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Guyana targets Diaspora to fill labour gap

NEW YORK: Some 16 Guyanese Private Sector companies were part of a Diaspora Job Fair in New York on Saturday seeking to recruit persons to take up vacant positions in their companies.

Foreign Secretary Robert Persaud, while delivering the keynote address, noted that this is a fulfillment of a commitment made by President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali to host Job Fairs in different parts of the globe to reach out to the Guyanese diaspora.

“What we are undertaking here is part of an ongoing campaign to ensure that one, our people are adequately updated on developments within our country but also and very importantly that the people of Guyana and Guyanese are not spectators to the transformation taking place, but rather we want them to be drivers, to be leaders and key beneficiaries of the progress and the transformation and the development and the prosperity that is taking place in our country,” the Foreign Secretary stated.

He noted that these same opportunities are open to Guyanese living in Guyana, however companies, despite



Government and Private Sector representatives at the Diaspora Job Fair

constant recruitment are facing difficulties finding people to fill vacant positions.

He noted that the International Office on Migration did a study a year and a half ago. Currently, there is work being undertaken by an Indian expert within the Ministry of Labour to assess what are the skills needed in the various sectors. The expert is also looking at the existing gaps and strategies that

can be undertaken to fill those gaps.

“The number they came up with is in the vicinity of 100 thousand persons and that was a year and a half ago,” he said

He noted that the job fair is being facilitated to help the private sector.

“Why we are doing it, is because we do not have the resident skills and capacity to ensure that the transformation and the pace at which the president

and the people of Guyana want the country to go, we do not have the people right now in Guyana to do that,” he stated.

Therefore, instead of recruiting non-Guyanese to fill those roles, a deliberate conscious and sustained effort is being made to reach out to the diaspora which is over a million people in different parts of the world.

He noted that because of the political crisis, over 30 thousand Venezuelans are living in Guyana.

“Were it not for their input and their support, many of the projects would have not been undertaken, so why is it should we not make a very aggressive push to go to the diaspora and ensure that they too come back and to play their part in the development of our country,” Persaud stated.

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Annual flu shot to change with the times after strain of B virus vanishes

A strain of seasonal influenza has completely vanished globally since March 2020, and due to its disappearance, health officials in Canada are changing up the annual flu vaccine.

The B/Yamagata influenza strain, once a dominant force among influenza B viruses, may have vanished entirely due to the stringent measures imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). No cases have been confirmed across the globe since March 2020.

Due to the strain’s disappearance, NACI announced on July 26 that expert groups have endorsed removing the B/Yamagata component from influenza vaccine formulations. As a result, Canada’s flu vaccine will shift from a quadrivalent to a trivalent formula.

“As of March 2020, following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of measures to reduce the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, there have been no confirmed detections of naturally circulating B/Yamagata lineage viruses worldwide, including in Canada,” NACI said in the statement.

“Based on current epidemiological data, there is global expert consensus that B/Yamagata virus strains should be removed from influenza vaccine formulations and that manufacturing should transition to trivalent vaccines exclusively,” it added.

Before the strains disappeared, there were four strains of seasonal influenza circulating: two from influenza A (H1N1 and H3N2) and two from influenza B (B/Victoria and B/Yamagata).

Since the 2014 to 2015 flu season, Canada has used quadrivalent influenza vaccines containing strains from both influenza B lineages (B/Victoria and B/Yamagata) to offer protection against circulating influenza B viruses.

Although influenza A is usually the dominant strain, both influenza A and B contribute to seasonal epidemics. Despite its lower overall prevalence, influenza B can still pose a significant burden in Canada, accounting for up to

44 per cent of reported laboratory detections in some seasons, according to NACI.

“In November, December and into January, we mostly see influenza A. And then in the latter part of the season, January, February and tailing off through March, we’ll see a little bit more influenza B,” explained infectious diseases specialist Dr. Isaac Bogoch.

“If you look at the absolute number of cases, we usually have way more influenza A compared to influenza B, but B starts to show up a little bit later on in the season.”

He said that while the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of influenza A and B are the same, what differs is their epidemiology. This difference in epidemiology might explain why B/Yamagata disappeared while other strains persisted.

The B/Yamagata strain was first discovered in Japan in the late 1980s. It began spreading globally and became a predominant influenza strain in North America by the early 2000s.

By the 2014 to 2015 flu season, Canada had added the B/Yamagata strain to its seasonal flu vaccine, making it a quadrivalent formula to protect against more influenza types.

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In Canada and globally, between 2012 and 2017, B/Yamagata viruses caused a larger proportion of influenza B infections than B/Victoria, NACI said. However, two years before the COVID-19 pandemic, the B/Yamagata lineage started becoming dominant.

Then, in March 2020, it seemingly vanished.

“During the darkest days of COVID, we stopped detecting one of the two influenza B strains and that was B/Yamagata,” Bogoch said. “Was it hiding out somewhere or was it just circulating in lower levels? Was it going to somehow emerge later on? Those are questions that were asked at that time. But, it didn’t seem to come back.”

Although it has disappeared, Bo-



Dr. Isaac Bogoch

goch emphasized that this does not mean the strain is eradicated, as eliminating any virus is extremely challenging.

But there are theories about what happened to it.

The first theory relates to the public health measures implemented at the start of the pandemic.

A 2022 study published in Nature, argued that since April 2020, many countries have seen historically low seasonal influenza virus circulation, attributable to quarantines, social distancing, school and workplace closures, mask-wearing, surface disinfection and enhanced hand hygiene.

Bogoch suggested that another fac-

tor contributing to the B/Yamagata strain’s disappearance could be the “massive drop in human mobility” during the pandemic.

“If you look at international travel, passenger volumes and human mobility patterns during that time, they were a tiny fraction of what they are normally” he explained.

“And when you look at how seasonal influenza is transmitted, it goes from the southern hemisphere and then it works up its way into the northern hemisphere during our winter months, and then back to the southern hemisphere during their winter months and ping-pongs back and forth.”



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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

Maduro's "win"

It should be no surprise to anyone who has been paying attention to the Venezuelan election that the incumbent, Nicolas Maduro, has declared himself the winner in Sunday's poll.

Prior to the election, Maduro sent very clear signals that he would not entertain any opposition, filing dubious charges against Opposition powerhouse Maria Corina Machado and allowing only a select few international observers to monitor the polls for fairness and accuracy.

Within hours of the voting being closed, Maduro declared himself the winner with 51 percent of the votes.

Almost immediately, Venezuelans across the country began protesting, as Machado and her candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez, claimed they had trounced the incumbent by a more than two-to-one margin.

Maduro's government hasn't taken lightly to the criticism and ratcheted up their attacks on their opponents Tuesday, with some allies suggesting the opposition's most influential leader and a presidential candidate be arrested.

The unimpeachable Carter Center, one of the world's foremost election observer groups, said it was unable to verify the results of the presidential election, blaming authorities for a

"complete lack of transparency" in declaring Maduro the winner without providing any individual polling tallies.

The statement Tuesday night by the Atlanta-based group is perhaps the harshest rebuke yet of Venezuela's chaotic election process because it comes from one of just a handful of outside groups invited by the Maduro government to observe the vote.

"The electoral authority's failure to announce disaggregated results by polling station constitutes a serious breach of electoral principles," the Carter Center said. The group, which had a technical mission of 17 experts spread out in four cities across Venezuela, added that the election did not meet international standards and "cannot be considered democratic."

As protests continue to cripple Venezuela's already fragile economy, there are fears that this election could have severe consequences for the country's neighbours in the region.

Trinidad and Tobago, the closest island nation to the Venezuelan mainland, is already bracing for a new influx of Venezuelans fleeing Maduro's regime.

The nation, located just 7 miles off the Venezuelan coast, has already been overrun by some of the 7.7 million

Venezuelans who fled the country since 2014, the largest exodus of nationals in the country's turbulent history.

Other Caribbean nations are also bracing for an influx of Venezuelans.

In Guyana, Maduro's "victory" could spell years of trouble ahead, as he is the one who has been spearheading the dubious claim on one-third of Guyana's territory.

Maduro has dredged up age-old claims that have already been settled internationally to lay claim on Essequibo ... only after Guyana and its partners spent billions of dollars exploring the area for oil.

Now that the resource has been found in abundance, Maduro is staking a claim on the land and the waters in the territory, hoping of course to boost his country's flailing economy.

There's little doubt that he will continue to pursue the claim now that he has "won" the election.

The refugee issue, as well as the oil issue, keeps Maduro firmly in the eyes of the world's largest superpower.

On Tuesday, the USA signaled that it had no intention of allowing Maduro to get away with stealing the election.

United States President Joe Biden and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio

Lula da Silva spoke by phone and agreed that Venezuela must release the election data, saying the election's outcome "represents a critical moment for democracy in the hemisphere," according to a White House summary of the call.

Biden and Lula "agreed on the need for immediate release of full, transparent, and detailed voting data at the polling station level by the Venezuelan electoral authorities," it said.

Given Maduro's strongman attitude, we are almost certain he will continue to defy the concerns of the world over his political manoeuvres, especially since he already has one strong ally, Russia, in his corner.

The rigging of the election in Venezuela is reminiscent of what happened in Russia recently, where Vladimir Putin not just imprisoned the opposition, but allegedly went so far as to murder his strongest opponent, before declaring himself the winner of Russia's Presidential election.

The people of Venezuela, however, have other ideas, and they vow to keep up the protests until Maduro allows their votes to be fairly counted.

Let's hope that Vox Populi saves the day.

Time to draw the hard line

Dear Editor,

JUDICIAL overreach has now been paired with unbelievable arrogance from Judge Gino Persaud, who, in response to clear submissions that argue that the courts should cede authority on what can/should be done with PetroCaribe funds owed to the Venezuelan government by the Government of Guyana, declared, "I do not agree with the public policy argument as articulated and advanced by the Attorney-General".

My view is that the judge may disagree with the public policy, but must respect it and its sanctity as beyond his power and reach. A judge cannot encroach onto the power of the Executive to make public-policy decisions.

Justice Persaud confined himself to following what courts decided in other countries, including Jamaica. The judge might want to note that Jamaica has no border with Venezuela, and is not threatened by a war of invasion and annexation with that country.

The law does not operate in a vacuum; the government is aware of the laws that would usually apply if a company has arbitration judgment against a government and is seeking to levy on assets around the globe, but what is different with this case is the border controversy that exists with Guyana and Venezuela, and the precarious position that any change in relations could provoke.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is hearing the case between the

two nations, and has accepted the Argyll Declaration into evidence (this agreement says neither country will take any action that would aggravate the other and increase tensions). Any child can see and understand that adherence to Justice Persaud's judgment can be used by the Venezuelan government to claim Guyana has broken the agreement.

I am of the firm view that President Irfaan Ali must draw the line here. Guyanese lives and two-thirds of her territory are put at risk with this judgment delivered by Justice Persaud, and when we add the ignorance and arrogance included within the language of the judge's pronouncements, it has to be cast in a dustbin publicly, and along with that must come a Presidential ad-

monition to the judiciary to stay within their lane. It is a matter of life and death; Guyanese lives, Guyanese land, Guyana the country, the shape and size, the history, the culture are all threatened by a judgment that ignores realities on the ground.

I am in total agreement with calling this judgment "unpatriotic", but would go further and call it "unthinking"; the product of a failed education system that relies on rote learning with not enough emphasis on 'reasoning'. It is imperative that President Ali draws the hard line before we suffer a great loss because of a decision made in a Georgetown courtroom.

Yours sincerely,
Robin Singh



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Edmonton man jailed for 5 years in the UK for acts of terrorism

British radical Islamist preacher Anjem Choudary, whose followers have been linked to numerous plots around the world, was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum of 28 years on Tuesday for directing a terrorist organization.

The same judge sentenced Khaled Hussein, 29, of Edmonton, to five years in prison for membership in a proscribed organization, with an additional year of probation.

Choudary, 57, was convicted last week of directing Al-Muhajiroun (ALM), also known as the Islamic Thinkers Society. The group was banned as a terrorist organization more than a decade ago.

Prosecutors said Hussein was a dedicated supporter of ALM.

Both men were arrested a year ago after Hussein landed at Heathrow Airport.

"Organizations such as yours normalize violence in support of an ideological cause," Judge Mark Wall told Choudary at London's Woolwich Crown Court on Tuesday.

"Their existence gives individuals who are members of them the courage to commit acts which otherwise they might

not do. They drive wedges between people who otherwise could and would live together in peaceful coexistence."

Wall imposed a life sentence on Choudary with a minimum term of 28 years before he can be eligible for parole, less just over the year that he has spent in custody since his arrest.

During the trial, the U.K. court heard that Hussein had been a member of Al-Muhajiroun for at least two years and had been in close contact with Choudary, "in effect working for him."

Prosecutor Tom Little described Choudary as having a "warped and twisted mindset," and said in court that he had stepped in to lead ALM after Omar Bakri Muhammad, the group's founder, was imprisoned in Lebanon between 2014 and March 2023.

Once Britain's most high-profile Islamist preacher, Choudary drew attention for praising the men responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and saying he wanted to convert Buckingham Palace into a mosque.

He was previously imprisoned in Britain in 2016 for encouraging support for Islamic State, before being released in 2018 after serving half of his five-and-a-half-year sentence.



Anjem Choudary, left, and Khaled Hussein



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The Paradox of Accountability and Integrity



Joel Bhagwandin

In his Accountability Watch Column in the Stabroek News (SN) edition of July 29, 2024, former Auditor General (AG), Dr. Anand Goolsarran continues to cleverly cast unjustifiable aspersions towards the undersigned, viz-à-viz, his paradoxically convoluted ramblings. It would be remiss of the undersigned to leave these unaddressed, among other things he said—worthy of deconstruction.

He disclosed that there was an email exchange between the undersigned and himself, to which he described as a “fruitful exchange”. Unfortunately, the readers did not have the benefit of that “fruitful exchange” to which he refers. The undersigned is therefore compelled to divulge the full context of the exchange. First, it is important to note that the only reason there was an email exchange between him, and the undersigned was because SN, as expected, inordinately sanitized one of the undersigned’s previous responses to him, such that it was ridiculously unrecognizable. Hence, to ensure that he was privy to the original response, it was emailed to him by the undersigned.

The former AG took great offence to a comment in one of the undersigned’s letters in the media, citing other accountants who publicly registered concerns on whether he possessed the relevant qualification and experience to conduct the forensic audits. So, the former AG in his first email to the undersigned, attached his curriculum vitae, which I never opened and read (btw). But, in a subsequent letter, it was pointed out to him that this author withdrew the statement. For ease of reference I wrote the following (Guyana Chronicle, July 26, 2024):

“[f]or my part, therefore, I have no difficulty to voluntarily withdraw the said “cited and paraphrased” assertion. Might I add, too, that only those who uphold the highest level of

professional integrity and ethical standards would volunteer to withdraw a previous statement that was the subject of correction and/or clarification. As for his part, his reluctance to withdraw his incorrect and misguided assertions concerning me, is duly noted.”

To date, the former AG refuses to withdraw comments and aspersions he made about the undersigned publicly. This leaves much to be desired in so far as his integrity, credibility, and character are concerned. It is not that the undersigned is immune to criticism as he posited. As a matter of fact, it bothers me not, whether or not he chooses to withdraw or not. Rather, the modus operandi of the undersigned is to mainly expose his lack of credibility and shallow integrity.

To this end, he has refused to acknowledge that the undersigned has demonstrated the highest level of ethical conduct by recusing myself whenever a conflict of interest arose at the Public Procurement Commission (PPC) that involves the undersigned. I have done this twice, which the PPC has confirmed officially in a response to questions raised by SN. He has also disregarded the fact that there was no conflict of interest with my former business relations with ExxonMobil Guyana (EMGL) and the PPC, considering that the operations of EMGL are governed by the 2016 Petroleum Agreement, the Petroleum Activities Act, the Local Content Act, and the Environmental Protection Act. Whereas the PPC’s functions and mandate concerns the oversight responsibility, monitoring and compliance, among others, in relation to public procurement, pursuant to the Procurement Act (2003).

Additionally, he refused to accept and acknowledge altogether that he erred in his interpretation of the undersigned’s status as a commissioner, whereby he was of the incorrect view that a commissioner is an

employee of the Government. It was explained to him that in accordance with the Constitution of Guyana, constitutional office holders are not employees of the Government, and that there is no employment contract as well.

In the said email exchange, the former AG denied having any affiliation with any political party, namely, the Alliance for Change (AFC), although he admitted to having a longstanding and close relationship with the AFC’s executive member and former leader, Khemraj Ramjattan. He also admitted that his son, Michael Goolsarran was a prominent national candidate for the AFC, contending the general and regional elections in 2006.

In a clever, but failed attempt to extricate himself of his complicit participation as a financial beneficiary, in the purposeful breach of the Procurement Act in relation to the forensic audit contracts, he contends that the award was lawfully done under the restricted tender provision and not sole-sourcing. This, however, is disingenuously inaccurate. The Auditor General’s Report stated that based on documents seen, the contracts were awarded under the sole-sourcing method, which was approved by the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). Furthermore, even the restricted methodology would have been unlawful since a total of eighteen accountants and auditing firms were awarded contracts to perform the forensic audits. The restricted tendering methodology is reserved strictly for instances where there are few suppliers of certain goods and services. This was not the case given that most of the audit firms, if not all of the audit firms in Guyana have the capability to perform special audits of this nature.

Accordingly, the correct methodology would have been the open tendering process.

As such, his explanation pro-

vided that these audits were urgent to facilitate the transition is arguably inexcusable and unacceptable.

Dr. Goolsarran further implicated himself when he disclosed that he advised the former finance minister, Winston Jordan, that he should not refer to the audits as “forensic audits”, because there were no allegations of fraud.

The question arises, therefore, how come he did not advice the former minister that he was breaching the Procurement Act in the award of those contracts?

Finally, it was brought to his attention the exhibition of his inconsistencies in addressing issues of “conflict of interest” concerning the undersigned, in contrast to other more legitimate, glaring, and evident issues of conflict of interest as regards the AFC: (i) the AFC’s leader and EMGL and (ii) an Executive Member of the AFC, who is also a member of the PPC. It was only after forcing the issue, he opted to address this in a convoluted manner, refusing to even name the individual, which was quite contrary to the manner in which he addressed the undersigned. Moreover, in relation to the conflict of interest involving the AFC leader and EMGL, the former AG sees no conflict of interest whatsoever, therein, although the AFC leader is an aspiring Presidential candidate, and although the AFC has a number of seats in the National Assembly.

So much so for Dr. Goolsarran’s credibility and integrity.

“The greatness of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires, but in his integrity and his ability to affect those around him positively.” — Bob Marley.

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Guyana showcases climate-finance model at Amazonian Forever Summit

GUYANA has once again made its mark on the world stage when Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat presented the country’s innovative climate-finance model at the recent Amazonian Forever Summit held in Belem, Brazil.

A press release from the ministry noted that Minister Bharrat took centre stage to share Guyana’s ground-breaking approach to balancing economic development with environmental sustainability. At the heart of this approach lies the country’s Low Carbon Development Strategy, which has garnered international attention for its effective ecosystem valuation of forests.

During his address, Minister Bharrat highlighted Guyana’s impressive progress in climate action, particularly noting the country’s success in maintaining a low deforestation rate. This achievement underscores Guyana’s commitment to preserving its vast rainforests, while pursuing economic growth.

The minister detailed the evolution of Guyana’s climate-finance model, explaining how it transitioned from relying on international public finance to embracing a market-based mechanism with private finance. He announced that Guyana has earned US\$224 million under a bilateral agreement with the Government of Norway, based on verified results in forest conservation and sustainable management.

In a significant development,



Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat at the Amazonian Summit

Minister Bharrat revealed that Guyana recently finalised a market-based agreement for the sale of carbon credits worth over US\$750 million. This landmark deal not only validates Guyana’s approach, but it also sets a precedent for other nations seeking to monetise their conservation efforts.

Looking ahead, Minister Bharrat outlined the priorities for Guyana and the broader Amazon region in upcoming international forums. He emphasised the importance of the Conference of Parties meeting (CoP 16) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, scheduled to be held in Colombia later this year, and the UNFCCC Meeting

(CoP 30), set for Belem, Brazil in 2025. These platforms will be crucial for highlighting the importance of climate finance, forest protection and the preservation of vital ecosystems, including watersheds and biodiversity.

The minister stressed the need for a scalable, replicable, and sustainable model for climate finance that aligns with a low-carbon development approach. He positioned Guyana’s model as a potential blueprint for other nations to follow, showcasing how a small country can make a significant impact on global climate action.

This presentation at the Amazonian Forever Summit marks a pivotal

moment in regional co-operation on climate issues. By sharing its successful model, Guyana is not only asserting its leadership in sustainable development, but it is also encouraging other Amazonian countries to adopt similar, innovative approaches.

As the world grapples with the urgent need for effective climate action, countries such as those in the Amazon will continue to collaborate. The international community will undoubtedly be watching closely as Guyana continues to refine and implement its ground-breaking climate-finance model.

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Ali praised for his chairmanship of Caricom as he hands over reins

SIGNIFICANT achievements have been made over the last few months in various areas in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) during President, Dr Irfaan Ali’s tenure as Chairman of the bloc.

This was highlighted by CARICOM Secretary-General, Dr. Carla Barnett, during the opening ceremony of the 47th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community at St George’s University, Grenada, on Sunday.

According to Dr. Barnett, since the last face-to-face meeting of the heads which was held in Guyana in February, the community has been guided by decisiveness, determination and energy by the outgoing chair, President Ali.

“There have been notable achievements under his chairmanship, including increased engagement with Africa and the Middle East, advances on initiatives to increase the region’s food and nutrition security and arrangements to widen the membership of CARICOM,” Dr. Barnett said.

She added that there have also been other notable advances in other areas, including managing the crises in CARICOM member state, Haiti, where a transitional presidential council has been established through which a new cabinet was appointed.

As such, she said the critical role played by CARICOM Heads of Government and the Eminent Persons Group in bringing Haiti to the point of a transitional government must be noted.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General added that there are several critical dis-



CARICOM Secretary-General Dr Carla Barnett

cussions and decisions to be made at the 47th meeting of the heads.

She said: “The free movement of nationals in the community, the provision of a reliable and cost-effective regional transportation system, establishment of the CARICOM single market and economy, economic and political co-operation and common market instruments, as our countries reinforce resilience and growth, it is critical that

this 47th regular meeting advances these and other discussions and decisions intrinsic to the objectives of CARICOM integration.”

With that, she went on to add that the Caribbean’s integration movement has entered into the second half of its journey to a century, as CARICOM celebrated its 50th-anniversary last year.

“As we celebrated our 50th anniversary during last year, we took stock

of our achievements and evaluated our faithfulness to the ideals of our integration movement, even as we acknowledge that there is still much more work to be done,” she expressed.

Further, Dr Barnett indicated that there is no denying that there are many noteworthy successes, as CARICOM has led and supported hemispheric and global measures that have influenced the thinking of major countries.

Dental Centre upgrade

I am delighted to announce that significant upgrades and modernization efforts are being carried out at the Cheddi Jagan Dental Centre on Carmichael Street. In our commitment to providing top-notch dental care, we have recently installed state-of-the-art dental chairs, a cutting-edge X-ray machine, a sophisticated dental CT scanner, and various other advanced equipment. These enhancements are expected to raise the standard of care and significantly improve the institution's overall quality of services.

Dr. Frank Anthony (Minister of Health, Guyana)





NEW LAB: The new pathology laboratory at the GPHC offers a faster turnaround time in processing biopsy samples, digital pathology, real-time consultation for surgeons, and advanced immunohistochemistry, such as the ER receptor, PR receptor, HER 2 receptor, Ki67 receptor, CD3 receptor, CD4 receptor, D20 receptor, CD30 receptor, and CD79a receptor. This has greatly improved the national diagnostic capabilities in Guyana.

Fast track to home-ownership on mark

MORE than \$240 billion has been expended to make home-ownership more affordable in Guyana, and according to President Dr. Irfaan Ali, this has resulted in over 35,000 houselots being distributed and persons benefitting from crucial infrastructural development.

Dr. Ali, during a video broadcast on Sunday, said that the government has simultaneously been investing in the country’s infrastructure, enhancing road networks, and improving the availability

of water and electricity.

“Housing does not come by itself. It comes with infrastructure to support housing schemes. To support these new housing schemes and these 35,000 houselots and homes that we’ve invested in, we have built 414 kilometers of new roads, 250 kilometers of new water transmission mains and more than 2,200 kilometers of electricity transmission lines,” President Ali said.

The People’s Progressive

Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government, he highlighted, has implemented measures to make home-ownership more affordable, including subsidies and lower interest rates.

Already over 3,000 houses have been delivered, with a focus on low- and moderate-income segments, and the government is expanding the housing programme to reach every part of the population

“An average low-income house lot

is subsidised by almost \$4.2 million and we brought down interest rates.... This has led to an increase of about eight to 10 per cent in new housing loans at a value of \$56 billion,” he said adding:

“We built more than 3,000 homes, more than 1,000 low-income housing at a cost of more than \$5.9 billion, more than 400 moderate-income homes, 100 middle-income homes and more than 1000 young professional homes.”

The World Guyanese Congress (WGC) is a federally incorporated non-partisan global organisation that represents the interests of citizens of Guyanese heritage around the world. The organisation focuses on the successful development of our communities globally with an emphasis on leadership development and collaborative activities in diaspora communities to strengthen the community worldwide.

The organisation is headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and led by a Chairman and Executive Committee supported by an Advisory Council and various Committees as well as a Board of Governors that acts as ambassadors for the organisation. It has nine national and regional chapters:

Key priorities of the WGC include:

- Build a globally cohesive community with a focus on youth and women in business and civic leadership worldwide.
- Support social entrepreneurship and civic engagement in communities around the world.
- Engage diaspora communities in the social and economic development of Guyana.

World Guyanese Congress
5200 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M2N 5P6



To find out more about World Guyanese Congress and our goals and priorities. Scan the QR code, or visit www.wgc-org.com

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Witness details brazen attempts to ‘add votes for APNU+AFC, deduct votes for PPP/C’

MINISTER of Local Government and Regional Development Sonia Parag was the first key witness to take the stand in the long-awaited trial concerning the alleged fraud during Guyana’s 2020 General and Regional Elections.

The trial of those accused of conspiring to defraud the electorate of Guyana by declaring a false account of votes commenced Monday morning before Senior Magistrate Leron Daly at the Georgetown Magistrates’ Courts.

Charged are People’s National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) activist Carol Smith-Joseph; former Health Minister under the A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance for Change (APNU+AFC) government, Volda Lawrence; former Chief Elections Officer (CEO) at the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) Keith Lowenfield; former Deputy CEO Roxanne Myers; former Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica) Returning Officer Clairmont Mingo; and GECOM employees Sheffern February, Enrique Livan, Denise Babb-Cummings, and Michelle Miller.

Together, they are facing 19 conspiracy charges. All of them were present in court, except Miller, who appeared virtually via Zoom from the USA, where she is caring for a sick family member.

It is alleged that between March 2, 2020 and August 2, 2020, Lowenfield, Myers and Mingo, while in Georgetown, conspired with the other six defendants and others, to defraud the electorate of Guyana by declaring a false account of the votes cast at the highly contentious elections.

During her lengthy testimony, Minister Parag, who’s also an attorney-at-law, detailed the actions and behaviours of former key GECOM officials, specifically highlighting the alleged misconduct she observed and protested against.

As a Candidate of Poll for the People’s Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) in the 2020 elections, she testified that she was sent to the GECOM Command Centre at the Ashmins Building on High Street, Georgetown at 08:00 hours on March 3, 2020, along with other foreign and local observers to watch the tabulation of votes for Region/District Four (Demerara-Mahaica), which is Guyana’s largest voting district.

She explained that she was tasked with “comparing numbers” on her party’s Statements of Poll (SOPs) to those that Mingo was calling out during the tabulation process. The tabulation process, according to her, was suspended at 21:00 hours after Mingo complained of being tired.

Minister Parag recounted seeing Miller and Ms. Bowman (only name given) of GECOM when she went back to the Command Centre the next day.



Minister of Local Government and Regional Development Sonia Parag

She testified that Myers, the Deputy Chief Election Officer at the time, told her that Miller and Ms. Bowman would continue with the tabulation process. She mentioned that Lawrence was present as well.

Providing evidence of a pattern of purported collaboration and fraudulent activities intended to rig the election results, Parag said: “I objected by saying that the numbers that you [GECOM staff] have, are not the numbers I have. I proceeded to call out loudly the numbers that I had on the Statements of Poll in my possession. But the GECOM staff (name disclosed) paused a bit and continued.”

Minister Parag described hearing whispers from those seated nearby as she continued to voice her objections.

“As the process continued, numbers were being called by the GECOM staff. And again, I compared the numbers to the Statements of Poll I had in my possession and I objected... The numbers being called are adding votes for the APNU+AFC and deducting votes for the PPP/C,” Minister Parag said she shouted.

Parag said that as she was saying this, other people were speaking loudly.

“I said, ‘Why are we using a spreadsheet and not Statements of Poll?’” she went on.

According to her, there was absolutely no response to her query.

She testified having heard Minister of Public Affairs Kwame McCoy yelling, “They are rigging this election!” as she was voicing her concerns.

McCoy was there to observe the tally process as well.

A New and United Guyana (ANUG) delegate Jonathan Yearwood

was among those who, according to her, were “shouting and calling for the Statements of Poll to be used” at this time in the “loud eruption of objections”.

Parag said that then Chief Election Officer Lowenfield entered the room, and once more she demanded that SOPs be utilised in the process.

Minister Parag told the court that she remembered Lowenfield saying that the spreadsheets had votes recorded from the SOPs.

As an election observer, she noted that Teni Housty, the then-President of the Bar Association of Guyana, read aloud Section 84 of the Representation of the People Act (RoPA) regarding the use of SOPs, and that she saw Lawrence using a spreadsheet.

Essentially, Section 84 mandates that the Returning Officer determine the total number of votes cast in support of each list, in accordance with the Statements of Poll.

Minister Parag said that a member of the GECOM staff had left the room and returned with what looked to be a SOP while she persisted in her protest against the use of spreadsheets in the tabulation process.

The witness said that when she was comparing the numbers on her SOPs with those being called by the GECOM workers, she loudly repeated the figures in Lowenfield’s presence.

In her testimony, Parag stated that only 421 of the 879 ballot boxes in District Four were counted, indicating that the tabulation process eventually “slowed down.”

She added that as of March 4, 2020, into the evening, they had reached box 471. She stated that GECOM employees “claimed they

were tired and the process was interrupted” at 21:00 hours.

Later on, she said the procedure was continued, but just two boxes were processed.

The minister stated that no tabulation was being done into the early hours of March 5, 2020, and that the process had been stopped altogether at roughly three in the morning.

Parag will continue will continue with his testimony when the court resumes for hearing on Tuesday morning, July 30, 2024 at 09:30 hours.

The prosecution team is being led by King’s Counsel Darshan Ramdhani, and includes King’s Counsel Thomas Astaphan, and Attorney-at-Law Latchmie Rahamat, among others.

The defendants’ lawyers include Ronald Daniels, Eusi Anderson, and Darren Wade.

The evidence for the prosecution includes certified copies of SOPs and Statements of Recount (SoRs), witness statements from at least 80 persons, along with video interviews and other documentation.

Edgar Thomas, the former police commander of Region Four (Demerara-Mahaica), forensic investigator Rawle Nedd, and head of the Diaspora Unit Rosalinda Rasul are among those who are expected to testify.

Prosecutor Ramdhani stated, in his opening statement, that each defendant had a “critical role” to play in the wilful endeavour to inflate votes for the APNU+AFC, and deflate votes for the PPP/C.

He submitted that in order to demonstrate the existence of a broad conspiracy, he will provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

According to Ramdhani’s submission, he would present evidence demonstrating that Mingo made a fraudulent declaration that was even placed on GECOM’s website, along with the part the other defendants played in assisting with the effort to rig the elections in the APNU+AFC’s favour.

The SOPs will be produced before the court to have their legitimacy confirmed.

The APNU+AFC Coalition received 171,825 votes, while the PPP/C received 166,343 votes, according to former CEO Lowenfield’s election report.

It was evident from the official findings of the recount process, which was supervised by GECOM and a high-level Caribbean Community (CARICOM) team that the coalition had received 217,920 votes, while the PPP/C had received 233,336 votes, which was enough to win.

In order to help the APNU+AFC caretaker administration stay in power, Mingo and the other defendants, allegedly inflated the results in Region Four, as the recount process also revealed.

More than US\$100M needed to rebuild region’s agriculture sector

THE Caribbean’s agricultural sector has been severely devastated by Hurricane Beryl, and more than US\$100 million will be needed for the Region to rebuild this vital sector, Guyana’s President and the outgoing Caribbean Community’s (CARICOM) Chairperson, Dr Irfaan Ali has said.

Dr. Ali, who is also the lead Head of Government with responsibility for agriculture, agricultural diversification and food security in the Region’s Quasi Cabinet, was at the time addressing the 47th Regular Meeting of the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government in St. Georges, Grenada, on Sunday.

“[The] damage to the agricultural sector alone is more than US\$100 million. And I’m not counting opportunity costs, because government now must reprioritise where they will spend the money,” President Ali said.

The reality now is that the sector will have to incur a budget cut, as funds will have to be redirected to rebuild in other sectors that have also been devastated by the category four storm.

Dr. Ali noted that prior to this natural disaster, the Region had been making progress in achieving both its regional and global food-security targets.

Referencing a recent regional report, Dr. Ali said that the Caribbean had reduced its food insecurity by 17 per cent since 2020.



Damage at the Port of Bridgetown in Barbados

Earlier in July, a category four Beryl made landfall on the islands of Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica and several others. Devastating damage to infrastruc-

ture were reported in the Grenadines and Grenada, while the fishing industry in Barbados took a ‘beating’ as over 200 vessels were destroyed during the passage of the storm.

“These were all islands that were on track mostly in achieving the 25 by 25 targets set by themselves,” President Ali had said in a previous address.

CARICOM had outlined several initiatives over the past years to reduce its mammoth US\$6 billion food-import bill.

The aim is to slash this expenditure by 25 per cent by the year 2025.

According to President Ali, there have been investments in the sectors — infrastructure, water systems, technology, crop variety, farm support and farm-to-market infrastructure; however, many of the states have lost these investments.

“Outside of this, you have hundreds of acres of commodities that were lost and production that was taken out instantaneously,” he said.

President Ali had said that while the “quick fix” will be to get food immediately to the islands that have been severely affected, a major concern will be ensuring that nutritional values are met.

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Guyana cementing status as regional investment hub

THE Caribbean Investment Forum 2024, held from July 10-12 at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre in Guyana, has solidified the nation’s reputation as a top investment hub. With over 400 delegates from more than 30 countries participating in over 200 business meetings and presentations, the forum showcased Guyana’s vast investment opportunities and vibrant economic potential.

The event invigorated Guyana’s local tourism and hospitality sectors, with city hotels experiencing high occupancy rates and catering services bustling with activity. The discussions centred on sustainable agriculture, green economy, and business digitisation, reflecting Guyana’s commitment to modern, sustainable development.

President Dr. Irfaan Ali set the tone for the forum, declaring Guyana an “investor’s paradise” and emphasising the nation’s attractive investment climate. Highlighting Guyana’s status as the world’s fastest-growing economy, President Ali pointed to the country’s rich resources, generous fiscal incentives, and strategic location as key reasons for investors to consider Guyana.

“Guyana is open for investments in agriculture, energy, forestry, ICT, manufacturing, mining, services, and tourism sectors,” President Ali stated. He assured attendees of Guyana’s commitment to democracy, transparency, and accountability, along with significant investments in social development, food security, climate resilience, and energy security.

Guyana’s infrastructure is undergoing rapid modernisation, creating numerous investment opportunities. The development of Silica City, the country’s first smart city, construction of seven new hospitals, new housing schemes, and the Gas-to-Energy Project promise cheap and reliable electricity. The country’s focus on environmental preservation, increased agricultural production, and promotion of tourism further highlight its comprehensive development strategy.

To support its burgeoning economy, Guyana has awarded over 20,000 scholarships for higher education and funded numerous technical training programmes, ensuring a skilled workforce ready to lead the country into the future.

Dr. Peter Ramsaroop, Chief Investment Officer and Head of the Guyana Office for Investment, likened Guyana to the Asian Tigers, nations renowned for their rapid economic growth. He dubbed Guyana the “Jaguar Economy,” highlighting its impressive economic trajectory and sustainable development efforts.

“Guyana’s Jaguar Economy is roar-

ing to life,” Dr. Ramsaroop declared, urging local businesses to partner with foreign companies and seize global market opportunities. He praised local investment projects in energy, hospitality, and agriculture as greenfield opportunities ripe for development.

Investors Simon Shaw, Ermath Harrington, and Sajjad Husain showcased innovative local projects, drawing significant interest. Shaw’s HUBU Aquafarm plans to upgrade its organic shrimp production facilities, Harrington’s HealthApp Solutions aims to make healthcare more accessible, and Husain’s GUYIMEX International Inc. is building a state-of-the-art food produc-

tion and storage facility to reduce food import dependency.

The forum concluded with a celebratory cocktail event hosted by President Ali at State House, followed by a day of tourism activities. Delegates enjoyed local cuisine, visits to historical sites, the majestic Kaieteur Falls, thrilling boat rides, and an immersion in indigenous culture, leaving them with unforgettable memories of Guyana.

With the Caribbean Investment Forum 2024 successfully concluded, Guyana now looks forward to hosting the International Business Conference in October and the Energy Conference in February next year.



Participants at the forum

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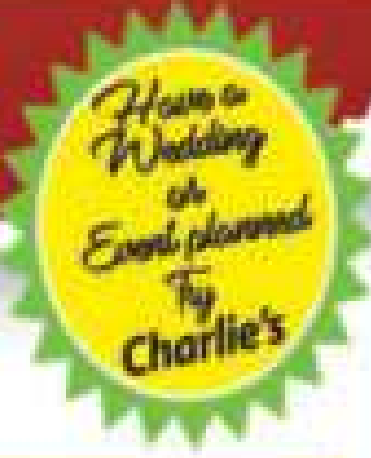
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Journey to Prosperity For All: **CELEBRATING FOUR YEARS OF DR. IRFAAN ALI’S GOVERNMENT**



Guyana stands at the threshold of a new era, a testament to the dynamic leadership of President Dr. Irfaan Ali. Under his guidance, the nation has not only witnessed a robust return to democracy but also an unprecedented wave of economic growth and strategic infrastructural development for national transformation.

The People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) administration has delivered on over 90 percent of its manifesto promises, laying the groundwork for a multi-dimensional economy that promises prosperity for all.

This newspaper spread celebrates the remarkable progress in key areas, highlighting how Guyana is forging a path to a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable future for every citizen.

UNPRECEDENTED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Under the People’s Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) administration’s policies, Guyana has achieved annual growth rates exceeding 20% from 2021 to 2023, solidifying its position as a global economic powerhouse.



DRIVING SUCCESS AMIDST CHALLENGES



Dr. Ali’s leadership guided Guyana through the COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 election turmoil, propelling the nation to become one of the world’s fastest-growing economies.

Guyana’s Annual GDP Growth (2020–2023)		
Year	Overall Real GDP	Non-Oil Real GDP
2020	43.5%	-7.3%
2021	20.1%	4.6%
2022	63.3%	11.5%
2023	33.0%	11.7%

LOCAL CONTENT EMPOWERING GUYANESE

The government’s local content policy has been a catalyst for economic transformation, turning the oil and gas sector into a significant job creator. Over 6,000 direct jobs and countless indirect opportunities have been generated, benefiting more than 800 Guyanese businesses, and contributing over US\$1 billion to the local economy.



UNLOCKING ECONOMIC POTENTIAL



Oil revenues have surged from US\$198.3 million in 2020 to a remarkable US\$1.6 billion in 2023, fueling critical investments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education. The Natural Resource Fund (NRF) Act, implemented in 2021, ensures responsible management of these resources.

Surge in Oil Revenue (2020–2023) (US\$ Million)			
Year	Government Share of Profit Oil	Royalties	Total NRF In-flows
2020	185.4	12.9	198.3
2021	357.2	52.0	409.2
2022	1,099.1	155.2	1,254.3
2023	1,398.9	218.1	1,617.0

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND TRANSPARENCY

Dr. Ali’s administration has prioritised environmental protection and transparency in the oil and gas sector. Rigorous Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are conducted for all projects, and the comprehensive 2023 Petroleum Act ensures robust oversight. Guyana has established comprehensive oil spill response plans, backed by a substantial US\$600 million environmental liability insurance, and a US\$2 billion guarantee from oil giant, ExxonMobil.

DIVERSIFICATION AND GROWTH

Beyond oil and gas, the government is driving economic diversification:



- Agriculture:** The sector is experiencing a resurgence through investments in technology, infrastructure, crop diversification, and farmers’ empowerment, including targeted programmes for women and youth.
- Manufacturing and Services:** These sectors are rapidly expanding, creating jobs and fostering

entrepreneurship through robust government policies, including grant programmes, loan guarantees, and business development training. Industrial estates support startups and small businesses with mentorship, training, and resources. Additionally, the government’s commitment to local businesses is evident in the allocation of 20% of government contracts to small contractors.

- Foreign Investment:** Strategic partnerships and strengthened chambers of commerce have boosted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), attracting both global brands, and homegrown success stories.



Annual Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Flows (2020–2023) (US\$ Millions)	
Year	FDI
2020	2,073.8
2021	4,468.1
2022	4,393.4
2023	7,197.9

Enhancing Financial Well-being and Living Standards

The expanding job market, driven by significant investment and government infrastructure projects, has created many opportunities for Guyanese. New call centres and job fairs have connected over 10,000 citizens with employers, while the National Pathway Workers Initiative has empowered over 11,000



participants, and is boosting the local economy. The government aims to create 50,000 tourism jobs by 2030, supported by the Hospitality and Tourism Training Institute (HTTI), which will significantly boost the tourism sector and overall economic growth.

Improvements for Public Servants

Public servants have seen significant improvements in their financial well-being. Since 2020, salaries have increased by a cumulative 23%, complemented by special bonuses, increased allowances, and one-off payments. Income tax relief, with the threshold raised to \$100,000, has provided additional financial breathing room. The government's commitment to fair labour practices is evident in the recovery of over \$162 million in owed wages since 2020.



Commitment to Improving Lives

Since 2020, the PPP/C administration has injected nearly \$200 billion into the economy, implementing fiscal measures to bolster household incomes, and stimulate various sectors. Key initiatives include:

- **2020:** Reversal of VAT on utilities and introduction of a COVID-19 relief grant
- **2021:** Zero-rated essential food items, and provision of housing tax concessions
- **2022:** Implementation of cost-of-living measures, and elimination of excise tax on fuel
- **2023:** Reduction in freight charges, and increase in the "Because We Care" cash grant
- **2024:** Removal of Excise tax on petroleum, and increase in Old Age Pension and Public Assistance

These measures have come at a significant cost, with expenditures estimated at over \$40 billion in 2020, \$10 billion in 2021, \$25 billion in 2022, \$50 billion in 2023, and surpassing \$70 billion in 2024.

Expanding Access and Quality in Education

Guyana is undergoing a significant transformation in education, with the budget rising from \$52 billion in 2020 to \$135.2 billion in 2024. This increase reflects the government's commitment to building a stronger education system for all students.



Infrastructure Expansion: To ensure quality education for every child, the government is constructing new schools and upgrading existing ones, particularly in underserved hinterland areas. This initiative is essential for achieving universal secondary education by 2025. New schools are being established in Regions 1 (Northwest, Hosororo, Waramuri, Matthew's Ridge, Kwebanna), 7 (Phillipai, Jawalla), 8 (Kopinang, Micobie, Parmakatoi, Monkey Mountain), and 9 (Karasabai, Aishalton, Nappi).

Empowering Students: The Because We Care + Uniform Assistance programme, extended to both public and private schools, provides financial support, increasing funding from \$744 million in 2020 to \$9.4 billion in 2024.



Nourishing Minds and Bodies: The school feeding programme's budget has grown from \$659 million in 2020 to \$4.9 billion in 2024, ensuring students receive nutritious meals.

Equipping Learners: Investments in textbooks have increased from \$506.1 million in 2021 to \$3 billion in 2024, with an additional \$4 billion between 2022 and 2023, allocated through the National School Grant to support teaching resources.



Innovative Education Programmes: STEM and Robotics: Initiatives like Robotics Hubs and STEM programmes encourage exploration in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Global Education: The Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) offers online platforms and scholarships, having awarded over 29,000 scholarships and enrolled thousands of students since 2021.



BUILDING A SKILLED WORKFORCE



Global Knowledge: Partnerships with Coursera provide access to world-class education.

University Expansion: The University of Guyana is expanding in high-demand fields such as science, medicine, engineering, and education. The \$11 billion Student Loan Write-Off programme offers financial relief.

Skills Development: Investments in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) support practical skills for in-demand industries. Upgraded training centres and expanded Board of Industrial Training (BIT) programmes have trained over 11,000 individuals since 2020.

Industry-Specific Training: The Guyana Technical Training College (G TTC) and other partnerships bring global expertise to the local oil workforce. Nearly 8,000 personnel have been trained in the tourism sector, with the upcoming Hospitality and Tourism Training Institute (HTTI) set to further enhance industry capabilities.



Specialised Care: Subsidised dialysis treatment and expanded units, along with enhanced mental health services, demonstrate the government’s commitment to specialised care.



Vision Care: Free eye screening and spectacles for specific age groups address common vision issues.

SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS



Dr. Ali’s government has implemented comprehensive programmes to assist vulnerable groups, including financial aid, housing access, and skill development opportunities.

Child Welfare: New daycare centres and expanded subsidies support early childhood development.

Women’s Empowerment: Programmes in education, entrepreneurship, and business support have empowered women. Over 5,000 scholarships were awarded in 2023, and the Women’s Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) initiative trained over 6,000 women in technical skills and entrepreneurship.



HEALTHCARE ADVANCEMENT



Guyana is experiencing a major overhaul in healthcare under Dr. Ali’s leadership, focusing on expanding access, and improving infrastructure and specialised care.



Infrastructure Expansion: New hospitals, including a Pediatric and Maternal Hospital, and upgrades to existing facilities bring healthcare closer to communities. The addition of six new regional hospitals will further enhance accessibility.

Human Capital Investment: Increasing the number of doctors and nurses, along with enhanced training and retention, is a crucial focus for better healthcare delivery.

Preventive Care and Early Detection: Expanded screening programmes and a focus on maternal and child health are supporting vital early disease detection and overall population health.



Elderly Care: Increased pensions and expanded care services have improved the quality of life for senior citizens, with pensions rising from \$25,000 to \$36,000 per month.

Disability Rights: Enhanced financial assistance, training, and support services have improved the lives of persons with disabilities. Public assistance increased from \$9,000 to \$19,000, and the PWD Support Unit and Learning Resource Centre offer additional aid.



Domestic Violence Prevention: The government provides legal protection, shelter, and comprehensive support services. The Hope and Justice Centre provides crucial support and safety for those in need.

Community-Based Initiatives: Programmes like Men on Mission (MOM) focus on community collaboration to address social issues, supporting home construction, mentorship, and youth development.

BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Under Dr. Ali’s leadership, significant strides in housing and infrastructure are transforming communities across Guyana. These efforts are enhancing living standards, making homeownership more accessible, and improving people’s overall quality of life.



House Lot Allocation: Nearly 35,000 house lots have been allocated, out of a targeted 50,000 by the end of the government’s term.

Affordable Homes: Over 2,600 affordable homes are under construction, with more than 1,600 completed and 1,000 in progress. Major projects include developments in Region 1 and 9.



Innovative Financing: New financing options and support programmes are making homeownership achievable for more Guyanese.

- Core Homes Initiative:** Since 2020, over 100 families have received new 20 x 20 two-bedroom concrete houses through the Core Home initiative, provided for a nominal fee of GYD\$100,000 (approximately USD\$480).



- Affordable Housing Innovations:** VAT exemptions on key materials, local sourcing of construction supplies, and increased mortgage loan ceilings are helping citizens in building their houses. Tax-deductible mortgage interest for loans up to \$30 million, and subsidies through the Steel and Cement Programme (over 1,200 vouchers issued at \$250,000 each) are aiding the housing drive.



Infrastructure Development: Significant investments in roads, utilities, and community amenities are supporting housing development and enhancing citizens’ overall quality of life.



Silica City: A smart urban hub along the Soesdyke-Linden Highway with an initial \$3 billion investment caters for 110 stylish homes for young professionals, a robust road network, and a state-of-the-art drainage system.

Expanded Water Access: Over 90,000 residents are benefitting from new or improved water points, with 31 new wells drilled in 2023.



Hinterland Development: Water coverage in hinterland villages reached 82% by 2023, with significant upgrades in areas like Kumu.



Investing in Quality Water: 12 existing treatment plants have been upgraded and 7 new ones constructed, with 5 additional plants planned to serve over 400,000 more residents by this year.

Efficient Distribution: Installation of over 65,000 meters of new pipelines reduced non-revenue water to 62% by 2023, with a target of 58% by 2024.

Sanitation Upgrades: Solid waste management has been enhanced with new facilities in Blairmont, Bon Success, and Haags Bosch, including tire shredders and compactor bins

Community Development: Beautification projects and the creation of public spaces are transforming communities into vibrant and attractive places to live.



- Kingston Seawall:** Upgrades include Wi-Fi, dining areas, and new parks.
- Modernised Markets:** Improved facilities will enhance shopping experiences.

- Albouystown Boulevard:** A \$1.4 billion transformation of Independence Boulevard features dual carriageways, a pedestrian promenade, and upgraded public spaces.



HINTERLAND INVESTMENTS

The PPP/C government has made significant strides in addressing development disparities between the coastland and hinterland regions. With a substantial investment of \$70 billion since 2020, the administration has implemented a comprehensive strategy to empower hinterland communities and improve residents' lives.



- Boosting Indigenous Leadership:** Investments in the National Toshaos Council Secretariat (\$147.8 million) and annual conferences have strengthened the role of village leaders in decision-making and community development.
- Securing Land Rights:** The expansion of the land titling programme enhances land ownership security for indigenous communities.
- Job Creation and Livelihoods:** The reinstated Community Service Officers (CSO) programme and Presidential Grants have provided employment opportunities and supported community-driven projects.
- Youth Development:** Over \$1 billion annually is allocated for job opportunities and training, with more than \$100 million designated for higher education for over 800 hinterland students.
- Cultural Preservation:** Continuous support, with \$147 million allocated in 2024, preserves and celebrates Amerindian cultural traditions, maintaining cultural identity and heritage.



CELEBRATING CULTURE & BUILDING CHAMPIONS

Under Dr. Ali's leadership, Guyana is experiencing a resurgence in culture and sports. The government's commitment to preserving heritage, nurturing talent, and developing world-class infrastructure is transforming the nation into a vibrant hub for arts, entertainment, and athletics.

- Cultural Preservation and Promotion:** Investments in restoring historic sites, supporting local artists, and celebrating diverse cultural contributions are revitalising Guyana's cultural heritage. A \$100 million budget allocation in 2024 supports the International Decade for People of African Descent, honouring diverse cultural contributions.
- Talent Development:** The government's focus on showcasing Guyanese talent on the international stage, exemplified by the Caribbean Premier League Half-Time Show, is inspiring a new generation of artistes.



- Sports Infrastructure:** Upgrades to sporting facilities and the construction of new, world-class stadiums are creating opportunities for athletes to excel, and for Guyana to host major sporting events. The new versatile world-

class stadia in Anna Regina, Palmyra and Linden currently under construction, will host various events and enhance Guyana's sporting and entertainment profile.



- Sports Tourism:** By hosting international competitions like the ICC T20 World Cup and the CPL finals, Guyana is positioning itself as a premier sports tourism destination.

COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



The PPP/C administration has prioritised environmental sustainability as a cornerstone of Guyana's development strategy. Recognising the delicate balance between economic growth and ecological preservation, the government has implemented ambitious policies to protect the nation's rich natural resources.

Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030:

- The LCDS 2030 outlines a comprehensive approach to integrating environmental stewardship with economic prosperity. By safeguarding Guyana's pristine rainforests, investing in renewable energy, and fostering a green economy, the government aims to build a sustainable future.

International Partnerships for Sustainability:

- Collaboration with countries like Norway and institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have provided crucial financial and technical support for Guyana's green transition.

Carbon Credits revenue:

- Under Dr. Ali's administration, Guyana has secured significant revenue from carbon credits, including a landmark US\$750 million agreement with Hess Corporation, which has fueled investments in sustainable development.

Supporting Sustainable Development:

- Over \$4.7 billion was allocated in 2023 to support 811 sustainable development projects in Amerindian and hinterland communities, empowering residents and fostering self-reliance.

INVESTING IN CLEAN ENERGY



To accelerate Guyana's transition to clean and affordable energy, the government has initiated several key projects:

- Gas-to-Energy (GtE) Initiative:** This aims to deliver clean, affordable electricity.
- Amaila Falls and Kato Hydropower Projects:** Developing large-scale hydropower infrastructure.

- **Solar Farm Projects:** Expanding solar energy generation in Lethem and Bartica.
- **Mini Grid PV Systems:** Providing electricity to off-grid communities like Baramita and Karaudaranau.
- **Solar Panel Distribution:** Equipping 30,000 Amerindian households with solar power.



RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:

Responsible resource management is central to Guyana’s development strategy. The government is committed to maximising long-term benefits while minimising environmental impacts:

- **Mineral Mapping and Automation:** This is promoting efficient and eco-friendly mining practices.
- **Support for Small-Scale Miners:** Miners are empowered to adopt responsible gold production methods.
- **Revitalised Bauxite Industry:** Investments have been made in infrastructure and renewable energy in Linden.
- **Sustainable Forestry:** Responsible forest management practices implemented and international certifications pursued.

A CONNECTED NATION



Guyana’s infrastructure is transforming to support economic growth and enhance citizens’ quality of life. Significant investments are being made in transportation, energy, and digital connectivity.

Expansion of Major Highways: Projects include the Corentyne Highway expansion to four lanes, conversion of the Railway Embankment Road to a four-lane highway, and new roads in rural areas like Parika to Goshen. The Diamond to Grove Bypass has already alleviated congestion, while ongoing projects like the East Coast to East Bank Link and Linden-Soesdyke Highway will further improve connectivity and support regional trade.

Modernising Bridges: Upgrades include the B’ Field Sophia Bridge for safer journeys and the Tucville Bridge to reduce congestion. Notable projects are the 32 new bridges from Kurupukari to Lethem and the planned landmark Corentyne River Bridge. The US\$260 million Demerara River Bridge, designed to enhance connectivity and safety, is halfway completed and features modern engineering aspects for improved traffic flow and vessel navigation.



Expanding River Transport: The MV Ma Lisha Ferry Service and upgraded stellings are enhancing river transport, improving connectivity in remote areas. Key projects underway include upgrades to the Kingston Goods Wharf, Morawhanna Stelling, Kumaka Stelling, and Port Kaituma, all aimed at supporting smoother and more efficient transportation.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Under the leadership of President Ali, Guyana is undergoing a rapid digital transformation that is reshaping its economy and society.



Liberalisation of Telecommunications: This has dramatically reduced internet costs, fueling the growth of industries like call centres and boosting Guyana’s global competitiveness.



Accessible Services: The government is committed to making essential services more accessible and efficient. The Single Window System is streamlining financial processes, while the National eID is modernising identity verification. A comprehensive plan to digitise over 70 key government services is underway, starting with vital documents like birth certificates and passports.

Public Safety and Healthcare: Investment in technology is improving public safety through expanded camera surveillance and the Safe Road Intelligent System. The healthcare sector is benefiting from telemedicine and electronic medical records, enhancing access to care and efficiency.

Bridging the Digital Divide: To ensure that everyone can participate in the digital economy, the government is establishing free ICT hubs in remote communities. These centres provide access to computers, the internet, and digital skills training, empowering citizens and fostering innovation.



GUYANA’S SOARING TOURISM INDUSTRY



Guyana is experiencing a tourism boom, fueled by significant investments in infrastructure, and a growing global reputation as an eco-tourism paradise.

Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA): The expansion and modernisation of CJIA have been pivotal in boosting Guyana’s connectivity. Improved facilities and extended runways now accommodate larger aircraft, making it easier for international travellers to reach this hidden gem.

New Flight Routes: With major airlines and relaxed visa restrictions for several countries, Guyana is more accessible than ever before. This surge in connectivity has resulted in a dramatic increase in visitor arrivals, with numbers doubling in just two years.

Visitor Growth

- **2021:** 158,312 (83% increase from 2020)
- **2022:** 288,322 (82% increase from 2021)
- **2023:** 319,056 (10.7% increase from 2022)
- **2024 (Jan-May):** 141,078 (12.8% increase from 2023)



Tourism Infrastructure: New hotels are being built, and thousands of hospitality professionals are being trained to deliver world-class service. The country is also developing new attractions, and strengthening partnerships with neighbouring countries to create unique travel experiences.

Sustainable Tourism: Guyana's commitment to sustainable tourism has earned it international recognition, including the prestigious title of World's #1 Best Ecotourism Destination. As the country continues to invest in its tourism industry, it is poised to become a leading player in the global travel market.



SECURITY AND PROSPERITY

Security and justice are fundamental to a thriving society. Dr. Ali's government is committed to creating a safe and secure environment for all citizens. Significant investments are being made in law enforcement, crime prevention, and the justice system.



Modern Court Infrastructure

- Thirteen new court projects and twelve rehabilitation projects.
- Reducing prison overcrowding by decreasing pretrial detention.
 - Establishing a restorative justice centre and promoting alternative sentencing.
 - Bills to expedite court cases and establish a plea agreement system.

Legal Education and Reform

- Expanding legal aid clinics for greater access to representation.
- Appointing more judges to reduce case backlogs.
- Providing specialised training for prosecutors.

Enhanced Security

- **GPF:** Expanding police stations, including a twelve-story Brickdam Police Station. Upgrading vehicles, integrating ICT, using body cameras, promoting community policing, and training 2,000 ranks in gender-based violence and restorative justice.
- **GPS:** Upgrading Mazaruni and Lusignan prisons for better security and rehabilitation.
- **GFS:** Enhancing emergency response by upgrading fire stations, acquiring new equipment, servicing hydrants, and training officers.
- **GDF:** Strengthening national defence with an expanded fleet, advanced technologies, and increased personnel.

Promoting Inclusivity

- Established the National Coordinating Committee and National Mechanism for Reporting. Sworn in the Judicial Service, Public Service, and Ethnic Relations Commissions. New phase of Constitutional Reform to address governance and legal frameworks.
- Increased women's representation in Parliament to 39% and appointed women to leadership positions. Ensured 12% indigenous representation in Parliament.
- Drafted anti-discrimination legislation for sexual orientation and gender identity.

GUYANA'S GLOBAL IMPACT



Guyana is rapidly transforming into a significant global player. Under the leadership of President Ali, the country is strategically leveraging its economic growth and commitment to sustainability to elevate its international standing.

Strong Diplomatic Presence: Guyana has demonstrated its diplomatic prowess through successful handling of complex international challenges, such as the border dispute with Venezuela. The country's election to the United Nations Security Council is testament to its growing influence on the world stage.

Regional Leadership and Global Partnerships: By hosting major international events like CARICOM and FAO conferences, Guyana is positioning itself as a leader in sustainable development and regional cooperation. The government's focus on building strong bilateral relationships and forging new partnerships, is further enhancing the country's global footprint.

Empowering the Diaspora: Government recognises the invaluable contributions of Guyana's diaspora, and is actively working to integrate their skills and expertise into the nation's development.

GUYANA'S RECOGNITION UNDER PRESIDENT ALI

Guyana has garnered significant praise for its impressive economic and social progress under President Ali.



National Accolades

Domestically, President Ali's administration is celebrated for driving substantial economic growth. His focus on key areas has received praise from local business leaders and civil society.

Regional Recognition

Regionally, Guyana's rapid development has been acknowledged by Caribbean neighbours:

- The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) recognises President Ali as a visionary leader.
- He was named the 2024 CARICOM Global Leader.
- In 2023, he was awarded the Order of Freedom of Barbados, for strengthening ties within the Caribbean community.

International Praise and Awards

- Globally, President Ali's leadership has earned Guyana notable acclaim:
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have lauded Guyana's economic performance as a model for developing nations.
- The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has praised Guyana for its efforts in integrating sustainable practices into its development strategy.
- He received the Africa Freedom Award for his transformational leadership.

A FUTURE OF PROSPERITY AND INCLUSION



As Guyana progresses under Dr. Irfaan Ali's leadership, the promise of continued growth and development remains strong. The PPP/C government's vision goes beyond immediate achievements, focusing on

harnessing economic successes to foster a resilient and inclusive society. By confronting new challenges and embracing emerging opportunities, the administration is dedicated to ensuring that the benefits of progress are shared by all Guyanese, paving the way for a more prosperous and sustainable future.

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\$565M Pump Station

A \$565.3 million gyd, pump station was commissioned at Greenwich Park on the East Bank of Essequibo, Region Three, on Thursday, by Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha. The new infrastructure will benefit farmers, residents, and about 5,000 acres of farmlands in the area.

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PARTY TRAYS AVAILABLE!

Ali lobbies for international support to tackle drugs, guns

INTER-AGENCY collaboration and international support are crucial to combatting transnational crime in the Caribbean, and while regional leaders have made progress in enhancing their respective security systems, more will be required to tackle the smuggling of guns and drugs into the region.

This is according to Guyana’s President and outgoing Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Dr. Irfaan Ali during his address at the 47th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community in St. George’s, Grenada, on Sunday.

He said that leaders in the region remain committed to strengthening border security.

“We have to ensure we build stronger systems so our borders are not used as tools to affect other borders and other countries. We have to fight the drug trade, we have to fight transnational crime and to do that we have to invest in security; we have to invest in border protection. We have to invest in port security, we have to meet all international standards and we are committed to doing so,” the Guyanese Head of State said.

President Ali noted that while regional leaders have acknowledged these challenges, special assistance is required, along with significant investments.

“... we must also ask for some more to be done in ensuring the guns that are coming into our system are not coming into the system,” President Ali said.

Just last week, Guyana’s Vice-President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, at a news conference, told reporters that while joint operations here in Guyana have recorded successes, there is need for greater United States assistance to address the flow of weapons into the region.

“A lot of the weapons come in from the United States of America; they come in through barrels and all sorts of things. And so, this is not a new position; it’s been expressed overwhelmingly by CARICOM,” Dr. Jagdeo said while stressing the importance of a symmetrical relationship between Guyana and the US to tackle transnational threats together.

Meanwhile, Jagdeo has noted that the Guyana Police Force and other joint services have recorded tremendous successes. In recent weeks, several major crime circles were busted as a result of inter-agency operations here.

“The successes of the Police



President Ali addressing the 47th regular meeting of Caricom leaders

Force, and, by extension, the Joint Services, is because of the hard work of many people in these agencies; the inter-agency collaboration that’s taking place between all the agencies that deal with Security and fighting crime and transnational crime in Guyana. And so, they have strengthened their intelligence,” Dr. Jagdeo said.

“They have targetted operations, and you’re seeing success from this. The fact that you see a see a lot of seizures of weapons here is because of that collaboration with our partners. But also, we still need to get more support from our external partners,” he added.

It was recently reported by this newspaper that joint operations among several key regional partners have recently led to the seizure of US\$3 million worth of cocaine, and US\$2.1 million worth of marijuana in the region.

President Ali, during a press conference, had disclosed that Guyana has ongoing collaborations with CARICOM IMPACS, the Brazilian Federal Police, the Colombian task force, and the Regional Security System (RSS) and several other major partners. It was these collaborations, he said, that had led to the significant drug seizures, arrests and disruptions of major drug trafficking networks.

With the support of additional partners from the United Kingdom, France, Brazil, and CARICOM, Guyana has been strengthening its border security and surveillance system.

The Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU) has strengthened its operation

at key border and port points through enhanced collaboration with the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) and the Eugene F. Correia International Airport (OGL), and the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD) to combat drug trafficking.

CANU has also been keeping a close eye on the increased flights and

destinations.

Recently, CANU disclosed that significant strides have been made in combatting illegal narcotics.

During the 2023 period, the Unit recorded five international seizures, a testament to the strategic measures being implemented at the various ports of entry countrywide.

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Caribbean countries jump on list of world's most powerful passports

The latest 2024 Henley Passport Index published in July has revealed that some Caribbean countries have improved their rankings.

The previous index, which ranks the world's most powerful passports, was published in January of this year.

In its newest update, Barbados maintains its position as the most powerful passport in the Caribbean, now ranked 20th globally, up from 22nd in January, with visa-free access to 165 destinations.

The Bahamas follows closely, moving up to 21st place from 24th, with visa-free access to 161 destinations.

St Kitts and Nevis is next, climbing from 25th to 23rd place, offering visa-free access to 157 destinations. St Vincent and the Grenadines also improved, rising from 25th to 23rd place, with visa-free access to 157 destinations.



Caribbean passports are becoming more powerful

Antigua and Barbuda is ranked 26th globally, up from 27th, with visa-free access to 153 destinations. Trinidad and Tobago's passport ranks 27th, moving up from 29th, with visa-free access to 151 destinations. St Lucia's passport ranks 30th, up from 32nd, with visa-free access to 148 destinations.

Grenada is now ranked 31st globally, up from 32nd, with visa-free access to 147 destinations. Dominica's passport is ranked 32nd, with visa-free access to 143 destinations. Belize has made a significant jump to 48th place, up from 52nd, with visa-free access to 102 destinations.

Guyana and Jamaica are both ranked 55th globally, with visa-free access to 89 destinations.

The most powerful passport in the world belongs to Singapore, with visa-free access to 195 destinations, while Afghanistan holds the least powerful.

US citizen charged with illegally exporting Guyana gold



Ivan Scipio

A 52-year-old US citizen, Ivan Anthony Scipio, has been charged with illegally exporting gold following a joint operation by the Criminal Investigation Department (Narcotics Branch) and the Guyana Revenue Authority.

Scipio, a painter residing in Georgetown, was apprehended on July 3 at an airport while attempting to board a flight to New York. Detectives from the Criminal Investigation Department (Narcotics Branch), along

with officers from the Guyana Revenue Authority, seized several pieces of gold jewelry and raw gold from Scipio during his departure.

According to the Guyana Police Force, Scipio failed to make the required customs declaration and could not produce the necessary licenses for legal gold exportation. The seized gold has an estimated value of GY\$6,787,569 (approximately

US\$32,500). Authorities believe this may not be an isolated incident. "Investigations revealed that Scipio has been allegedly involved in this racket for some time now since there is a link showing that he allegedly made several exports previously but was not caught," the police statement reads.

On July 25, Scipio appeared before Magistrate Judy Latchman at the Diamond Magistrates Court, where he

pleaded not guilty to the charge of "Exporting Gold without a License," a violation of Section 8 of the Guyana Gold Board Act, Chapter 66:01.

The court granted Scipio bail of \$800,000, with the condition that he report to the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) on the last Friday of each month. The case has been adjourned to August 19, 2024.



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Raju Gound has been hunting for diamonds for more than 10 years

Debt-ridden India labourer digs up diamond worth thousands

An Indian labourer's fortunes have changed overnight after he found a massive diamond in a mine in the central state of Madhya Pradesh.

The 19.22-carat diamond is expected to fetch about 8m rupees (\$95,570; £74,000) in a government auction.

Raju Gound said he had been leasing mines in Panna city for more than 10 years in the hope of finding a diamond.

Panna is famed for its diamond reserves and people often lease cheap, shallow mines from the government to hunt for the precious stone.

The federal government's National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) runs a mechanised diamond mining project in Panna.

It also leases out shallow mines to individuals, families and co-operative groups who look for diamonds, usually with basic tools and equipment.

Any finds are handed over to the government diamond office, which then evaluates the stone.

"These mines can be leased for about 200-250 rupees [for a specific period]," Anupam Singh, an official at the state government's diamond office, told the BBC.

In 2018, a labourer from Bundelkhand found a diamond worth 15m rupees in a mine in Panna. However, such discoveries are rare.

Mr Singh said that while many people have found smaller stones, Mr Gound's find was notable because of its size.

Mr Gound told the BBC that his father had leased the mine in Krishna Kalyanpur Patti village near Panna about two months ago.

He said his family leases mines mostly during the monsoon season when agricultural and masonry work dry up.

"We are very poor and have no other source of income. So we do this in the hope of making some money," he said.

He had heard stories of people chancing upon diamonds and hoped that he too would get lucky one day.

On Wednesday morning, he went to the site to perform his daily task of manually searching for the precious stone.

"It's tedious work. We dig a pit, pull out chunks of soil and rock, wash them in a sieve and then carefully sift through thousands of dried, tiny stones to look for diamonds," he said.

And that afternoon, all that hard work paid off and his luck turned.

"I was sifting through the stones and saw something that resembled a piece of glass. I held it up to my eyes and saw a faint glint. That's when I knew I had found a diamond," he said.

Mr Gound then took his prized find to the government diamond office, where it was evaluated and weighed.

Mr Singh said the diamond would be sold in the next government auction and that Mr Gound would receive his compensation after the government royalty and taxes were deducted.

Mr Gound hopes to build a better house for his family with the money and even pay for his children's education. But first, he wants to pay off his debt of 500,000 rupees.

He says he's not afraid of people finding out about the diamond as he plans to divide the money between 19 relatives who live with him.

For now, he's content just knowing that the money will come to him.

"Tomorrow, I'll go to the mine again to look for diamonds," he said.



The diamond Mr Gound found



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): No matter how difficult a spell a relationship has been going through it will come together again as from today. You may still disagree on some issues but you both now realize that compromise is possible and communication is the key to mutual respect.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): If you need assistance today just open your mouth and ask for it. If you keep your head down and say nothing then others will assume that everything is okay and not lift a finger to help you. They cannot be expected to read your mind.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): A difficult task lies ahead of you but if you are serious about making a good job of it then it is sure to be a success. With Mars and Jupiter moving through your sign the one attribute you are not lacking at the moment is confidence.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): You have taken some tough decisions in recent weeks, some of which seemed a bit ruthless to those on the receiving end, but you are in no mood to play games or forgive people who have let you down. You may have to be ruthless again today.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): You must not allow yourself to get bogged down in petty details, not when there are so many major issues requiring your attention. Your greatest talent is your ability to see the bigger picture, so leave the small stuff to those of more limited vision.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): Some very important people have been watching you closely and there could soon be a promotion of some kind coming your way. They particularly admire the way you handle yourself when dealing with those who are openly hostile to your plans.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): No, Lady Luck has not deserted you and what occurs over the next few days will restore your belief that you are destined for bigger and better things. Opportunities are most likely to arrive via friendships – a perfect excuse to keep your social life active.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): No good deed ever goes unnoticed and you will receive something worth having today in return for all the favors you have done for other people in recent weeks. The universe especially values those who help friends and colleagues in their hour of need.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): You will leave a task to the very last minute today but you enjoy the pressure and will make a thoroughly good job of it. Not everything in your life needs to be on a deadline though – there is no cut-off point for telling people you love them.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): Recent events may have been frustrating in that they did not yield the results you expected but you stuck to it and refused to be beaten and now you will receive your reward. Something both unexpected and amazing is about to happen in your life.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): You don't have to prove that you are smarter than your rivals but you will do so anyway just for the fun of it. Venus in your opposite sign means that even those who are made to look foolish will be charmed by your wit and wisdom.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): You don't care much for fame or fortune but you do care that people treat you with respect and you may have to remind someone of that fact over the next 24 hours. Don't let them get away with criticizing the things in life you value the most.

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Grenada implements ‘free barrel’ program following Hurricane Beryl

The Government of Grenada has unveiled the first phase of fiscal incentives to aid the citizens of Grenada, Carriacou, and Petite Martinique, who were significantly impacted by Hurricane Beryl.

As part of these new measures, the government will offer 100 percent duty and tax exemptions on a range of essential items imported into the state. This includes exemptions from Customs Service Charge, Port Charges, and Stamp Duties on food, clothing, small household appliances, linen and bedding, toiletries, sanitary products for both adults and children, and household cleaning supplies. These exemptions apply to items imported in boxes, barrels, and crates, collectively referred to as “Barrels.”

To qualify for these exemptions, the imported items must not be for commercial use or resale and are limited to two barrels per household. The “free barrel” program will be in effect for barrels cleared between July 22, 2024, and December 31, 2024.

While the administrative process for clearing barrels remains unchanged, importers will not be required to pay the usual duties, taxes, and fees. However, items will still be assessed by a Customs Officer, and importers must provide invoices and other documentation. Additionally, importers must present one of the following forms of identification: Driver’s License, Pass-



Duty free exemptions are being offered on any barrels of goods shipped to Grenadians

port, Voter’s Registration card, or NIS card.

The duty and tax exemptions are strictly limited to two barrels per

household. Any imports exceeding this limit will be subject to the standard duties and taxes.

Importers are reminded that mak-

ing false declarations to Customs is a serious offense and could result in fines and penalties.

Archbishop of Canterbury apologises for slavery

The Archbishop of Canterbury apologized to the people of Jamaica for the Church of England’s participation in slavery. The Right Honorable Justin Welby, was the guest preacher at the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Anglican Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands held on Sunday.

The celebratory church service was held at the National Arena in St Andrew and was attended by hundreds of people, including dignitaries and high-ranking members of the church.

It was Welby’s opinion, that “the church sinned and consumed the sheep”.

“I cannot speak for the Government of the United Kingdom but I can speak from my own heart and represent what we say now in England. We are deeply, deeply, deeply sorry. We sinned against your ancestors. I would give anything that that can be reversed, but it cannot,” Welby said, pointing out that the church began its transformation from loving power to begin loving people, in the 19th century.

Webly said though the apology is long overdue it is better late than never “We are now responsible to God to do right, and to repent and say sorry. That must involve reversing direction and going in a different way. Our Saviour



The Archbishop of Canterbury the Right Honorable Justin Welby

and His ever-present love led the church into seeking to do right. Too late, but better late than never.”

He said he knows that parts of the

Church of England, and even one of the archbishops in the 18th century, owned slaves.

“The shepherd, as Ezekiel said,

consumed the flock. It is no wonder the Church of England has suffered judgement, for what worse thing could be done? Even for those in the church who did not actively participate in chattel enslavement, the silence of the church was collusion, an agreement with slavery,” he said, adding that there were bishops who truly profited from slavery.

An archbishop of Canterbury in the 18th century approved payments for the purchase of enslaved people for two sugar plantations in Barbados, documents seen by the Observer have revealed.

Thomas Secker agreed to reimburse a payment for £1,093 for the purchase of enslaved people on the Codrington Plantations, as well as hiring enslaved people from a third party. It was stated the measures were “calculated for the future lasting advantages of the estates”.

The papers are among a cache of documents found in the archives of Lambeth Palace Library which detail the direct links between the Church of England and chattel slavery on plantations owned by its missionary arm, The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).

Jamaica Independence holiday celebrations scaled back this year

Activities for Jamaica’s 62nd anniversary of independence will be scaled back this year as the country continues restoration and recovery efforts following Hurricane Beryl.

“Recognizing the magnitude of Hurricane Beryl’s impact, we decided to modify our plans while keeping the spirit of independence alive,” said Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Hon. Olivia Grange.

“Traditionally, we celebrate from August 1-5 in the Independence Village, but this year, we have condensed the festivities to three days. These changes ensure that while we celebrate 62 proud years of independence, we remain mindful and supportive of those in the southern parts of the island who are in the process of recovery,” she noted.

Minister Grange spoke at the National Emancipation and Independence Thanksgiving Church Service on Sunday, July 28, at Grace Missionary Church in Kingston.

The Ministry and the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC) have partnered with the Jamaica Red Cross to collect monetary donations to assist hurricane victims in southern Jamaica. A special offering was collected at the church service.



Jamaicans pictured celebrating their island’s 60th anniversary of Independence

Minister Grange advised that Red Cross representatives will be present at all national events at the Independence Village, which will be held at the National Indoor Sports Complex from August 3-5, from 4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. each day.

“We encourage everyone to contribute generously to this worthy cause. Your donations will enable the Red Cross, in collaboration with the Office

of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), to purchase essential items in bulk, ensuring efficient and effective distribution to those affected by Hurricane Beryl,” she said.

The National Emancipation and Independence Thanksgiving Church Service included Bible readings from Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, and Leader of the Opposition,

Mark Golding, with Custos of Kingston, Hon. Steadman Fuller, delivering greetings on behalf of Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen.

Jamaica’s 62nd year of independence is being observed under the theme ‘Jamaica 62: One Love...To the World.’

Free documents replacement in SVG after Beryl

St. Vincent and the Grenadines residents whose birth certificates or passports were affected due to the passage of Hurricane Beryl have been offered some measure of relief to have these documents replaced free of charge.

According to the Agency for Public Information (API), this was announced by Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves during a consultation last week with affected persons from Union Island and other parts of the Southern Grenadines.

Gonsalves indicated the decision was made at a Cabinet level.

“There is something in place, the Cabinet has taken a decision that if you’re from any of the affected areas, not only Union Island, but wherever including on St Vincent, you will get your birth certificate free of cost, you will get your passport free of cost,” said the prime minister.

Hurricane Beryl was the earliest-forming Category 5 hurricane on record and the second such storm in the month of July, the other being 2005’s Hurricane Emily. Beryl was also the strongest hurricane to develop within the Main Development Region (MDR) of the Atlantic before the month of July.

On July 1, Beryl made landfall in the Eastern Caribbean as a high-end Category 4 hurricane, causing total devastation on Grenada’s northern islands



Hurricane Beryl caused significant damage in St Vincent and the Grenadines

of Carriacou and Petite Martinique and on several of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines’ southern islands, such as Union Island and Canouan.

The hurricane intensified further as it entered the Caribbean Sea, peaking as

a Category 5 hurricane, before slowly weakening over the next few days due to wind shear as it passed south of Jamaica and then the Cayman Islands.

After weakening into a tropical storm over the Yucatán Peninsula, the system

moved into the Gulf of Mexico, where it gradually reorganized into a Category 1 hurricane on July 8, just before making its final landfall near Matagorda, Texas.

Less Jamaicans on Canada’s farm work program after negative reports

The number of Jamaicans who travelled to Canada as part of the overseas employment program in 2023 declined by five per cent, as negative publicity surrounding the farm work program continued.

The number of Jamaicans employed in the Canadian Farm and Factory program decreased from 9,435 to 8,961 persons.

The figures were contained in the Planning Institute of Jamaica’s Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2023 report, which said that several factors contributed to the decline, including inclement weather that damaged crops and led to the cancellation of “worker orders” by employers.

Further, the report said negative publicity surrounding the program’s working conditions may have deterred potential participants, further affecting the overall participation numbers.

On Monday, Canada-based Injured Workers Action for Justice (IWAJ), in response to the report, stated: “The migrant farmworkers participating in the farm work programs have shared their own experiences and perspectives. These include poor living and working conditions, abuse and harassment from employers, injuries and deaths, lack of proper healthcare, and retaliation against



Jamaican farm workers picking apples on a Canadian farm

workers who speak up about problems. These injured migrant farmworkers have been speaking out about their real, lived experiences, not just ‘negative publicity’.”

In 2022 farm workers on the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program in Canada reported that they were being made to work under poor conditions.

The local independent fact-finding

team, appointed to investigate the working conditions, has found that most of the Jamaican employees are satisfied with their working and living conditions.

Conversely, the number of participants in the US Farm Work Program grew by 4.6 per cent to 4,306 Jamaicans due to a 4.8 per cent increase in male participants in this program.

The report said the increase in the

number of participants in the US Farm Program could be a result of the ministry’s initiative to partner with more recruitment agents in late 2022.

The overseas employment program is the primary labor-migration initiative of the Jamaican Government. It places qualified Jamaicans in employment in the United States and Canada.

Jamaicans migrating without paying debts

Senior financiers in Jamaica’s banking system says “migration and unexpected expenses” are amongst the top two reasons why people are late to pay their loans each month. An increase number of Jamaicans are falling behind on their regular monthly loan payments, but the central bank says it is not yet worried.

The data captured in the figures are for past due loans — which are loans that have not been paid from anywhere between 30 days up to 89 days.

People who migrate each year, and turn to banks to borrow money they have no intention of repaying has become a headache for the banking sector. Although it is known that debt doesn’t magically disappear when one moves, the debt collection does become more challenging for issuers if you leave the country. Because of each country’s unique credit systems and regulations, it can be difficult for creditors to track someone who migrates. Reports state at least one group of Jamaican migrants is culpable more than others, but declined to name the group. Overall, migrants, listed as overseas residents, were late on payments totaling \$6.8 billion in March. That’s about 15.8



per cent of the total for that month. Later data show it has since increased to \$10.2 billion in May or about 25 per cent of all repayments that are past due.

Actors in the nation’s banking sector said the growth in past due loans has been kept under control by financial institutions keeping on top

of those whose loans remain unpaid, using e-mail and phone calls to give follow-up reminders within a few days after the loan is past due.

The introduction of credit bureaus in Jamaica has also helped, with people mindful of the harm non-payment can cause to their credit history, and the impact that can have on

future loan requests also playing a role in modifying behavior.

Overall “The stock of these loans on the balance sheet of the deposit-taking institutions grew by 32.1 per cent to \$42.9 billion at March 2024 from \$32.5 billion at March 2023,” the central bank said. Further data show past due loans rose again to \$50.1 billion by the end of April before declining to \$41 billion at the end of May.

But the Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) said the increase in past due loans must be looked at in the context of the growth in the overall loan book of the nation’s eight commercial banks and one merchant bank. From that perspective, the ratio of past due loans to total loans were up “marginally to 2.96 per cent at March 2024”, the central bank pointed out.

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Judge rules in favour of firearms dealers in bank privacy matter

FIREARMS dealers Brent Thomas and Hugh Leong Poi have been successful in their lawsuits against the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) over information it received from several financial institutions in 2022 on them and their dealerships.

The FIU’s director cannot use any of the financial information he received on the two and their companies, by court order. The FIU has regulatory responsibility for anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism and falls under the Ministry of Finance.

The two questioned the constitutionality of the FIU’s move around October 2022 to ask various institutions for financial information on some 35 individuals and 17 businesses associated with the legal firearms business.

They filed separate constitutional claims seeking several declarations and orders. Among those orders is the destruction of the information obtained by the FIU on them and their businesses, Specialist Shooters Training Centre and Sport Outlet Ltd. They argued that the request by the director of the FIU was ultra vires.

On July 26, Justice Marissa Robertson declared certain sections of the FIU Act and regulations to be unconstitutional in the absence of the director receiving a suspicious transaction report (STP) or suspicious activity report (SAR), and “not reasonably justifiable in a society that has proper respect for the rights and freedoms of the individual.”

Robertson also declared that sections of the FIU Act, the Proceeds of Crime Act and the Anti-Terrorism Act were unconstitutional.

Concerning Thomas and Leong Poi’s assertions, she declared that the FIU director’s request for their financial



Firearms dealer Brent Thomas

information without an STP or SAR was also unconstitutional.

She further declared that the FIU director’s request was not authorised by law. She quashed the decision to make the request.

Robertson also granted an injunction restraining the FIU director from using any of the information he received on the two, since those requests were not based on an STR or SAR and were not in keeping with provisions of the FIU Act.

Thomas and Leong Poi had asked for the FIU to disclose a copy of each request, but the judge refused these.

In their claims, Thomas and Leong Poi contended that the FIU director must first receive a SAR or STR, analyse them, and assess that an offence has taken place or that proceeds of a crime may be located in the jurisdiction. They argued that failing to observe the conditions deprived them of the right to protection of the law. They also argued certain portions of the FIU Act and regulations gave rise to the risk of systemic unfairness, since the FIU Act was silent on the need for judicial oversight of the director’s powers.

In her ruling, Robertson said, “The notions of justice, fairness, the rule of law and the right to be protected from acts by the Government or public bodies which arbitrarily or unfairly deprive individuals of their basic constitutional rights require...a basis for their actions which tends to infringe those rights.

The FIU, she said, ought to have an STR or SAR before making such requests and the absence of either “would be unlawful.”

While she considered the public-interest aspect of the FIU’s role in preventing transnational crime and in the global financial system, including the repercussions of non-compliance with the Financial Action Task Force, the law did not allow the FIU director to make the requests he did.

In their defence, the State did not confirm there was a request or whether there was an STR or SAR.

In September 2023, another judge, Justice Devindra Rampersad, held that the FIU abused its power and acted unconstitutionally when it tried to access the private banking information of former police commissioner Gary Griffith and his wife Nicole Dyer-Griffith from several banks.

Curacao becomes associate member of Caricom

Curaçao has been warmly welcomed into the Caribbean community as the country was officially admitted as the sixth Associate Member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM Secretary-General Carla Barnett expressed enthusiasm for Curaçao’s membership, stating that the organization looks forward to the active engagement of its newest member.

Prime Minister of Curaçao, Gilmar Pisas, emphasized that Curaçao’s membership in CARICOM will not interfere with its commitments within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, just as the relationship between other Associate Members and the UK does not compromise their regional commitments.

Prime Minister Pisas highlighted Curaçao’s cultural ties to the Caribbean, noting that the country’s cultural identity is deeply linked to the region’s rich historical heritage. He affirmed Curaçao’s dedication to CARICOM and the shared goals of its members.



CARICOM Chairman Dickon Mitchell; CARICOM Secretary-General Carla Barnett and Curaçao’s Gilmar Pisas

“By joining CARICOM, we affirm our commitment to work together in the interest of the collective values and aspirations that bind us as small island developing states in the Caribbean region,” Pisas said. “We bring to CARICOM a unique blend of cultural traditions, economic strengths, and social perspectives that will hopefully enrich the community as a whole.”

Pisas also emphasized the importance of economic integration within CARICOM. He noted that Curaçao’s strategic location, ports, and well-developed services could serve as a hub for regional trade. By investing in connectivity and logistics, Curaçao aims to streamline the movement of goods and services across the Caribbean, boost economic activity, and create jobs throughout the region.

Vincy PM urges Caricom to formally recognise Maduro victory

ST VINCENT and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves has urged Caricom leaders to formally recognise the re-election of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in that country's presidential elections held on July 28.

Gonsalves made this call on July 29 in an interview in Grenada where the 47th regular meeting of the Caricom heads of government is taking place.

A CNN report on July 29 said Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) issued a statement that said with 80 per cent of the votes counted, Maduro has claimed 51 per cent of those votes, beating his opponent, Democratic Unitary Platform (PUD) candidate Edmundo González Urrutia, who received 44 per cent.

The report also said Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado is disputing these results. She claimed that Gonzalez received 70 per cent of the vote while Maduro received 30 per cent.

A Reuters report said there was a subdued reaction in many towns and cities in Venezuela, with most of their streets being empty. An AP report said that many Venezuelans, incensed at the results, engaged in noisy protests on July 29, beating pots and pans with spoons to make their displeasure known.

In an interview with the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC), Gonsalves said, "Well, I've already called the Venezuelan government to congratulate them on the victory of Nicolas Maduro." Gonsalves hoped Caricom will issue a formal statement congratulating Maduro on his re-election.

"He's an important partner and he's important for peace and security in our region, including peace and security on the border with Guyana."

Guyana and Venezuela have a long running border dispute with respect to the former's Essequibo region. Both countries are awaiting a ruling from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the matter.

Gonsalves said he was satisfied that, based on reports from the Vincentian ambassador in Caracas and other personnel, that the election was fair.

He believes the reason why some countries are taking different positions with respect to the result was a case of "politics taking precedence in some quarters."

"There may be some countries which may wish to wait and see. I don't know but that certainly will arise sometime today, whether in this morning session or in the caucus this afternoon. But I would like to see Caricom make a statement congratulating Maduro on his re-election to the presidency," Gonsalves said.

Some Caricom leaders offered



Thousands of Venezuelans took to the streets to protest the election results

their views on the election in subsequent interviews with the Caribbean News Agency (CANA).

Guyana President Dr Mohammed Irfaan Ali said an election has a number of components, including the operations and arrangement before the polls.

He identified other components would include "the elections itself on election day and of course, the mechanisms after the election, the mechanisms to ensure that the votes are counted" and that "there is a credible process of verification".

Ali said, "So those are all competence of the election. We are not pronouncing, we cannot pronounce one way or the other. As I said, we don't have details before us. But those are the components that we support in any democratic elections."

Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit said the CNE was the competent authority to oversee the election.

"Therefore, we extend our congratulations as we do in all elections anywhere in the world, our congratulations to President Maduro on his re-election. We look forward to working with him for the next six years on a bilateral and multilateral basis."

St Lucia Prime Minister Phillip J Pierre said, "The results that have been declared say that President Maduro has won. I can't make any firm statement, in terms of what is out now is that President Maduro has won."

He added, "I hope after all the audits are done, after the independent ob-

servers give their reports, I'm sure that you get to a position where the result can be sustained and the results can be accepted by the world."

Efforts to get reactions from Prime Minister Dr Rowley and Foreign and Caricom Affairs Minister Dr Amery Browne – who are both in Grenada – on July 29, proved futile.

In a statement on X, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed concern the results of the elections did not reflect the will of votes of the Venezuelan people. "Ensuring full transparency in the electoral process, including detailed counting of votes and access to voting records at polling stations, is vital."

The UK updated its travel advice, told to British nationals in Venezuela to stay home if possible. In a statement, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said, "The UK does not accept the legitimacy of the current administration put in place by Nicolás Maduro."

Uruguayan President Luis LaCalle Pou and Panama President Jose Raul Molino rejected the result.

Pou said, "The process up to election day and counting was clearly flawed. You cannot recognize a triumph if you can't trust the forms and mechanisms used to achieve it."

Molino said, "Panama joins the generalised rejection of the electoral result. We aspired for the popular will to be respected and such situation was ignored."

The Brazilian Foreign Ministry

welcomed the election result and said it is closely monitoring the counting of votes.

Chilean President Gabriel Boric and Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo called for verification of the result before their respective countries make formal pronouncements on it.

Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said, "The democratic will of the Venezuelan people must be respected with the presentation of the minutes of all the polling stations to guarantee fully verifiable results. We ask that the calm and civility with which the election day took place be maintained."

In a telegram to Maduro, Russian president Vladimir Putin said, "Russian-Venezuelan relations have the character of a strategic partnership. I am confident that your activities at the head of state will continue to contribute to their progressive development in all directions."

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel congratulated Maduro on his "historic victory".

Bolivian President Luis Arce said, "We have closely followed this democratic festival and we welcome the fact that the will of the Venezuelan people at the polls has been respected."

Honduran President Xiomara Castro and Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega offered similar congratulations to Maduro.

Roach, Chanderpaul in Windies XI for warm-up vs South Africa

Out of favour opening batsman Tagenarine Chanderpaul and experienced fastbowler Kumar Roach have been included in a 14-man West Indies Championship XI team which will play South Africa in a warm-up match from July 31-August 3 at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad.

The four-day encounter will serve as preparation for the two-match Test series between the Windies and South Africa, which commences with a match at the Queen's Park Oval, St Clair from August 7-11. The second Test will be played at the Providence Stadium in Guyana from August 15. The West Indies are coming off a 3-0 series defeat to England, which culminated with a heavy ten-wicket loss in the third and final Test in Edgbaston on July 28.

The 28-year-old Chanderpaul was overlooked for the England tour. Meanwhile, the 36-year-old Roach was originally included in the squad for England, but was ruled out for the series before the first Test due to his rehabilitation from a knee injury sustained in the County Championship.

On July 27, a Cricket West Indies (CWI) release announced the 14-man squad for the warm-up fixture, with Barbados allrounder Justin Greaves appointed as the captain and Sint Maarten middle-order batsman Keacy Carty appointed as his deputy.

The 30-year-old Greaves has played two Test matches for the West Indies, both of which came against Australia in January. Greaves has also played five One-day Internationals (ODIs) for the West Indies, with his debut coming against Ireland in January 2022.

The 27-year-old Carty has played 22 matches for the West Indies in the ODI format, but remains uncapped at Test level. Carty has played 48 First-Class matches, averaging 28.09 in the format with three hundreds and 18 fifties. Carty finished the 2024 regional First-Class season as the fifth-leading run scorer with 496 runs, notching a career-best score of 127 in the process.

The West Indies Championship XI also includes the Trinidad and Tobago quartet of Bryan Charles, Amir Jangoo, Anderson Phillip and Jeremy Solozano,



Tagenarine Chanderpaul

all of whom had solid seasons in the West Indies Regional Four-day Championships in 2024.

The left-handed Jangoo was a revelation for the TT Red Force in the 2024

regional season, scoring 500 runs at an average of 100 — hitting a mammoth 218 against Combined Campuses and Colleges in April.

Playing for the Windward Islands, Solozano, who has the solitary Test to his name, scored 330 runs at an average of 41.98 in the First-Class season.

Charles and Phillip grabbed 30 and 29 wickets in the First-Class season respectively, with the latter finishing as the second-best wicket-taker among fast bowlers.

The team also includes Barbados left-arm spinner Joshua Bishop, who finished the First-Class season as the leading wicket-taker with 42 scalps.

The South African team, which will be captained by Temba Bavuma, arrived in Trinidad on July 27.

Windies Championship XI: Justin Greaves (captain), Keacy Carty (vice-captain), Joshua Bishop, Jediah Blades, Tagenarine Chanderpaul, Bryan Charles, Amir Jangoo, Anderson Phillip, Kumar Roach, Nial Smith, Jeremy Solozano, Shamar Springer, Isai Thorne, Kevin Wickham.

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\$8.6M US contract signed to build National Control Centre for Gas-to-Energy project

The last phase of the Gas-to-Energy project is moving apace as a new \$8.6 Million US contract was signed between the Government of Guyana and a Chinese company known as Power China to construct a building to house the National Control Centre.

Power China was one of the competitive bidders among three other companies shortlisted during the open tender process.

The building will be constructed in Beterverwagting along the East Coast of Demerara. The project has a 13-month duration.

During the signing ceremony on Tuesday in the boardroom of the Office of the Prime Minister at Camp Street, Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips noted the role the building will play in the delivery of power from the Gas-to-Energy project.

"This is important for the whole management of the transmission and distribution of the power that will be evacuated from the Gas-to-Energy project. So, the people of Guyana, come 2025 will benefit from adequate electricity," the prime minister stated.

He added that the project will allow the government to deliver on its promise of easing the cost of living for citizens across the country.

"The power from the Gas-to-Energy project would be reliable. And as such, the cost will go down. We promised the people that we would reduce the cost of electricity by 50 per cent and we will deliver on that promise," Prime Minister Phillips recounted.

Additionally, the Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Deodat Indar explained that the nearly US \$2 billion gas project has several components being done simultaneously.



Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips and Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Deodat Indar during the signing ceremony

These include the installation of deep-water pipelines, shallow-water pipelines, and underground pipelines, the building of the Materials Offloading Facility in Wales, West Bank Demerara, the construction of access roads and the power plant and the installation of transmission lines that will transfer the electricity to the control centre.

"Today, what we have done is to sign the last aspect of the entire leg of projects surrounding the Gas-to-Energy project...we have [KPIL] who is building the 230KV transmission line

to bring it to Vreed-en-Hoop Sub-station and to bring it to Beterverwagting located behind Eccles...That there is now where this contract kicks in where we have the control centre building," Minister Indar explained.

The minister said that a temporary building is expected to be constructed to ensure the timeline is met.

"So, we will have to build a temporary one to make sure that we don't miss the opportunity to dispatch once the power plant commences its operations. Around December of this year that should be completed," the minister

disclosed.

Meanwhile, the Head of the Executive Management Committee of the Guyana Power and Light Inc (GPL), Kesh Nandlall said that the building will play a key part in the execution of the services of the GPL.

It will aid in the agency managing the power grids in a very efficient manner. "It is intended to house the scanning equipment. It is a very important infrastructure for the development of the power sector going forward since it would be housing the brain-child of the grid," Nandlall stated.

GolInvest inks pact for \$3 billion dairy farm

On Tuesday, the government handed over the investment agreement with Demerara Dairy Inc (DDI) for the establishment of a \$3B state-of-the-art dairy farm and milk processing facility.

When completed, the establishment is expected to create 70 direct jobs and another 150 jobs indirectly.

The agreement was previously signed by the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, Dr. Ashni Singh and handed over by Guyana's Chief Investment Officer and Agency Head of the Guyana Office for Investment, Dr Peter Ramsaroop to the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL) Komal Samaroo.

"Milk is a very internationally competitive commodity and so we have designed a dairy farm with updated technology in the world so that the milk that we produce in the farm in Guyana can compete in the regional market against milk imported from

other parts of the world," Samaroo told the Department of Public Information (DPI).

The farm will be located at Mobilissa. It will see the cultivation of 250 hectares of field crops, the construction of a 22-tonne per day animal feed centre, and a 13.7 tonnes per day raw milk dairy farm.

The processing plant will be at Diamond, East Bank Demerara.

The first phase will see the utilisation of some 925 animals (500 milking cows, and 415 heifers). Each cow is estimated to produce 10,000 litres of milk annually. The processing plant at Diamond will be capable of producing some 19.2 tonnes or 18,600 litres of premium milk products.

"This investment agreement here today will allow us to install the necessary equipment to process and package that milk to an internationally acceptable standard for the domestic and export market," Samaroo said.



Chief Investment Officer and CEO of Guyana Office for Investment, Peter Ramsaroop and Chairman and CEO of Demerara Distillers Limited Komal Samaroo



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