - April 20):** What occurs in your private life today will shock you a bit but most likely in a nice way. Best of all, the support you get from loved ones will encourage you to believe that the dark days of disputes and disagreements are now firmly behind you.

**TAURUS (April 21 - May 21)** No matter how often you have been misunderstood in the past you will have no trouble making your intentions clear over the next 24 hours. Don't sit there waiting for other people to come to you with ideas, you've got plenty of your own to share.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21):** If you stay calm and refuse to be rattled by other people's unpredictable behavior then nothing much will faze you. While friends and colleagues are running around like headless chickens you will be serenely floating along in your own little bubble.

**CANCER (June 22 - July 23):** Values planet Venus is very much on your side at the moment and with Uranus, planet of the unexpected, involved in the mix as well you won't hesitate to make the kind of changes you feel are necessary both at home and at work. Go for it!

**LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23):** Turn on the charm today if you want to get things done. That applies to all levels of your existence but especially to your career situation where your big ideas will inspire colleagues and employers to put their trust in you. You're on a roll.

**VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23):** The more others pick holes in your beliefs the more you must stick with them and keep communicating them to the world. If your opinions offend people that's actually a good sign in that it means your arguments are getting through to them at last.

**LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23):** Venus, your ruler, links with changes planet Uranus across the business and career angles of your chart today. Trust what your instincts are telling you and don't be afraid to throw out the old so there is room for the new. It shouldn't be too painful.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22):** You don't need to feel guilty about having a good time when others are finding life difficult. The influence of Venus in the most adventurous area of your chart means you have cosmic permission to go anywhere and do anything without fear of the consequences.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21):** You won't find it hard to open up emotionally to the people around you today but don't be too eager. It may feel great to get certain things off your chest but some details are too personal to be telegraphed to the whole wide world.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20):** Venus in your opposite sign will encourage you to work with people whose opinions and talents complement your own. There will still be some differences between you but they are superficial and can be easily ignored. Work together for your common good.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19):** Like everyone you tend to follow certain methods and routines out of habit but the current cosmic picture urges you to shake things up today. Just because you feel comfortable with something does not mean you must stick with it forever.

**PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20):** You may believe you can beat every challenger who comes your way but why put yourself in that position when you don't have to? Venus in the most dynamic area of your chart means the most powerful weapon in your arsenal is your charm. Use it.

PSYCHIC READER FORTUNE TELLER

ॐ ✚ ☾

WORLD FAMOUS INDIAN ASTROLOGER

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# Deadly Guyana fire: Girl, 15, re-manded after 19 murder charges

Magistrate Sunil Scarce Monday adjourned to July 4 the case against a 15-year-old girl charged with 19 counts of murder arising from last week’s fire at the dormitory at Mahdia Secondary School in Guyana.

The teenager, who is also a student of the school, was not required to enter a plea when she appeared before the Diamond Magistrate’s Court via Zoom.

The teenager is accused of setting fire to the dormitory last Monday resulting in the deaths of 18 fellow students between the ages of 12 to 17 and a five-year-old boy.

Guyanese law prohibits the naming of juvenile accused persons or convicts.

But it allows for her to be charged with murder since she is older than 14 years.

When the matter resumes on July 5, it will be for statement and disclosure.

The dormitory housed female students from Mahdia, Campbelltown, Mico, El Paso, and several other villages in the North Pakaraimas in Region 8

Last Friday, the government said the authorities would release the bodies of the 13 girls after it received DNA results.

The samples from the forensic specimens were obtained from the 13



The fire at the Mahdia Secondary School

bodies by a Specialist Pathologist through a bilateral arrangement between Guyana and Barbados while another forensic specimen was obtained from a young boy and was taken by Guyanese Pathologist, Dr Nehaul Singh.

These specimens were compared to DNA samples taken from parents and siblings.

The government said it would also be providing assistance and support to all families for funerals.

President Irfaan Ali has already announced that a Commission of Inquiry will “investigate the causes and circumstances of the fire which destroyed the dormitory and to enquire into related issues.”

Opposition Leader Aubrey Norton, while welcoming the government’s announcement, said that “such a commission must be independent and comprise persons who have the respect of all stakeholders so that the findings are credible and acceptable to all.”

## Hunt for ‘Smallie’: Accomplice shot dead by cops

Guyana police say a man believed to be an accomplice of prison escapee and convicted mass murderer Royden “Smallie” Williams was killed in a shootout with Police on Sunday.

“Intelligence-led to a confrontation with one of the accomplices, who was fatally shot,” a police statement said but did not immediately name the dead man.

According to the statement, no firearm was recovered in the shootout at St Mary’s Logging Area, Essequibo River, about 58 miles south of Bartica.

“Smallie” who was sentenced to death for the murder of eight persons during the Bartica massacre in 2018 remained on the run on Sunday, nine days after he fled the Mazaruni Prison in a hail of gunfire between heavily armed gunmen and prison guards.

He was also found guilty for the murder of a Guyana Defence Force soldier.

The Guyana police said they are intensifying the search for the convicted killer and his accomplices.

Last week, four prison officers, a businessman and a Venezuelan woman were charged with conspiring to facilitate the escape of Williams from the Mazaruni Prison.

Rajmohan Autor called “Chico”, age 48 years, a businessman of Parika Outfall, Fast Bank Essequibo; Frangeliz Jugandry Flores Perez, age 28 years, a Venezuelan National of Alexander Street Kitty; Omar Witherspoon, Prison Officer #3775, age 26 years of lot 41 Stanley town, New Amsterdam, Berbice; Conroy Hosannah, Prison Officer #3429, age 35 years of lot 218 Forth Ordinance Housing Scheme, East Canjie, Berbice; Oldfield Romulus, age 50 years, a Prison Officer of Lot 136 Victoria Cumberland Village, East Canji Berbice and Alexander Hopkinson, age 59 years, a prison officer of 5 Miles Housing Scheme Bartica Potaro



For information that can lead to the capture of high-profile convicted killer and prison escapee Mark Royden Williams, call 'Smallie'

The wanted poster for “Smallie”, a convicted killer who escaped prison in Guyana

Road have all been charged. Police said that on May 19, 2023, they conspired with other persons, still unknown, to assist

Royden Williams also known as Mark Williams and Royden Durant called “Smallie” in escaping from lawful custody under sentence of death.



# US Vice President Kamala Harris to meet with Caribbean leaders

United States Vice President, Kamala Harris, will meet with Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders early next month in the Bahamas.

Government Press Secretary Clint Watson said that Harris, who will be the highest US government official to visit the Bahamas since 1973, will arrive in the country on June 8 to meet with the heads of government.

CARICOM chairman and Bahamas Prime Minister Phillip Davis will co-host the US Caribbean leaders meetings with Harris.

“This gathering will convene leaders from CARICOM and other key regional stakeholders,” Watson said during an Office of the Prime Minister press briefing.

The agenda for the discussion comprises pressing global concerns including climate change, energy management, food security, and the process of rebuilding in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Watson said that the dialogue will continue to highlight the importance of climate change and mitigation and will address the region’s energy crisis.

He noted strategies will also be discussed to reduce the region’s reliance on fossil fuels.

Harris previously met Caribbean leaders at the June 2022 Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles.



Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith (left) and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom, the Rt. Hon. James Cleverly, sign a framework document for a £15-million (\$2.9-billion) violence-prevention project, during a press conference following a JA-UK strategic dialogue at the Ministry’s downtown Kingston offices on May 19.

“The Vice President’s trip delivers on the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to advance cooperation with the Caribbean, pursue shared prosperity and security, and celebrate the common bonds between our nations,” according to a US Embassy statement.

“The Vice President is travelling to The Bahamas during Caribbean-American Heritage Month and will celebrate

the longstanding people-to-people ties between the Caribbean and the United States.”

US Embassy Chargé d’Affaires, Usha Pitts, said her visit commemorates not just 50 years of Bahamian independence, but also and 50 years of enduring partnership between our two nations.

“Next year, the embassy team will move into our new US\$310 million

complex in downtown Nassau. From this base of operations, we look forward to strengthening our bilateral ties for the next 50 years and beyond. Vice President Harris’ visit demonstrates the value of our friendship and solidifies our commitment to address climate change and advance our shared democratic principles.”

## CARIBBEAN ROUNDUP

### Jamaican plastic ban goes into effect December 31

A ban will be imposed on the use of plastic lunch boxes, effective December 31, 2023, as the Jamaican government’s efforts continue to shift to more sustainable options.

This was announced by Minister Without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda, while addressing Thursday’s (May 18) non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing ceremony for the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) Adopt-A-Mangrove program. The event was held at the Agency’s head office in Kingston.

Minister Samuda indicated that the elimination of lunch boxes will represent an extension of the existing ban on single-use plastic items that was implemented in 2019.

“We made the initial change as it related to Styrofoam; there was a wave of recycled paper alternatives in the market then. Obviously, smart businessmen found another plastic solution that I would say went around the policy intent,” he noted.

Minister Samuda added that with the extension of the banned items, the intention is to “close that loophole, because it was certainly not intended [for Styrofoam] to be replaced by Polyethylene terephthalate (PET)”.

While PET is a better material compared to Styrofoam, it is still not the most suitable material to be used.

“We want recycled paper-based solutions as our lunch boxes,” Minister Samuda emphasized.

To help alleviate some of the solid waste issues affecting Jamaica, the ban will also include personal care products that have microplastics in them.

“There are some skews or variants of deodorants and facial soaps that have plastic beads in them that are deleterious to human and marine health. There is no sewage-based system on Earth that would extract these plastic beads before they are put out into the environment. So, we are looking at the items that can be removed from our waste stream,” Minister Samuda said.

“Every step towards environmental protection and restoration, where needed, is a good step towards Vision 2030 [Jamaica] and, practically, it is a step towards us not having to explain to our children, in an embarrassed manner when we are older, why we didn’t take particular steps,” he added.

#### Former Suriname President dies

Suriname’s former Prime Minister, Wim Udenhout, died at the Paramaribo Academic Hospital on Monday night, his family has confirmed.

He was 85.

Udenhout served as prime minister from February 1984 to July 1986 during the transitional period from the military dictatorship to elected government.

Although on paper he was the head of the government and the Council of Ministers, the actual political power was in the hands of then army commander Desi Bouterse, who came to power in a coup d’état on February 25, 1980.

During his term in office, the media were allowed to operate freely, after being banned following the December 8, 1982 murders, in which five media workers were among the 15 people killed.

Media reports said then that the restoration of press freedom was one of the conditions he had sought from Bouterse’s military junta before accepting the post of prime minister.

Udenhout, who held a doctorate in English Literature from Leiden University, had in 1975, emigrated to the Netherlands, but returned to Paramaribo to become a teacher and head of the English section at the Institute for the Training of Teachers.



# Caribbean Airlines launches “Welcome Home” campaign in Barbados

On Friday, May 26, Caribbean Airlines Limited, the leading airline serving the Caribbean region, launched its highly anticipated Welcome Home campaign in Barbados.

This exciting initiative aims to strengthen connections, enhance customer experiences, and foster cultural ties within the Caribbean community.

The Barbados event took place at Copacabana, Bay Street, Bridgetown, and was attended by hundreds including Prime Minister, The Honorable Mia Mottley, SC, MP. International Soca star Machel Montano and Agent Sasco of Jamaica, delivered scintillating performances for the enthusiastic crowd.

The Welcome Home campaign comprises three key elements, each designed to create a seamless and memorable travel experience.

Firstly, Caribbean Airlines is focused on connecting the region like never before. With an extensive network and a commitment to expanding its reach, the airline ensures convenient travel options to and from various destinations across the Caribbean.

Secondly, the campaign places consistent attention on customers, emphasizing their needs and preferences. Caribbean Airlines aims to exceed ex-



Scene from the launch of the Caribbean Airlines Welcome Home campaign in Barbados

pectations by delivering exceptional service, personalized care, and innovative solutions that cater to the unique requirements of travelers. By putting customers at the heart of everything they do, the airline strives to create a warm and welcoming environment for all passengers.

Lastly, the Welcome Home campaign aims to connect communities through culture. Recognizing the rich diversity and heritage of the Caribbean,

Caribbean Airlines seeks to promote and celebrate the region’s vibrant traditions, arts, and customs. By embracing cultural experiences, the airline aims to foster a sense of belonging and pride within the Caribbean community, both locally and internationally.

Garvin Medera, CEO of Caribbean Airlines Limited, expressed his enthusiasm for the Welcome Home campaign, stating, “The Caribbean is our home, and we are dedicated to con-

necting the region, adding value for our customers, and ensuring that individuals can conveniently reach their favorite destinations. We are committed to providing a superior travel experience that reflects the spirit and warmth of the Caribbean.”

The airline also previously rolled out “Welcome Home” in Guyana on May 19.

The event took place at the Guyana Marriott Hotel carpark.

# LASCO founder Lascelles Chin dies in Florida

Jamaican businessman and the founder of the LASCO Affiliated Companies, Lascelles Chin died Saturday night in Florida.

Reports are that Chin, 86, was in the US for medical treatment.

Chin was the executive chairman of Lasco Manufacturing, Lasco Financial and Services, and Lasco Distributors.

He founded Lasco Distributors Ltd in 1988.

The business giant received Jamaica’s fourth highest civilian honor, the Order of Jamaica, in 2001.

He was also awarded two honorary degrees- Doctor of Laws and Doctor of Humane Letters- from the University of Technology, Jamaica, and Northern Caribbean University, respectively.

Both Prime Minister Andrew Holness and Opposition Leader Mark Golding recognized Chin for his great impact.

Holness described him as a “visionary leader and advocate for change” whose legacy will forever inspire Jamaicans.

“Deeply saddened by the passing of Jamaican business giant and philanthropist, Lascelles Chin. His entrepreneurial prowess transformed Lasco into a household name, while his philanthropy uplifted countless lives,” Holness said on his social media pages.

Meanwhile, Golding hailed the late businessman as a “true Jamaican visionary & entrepreneur,” noting that Chin’s impact on the Jamaican business landscape is immeasurable.



Lasco Founder Lascelles Chin



# Surinamese \$\$ office in the Netherlands hit by bomb attacks

Surinamese money exchange office and its branches in various cities in the Netherlands have been hit by a string of bomb attacks over the past days with the latest attack occurring on Sunday night.

Last week, branches of the Suri-Change money exchange company in Amsterdam were targeted and while there have been no casualties, the buildings have all been damaged.

On Sunday night, police cordoned off the building as specialists from the Explosives Safety Team and the Forensic Investigation United conducted their investigation.

“The damage is limited to the front door, no one was injured,” the police said in a statement.

The attacks on the Suri-Change money exchange company began in January when its branch in South Rotterdam was first shot at and then attacked with a firebomb.

The police said they are investigating whether the attacks are intended to intimidate customers as several other branches have since been closed until further notice.

Suri-Change money exchange was established decades ago by Surinamese entrepreneurs in the Netherlands allowing Surinamese nationals to send money to relatives at home.

The Dutch judiciary has long suspected the money exchange company of being engaged in money laundering using a network in the Netherlands,



One of the Suri Change storefronts in the Netherlands that was hit by bombs

Slovakia and Suriname.

At the end of March, investigative services raided the head office in Rotterdam and arrested five people including the 73-year-old owner and his two sons. Several homes valued at Euro25 million (One Euro=US\$1.29 cents) had also been seized.

The suspects have since been released.

Following the raid in March, Suri-Change Bank in Suriname issued a statement distancing itself from the Netherlands-based company. It said also that its chief executive officer, Terence Gonesh is not a suspect in any

judicial investigation by the Dutch authorities.

Following the recent bomb attacks, Suri-Change Bank said that it regretted the attacks and confirmed that its services were disrupted.

## Jamaica’s releases first batch of 658 area code

Jamaica’s Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) has released the first batch of new 658 area code numbers to

telecommunication companies in the island.

This was disclosed by the OUR’s



Public Affairs Coordinator, Gordon Brown, in an interview with JIS News.

“Pretty soon, but we don’t know exactly when, you will see 876 and 658 area codes being used in Jamaica together. The important thing is that people have to get in the habit of saying your phone number with the area code and the seven digits that follow. We have to break that cycle of [saying] just the seven digits that we have been accustomed to,” he underscored.

Mr. Brown noted that the new area

code was put in place due to the “complete usage” of numbers allocated using 876.

“So, we had put it in place way back, and it came to fruition, where, in 2018, the area code 658 was introduced,” he noted.

“It was roughly about a one, or so, year timeframe that people had to get familiar with using 10-digit [dialing], and that is in preparation for, at some point in the future, when there isn’t going to be a choice, we will have to use the 658 in addition to the 876... and that time is soon,” Mr. Brown informed.

In May of 2018, Jamaica became the first country in the English-speaking Caribbean to be allocated an additional area code.

The 876 area code, which has been in existence since 1996, was expected to provide sufficient numbering capacity for the next 20 years of demand growth.

However, 13 years later the country had to consider the introduction of a new area code to augment the existing 876 numbering space.



# T&T President: East Indian immigrants were strong, resilient

President Christine Kangaloo said on Indian Arrival Day, TT celebrates the legacy of the dauntless immigrants who came to TT, bringing their cultures, traditions, values and mores as well as the drive and determination to forge a better and brighter future for themselves and their offspring.

In a statement on Tuesday, May 30, the official holiday for Indian Arrival Day, Kangaloo said the arrival at the Port of Spain harbour on May 30, 1845 of the *Fatel Razack* signalled the beginning of a significant chapter in the history of TT.

She said 225 passengers disembarked to survey their adopted homeland, exhausted from their long and arduous journey over the treacherous *kali pani*, yet buoyant with hope and expectation for the future.

“They were the first of over 143,000 Indian indentured labourers who came to this country over an ensuing period of 72 years, until 1917, to work on sugar and other agricultural estates, forever transforming the social and cultural landscape of our nation.

“Although they faced harsh working and living conditions, meagre wages and rampant discrimination – even after the end of the indentureship system – they persevered, remaining fiercely committed to their customs and beliefs and sacrificing tremendously to achieve their goals.

“They triumphed over adversity and



Trinidad and Tobago President Christine Kangaloo

they made this country their home.”

Kangaloo said TT has benefitted enormously and been enriched in many ways, tangibly and intangibly, by the sacrifices and contributions of the people who came, persevered, and prospered, in so doing helping forge a stronger, more diverse society.

“Among the most enduring lessons that their arrival and their way of life

have taught us, are the power of commitment and the importance of resilience.”

She called on citizens to use the occasion of Indian Arrival Day to not only reflect on the experiences of their Indian forebears.

“Let each of us adopt, in our own lives, their ability to endure and overcome even the harshest of circumstances and press on through times of difficulty

with fortitude, resolve and courage. Let us honour the memories of those who gave their lives for future generations by embracing the cultural diversity and heritage to which they richly contributed, and by resisting all forms of division and discord.”

Kangaloo called on the public to rise to this moment in history in their memory and honour.

## Kamla: Let each chart their own destiny

OPPOSITION Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar said each person in Trinidad and Tobago should be free to chart their own path, under an umbrella of the principles of freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights.

In her message for Indian Arrival Day, celebrated on Tuesday, she said: “Indian Arrival Day serves as a powerful reminder of the struggles, sacrifices, and triumphs of our ancestors who arrived on these shores in 1845. Their journey was not an easy one, and upon arrival, they faced the challenges of adapting to a new land, a new language, and new conditions.”

She said they persevered against seemingly insurmountable hardships, with a spirit of resilience and a determination to build a better future for themselves and their descendants.

“We stand here, beneficiaries of their enduring legacy. We owe it to their memory to ensure that their contributions are not forgotten, but cherished and celebrated.”

She said East Indians have played an integral role in shaping the nation's cultural, social, economic, and political fabric, excelling from the fields to the boardrooms, and from the classrooms to the courtrooms.

“Today East Indian culture is dyed in the wool into the culture and identity

of TT.

“However, while we take this moment to celebrate, we must also recognize that our work is not yet complete.

“Ours is a diverse nation, with a tapestry of different cultures, languages, and traditions. It is in this diversity that our true strength lies.”

The opposition leader advocated the power of unity, inclusivity and social justice.

“We must strive for equality, justice, and fairness for all citizens, regardless of their background or heritage.”

Every person – regardless of their ancestry – must have equal access to opportunities, quality education, healthcare, and a chance to thrive, Persad-Bissessar said.

“As we celebrate Indian Arrival Day, let us also reflect on the principles of freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights. Let us stand together against any form of discrimination, prejudice, or intolerance.

“The essence of Indian Arrival Day is that every single person has a right to chart their own destiny and prosperity free from the authoritarian control of others.

“I am proud that the party I lead continues to fight for the democratic rights of all citizens of TT.”

She urged the Government to renew



T&T Opposition leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar

its commitment to promoting social cohesion and inclusive development.

“We need policies that empower all citizens and provide a level playing field for everyone to succeed. Let us work together to create an environment where every individual can fulfil their potential, irrespective of their heritage or the circumstances of their birth.

“In conclusion, I extend my warmest wishes to the Indian community on this Indian Arrival Day.”

Saying the struggles and achievements of the ancestors must be honoured, Persad-Bissessar said, “Together, let us forge a future that upholds the values of equality, justice, and unity.”



# Sammy: Spin killing Windies, but success not far away

DESPITE acknowledging a vulnerability against spin bowling, new West Indies white-ball coach Darren Sammy does not think the regional team is “far off” from being world-beaters again.

On May 12, 2023 Sammy was appointed West Indies T20 and One-Day International (ODI) coach.

Andre Coley, who was the West Indies interim coach for all three formats since Phil Simmons resigned in late 2022, was named the Test coach.

West Indies are ranked seventh in the T20 format and tenth in ODIs, but Sammy is confident a change in fortunes is not a lofty goal.

Sammy knows how it feels to reach the pinnacle of world cricket as he led West Indies to two World T20 titles in 2012 and 2016.

In his first interview with journalists after being appointed, Sammy said, “Numbers don’t lie. We are at number nine and number eight respectively,” Sammy said, quoting out-of-date rankings.

“We are (ranked) there for a reason.

We have not been consistent enough, but when I look at the data ahead of me, what we have done in the last five years, what we have done in the last few years (and) where we have been losing games at different stages, we are not far off, and that (gives me) excitement.”

Sammy said one or two poor periods in a match often cost West Indies matches.

“When I look at what openers are doing in the world versus what we are doing – we are not far off. Different stages of the game where spin is killing us between overs number 11 to 40 is areas we can improve...”

"When I look at the one percenters, if we could improve in certain areas and just be more aware of the situation, probably a different mindset, better skills, better executions – we are not far off.”

Sammy said he has embraced the task at hand. “I understand the challenges that come with the role, but in doing so it is not one that fears me. I am quite excited about the challenges because (of) what we have, and under-



WI white-ball coach Darren Sammy

standing the task at hand.”

The St Lucian icon said once he understands what the job requires he believes he can succeed. He said he will keep positive people around him and ignore the detractors.

“Block out the noise because I have had to do that throughout my career.”

The new West Indies white-ball coach said it must be a collective effort in improving the performance of West Indies.

“My coaching style is similar to my captaincy style. The first thing I said when I spoke to my staff, I said when we pack our bags, leave the ego at home... Yes I am the head coach, but it takes a

team effort in order to move things forward.” He said cricket is not tennis or golf where it is one individual.

Sammy said he must be in sync with both T20 captain Rovman Powell and ODI captain Shai Hope.

Players understanding their role is key to stronger performances, said Sammy.

“One of the things we are quite clear on is just having that positive mindset in the dressing room, making sure that role definition is quite clear with the players. With that comes accountability, it gives you that sense of where we are heading with clear roles for different players.”

## CWI makes changes to ODI, A team squads

CRICKET West Indies' (CWI) senior men’s selection panel has announced changes to the West Indies A Team squad and West Indies ODI squad.

For the ongoing A team series in Bangladesh, left-arm spinner Veerasammy Permaul will travel to Sylhet as cover for fellow left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie, who has been ruled out of the remainder of the three-match series with a lower back injury.

Motie will travel to Dubai ahead of the West Indies three-match One-Day International (ODI) series against the United Arab Emirates at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. He will not play, but will receive treatment from the medical staff with the aim of being available for the International Cricket Council (ICC) Men’s Cricket World Cup qualifiers in Zimbabwe, which start on June 18.

Off-spinner Kevin Sinclair, who is in Bangladesh with the A team, will replace Motie in the 15-member ODI

squad for the series against UAE. Experienced batter Johnson Charles has also been called into the ODI squad as a replacement for Devon Thomas.

Thomas has been provisionally suspended from playing cricket owing to charges brought by the ICC Anti-Corruption Unit under the Anti-Corruption codes. Lead selector Desmond Haynes said, “We were forced to make some changes to the squads, and this has presented opportunities for players to come in. Sinclair has been in good form all year and has taken that to the A team series in Bangladesh. Permaul and Charles are experienced players and they will be able to quickly adapt to the conditions and fit into the environment in Sylhet and Sharjah.”

Haynes added, “Motie is a key part of our plans for the ICC Cricket World Cup qualifiers in Zimbabwe, so we are hopeful he will make a full recovery for that tournament.”

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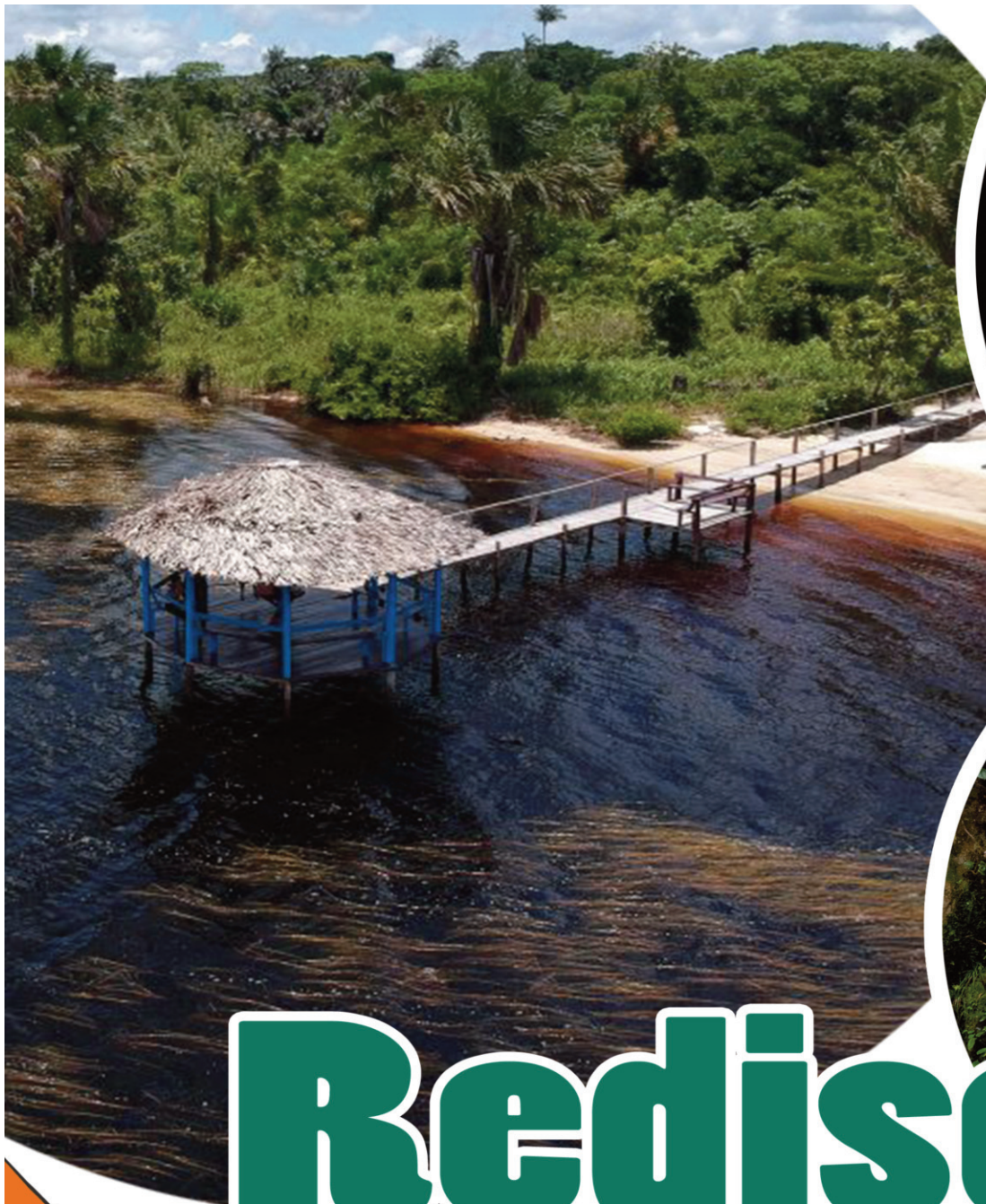
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