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Guyana links climate change and food security at UN

Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali said that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) must take into account the consequential effects on food security and climate change in addressing the issues of conflicts and war. While chairing the special council meeting on Tuesday, the Guyanese Head of State emphasised that these issues are intricately linked to the rule of law, democracy and governance. "We, therefore, are of the very strong view that the Security Council should outline a series of steps that include a full analysis of the impact, and just as we adopt measures to safeguard humanitarian interests, we must adopt measures in our procedures to deal with the effects on food and climate." The Head of State underscored that the Council must be bold enough to take the necessary actions and make the needed changes. President Ali also spoke extensively on the effects of war and conflict, on land degradation, deforestation, food insecurity; climate change, pollution, generational disruption and its impact on social costs, among other areas. Guyana is at the helm of the Presidency of the 15-member Security Council for the month of February, 2024. Above Dr Ali is pictured with UN officials at the UNSC meeting in



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Tourism tours launched in Rupununi, Region Nine

The Tourism Sector continues to expand with the launching of two new experiential tours in the Rupununi, Region Nine.

The Guyana Tourism Authority led by Kamrul Baksh, Rupununi Adventures, Tara's Choices & Tours, and Bushcow Eco Trails on Monday launched the new products at the Cashew Grove Park at Lethem, Region Nine.

Rupununi Adventures and Tara's Choices & Tours have collaborated for the 'Explore Lethem' tour which promises an immersive journey. The tour also features guided tours to Matapee Falls, paddle boarding, and kayaking experiences at Manari Creek and the town of Lethem.

Meanwhile, the 'Indigenous Exploration: Kanuku & Rupununi Trekking and River Adventure' tour launched by Bushcow Eco Trails, will take guests on an adventure deep into the heart of Guyana's rich indigenous heritage with an unforgettable blend of nature and culture amidst the awe-inspiring Kanuku Mountains.

While delivering the feature remarks at the launching ceremony, Director of the Guyana Tourism Authority Kamrul Baksh commended the operators for their efforts in creating products that appeal to tourists.

He noted that one such example of



Local tour operators on a tour of Lethem

an outstanding tour operators was Guy Fredericks of Bush Cow Eco Trails.

"He launched earlier, and as he mentioned, the guests wanted something more. They wanted not only a hiking experience exclusively but they wanted that jungle plus river. So, he recognized and then retrofitted the tour to

cater for the market, and that's exemplary because it's responding to the needs of the market which is demand-based, and that approach, you can't lose," Baksh noted.

He also commended the proprietors of Rupununi Adventures, Tara's Choices & Tours for their collaboration,

noting that it is timely, especially in the context of the Rupununi Rodeo which is coming up.

"I like that experience because it draws on the main elements of the Lethem district and just on the periphery and packaging that in a day experience. A lot of people are interested in doing that first flight in from Ogle, spending just a few hours and then flying back out," he said.

Baksh said too that he "think for the very first time in this industry's history, we are seeing such scale of tours being developed, persons going out and doing assessments and putting itineraries together in such a short time," he stated while highlighting that over the last four years, there were 50 new tours developed in Guyana.

He noted that a lot is being done through partnerships and the momentum must be kept.

"We just want to continue to work on raising the standards within this industry and encourage each of you to enroll in the HSSE programme. So, the Guyana Tourism Authority is working closely with the Centre for Local Business Development in having you guys complete your HSSE training and manual which will go a long way into ensuring that the safety standards for your respective tours are on par," he stated.

Climate change impacts food, int'l security

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hugh Todd on Tuesday pointed to the adverse effects of climate change on food security and peacekeeping operations.

Speaking at the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) open debate on the impact of climate change and food insecurity on the maintenance of international peace and security, the minister highlighted the interconnectivity between these three elements, stressing the need for a systematic and strategic approach by the council.

"We are concerned that the increasing occurrences of extreme climate defence are severely impacting access to vital resources, such as water and agricultural lands. There is increasing evidence of the interrelationship between climate change, food insecurity and conflict, with each directly and indirectly impacting the other," he said.

He continued, "Food and water insecurity and hunger are among the primary pathways through which the effects of climate change on peace and stability and the enjoyment of human rights manifest."

To further strengthen this point, Minister Todd pointed out that, of the 10 countries more vulnerable to climate change-related risks, 9 are food insecure. For context, climate change phenomena such as rising temperatures and sea levels, severe droughts, and floods lead to food insecurity.

The minister explained that this can in turn disrupt livelihoods and migration patterns.

According to the foreign affairs minister, these are the main drivers of conflict and violence.

Based on this assessment, he identified climate change as a 'risk multiplier'.

"Low-income, fragile, vulnerable, and conflict-affected countries and communities are most at risk of being overwhelmed by climate impacts," the foreign affairs minister added.

Women, youth, children, and the indigenous community were also identified as particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Minister Todd affirmed the UNSC's resolute stance in taking a holistic view of these challenges, and adopting comprehensive risk assessments, utilising data and analytics to build resilience.

"We stand ready to consolidate our efforts to advance systematic response, inclusive and evidence-based approach," the minister noted.



Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hugh Todd



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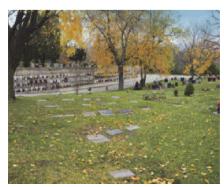
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Mohan Nandu: Replica of India's Mukesh passes on

By Dr Vishnu Bisram

One of Guyana's leading singers of a variety of Indian songs, Mohan Nandu, passed away Thursday night at Mercy hospital. He was taken ill at his home on Thursday and transported to Mercy by staff from SVN high school. He was ailing for some time. He was 87. He was a national hero, at least for Indians in the field of music, and he received a national medal of services for his contributions in that area.

Mohan ji was from Anna Catherina and lived in the house he was born all his life. He was a very simple, humble, down to earth man. He was very popular as a singer especially in Demerara. Berbicians and Essequibians saw much less of him and had to be contented to hearing him on radio or listening to his cassettes. They all loved him. He had a golden voice, an exact replica of the great Mukesh of Mumbai.

Mohan came from a family of singers. His father was an accomplished and popular taan singer and musician and his mother a religious woman; he also had a sister. Nandu began singing at an early age, and he has been singing classical songs and playing the harmonium since the 1940s entertaining audiences throughout the country. He sang at weddings, baraats, pujas, satsangs, Mandirs, Bhagwat's or jags and Ramayans, and at concerts and on radio. He sang at several fundraisers including for the PPP. He also partook in Indian singing competitions, winning many trophies in the Mukesh competition. He belted out unforgettable classical and religious hits, evergreen melodies. Everywhere, people yearned to hear him sing and crowded his performances. Mandirs and halls reverberated with applause. He was very close to another iconic singer Shri Gobin Ram. They made quite a team and entertained thousands in West

Mohan's singing icon from Bollywood was the legendary Mukesh, the playback singer for thousands of films. Singing and music were his first love, and he learned Hindi songs from Bollywood.

Hindi films have always been an attraction and a mirror of almost every In-



Mohan Nandu: one of the top Indian singers in Guyana and the Caribbean

dian Guyanese. They were embedded in the psyche of Indians. And they imitated the Hindi songs of the films. Nandu learned by seeing the films, imitating the songs especially of Mukesh who sang for dozens of actors, and practicing them for perfection. And was he perfect? According to Bollywood singers who performed at concerts in Guyana, on listening to Nandu, they said he sang exactly like Mukesh. One of the professional Bollywood performers offered to take Nandu to sing in Bollywood.

Hailing from the West Coast, he entertained crowds mostly in West Demerrestricting Berbicians Essequibians access to enjoy his musical talent. They only saw him perform in person at concerts on the Corentyne,

West Berbice, and Essequibo or when he accompanied popular Pandit Reepudaman Persaud at Ramayana discourses. He accompanied Pt Reepu to countless kathas all over the country. Mohan was very close to Pandit Reepu whose Dharmic Sabha honored him for lifelong contributions to Indian culture.

It is noted that he was one of only a few artistes who did not migrate for opportunities to make a name overseas – quite a patriot. And for that, Guyanese are grateful. He was deserving of national honors

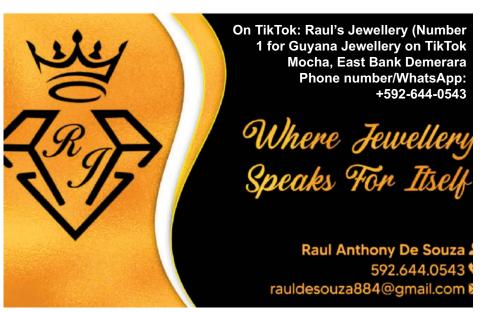
Nandu never accumulated wealth

and other materialistic possessions and lived in humble surroundings in a very small house on stilts.

Friends and Swami Aksharananda provided for Mohan Nandu's medicine, meals, house cleaning, and general upkeep.

The inimitable king of melody from West Demerara is gone. Guyanese in the diaspora in America remember him with deep sorrow. Although he has departed, he still lives with us in his many songs that are now available on You Tube and elsewhere. His departure is a loss to Indian arts.







EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

Questions about the 'ghost ship'

For any oil producing nation, dealing with the issue of oil spills is perhaps one of its most important jobs. This is because, obviously, of the harsh impact of such a spill on the natural environment, including wildlife.

We know that protocols for dealing with oil spills have been forefront at the minds of those in the Guyana government as it learns to navigate the fledgling oil and gas industry in that country.

But its neighbour, Trinidad and Tobago, should have had a lot of experience with this, both in terms of contingency plans and actual action. This is because T&T has been an oil producing nation for the better part of seven decades.

Imagine our surprise, then, as the twin-island nation was gripped in the throes of its annual Carnival celebrations this weekend, that news broke the country was dealing with a major oil spill --officially categorized as a Tier 2 spill, which, according to global experts, is sizeable and requires likely international assistance to contain.

Local authorities were apparently unaware of the spill until oil began washing up on beaches along Tobago's southwestern coast in a picturesque area called Canoe Bay. A cursory investigation quickly found the source: a large tanker that had overturned just offshore.

Incredibly, no one seemed to know

what the ship was, where it came from, and what caused it to capsize. No one also knew where the crew of the vessel was.

So far, all efforts to stop the spill from the tanker's holds have been unsuccessful. As well, we don't know, as of now, just how much oil was lost and came ashore along the pristine Tobago

Prime Minister Keith Rowley admitted that the matter is not under control.

"Cleaning and restoration can only seriously begin after we have brought the situation under control," he said. "Right now, the situation is not under control. But it appears to be under sufficient control that we think we can manage."

Rowley also said that T&T has asked unnamed international countries for help with the spill.

The ship which overturned was, on Sunday, referred to as a "ghost ship" by the TT Prime Minister. It has since been identified as the MV Gulfstream, a medium-sized oil tanker that some reports suggest may have been retrofitted as a lumber and sand cargo carrier. It has not been determined from where the ship originated or what it's actual cargo was -- whether it is oil or lumber -- although Martime records have identified a ship with the same name as flying a Maltese

flag. Other records indicate a ship called MV Gulfstream was flagged to St Kitts-Nevis.

Tobago Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) Director Allan Stewart said that searches were ongoing for its registration number.

"The origin of the vessel, while it is not yet confirmed, we know definitely the name of it is 'Gulfstream.' The authorities are trying to do their searches and make sure the divers later on will provide us with more details on the vessel when the water calms down so we can get the number. That will help with the identity," he said.

The problem with all of this is that the Gulfstream was apparently plying the waters of Trinidad and Tobago without the knowledge of anyone in authority. It is incredible to think that a ship that size could pass through the country's waters without any maritime agency such as the Coast Guard being aware of its presence, and indeed, if it did not sink, it likely would have gone unnoticed entirely.

This raises a whole lot of questions: was the Gulfstream on legal business, or was it involved in some sort of smuggling exercise? It is normal to assume that a crew would not abandon the vessel or report its sinking if it was on legitimate business, but would be quick to disappear if it wasn't.

If it was carrying a cargo of oil, where did this oil originate? The ship sank within the distance of three oil producing nations: Guyana, Venezuela and Trinidad.

Venezuela is facing US sanctions on its oil shipments. Could it be that the Gulfstream was engaged in helping that country defy the embargo?

Other reports suggest that a racket involving the illegal sale of subsidized diesel fuel from Trinidad up "the islands" is still going on, even though it was exposed some years ago. That racket involved TT Coast Guard officials selling the diesel fuel allocated for its vessels to fishermen and other marine traders in other Caribbean countries at a huge profit.

Was the Gulfstream part of that racket?

These are all questions that remain unanswered, but what is clear here is that TT has dropped the ball in terms of its border security and wider national security if a large ship can traverse undetected through its waters.

The oil spill is one thing; we think the TT government has the expertise to deal with that quickly, thus preventing a wider environmental disaster.

The "ghost ship" is quite another.

The people of T&T must demand answers from the relevant authorities on this

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Dear Editor,

SOLIDARITY with those who struggle is one of most constructive things we can do in society. Today the teachers in Guyana who are in their classrooms deserve all our support.

Nearly half of all teachers are still teaching our children. The ones on the picket lines are there because of political and some very culturally regressive reasons.

Did you know that of the 13,500 teachers in Guyana, only 4,500 are with GTU? If you think teachers are oppressed, ask the teacher trainees who saw their income go from \$12,400 to \$104,000 in a matter of three years! And ask the thousands who are getting low-cost mortgage to

build houses on subsidised house lots, or those who get the duty free benefit for vehicles, or the thousands of recipients of GOAL scholarships worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Ask them!

And ask them what GTU ever did for them. Ask Coretta McDonald what the APNU+AFC did for them when they couldn't even get a meeting with the Minister of Education. Give your solidarity where it will be meaningful and consequential – to the teachers who have said no to an illegitimate and politically orchestrated strike.

I know of no arrangement where workers are paid to be on strike. The GTU and its supporters in the opposi-

tion APNU+AFC, plus their so-called civil society comrades, are delusional on this score.

In Guyana, we have the extraordinary situation where some teachers are engaged in a politically motivated strike and yet want to be paid. The strike is clearly political. A senior member of the union confirmed this by leaking that there is a "corporate sponsor" for what is clearly illegal.

The nation should know that GTU represents only about 32% of all teachers in the country. A substantial number of these are concentrated in a few urban areas and are card-carrying members and activists for the APNU+AFC. Put differently, most teachers in Guyana do not support the

GTU. It is that simple.

Politically, I am deeply invested in the professional welfare of teachers. I have been in the classroom for 38 years and I engaged in one of the longest strikes in Canadian history (York University, Spring 1997), during which time no striker received a dime in regular pay. We received strike pay from our union, but that was it.

Strikers never receive their pay from their employers, anywhere in the world. The GoG is on solid ground and should not reward those who are hell bent on being disruptive.

> Sincerely, Dr. Randy Persaud



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Ontario to scrap license plate renewals, process to be automatic

By Niraj Sharma

LJI REPORTER

Premier Doug Ford has revealed that Ontario drivers will soon no longer need to go through the annual license plate registration process, as the province is working towards automating this procedure. Ford made this announcement during a press conference in Toronto on Tuesday, emphasizing the government's efforts to simplify and streamline the process for residents.

"We are getting rid of that totally. Registering your vehicle, we did the first step, getting rid of the stickers. Now we are getting rid of the re-registration," Ford stated in response to concerns about a surge in expired plates on Ontario roads. He assured the public that the system would be automatically updated, eliminating the need for individuals to worry about re-registering their plates.

This decision comes in the wake of a Toronto Star report that highlighted over one million expired license plates in Ontario, with an increasing number of motorists forgetting to renew since the process became free. The Ford government had previously eliminated all fees associated with the annual registration of license plates in 2022.

Starting from March 13, 2022, drivers of passenger vehicles, motorcycles, mopeds, and light commercial vehicles were no longer required to pay renewal fees or apply stickers to their license plates. Previously, the cost to renew license stickers was \$60 in northern Ontario and \$120 in southern Ontario. The move resulted in hundreds of thousands of unregistered license plates across the province, confirmed by the Ontario Provincial Police in December.

When questioned about the official timeline for scrapping renewals, Premier Ford couldn't provide specific details but assured that it would occur "extremely soon" and be legislated upon the government's return. The goal is to further alleviate the burden on Ontario drivers by simplifying and automating the registration process.



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Third Force politics not a viable option for aggressive development



Joel Bhagwandin

Proponents of a "third force" political entity are of the view that a "third force" is necessary to hold the "balance of power" in the National Assembly. Proponents of the "third force" politics are also of the view that the PPP/C does not want to have an educated population because an educated population would be a threat to the party based on its politics, implying that an educated population will be critical thinkers and that critical thinkers will vote on the basis of issues and policies. Further, the "third force politics" proponents alleged that the PPP/C is a racial party, the party intentionally oppresses others, etc.

Contrary to the foregoing allegations by the proponents of third force politics, this author argued that an educated population is not a threat to the PPP/C as a political entity nor as a government. Rather, an educated population would systematically disprove the aforesaid presuppositions, with irrefutable empiricism. The third force proponents presuppositions are hinged upon an unscientific basis.

The following characterizations can be ascribed to an educated population, contrary to the views of the proponents of third force politics:

An educated population will not have to rely on the likes of the third force proponents and their aligned psychologists' unscientific propagation;

An educated population won't have to subject themselves to the rhetoric of any politician and/or entity. They would be able to conduct their own critical analysis:

An educated population would recognize bias with little to no effort;

An educated population understands the difference between a fictional world and a world engendered by realism and pragmatism;

An educated population would formation agenda. know that "third forces" have consistently failed, and it is unlikely to work; third force propon

What one may regard as the "balance of power", Guyanese have seen the dangers of this in the 2012 (pre-2015) political dispensation. Nothing gets done and the country effectively becomes ungovernable;

An educated population that wants to have a better quality of life would know that in such a dispensation, there will be no such thing as quality of life. Guyana was on the verge of becoming a blacklisted country (AML/CFT).

An educated population would know that there is no fact nor truth to the notion that the PPP/C is a racial party. Narratives and rhetorics are not facts. When challenged, the third force proponents have all failed to identify a single policy or racial feature of the PPP/C. It can't be the cabinet, the cabinet is diverse and looks like Guyana; it can't be the public service, which is dominated by Afro-Guyanese; it can't be the judiciary, the judiciary is led by two of the most powerful Afro-Guyanese women in the country; some of the best and highest paid technocrats within the public service are Afro-Guyanese. So, where is the racial feature? There is none.

On the subject of Guysuco, which the third force proponents often reference...An educated population would not ignore the equal amount of subsidy for electricity in Region ten (10). Why single out Guysuco and not Region ten? An educated population would know of the economic impacts of Guysuco, and not only through a warped political lens. Afro-Guyanese were also impacted, more than 7,000 families affected and 40,000 dependents. An educated population would know that the APNU Government disregarded their own advice, inter alia, the Commission of Inquiry (COI) into Guysuco, to not close any of the estates at that time. An educated population would know that if an industry is no longer viable, to transition out of that takes time. The economy is already on that transition path, inter alia, an aggressive economic diversification and trans-

While this author challenged the third force proponents to demonstrate a single racial policy of the PPP/C Government, which they have failed to do. Hereunder, is a demonstration of how one of the proponents' unscientific, biased theory is flawed and therefore has

no basis in fact, logic, or sound reasoning.

To this end, lets examine the theory: an educated population is a threat to the PPP/C politics. This is a multidimensionally flawed presupposition. The PPP/C Government has a scholarship programme targeting over 30,000 persons. Guyanese from all ethnic groups including members of the opposition are beneficiaries. The Government has demonstrated their commitment to provide free tertiary education, whereby they have already signaled the conditions that this will come with. Those conditions are: improved quality tuition, and improved management and administration of the institution. All Guyanese attend the University of Guyana (UG) from all ethnic groups.

That's not all. If at all, there was any merit to the proponents' theory, then why would the Government remove taxes from private education, aimed at promoting a private sector educational sector. There are atleast three tertiary educational institutions that are privately operating in Guyana, that are churning out undergraduate and post-graduate degrees. If the PPP/C Government wanted an uneducated population, then why such a policy? More so, if there was any merit to that notion, then why liberalize the telecommunication sector? The internet is another source of education. In this respect, there are many internationally accredited and recognized universities

all over the world that offer distance/online education. Thus, cheap, and reliable internet access is aimed at helping to educate the population.

Proponents of the "third force" politics, especially those who subscribe to third force politics, must always bear in mind that the nature and intricacies of politics have been the same since the beginning of time and will remain so until the end of time. Meaning, that the notion whereby a third-party political force will seek to hold the balance of power is an illusion. The moment that one becomes a politician, and a political organization is formed to contest an election, and wins at least one seat, much less six, it is no longer about balance of power. Once any political entity is indoctrinated into the political economy matrix, it is always about power. Politics is not about balancing power; it always has been about power. An educated population would be mindful of this phenomenon called "politics".

As such, whether it's recycled politicians or a new breed of politicians, nothing changes when it comes to politics. The danger that currently prevails with the current crop of third force aspirants is that they are all very inexperience, mediocre, amateur, and disingenuous. These characteristics will stymie, once again, Guyana's development trajectory, should a third force succeed.

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Brian Tiwarie, OMC, AA - CEO

Family stuck in home where they lost loved ones in 2017 murder-suicide

By Nishad Sharma

LJI REPORTER

The relatives of Shanna Desmond, the wife of military veteran Lionel Desmond, are urging either the federal or Nova Scotia governments to release them from the residence where the tragic murder-suicide occurred.

In January 2017, Lionel Desmond, grappling with acute PTSD and struggling to access treatment, took the lives of his wife Shanna, their daughter Aaliyah, and his mother Brenda before turning the gun on himself in their family home in Guysborough County.

The recent final report from the judge overseeing the fatality inquiry into the incident included 25 recommendations aimed at preventing similar

However, the inquiry did not address the fate of the family home where the horrific events transpired. Shanna's parents, Thelma and Ricky Borden, currently reside in the house and desire to relocate, but financial constraints and the stigma associated with the tragedy make selling the property challenging, if not impossible.

Sheldon Borden, Shanna Desmond's brother, emphasized a straightforward solution, suggesting the family should be relocated from the home.

Speaking to reporters after the release of the inquiry report, he noted the financial difficulties faced by many in simply leaving their homes, especially considering the emotional toll of the incident.

While Nova Scotia Justice Minister Brad Johns expressed personal sympathy for the families, he indicated that the province is awaiting leadership from the federal government on the matter.

Veterans Affairs Minister Ginette Pettipas Taylor, following the fatality in-



Lionel desmond with members of his family in an undated photo

quiry report, pledged to reach out to the families.

However, as of February 8, the government's response has been limited to acknowledging its support for the inquiry and committing to a thorough review of the report in the coming weeks.

Community activist Rubin (Rocky) Coward, a friend of the Borden family, highlighted past precedents in similar situations.

He cited the demolition of the Mc-Donald's restaurant in Sydney River, N.S., following a 1992 murder and the

province's acquisition of properties owned by the gunman responsible for the Portapique, N.S., murders in April 2020.

The government explained that acquiring the Portapique properties aimed to prevent further development.

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Oil trade between Guyana, India at 'all-time' high

THE trade of hydrocarbon between Guyana and India increased dramatically between 2021 and 2022, hitting an "all-time high" of US\$149 million, according to Hardeep Singh Puri, India's Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs and Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

In a post on X, formerly Twitter, he mentioned that this is because Indian refiners have begun sourcing crude oil from Guyana.

Puri said he talked about "ways to build on this to further expand and cement our ties to cover other aspects of the energy sector including power plants, infrastructure, and capacity building" with the Minister of Natural Resources of Guyana, Vickram Bharrat.

Puri said that he and minister Bharrat had very fruitful talks about how India will be the oil demand centre in the ensuing decades, accounting for roughly 25 per cent of the growth in global energy demand between 2020 and 2040.

They also talked about the great chances for cooperation between the two nations that such will bring.

On Tuesday, a delegation from Guyana, led by Prime Minister Mark Phillips and Minister Bharrat, arrived in India on a week-long visit intended to enhance the two nations' multifaceted relationship.

Thus far, they have met with India's President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, and External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

The Deccan Herrald, an Indian daily newspaper, reported recently that Minister Bharrat said that India wants to sign a multi-year oil purchase deal with Guyana and acquire stakes in the South American nation's exploration

That newspaper reported Minister Bharrat as saying that Guyana will make a decision on the oil purchase deal "at some point in time".

The Deccan Herrald said that Minister Bharrat said that the cabinet of Guyana would need to approve any such agreement with India. According to the newspaper, India, the thirdlargest importer, and consumer of oil worldwide, wants to diversify its supplies of crude oil.

It stated that Guyana and India had inked a five-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) earlier this month to cooperate on energy.

"Bharrat also said Indian companies are interested in picking up stakes in Guyana's exploration acreage through negotiation rather than a bidding process. Indian companies did not



Natural Resources Minister, Vickram Bharrat, with Hardeep Singh Puri, India's Minister of Petroleum and Gas

participate in Guyana's latest oil and gas bidding round," said the Deccan Herrald.

Additionally, it quoted Minister Bharrat as saying: "Our preference (for offering oil blocks for exploration) will be through bidding, and if there is any interest in any particular block, we are willing to negotiate and enter an agreement."

As it relates to India acquiring stakes in the prolific Stabroek Block, Minister Bharrat told the publication that Guyana was willing to offer stakes through negotiation only in relinquished areas. According to the publication, Minister Bharrat stated, "We have some relinquished acreage from Stabroek and other blocks so simply that means possibly we will have a bidding round possibly later this year."

ExxonMobil (Guyana) Limited operates the Stabroek Block and holds 45 per cent interest.

Hess Guyana Exploration Limited holds 30 per cent interest, and CNOOC Petroleum Guyana Limited holds 25 per cent interest. Three floating production storage and offloading (FPSOs) vessels are deployed in this block.

Over 600,000 barrels per day (b/d) are presently produced from the Stabroek Block projects, exceeding the operator's estimates.

Building on the discussions during President Dr Irfaan Ali and Vice-President Bharrat Jagdeo's visit to India in January and February 2023, both countries have taken concrete steps by establishing eight Joint Working Groups.

These groups encompass a wide array of domains including agriculture, health, infrastructure development, energy, Ayurveda, technology innovation, defence, and human resources and capacity building. This holistic approach aims to fortify cooperation and leverage each nation's strengths for mutual

gain.

A pivotal aspect of the partnership is Guyana's expressed interest in procuring defence capabilities from India. This initiative stems from Guyana's imperative to safeguard its maritime boundaries, exclusive economic zones, and burgeoning oil and gas industry from potential threats, notably illegal fishing activities. India and Guyana have had diplomatic ties since 1965.



EU Ambassador praises Guyana's forest-management practices

GUYANA'S well balanced forest management practices could see the country soon being licensed under the European Union's (EU) Forest Legality Governance Enforcement and Trade (FLEGT).

"When it comes to the forestrymanagement practices, Guyana is really already advanced," European Union's Ambassador to Guyana, Rene van Nes, said recently.

The European Union (EU) launched the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) programme in response to the global problem of illegal logging.

"Guyana has signed up to a whole range of commitments to make sure that logging is done in [a] sustainable way and they are advanced already," van Nes

Simply explained, FLEGT is an action plan outlining several steps to address the issues of forest governance and law enforcement in the industry.

A key element of this action plan is the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), a bilateral agreement between the EU and a timber-producing partner country.

In 2012, Guyana began formal negotiations with the EU on a FLEGT VPA and through a collaborative process, the Guyana Government and EU established



EU Ambassador Rene van Nes

the shared goal of fostering good forest VPA implementation structure. governance and addressing illegality.

Last month, it was reported that Guyana is making progress towards effectively joining the VPA.

The Ministry of Natural Resources had convened a crucial meeting at the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) on Wednesday, where key discussions focused on the establishment of the Government Co-ordination Body(GCB), which will be a key component of the

At the meeting, representatives discussed the integral role of the GCB in ensuring a coordinated and cohesive approach to meet the objectives outlined in the VPA.

These objectives, set forth by the EU FLEGT initiative, include stimulating markets, retaining international markets Guyana's exporters,

demonstrating the legality and sustainability of timber production, and enhancing reporting requirements within the chain of custody management.

The EU FLEGT VPA, signed in December 2022 and officially ratified in April 2023, marks a significant commitment by Guyana to address forestry-repromote challenges and responsible and sustainable timber production.

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) has been tasked with representing the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in achieving the objectives outlined in the

One of the primary objectives of the VPA is the establishment of the Guyana Timber Legality Assurance System (GTLAS). This national system is designed to ensure that all aspects of forestry production comply with relevant laws, encompassing social, environmental, and financial regulations.

"Guyana will be licensed, that is very special. At this moment, there is only one country in the world that is licensed with the FLEGT. Likely, Ghana will be licensed, so if Guyana is able to get licensed as well...then [Guyana] will really be up there in terms of forest practices," he said.



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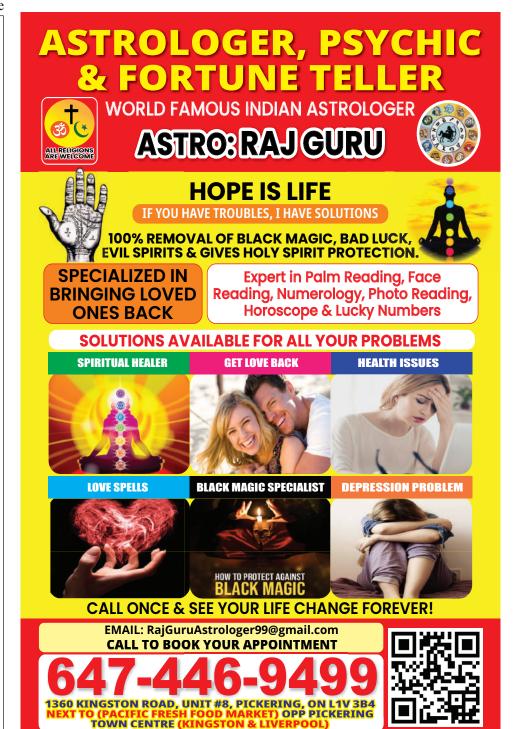














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Multi-purpose recreational facilities to be built in Herstelling, EBD

RESIDENTS of Herstelling and Covent Garden on the East Bank of Demerara will each see the construction of multi-purpose recreational facilities.

The plans for these were unveiled on Saturday by staff of the Ministry of Housing and Water, who were joined by Minister within the ministry, Susan Rodrigues.

According to the ministry, under the Inter-Development Bank (IDB) funded Adequate Housing and Urban Accessibility Program, Herstelling Plot C will benefit from a \$94 million facility, while Covent Garden will similarly benefit from a \$101 million facility.

Saturday's consultations were geared at discussing with residents the draft design for the recreational facilities to be constructed in both communities. The sessions were facilitated by the Deputy Director of the Community Development Department, Donel Bess-Bascom, Community Development Officer II, Carneshia Periera, and Health Safety and Environmental Manager, Mr. Sunil Gopaul, Health Safety and Social Safeguard Technical Officer, Mr. Albert Narine, and other technical project staff.

Minister Rodrigues, in her remarks brought residents up-to-date on



Minister Susan Rodrigues engages residents

development in the housing and infrastructure sectors, noting that they can expect more.

Speaking directly to the IDB-funded project, the Minister told residents that she is pleased with the road works and sidewalks that have been completed.

She added that as the works continue in the respective communities, residents are expected to play their role in monitoring the projects in their respective communities.

Upon completion of these facilities, Minister Rodrigues told residents

the benefits would be numerous as she urged them to care for the facilities.

The new facilities will feature a play area, washrooms and changing rooms, a pavilion, a basketball court, an open auditorium, a footpath, a perimeter fence, and LED floodlight in and around their immediate environs.

Furthermore, a similar session was conducted at Parfaite Harmonie, West Bank Demerara. A facility costing \$182 million is set to be constructed in Onderneeming.

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UWI on board with plan to establish medical school in Berbice

THE University of the West Indies (UWI) has signalled its support to collaborate with the Government of Guyana in establishing a medical school at New Amsterdam, Berbice, Region Six.

Guyana's President, Dr. Irfaan Ali during a recent commissioning ceremony for an oil-and-gas training facility in the region, disclosed that discussions between the government and the tertiary institution have been fruitful.

"We have just concluded the arrangement where the University of the West Indies School of Medicine will be our education partner, here in Berbice, training doctors," President Ali said.

The establishment of a medical training facility here has been on the cards for the government since an agreement was signed for the construction of a new, modern level-five hospital at New Amsterdam.

Just last month, the sod was turned for the US\$161 million facility in New Amsterdam which is set to be equipped with all modern facilities to conduct transplants and other major surgeries.

At that ceremony, President Ali had touted that training will be a major component of the hospital.

The new hospital will feature five operating theatres, one specifically for cardiac surgery, and advanced digital X-ray, and CT scan machines. It will be the



An artist's impression of the \$161M state-of-the-art New Amsterdam Hospital

second public facility to house an MRI machine and will be equipped for transplants

Two additional buildings will be constructed within the compound – one for a teaching facility and another for a modern psychiatric facility.

Once completed, the new facility will be linked to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) which will be connected to Mount Sinai Hospital in New York and other major hospitals around the world in telemedicine.

Discussions however are continuing with the university to offer a nursing programme. This the President said will align with ongoing works by the country's health ministry to upskill nurses by providing more training opportunities.

"I had talks again with the univer-

sity's school of nursing and I've instructed the Minister of Health to get an agreement with the University of the West Indies to have their nursing programme accredited to the new school of nursing that we're building in the region, so that the children in Regions Six, Two and 10, who will be doing nursing will be having a University of the West Indies nursing degree," President Ali said.



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Health Ministry looking to expand cancer screening, care this year

THE Ministry of Health this year is aiming to expand cancer screening, testing and care services across the country to further reduce the morbidity and mortality rates here.

This was disclosed by Minister of Health Dr Frank Anthony on Friday at a World Cancer Day health fair held at the ministry's Brickdam headquarters.

During brief remarks, the minister said that over the last few years, the ministry has been looking more closely at chronic non-communicable diseases and ways in which these can be reduced across the country.

Further to this, he added that the most prevalent cancers in Guyana are breast, cervical and prostate. As such, he noted that this is something that they have to pay significant attention to, and while these are not the only three cancers that exist, their prevalence requires much more attention.

It was then that the minister noted that when looking at the latest report in terms of mortality, more persons have died from prostate cancer in Guyana than any other cancer.

As such, he indicated that this year, the ministry will start looking at how they can roll out a comprehensive programme to tackle this.

He said: "Men are a little bit more difficult to work with because a lot of men don't come to clinic and very often, they might have signs and symptoms of enlargement of [the] prostate, which then maybe later you can get prostate cancer, but they tend to ignore these signs. Only when it's really dominant then they will come to the clinic, by which time they might have a lot of other complications."

The minister indicated that they are looking to start an awareness programme to further get men to understand and be aware and get screened early as part of this process.

Meanwhile, concerning the treatment of cancers, he noted that currently a lot of the treatment that is carried out is surgical in order to deal with metastasis which is the spread of cancer cells from the place where they first formed to another part of the body.

However, he noted that brachytherapy is currently unavailable in Guyana and as such, a gap exists in the treatment that can be provided. Brachytherapy is a type of internal radiation that uses radiation to destroy cancer cells and shrink tumours.

"And so, this year we are working to introduce brachytherapy in Guyana,



Minister of Health Dr Frank Anthony

so we will start the process and hope- duced here in Guyana," he said. fully we can get brachytherapy intro-

Regarding breast cancer, the minis-

ter said that while the ministry can do mammograms at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), they are looking to expand this aspect.

Dr Anthony told the gathering that the intention is that during this year, they will add three additional mammogram machines to what currently exists. One will be installed at the hospital in Linden, while the others will go to the West Demerara and New Amsterdam Hospitals.

With these things implemented, the government hopes to improve screening and care for cancer across the country.

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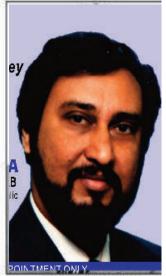
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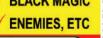
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Overhaul of Companies Act in Guyana coming, says AG Nandlall

IN keeping with efforts to modernize Guyana's economic and legal landscapes, Attorney-General Mohabir Anil Nandlall, S.C., has unveiled a comprehensive plan to overhaul the nearly three-decade-old Companies Act, signalling a pivotal shift in the nation's approach to commercial regulation amidst an unprecedented economic boom.

This pivotal legislation, as outlined by Minister of Legal Affairs, Mohabir Anil Nandlall, S.C. during his weekly programme, 'Issues in the News,' marks a critical juncture in the country's journey of transformative growth.

"The Companies Act, passed in 1991, is nearly 35 or 40 years old; and by sheer passage of time, it requires a review," Nandlall said, highlighting the outdated nature of the current legislation against the backdrop of Guyana's rapidly evolving economic landscape.

Highlighting the gap between the law and current commercial realities, Nandlall pointed out: "The state of the Guyanese economy and the state of the commercial sector of Guyana in 1991, when that Act was passed, was radically different from what it is now."

This mismatch, according to Nandlall, necessitates a "complete overhaul of the act" to address modern commercial practices, including issues such as anti-money laundering and the advent of the stock market, which were not prevalent concerns when the original act was enacted.

Nandlall also noted the significant increase in business activities, stating, "From 2020 to now, we have had 59,014 new businesses registered at the Deeds and Commercial Registry Authority (DCRA) ...For companies, we have had 4,856 new companies incorporated."

These statistics, Nandlall said, underscore the explosive growth in the commercial sector, further underscoring the need for updated regulatory frameworks.

The Attorney-General revealed



Attorney General Anil Nandlall

plans to adopt a CARICOM model law as a template for the new Companies Act, aiming for consistency with broader Caribbean legal standards while accommodating Guyana's unique economic features, including the burgeoning oil and gas sector.

"Our companies act must take into account these new realities," Nandlall affirmed, acknowledging the multidimensional changes in the commercial landscape, from the introduction of new industries to the expansion of existing ones.

Nandlall said that this legislative revision is poised to modernize Guyana's commercial legal framework, ensuring that it is equipped to facilitate the nation's ongoing economic expansion and integration into the global market, with a clear focus on regulatory compliance, transparency, and fostering a conducive environment for business and investment.

This amendment comes against the backdrop of a remarkable increase in business and company registrations over the past three years since the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) was elected to office, as reported by the DCR A

The revenue earned by the DCRA has also seen a noteworthy increase, underscoring the economic vitality and the success of the registry's operations in facilitating the growth of the commercial sector.

In response to this burgeoning commercial landscape, the government has embarked on a series of legislative reforms aimed at creating a more modern, safe, and transparent business environment.

Key among these reforms is the overhaul of the Companies Act and the Securities Council Act. The latter is a strategic move to foster a robust stock exchange market in Guyana, with plans to model it after one of the leading markets in the Caribbean, in collaboration with Jamaica.

The government is also working on amending laws to ensure that contractual instruments could be accepted as collateral for financing by commercial lending agencies.

This is part of a broader effort to make business operations smoother and more secure for entrepreneurs and investors alike.

Protesting teachers will face salary deductions

AMID the ongoing illegal protest orchestrated by the Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU), the government on Monday issued a notice, declaring that educators who have been absent from work without authorised leave will face salary deductions.

According to the official notice sent out by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, a list was compiled from all 11 Education Districts of teachers who have failed to report for duty and lacked the necessary leave approval.

"This unauthorised absence constitutes a breach of their conditions of service and their statutory duties and attracts legal sanctions," the notice stated.

It was further announced that the deductions would be reflected in the

teachers' March 2024 salaries, aligning with legal requirements.

The backdrop of this stern action is a week-long protest staged by some teachers led by the GTU and joined by opposition elements.

The strike has been under scrutiny for its underlying intentions. The GTU called for the strike, claiming that negotiations on teachers' conditions and benefits have yet to be exhausted.

President Dr. Irfaan Ali on Sunday, while addressing the nation, highlighted the need for fairness and cautioned against political manipulation.

"We have to be fair. We have to have a conscience. We can't allow ourselves to be political pawns and this is all I ask. For us to be fair. For us to look at all we have done, for us to understand the commitment I have made. I can look

every worker in the eye and say to them, we got your back, we are committed to you, we will bring prosperity to every one of your homes," he stated.

He reassured every worker of the government's support and commitment to their collective prosperity. The protests and the government's response follow a year of consultations among President Ali, Minister of Education Priya Manickchand, and other officials with educators to address their concerns.

McDonald had previously urged the government to proceed with salary deductions for teachers participating in the strike action.

She said the potential salary deductions for participating teachers would not pose a problem, as "corporate sponsors" have committed to reimburs-

ing affected educators.

However, specifics regarding these sponsors, the total funds pledged, and the planned distribution method remain undisclosed.

Minister Manickchand had criticised the strike as "dishonest" and "dishonourable," pointing out that negotiations with the GTU were ongoing and were not at an impasse as claimed by the union.

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Guyana gov't working on the 'best welfare package in region'

PRESIDENT Dr. Irfaan Ali has advised Guyanese to stay the course, as the government is working to ensure that everyone lives a better quality of life.

His comment was a direct response to detractors of development, who continue to propagate claims that are unsubstantiated or supported by evidence.

"Everybody believes that all the resources are available now. In 2027, then is when the real growth in revenue coming in would be seen in the country. And I said to our teachers, our nurses or public servants, and I say to them now again that we are committed to giving you the best life possible," the Head of State remarked during a live broadcast on Sunday.

While stressing that patience is key, Dr. Ali assured public servants that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) administration is pursuing policies and strategies to provide the best welfare package to the country's valued workers.

He remarked: "But I assure them even today that this government will ensure that the total package is the best welfare package they can have in this region as time progressed. You don't need to down tools because you are pushing up open doors. We are committed to this, but you have to have patience."

The President said measures to improve the lives of all Guyanese will continue "even before the end of this year."

Dr. Ali related: "We build systems that empower people, uplift your standards, and give you a better shot at life. That is why we are investing in your education, healthcare, giving everyone an opportunity to earn a degree."

For the last few days, picketing action led by the Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU) has been consistent outside the Ministry of Education's head office on Brickdam, Georgetown.

The strike action began last Monday, and saw educators taking to the city's streets, both in Georgetown and other parts of the country.

President Ali, in the broadcast, said that the government has already announced a series of measures to improve the lives of teachers, nurses and other public servants, and by the end of the year, much more investments will be announced, making educators the "prime beneficiaries of the development and advancement" of Guyana.

According to the President, in September 2020, the government invested \$700 million to correct the scales used to



Guyana President Irfaan Ali

calculate teacher's salaries and increases.

Additionally, an allowance of \$10,000 was provided to all teachers

with a university degree.

"Not only are we giving this allowance to trained teachers and trained graduates, but we are making the opportunities to teachers available in their school to earn that degree through the GOAL scholarship programme, through

school to earn that degree through the GOAL scholarship programme, through Online teachers training programmes, through the associate degree programme," President Ali said.

"Every teacher in the system now has a free opportunity. The government is investing on their behalf so they can upgrade their skills," he added.

In addition to this, the government is giving \$6,000 to every teacher with a post- graduate diploma and has granted a \$20,000 allowance to all teachers with a master degree.

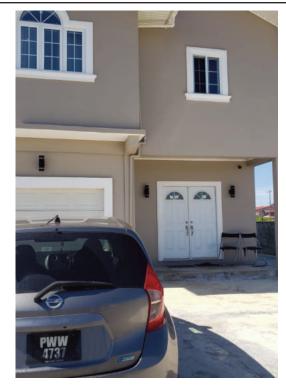
Meanwhile, an allowance of \$30,000 for educators with a doctoral degree was also granted.

"All of these allowances are not just granted in an environment in which there is no opportunity to achieve all of these degrees and added qualifications."

Other incentives to support educa-

tors who work and live in remote areas were increased by 100 per cent, moving from \$9,000 to \$20,000 per month.

Dr Ali said: "We went further, we had a provision of more than 3,800 scholarships to teachers...to qualify themselves and earn a higher salary. We are incentivising the system, giving teachers an opportunity to empower themselves, while at the same time incentivising them to do better for themselves, incentivising them to do better for the teaching system."



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Shah Rukh Khan (R) with the Prime Minister of Qatar

SRK denies claim of involvement in release of Indian Navy veterans

Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan has denied claims that he was involved in the release of eight Indian Navy veterans by Qatar.

On Tuesday, former Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy claimed that the superstar helped persuade the Qatar government to release eight Indian Navy veterans held on espionage charges.

"Modi should take Cinema star Sharuk Khan to Qatar with him since after MEA and NSA had failed to persuade the Shiekhs of Qatar, Modi pleaded with Khan to intervene, and thus got an expensive settlement from the Qatar Shiekhs to free our Naval officers (sic)," Swamy said in reply to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's post on X.

Shah Rukh Khan's team issued a statement denying the former BJP leader's claims.

"Regarding the reports concerning Shah Rukh Khan's purported role in the release of India's naval officers from Qatar, the office of Mr. Shah Rukh Khan says that any such assertions of his involvement are unfounded, emphasizing the execution of this successful resolution solely rests with the Indian government officials and unequivocally denies Mr. Khans participation in this matter (sic)," Shah Rukh Khan's manager Pooja Dadlani shared a statement on Instagram.

"Additionally, all matters involving diplomacy and statecraft are best executed by are very able leaders. Mr. Khan like many other indians is happy that the naval officers are home safe and wishes them all the best," the statement added.

Shah Rukh Khan was recently in Qatar to attend the AFC Final as a special guest of honour. He was seen being greeted by Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani in pictures.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20) Don't fool yourself into believing that you can rely on other people to come to your aid if you do something stupid. The planets warn if you go over the top in any way you are essentially on your own – even friends will pretend they don't know you!

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): As Mars moves into the career area of your chart today you should be looking to raise your game and do more with the talents you were born with. You will get no end of opportunities to prove yourself over the next few weeks, so get serious.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): If you want to get away from your everyday environment now is the time to stop thinking about it and start doing the things that can make it happen. You need some adventure in your life and you are not getting it where you are now.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): You will go out of your way to find out what secrets others are keeping from you today but once you know them you may wish you were still in the dark. It seems that someone you are close to emotionally has been less than honest of late.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): A partnership that you begin today will have the potential to change your life for the better but you must be honest about your motives. If you are not upfront about what it is you are hoping to accomplish the relationship could sour very quickly.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): You have been much in demand socially in recent weeks but now you must make a conscious decision to party less and think more of your wellbeing. The simple fact is if you carry on burning the candle at both ends it's your fingers that will get scorched.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): Mars joins the Sun and Pluto in the most dynamic area of your chart today, making this one of the best times ever to move rapidly in the direction of your dreams. Don't doubt yourself for even a moment – if you can imagine it you can do it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): Any domestic or emotional challenges you have been struggling with in recent weeks can be dealt with quite easily now that Mars is changing signs. But you will need to be both focused and ruthless, as much with yourself as with other people.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): Get out and about today and remind the world that you exist. Cosmic activity in the most open and outgoing area of your chart will encourage you to interact with people you meet while on the move and some of those people could become lifelong friends.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): This is a good day to get together with people who share your professional and financial aims and to make the most of your big idea. You don't have a big idea? Then do some brainstorming today and come up with a concept that can make you rich.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): There has rarely been a better time to work towards a long-term goal and in the process move up to a higher level of success and self-awareness. Others may say you are taking too many chances but in reality you can't take enough of them.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): Forget about chores and duties and matters of a practical nature today and give yourself permission to dream. Whatever mental limits you may have imposed on yourself in the past they can and they must be swept away once and for all.



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February 26 set as date for local elections in Jamaica

Jamaica's local government election is to be held on February 26, Local Government Minister Desmond McKenzie announced.

He made the announcement a short while ago at a Jamaica Labour Party meeting, at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in St James.

The local government election, which is constitutionally due every four years, was last held in November 2016. It was due to be held in November 2020 but was postponed as the world was still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic — even though the general election was held in September of that year.

It was postponed again in January 2022 for the same reason — COVID-19.

In 2022, for a third time, the local government election was postponed until no later than February 28, 2024.

At the time, Minister McKenzie explained that the third postponement would allow the country to continue its post-COVID-19 economic recovery.

McKenzie had also noted that the postponement will provide further time to conclude consultations regarding Portmore becoming Jamaica's 15th parish. But in a recent update, Prime Minister Andrew Holness said the law to make Portmore a parish would not be ready before the election was due to happen.

Last month, Prime Minister Holness declared his party's readiness for the polls.

In a January meeting with the party's senior officers, he received re-



Local Government Minister Desmond McKenzie

ports on the party's readiness for an election.

Reports were submitted by Chairman Robert Montague, General Secretary Dr Horace Chang, Deputy
Chairman Dr. Aundre Franklyn, Chairman of Area Council One Desmond

McKenzie, and Party Treasurer Aubyn Hill.

In a statement, Holness said that based on the reports he received, he was "confident in the prospects of the Jamaica Labour Party for the upcoming elections, as the internal polling numbers showed the Jamaica Labour Party maintaining a strong lead in a majority of parish council seats."

The Jamaican government has set aside some \$1.7 billion for the local government election.

Santokhi challenges corruption claim

A Surinamese newspaper has refused to comply with President Chandrikapersad Santokhi's demand to remove a photo from its website.

The cover of the book features a photo of President Santokhi, Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Minister Parmanand Sewdien, and entrepreneur Vijay Kirpalani.

The contentious image is on the cover of a book by Dutch entrepreneur Gerard van den Bergh, exposing alleged corruption at the highest levels of the government.

President Santokhi has taken the issue a step further by initiating legal actions against the book's publisher and a local bookstore, urging the immediate withdrawal of the book titled "Corruption at the Highest Level."

The newspaper has publicly rejected President Santokhi's demand, likening it to censorship.

Reports are that other local and foreign media that have also published the image have so far not received a notice to remove the photo.



Chandrikapersad Santokhi

SVG Cop suspended over child abuse

Three police officers in St. Vincent are suspended from duty following allegations of their involvement in the physical assault of a 10-year-old boy.

The incident took place at a local police station last Sunday.

Reports are that a corporal and two constables will receive half of their regular pay, during the suspension period, pending the outcome of an investigation.

According to reports, the 10year-old boy was detained by the police on suspicion of stealing a bicycle from someone's property.

It was reported that a belt was used by the lawmen to beat him, leaving bruises on his back.

Commissioner of Police, Enville Williams, has called upon witnesses with any information to come forward.

Police seeking female person of interest in Melissa Silvera murder

The Jamaican authorities said they are seeking the public's assistance in locating a person of interest who they believe can assist with the murder probe of Melissa Silvera, the wife of former Member of Parliament Jolyan Silvera.

The former parliamentarian has been charged with his wife's murder, after the discovery of her body at their Stony Hill home in St Andrew on November 10.

Melissa Silvera was previously said to have died in her sleep at the home, but authorities later revealed that she was shot three times. Jolyan is also being charged with the offense of using a firearm to commit a felony.

The woman named as a person of interest is Sashana Miller of a Corporate Area address, according to information released by the Major Investigations Division (MID).

Miller was been asked to turn herself into the MID office in Kingston. Anyone with information on her whereabouts was also notified to contact the police.



Joylan Silvera and his wife Melissa in happier times

But Miller hired well-known attorney Valerie Neita-Robertson, who accused the Jamaican Constabulary Force of engaging in a defamatory portrayal of her client.

"Our client, whose identity has been erroneously released to the media, is not a person of interest, as confirmed by the police themselves just this week," Neita-Robertson asserted in a media release today.

She added: "You are aware that she is legally represented and despite being assured by law enforcement that she was not a person of interest, our client has faced undue intimidation as her name was thrust into the public sphere, creating unwarranted speculation in social

media and every constitutional and common law due process requires you to speak to her attorney.

"As legal representatives for our client, we will pursue all available legal avenues to address this injustice and seek appropriate redress for the damages caused by the unwarranted release of our client's name as a person of interest."

CARIBBEAN ROUNDUP

SVG to impose alcohol restrictions at funerals

St Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves has announced plans to introduce legislation aimed at regulating alcohol consumption during funeral processions and cemetery gatherings.

Speaking on NBC Radio St Vincent and the Grenadines this morning, Gonsalves said the behavior of some mourners is becoming "out of hand".

Gonsalves expressed concern over the lack of reverence exhibited during funeral ceremonies, citing instances of alcohol consumption and revelry akin to carnival festivities.

He emphasized the need for a shift in behavior to uphold the solemnity of such occasions, particularly within churchyards.

In addition to addressing alcohol consumption at funerals, Gonsalves outlined other legislative priorities, including measures to combat gun and ammunition-related crimes, as well as reforms in court reporting and sexual offenses.

Kick 'Em Jenny kicks up

Over 3000 seismic activities have rattled Grenada, prompting heightened concerns due to a surge in seismicity at the Kick 'em Jenny Submarine Volcano, as disclosed by the National Disaster Management Agency (NaDMA) on Monday.

NaDMA said that the University of the West Indies, Seismic Research Center (UWI SRC) advised of increased seismic activity between Friday and early Sunday morning.

According to NaDMA's statement, the tally of seismic events reached 3,400, with the most significant registering a magnitude of 3.3.

However, the agency noted a gradual decline in both magnitude and frequency, eventually culminating in a near cessation of activity.

NaDMA emphasized the unpredictability of seismic behavior at the Kick 'em Jenny Submarine Volcano, cautioning that activity levels could fluctuate unpredictably.

It further shared that the UWI SRC will continue to monitor the situation and provide updated analyses of the situation.

To facilitate continuous observation, four fully operational seismic stations stationed in the north of Grenada are tasked with round-the-clock surveillance of Kick 'em Jenny.

NaDMA maintains a Yellow alert level for the volcano, signaling a state of restlessness. This desig-

nation mandates a 1.5 km exclusion zone around the volcano, urging all marine interests to adhere to safety protocols.

A Yellow alert indicates that the volcano is restless, with seismicity or fumarolic activity above historical levels, or other unusual activity has been observed.

Antigua's first female Top Cop passes on

Members of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda are mourning the death of former Commissioner of Police Delano Christopher.

According to reports, Christopher was pronounced dead at her home in Gunthropes around 10:30 am on Sunday.

Reports are that Commissioner of Police Atlee Rodney met with her family and offered condolences on behalf of the police force.

The former head of the police force assumed the commissioner position in 2005. She was the first female officer to be appointed to that rank.

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Fewer babies being born in Jamaica as birth rate drops: survey

Jamaica has experienced a significant decline in its total fertility rate (TFR), dropping from 4.5 births per female in the period between 1973 and 1975 to 1.9 in 2021.

This decline has contributed to a decrease in the country's population estimate.

These findings were revealed in the Reproductive Health Survey Jamaica (RHS) 2021, which was officially released to the public by the National Family Planning Board (NFPB) at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in New Kingston.

According to Professor Affette McCaw-Binns, an expert in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Epidemiology who presented the findings, the age-specific fertility rates decreased in all age groups except for those aged 25-29 years. This trend likely indicates a delayed onset of childbearing until the late 20s, as women focus on completing their education.

The TFR represents the average number of children expected to be born to a woman over her lifetime. With a fertility rate of 1.9, Jamaica's rate falls below the replacement level of 2.1, which is the average number of children needed to maintain a stable population, as explained by Professor McCaw-Binns.

She highlighted that the National



Jamaica's population estimate has decreased because of fewer births

Population Policy, developed in 1983, aimed to achieve replacement-level fertility by offering high-quality family planning services.

The RHS 2021 surveyed 3,224 females and 1,784 males aged 15-49 years, with data collected between August 2021 and April 2022. Forty-six percent of respondents resided in rural areas, 32 percent in urban centers out-

side the Kingston Metropolitan Region (KMR), and 22 percent within the KMR.

Of the participants, 61 percent were in a union (married, common-law, or visiting relationship), while 39 percent were not.

The survey was conducted by principal investigators from the NFPB and the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), with objectives including as-

sessing progress towards replacementlevel fertility, informing sexual and reproductive health policies, and updating data on various health indicators.

The 2021 RHS marks the eighth household survey documenting access to and effectiveness of contraceptive services in Jamaica, with the first conducted in 1975 as part of the World Fertility Survey of Reproductive Age Women.

JA PM: State collapsing under weight of crime

Prime Minister Andrew Holness recently issued a stark warning, highlighting the looming threat of the Jamaican state collapsing under the weight of crime and violence if decisive legislative measures are not promptly implemented.

Holness underscored a significant shift in his administration's policy approach towards legislation, emphasizing substantial allocations towards national security.

The results, he noted, have been tangible and promising.

Contrary to the severity of the situation, Mr. Holness pointed out a disconcerting perception among Jamaicans regarding the gravity of crime and violence.

He lamented that many fail to recognize it as an existential threat to the nation, instead viewing it merely as a localized issue confined to specific areas.

Delving deeper, the Prime Minister challenged the prevailing notion of crime as a "street-level problem," urging a broader understanding of its systemic roots.

He emphasized the interconnectedness of various criminal elements, highlighting the coordinated efforts of gangs across the island.

While acknowledging that these criminal groups might not harbor political aspirations traditionally associated with terrorism, Holness shed light on their agenda to undermine the state for economic gains.

He emphasized the need for legislative reforms to



Andrew Holness: state collapsing under weight of crime

foster a comprehensive understanding of the threat posed by organized crime.

In light of these challenges, the Prime Minister stressed the urgency of legislative changes to address the interconnected nature of crime and violence. He emphasized the imperative of recognizing that organized crime not only jeopardizes public safety but also poses a grave threat to the stability of the Jamaican state.

CARPHA: take preventative measures against Saharan dust

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) in Trinidad is encouraging people across the Caribbean to take preventative measures against the health consequences triggered by a significant Saharan dust plume.

This natural phenomenon has engulfed several regions, posing potential health risks.

According to the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) based in Barbados, there is a strong likelihood that the levels of particulate matter in the air will surpass the World Health Organization's (WHO) guidelines for 24-hour outdoor air qual-

This prediction raises concerns about air purity and the necessity for immediate public health interventions.

Dr. Joy St John, the executive director of CARPHA, emphasizes the detrimental impact of Saharan dust on air quality.

She points out that the increase in airborne particulate matter could pose serious health hazards, particularly to vulnerable groups such as young children, the elderly, and individuals with pre-existing lung and heart conditions,



The Sahara dust cloud covers the entire Caribbean region

including asthma, allergies, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

In response to the deteriorating air quality, CARPHA advises the public to adopt several protective strategies.

These include staying indoors to limit exposure to dust, wearing dust

masks when outside, and using HEPA breathing. For milder symptoms, overfilters to clean the air inside homes.

Additionally, individuals with respiratory conditions are urged to keep their medication accessible, adhere to prescribed treatments, and seek medical

the-counter allergy medications may offer relief. By taking these precautions, the Caribbean community can mitigate the health impacts of the Saharan dust plume and safeguard their well-being attention if they experience difficulty during this environmental challenge.

harged after cocaine found at NMIA **UK woman**

Jamaican authorities arrested six individuals, including four employees of Norman Manley International Airport (NMIA), in coordinated anti-narcotics operations spanning St. Ann and the airport premises on Thursday.

The operations yielded a substantial seizure of contraband, notably cocaine with an estimated value exceeding \$20 million.

Alongside 3.8 kilograms of cocaine, law enforcement confiscated 55 pounds of ganja, three motor vehicles, and over \$1.2 million in cash.

In the initial phase of the operation, narcotics police intercepted two motor vehicles at the Eight Rivers Plaza in Ocho Rios.

A search uncovered 3.8 kilograms later released.

of cocaine ingeniously concealed within food packages. Additionally, authorities apprehended the drivers of the vehicles and seized a sum of \$118,000.

Law enforcement then executed a raid at NMIA in Kingston.

A thorough search of a motor vehicle led to the discovery of 25 kilograms of ganja concealed inside a suitcase within the trunk.

Simultaneously, authorities seized \$1.2 million found within the vehicle.

Four airport ramp attendants were taken into custody, and the vehicle was seized.

The estimated street value of the ganja is \$540,000.

Two of the ramp attendants were



Cocaine was contained in packages of Lasco

St Kitts PM gets married

Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis Dr. Terrance Drew has revealed his marriage to Mrs. Diani Prince-Drew, with their wedding ceremony taking place in Barbados on Saturday.

PM Drew shared the delightful news on social media, expressing gratitude for the occasion:

"It is with a grateful heart that I inform you of my marriage to my wife Mrs Diani Prince-Drew.

The wedding took place in the beautiful CARICOM sister island of Barbados on February 10, 2024, in the presence of God, as the ceremony was officiated by Reverend Fr. David Yarde of the Anglican Church.

The ceremony was attended by my mother, my son and my sisters and the close family members of my wife.

I therefore officially introduce you to Mrs Diani Prince-Drew. We ask for your prayers and support as we embark on our new life together."



'Ghost ship' oil spill: T&T turns to international community for help

DESCRIBING the oil spill in Tobago as "a national emergency," T&T Prime Minister Keith Rowley says the government will spare no expense to help rehabilitate the island, which is heavily dependent on tourism.

He made the statement on February 11 during a joint news conference with THA Chief Secretary Farley Augustine at the Office of the Prime Minister – Central Administrative Services-Tobago, Orange Hill Road, Scarborough.

Dr Rowley, Augustine, Works and Transport Minister Rohan Sinanan, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries Stuart Young and Tobago Emergency Management Agency director Allan Stewart had earlier toured several coastal regions in the western part of the island to get a first-hand account of the damage caused by the oil spill.

Several technical officials from various ministries, companies and agencies accompanied the ministerial team.

The spill originated from a mystery vessel — Gulfstream — that was found overturned in the sea some 200 metres off the coast of the Cove Eco Industrial Park around 7.20 am on February 7.

Rowley said nobody could have predicted that an oil spill would have permeated the waters of Tobago and, as such, an occurrence of this nature would not have been budgeted for the THA.

"This is a national emergency and therefore it will have to be funded as an extraordinary expense...You have to find the money and prioritise. So this is priority and we have to respond," he said.

But Rowley stopped short of giving a potential cost to the rehabilitation effort.

He said the full scope and scale of what is required is still being determined and giving an estimate would be premature at this stage.

But he added, "The central government will have to provide the THA with whatever support the THA needs."

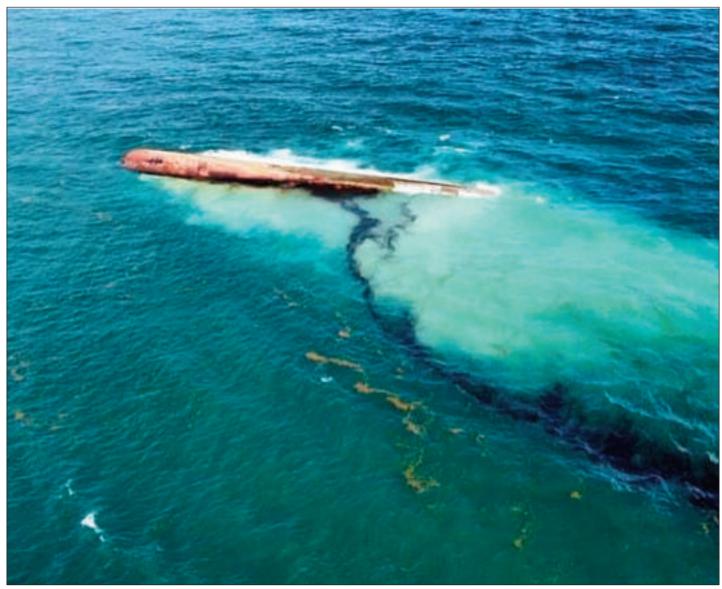
Rowley said the ministries of works and energy, Heritage Petroleum and the THA, also have their individual budgets.

"So these are extraordinary expenses. But the budgeting process in the Ministry of Finance will take care of it."

But he noted, "What should be clear to you is that some not so insignificant costs are being incurred just to respond to this incident that we didn't plan for and that we didn't expect. But it has happened and we are required to deal with it."

Saying he was not surprised by the devastation he witnessed, Rowley said oil spills are usually "messy, stressful and expensive."

But the PM noted he was very im-



The wreck of the MV Gulfstream off Tobago. The crew is missing

pressed by the initiatives that have been implemented so far to contain the spill and clean the shorelines of the affected beaches.

He said, "From mobilising the contingency plan, I would say that everything that needs to be done has been to this point done and is being done and will be done to ameliorate and minimise and eventually eliminate the threat that this poses to us."

Although a tier-three response to the disaster (international support) has not been triggered, Rowley said several countries, with extensive experience in treating with oil spills, have already offered assistance.

"I can tell you as a country, Trinidad and Tobago has been offered significant help from friendly nations who are involved in this."

He said the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Security are engaged in these discussions.

"But in the meantime we will be making full use of our capacity in house with the companies that work....So we are doing what is required to be done. We can't undo what has been done."

Regarding the operational aspect of the clean-up, Rowley said while cleaning the beaches is good, "if stuff is being poured out on a continuous basis into the water then it's just spinning top in mud."

He added, "Cleaning and restoration can only seriously begin after we have brought the situation under control. Right now, the situation is not under control but it appears to be under sufficient control that we can acknowledge if it doesn't worsen, it should get better.

"I am anticipating an improved condition but because the vessel is precipitously located it can change its position based on the tide."

Rowley said they are waiting on the results of the sample to determine the content of the cargo.

"I presume that sometime in the not-too-distant future, we may determine what other cargo and quantum might be on board."

So far, he said, the authorities have not been able to determine if the oil-like substance leaking from the vessel is bunker fuel, fuel for preparation of the vessel or raw crude.

"These are answers we don't have at this point in time. But as the days pass and the additional work is done, we should be able to answer those questions as we go forward."

In the meantime, Rowley said the identity of the vessel remains a mystery.

"An unknown vessel has apparently drifted upside down into Tobago. That vessel, we don't know who it belongs to. We have no idea where it came from and we also don't know all that it contains.

"What we do know is that it appears to be broken and is leaking some kind of hydrocarbon that is fouling the water and the coastline. That vessel could have come to us from any kind of operation, especially if the operation is illicit."

Rowley said the authorities also could not say if the vessel is a freighter, tanker or barge.

"Only the keel of the vessel is visible and its identifying characteristics are in the water which we can't penetrate at the moment. But we are doing all that is possible to answer these questions."

For now, he said, attempts are being made to prevent the oil from flowing into waters in other parts of the island.

"We are in the containment phase now and this phase will remain as long as the vessel is there and is entrapped with contents that could foul our environment."

They will then have to empty the vessel.

"One thing we cannot do is to leave the vessel there with content that could just keep spilling into the water. If we do that, we then would be at the mercy of the weather because fortunately, the weather is good right now.

"If the weather changes significantly with high tides the behaviour of what is being spilled from the vessel could change.

"We have to thank God for small mercies because where it is now allows us to contain it better than anywhere else."

Russell-Rutherford record stand hands West Indies consolation win

Andre Russell and Sherfane Rutherford shared a record sixth-wicket T20I partnership before spinner Roston Chase produced a magnificent spell to sink Australia as West Indies enjoyed a consolation victory at Optus Stadium.

West Indies were in big trouble at 79 for 5 after winning the toss in the third and final game, but Russell and Rutherford completely dominated the second half of the innings with a hard-hitting 139-run stand.

They slaughtered Australia's attack and combined for 12 sixes, but West Indies' total of 220 for 6 was under threat by a rampant David Warner, who struck 81 off 49 balls in possibly his last international match on home soil.

Australia nosedived after Warner's dismissal as they ended the home summer on a sour note, but still recorded a 2-1 series victory.

Captain Rovman Powell decided to switch strategies and bat first after his attack had leaked huge totals in the opening two matches.

But it appeared to not make a difference with West Indies' top-order unable to handle the extra bounce as they spiralled to 17 for 3 in the third over.

West Indies as expected did not go

into their shell with Powell and Chase leading a recovery, but their dismissals before the halfway mark left the tourists in familiar woe.

A brute of a delivery from left-arm quick Spencer Johnson delivery whacked Russell on the glove with the painful blow requiring medical attention. But he continued and cracked another short Johnson delivery for six.

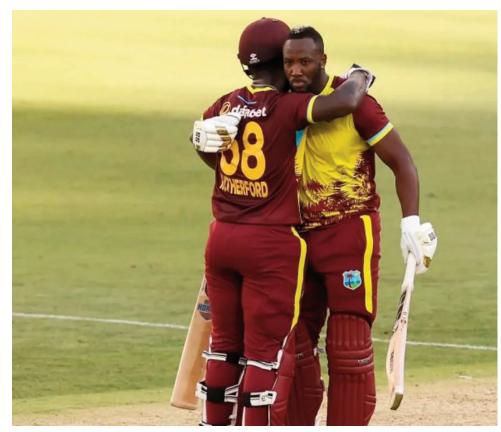
It got him going and also ignited Rutherford, who had started slowly before putting the foot down to reach his half-century off 33 balls. But he was overshadowed by Russell, who was in a mood as he motored to a 25-ball half-century with a six off legspinner Adam Zampa as West Indies lifted past 200.

Russell wasn't done as he monstered an unusually sluggish Zampa for three consecutive sixes in a penultimate over of the innings that yielded 28 runs.

Russell was throwing so much force into his strokes that a slew of fielders lost sight of the ball as it continually soared mightily high in the air and into the crowd.

He finally holed out in the last over and walked off the ground to a standing ovation from the 17,018 crowd.

Bartlett stars early in T20I debut,



Russell and Rutherford hug after their record stand

Zampa cops flogging

With Josh Hazlewood rested, Xavier Bartlett made his T20I debut after his incredible initiation into international cricket with consecutive four-wicket hauls in the ODI series between the teams. Bartlett opened the bowling and immediately was on the money with a back-of-a-length outswinger that beat Johnson Charles. He relished the extra bounce on the renowned pacy Optus Stadium deck and hit Charles on the helmet with a fierce short delivery.



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Citizens are not political tools: President Ali

IN acknowledging the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) government's mission to enhance the lives of all Guyanese, including public servants, President Dr. Irfaan Ali asserted that the government will not tolerate the manipulation of people as a "political tool" by those who hinder progress.

Following the strike action that was orchestrated by the Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU), Dr. Ali said that the government does not need anyone to "push" them to work assiduously to better the lives of citizens, as they are already on that path.

He said: "No one needs to push this government; we are committed to this task. I come from a family of more than 30 teachers now. No one needs to convince us about doing more for our workers, farmers, teachers, nurses, doctors. This is a commitment of this government."

Dr. Ali then went on to say: "But what is for sure is that we cannot allow and we will not allow people to be used as pawns, people to be used as a political tool," adding that this is being witnessed as the recent events continue to

Moreover, he did not mince his words when pointing out the damning revelations of financial unaccountability at the GTU.

The Auditor General's Office has reported that around \$2 billion, collected from teachers by the GTU, cannot be accounted for.

Commenting on this, the President remarked: "That is the situation now where this union that is totally unaccountable. This union has, what we read now, \$2 billion of teachers' money. \$2 billion that could have been invested in teachers' welfare."

Furthermore, he did not shy away from expounding on the numerous initiatives that the government has rolled out that are focused on enhancing the lives of public servants. The President then said that by the end of the year, there will be more announcements of measures that will boost the lives of all.

According to the President, in September 2020, the government invested \$700 million to correct the scales used to calculate teacher's salaries and increases.

Additionally, an allowance of \$10,000 was provided to all teachers with a university degree.

"Not only are we giving this allowance to trained teachers and trained graduates, but we are making the opportunities to teachers available in their school to earn that degree through the GOAL scholarship programme, through online teachers training programmes, through the associate degree programme," President Ali said.

"Every teacher in the system now has a free opportunity. The government is investing on their behalf so they can upgrade their skills," he added.

In addition to this, the government is giving \$6,000 to every teacher with a postgraduate diploma and has granted a \$20,000 allowance to all teachers with a master degree.

Meanwhile, an allowance of \$30,000 for educators with a doctoral degree was also granted.

"All of these allowances are not just granted in an environment in which there is no opportunity to achieve all of these degrees and added qualifications."

Other incentives to support educators who work and live in remote areas were increased by 100 per cent, moving from \$9,000 to \$20,000 per month.

"We went further, we had a provision of more than 3,800 scholarships to teachers...to qualify themselves and earn a higher salary. We are incentivising the system, giving teachers an opportunity to empower themselves, while at the same time incentivising them to do better for themselves, incentivising them to do better for the teaching system."

He reminded the nation of the government's support in seeing that every trained teacher becomes eligible to become a senior mistress/master after six years on the job.

This, he said, allows for an additional \$20,000 to be added to those educators' salaries.

"In the course of this year, in the coming years, it will get consistently better and at a more rapid pace."

He spoke about the ongoing distribution of \$3.1 billion in grants to make teaching easier.

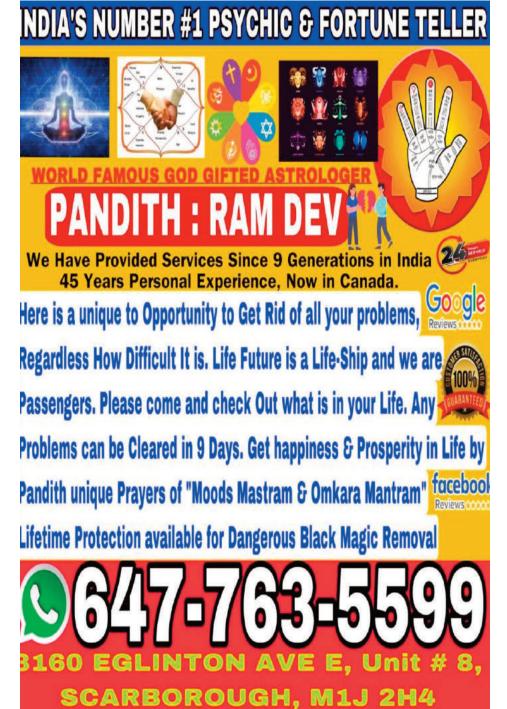
Further, the stipend for teachers in training at the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) was also increased from \$10,000 to \$90,000 per month.

According to President Ali, the Ministry of Education has been implementing initiatives to change the salary base of teachers by pushing more rapid promotions for educators.

In further outlining some of the initiatives undertaken by the government to support educators, President Ali highlighted ongoing discussions with commercial banks to establish a mechanism whereby teachers can access loans to support home ownership.



President Ali at a recent meeting with citizens



(MARKHAM & EGLINTON)

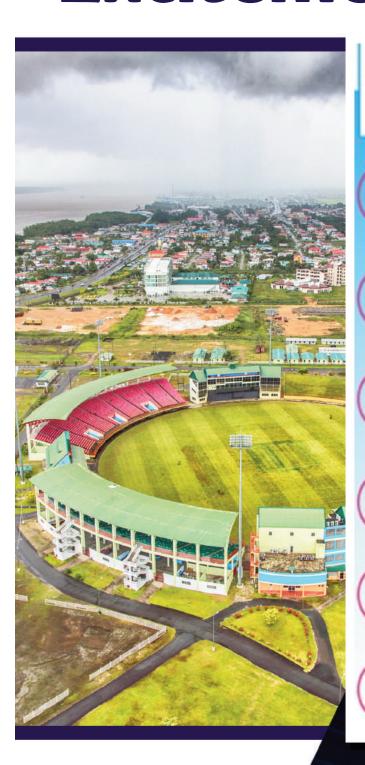
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NZ v AFG



Fri June 7, 2024



WI v UGA



Sat June 8, 2024

Semi-Final 1

Wed June 26, 2024



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