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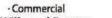
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Last Friday evening in Accra, Ghana, Prime Minister of Mozambique, Adriano Maleiane, presented Guyana's President Irfaan Ali, with the Global Africa Leadership Award for his "transformational" leadership. At the Africa Prosperity Champions Awards Ceremony and Presidential Gala Dinner ceremony, held in the West African Country, the Guyanese President was lauded for his "unwavering dedication to promoting inclusive development" through his 'One Guyana' political philosophy and for protection against neo-colonialism and "unwarranted foreign aggression." The Africa Prosperity Network is committed to prosperity for all Africans around the world.

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Aviation advisor resigns, plans to start El Dorado Air

The Guyana government advisor on aviation, Lenox Shuman, announced Friday that he had resigned from his post to concentrate on establishing a new airline, El Dorado Air.

I take this opportunity to thank the Government for allowing me to serve the people of Guyana. It has been an honor," Shuman said in a January 12 letter to President Irfaan Ali.

Shuman, a commercial airline pilot and a former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, is the Leader of the Liberty and Justice Party. He said that his resignation took effect from January 9.

"This resignation is being effected to facilitate my undertaking to establish a Guyanese Airline – El'Dorado Airlines Inc., and my continued role as Aviation Advisor would put me in a conflict of interest position.

"We anticipate a launch date of 20 August 2024 and look forward to the Government's support. Avail me to assisting the Government in any capacity you see fit for the continued development of Guyana," he wrote in his letter of resignation.

The new airline is expected to start operations by the end of August this year. For several years, Shuman, a commercial airline pilot in Canada, has yet to release details about the new airline or the proposed routes.

Photo shows Lennox Shuman



TT PM welcomes US ruling on illegal weapons

The Trinidad and Tobago government has welcomed a ruling by the United States Appeals Court that ruled in favor of Mexico's attempts to file a lawsuit against U.S. gun manufacturers alleging that their negligent business practices facilitate the illicit trafficking of their products into Mexico.

Last year, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, The Bahamas, Jamaica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago had joined an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief filed by Mexico appealing a decision in a U.S. court to hold gun makers responsible for facilitating the trafficking of deadly weapons across the border.

"The guns used in the commission of violent crimes in The Bahamas are not manufactured here, but instead, are manufactured abroad and illegally trafficked across our borders," a statement issued by the Office of the Prime Minister in The Bahamas read in part.

The regional leaders, at the end of a two-day symposium on violence as a public health issue last April, declared war on guns to combat the illegal trafficking of their products into Mexico.

In August 2021, Mexico filed a US\$10 billion civil lawsuit for damages against U.S. gun manufacturers that, through their carelessness and negligence, actively facilitated the trafficking of their products into Mexican territory.

But in September 2022, the trial court judge dismissed the lawsuit because a federal law called the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA) protected and gave immunity to the defendant companies even when the damage caused by their carelessness and negligence occurred in Mexican territory. Mexico then filed an appeal.

In welcoming the ruling of the three-panel judges, Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley said this development should cause all manufacturers and dealers to be more responsible in their trading of these items and make it more difficult for those who would engage in actions that are harming our country.

"I feel satisfied that it was a good



trade, which they said: "provides the weapons that contribute significantly to crime and violence in our region."

In their declaration titled "War on Guns," the regional leaders said they were also calling on the United States to join the Caribbean in "our war on guns and urgently adopt and take action to stop the illegal exportation of firearms and ammunition into the Caribbean.

In an unprecedented decision earlier this week, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in Boston, Massachusetts, ruled in favor of the Mexican government, unanimously ruling that Mexico had successfully demonstrated that the arms manufacturers and distributors do not enjoy immunity for their negligent business practices, which facilitate the illicit thing for Trinidad and Tobago to align itself with the arguments and the Mexican lawsuit because we face the same problem that Mexico is complaining about," Rowley told the Trinidad Express newspaper.

Rowley, who is leading a delegation to the United States on Sunday for talks with U.S. officials regarding the exportation of illegal guns, told the newspaper, "Whatever the outcome of this lawsuit ...this will certainly cause gun manufacturers and distributors in the U.S. to pay attention and take pause as they shovel volumes of dangerous items into our countries without the least bit of care as to the damage and destruction that these guns and ammunition are having in on our vulnerable societies".





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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

A New Dynamism

Editorial from the Guyana Chronicle. January 31 2024

THE face of Guyana is undergoing significant changes. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that we are beginning to see the broad contours of a new Guyana, one based on modernity and change.

Any impartial observer visiting Guyana for the first time after being away for the past five years or so can attest to this transformation. There is for example the new and modern Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) which is now comparable to any in the Caribbean in terms of passenger comfort and convenience.

The roads leading to and from the airport have all been upgraded and well lit. And even though we still have some catching up to do in terms of metropolitan standards, there can be no doubt that the country has become a much better attraction for tourists and visitors.

Guyana in fact recorded its highest tourist arrivals last year which, according to Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Oneidge Walrond, is testimony to the growth of the tourism and hospitality sector.

This, as the minister pointed out, is buoyed by the strong policies by the government and other stakeholders which have contributed to the sterling economic growth the country is currently experiencing in all sectors of the economy.

According to Minister Walrond, the year 2023 saw the highest number of arrivals in Guyana ever, a 273% increase over the 2020 period. The same is also true of airlift capacity which tripled from 2021 to 2023, reaching 1.2 million seats. This is indeed a remarkable improvement, especially when seen against the relatively small population of less than one million people.

One contributory factor to this development has been the introduction of new airlines such as British Airways, American Airlines, as well as increased frequencies from existing airlines.

The prospects for tourism in Guyana look good. American Airlines will add another daily flight on the Georgetown-Miami route while this year, United Airlines will be introducing a Georgetown-Houston link with four flights weekly. Additionally, Suriname Airways has added a service link in Georgetown to Bridgetown, Barbados and Paramaribo. Inter-Caribbean has indicated a willingness for possible expansion of its operations into Ogle.

These are all part of a new dialectic

in the modernization, which will see the country connected with the wider international community. Guyana already has one-stop connections to over 250 destinations worldwide, which is likely to expand further as the modernisation process picks up momentum.

With the plethora of natural attributes, Guyana is now laying the tourism infrastructure to tap into the global tourism market. According to President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, tourism is going to be one of the main components of the structure of the economy, now and in the future. A new model of tourism based on our unique natural and physical attributes is in the making, which will catapult Guyana as a preferred destination. The trend so far has been positive and encouraging as recent tourist arrivals have demonstrated.

Sensational Shamar Joseph

Dear Editor,

THERE are cricket memories in my mind that I will never ever forget. Some I have witnessed in person, some I have seen on television and some I listened to on the radio. But none can compare to what I saw on television in the early hours of Sunday, January 28, 2024.

I had the privilege of seeing my hero Alvin Kallicharran make his first test century on debut at Bourda against New Zealand in 1972. Earlier that same series, I was absolutely blown away by Sir George Lawrence Rowe making 214 and 100 unbeaten on his test debut at Sabina Park, Jamaica.

In 1977, I listened keenly to the radio as Colin Everton Croft destroyed Pakistan on test debut with devastating fast bowling to claim eight wickets for 29 runs.

A certain Barbadian by the name of Joel Garner also made his debut in that test match and the two of them went on to accompany Andy Roberts and Michael Holding to form the most feared pace quartet in cricketing history. WACA against Australia in 1993 was special, just as his six wickets for 24 runs in Trinidad to help bowl out England for 46 runs in the 1993-1994 series.

And no one can forget how he partnered with Courtney Walsh to stun South Africa in 1991 at Bridgetown, Barbados, during the latter's return to test cricket. During that game, they also snatched victory from the jaws of defeat.

Then the best fast bowler who ever lived, Malcolm Marshall, demolished England at Headingly, with a broken thumb and his left wrist in cast.

They referred to him as the "one arm bandit" and Tony Cozier agreed with me when I said that the best display of fast bowling ever seen was at Bourda in 1991, when Marshall bowled Border a few runs short of 50 after a stubborn partnership with Geoff Marsh.

But what I saw in the early hours of Sunday morning during the day and night test match played with the pink ball at the GABBA in Brisbane, Australia, between a young West Indies team and Australia, the World Number One test team, will forever be etched in my memory and be regarded as the best ever performance by a West Indian fast bowler.

Shamar Joseph, in only his second test match, with a damaged toe, in obvious pain, bowled 11.5 overs and literally obliterated the Australian batting with figures of seven wickets for 59 runs and essentially ended a 27year drought of West Indies not winning a test match in Australia.

The result was that West Indies successfully defended 216 runs and won by eight runs which shocked the Australian public and the entire cricketing world.

After that Starc's toe cruncher in the first innings, like most individuals, I had written him off and had little or no hope of West Indies successfully defending that total. But like a true warrior Shamar Joseph demonstrated tremendous grit, determination, selfbelief and testicular fortitude and used his young but experienced cricketing brain and did the impossible.

When I saw him for the first time in the 2023 CPL at Providence, I was impressed with his action among other things but felt that he needed a few seasons to be ready for the big times. I am glad that I was wrong and I look forward to the day when I will be sitting in the stands of the Shamar Joseph Cricket Stadium at Palmyra, Berbice, to see him destroy teams for the West Indies.

> Yours truly, Eric Whaul

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

Curtly Ambrose's devastating seven wickets for one run at the



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EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1 2024 Ontario announces plans to refurbish Pickering Nuclear Plant

By Niraj Sharma LJI REPORTER

The Ontario government revealed on Tuesday its intention to revamp the five-decade-old Pickering nuclear generating station, ensuring its operation for an additional 30 years. This decision aligns with the projected surge in electricity demand in Ontario over the next few decades and the federal clean electricity regulations requiring future power plants to achieve net-zero carbon emissions.

Energy Minister Todd Smith, in a news conference outside the nuclear plant, declared the Ford government's endorsement of Ontario's Power Generation's (OPG) plan to refurbish the facility. The refurbishment will primarily focus on four Candu reactors, collectively known as Pickering B, dating back to the early 1980s. This overhaul aims to provide 2,000 megawatts of power, equivalent to the current output of these units.

The refurbishment is expected to span 11 years, generating approximately 11,000 jobs annually and contributing \$19.4 billion to Ontario's GDP. However, the total budget for the project was not specified in the announcement. A



The Pickering Nuclear Plant east of Toronto

similar refurbishment at the nearby Darlington nuclear station is over halfway through completion, with a total budget of \$12.8 billion.

The plan, subject to approval by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, is seen as part of Ontario's extensive nuclear power expansion, positioning it as a crucial player in Canada's nuclear landscape. The City of Pickering currently supplies about 14% of the province's electricity, and its existing license for the four units set to undergo refurbishment expires at the end of the year. The commission is already considering extending the operating license until 2026.

Critics, including Ontario Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner, argue that the government's emphasis on nuclear expansion will escalate electricity costs and neglects more cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternatives. Schreiner advocates for investments in low-cost renewables and efficiency programs to align with global trends toward a cleaner energy future.

The Ford government defends the nuclear expansion, citing the imminent transition of the auto sector to electric vehicles, the steel industry's move away from coal-fired furnaces, and the province's growing population, which collectively may create a gap between electricity demand and supply. Currently, nuclear plants contribute slightly over half of Ontario's electricity, with hydro dams providing one-quarter and gas-fired power plants and wind farms contributing the remainder.

While the cost estimate for the Pickering refurbishment will be provided after a year-long initiation phase, Chris Keefer, president of Canadians For Nuclear Energy, supports the move, emphasizing its significance for climate and air quality. Opposing these nuclear initiatives, plans for expanding gas plants in various locations across the province are also underway. Pickering B's capacity is considered substantial, and replacing it with alternative sources would pose challenges, according to Keefer.

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THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1 2024

The Economy & Finance | JB's Insight **Professor Brandli's politics of** confusion, self-implicity

Reference is made to Andre Brandli's letters published in the Stabroek News editions of January 20, 2024 with the caption ... "I have rarely read such sychophantic pamphlet praising a political leader in a country that considers itself a liberal democracy", and on January 22, 2024 with the caption... "readers of SN and myself will appreciate clarification of these ten questions on the 'Jagdeo Doctrine'''. Prof. Brandli unleashed an unman-

nerly attack against Dr. Randy Persaud, a noted professor of international relations who is now Adviser on International Affairs in the Office of the President. Brandli takes issue with Professor Persaud's characterization of General Secretary Jagdeo's call for a broadening of the base of the PPP.

It is of paramount importance to establish at the outset that Brandli's attempt to sublty and cleverly infer that the President, His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and Vice President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo are misaligned, is a misguided inference on the part of Brandli. This is consistent with an observable strategy of the political opposition that they had attempted in the recent past, which failed simply because there is no truth to that notion. The truth, however, is that Dr. Brandli et.al., are profoundly ignorant on the subject of the politics of the PPP/C as a political entity and by extension the Guyanese political economy.

Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo is to President Ali, what the late Dr. Roger Luncheon was to former President Bharrat Jagdeo. So, there is no misalignment or any defacto leader as Brandli wants readers to believe. In other words, the role of the Vice President in the President Ali led PPP/C Government is consistent with the politics of the PPP/C since 1992. Moreover, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo is the current General Secretary of the PPP/C, and it was in this context that Dr. Persaud's essay was framed-in respect of broadening the base of the PPP/C as a political institution. This was taken completely out of context by Brandli, and at the time of writing, V. Bisram who joined the debate

Be that as it may, there is absolutely nothing unusual about anyone highlighting the positives of a political leader in a praise worthy manner, especially in a democratic system. In many societies, political leaders are revered, which is not unsual. In fact, there are volumes of literature, academic journals and books written about Guyanese politicians, namely: the late Dr. Cheddie B. Jagan (PPP/C), L.F.S Burnham, and Desmond Hoyte. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo is indisputably the most accomplished politician in the region, and his track record of accomplishments, as illustrated hereunder, is incomparable. His Presidency of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana was in an

era whereby the challenges of that time were vastly different in contrast to those that characterise the current environment. Equally, President Ali, in just three years has grown in popularity inexplicably rapidly, not only at home but globally. He has ascended to becoming a globally recognised and revered leader in just three years into his presidency. Indeed, his legacy and his accomplishments will be incomparable as well.

Turning now to his follow-up letter, Brandli posed ten questions to Dr. Randy Persaud, eight of which were inconsequential and nonsensical. Notwithstanding, two out of the ten questions, I would like to frontally address herein.

The first question I would like to address is (Q5) where he asked... "could Dr. Randy Persaud identify five papers authored by Bharrat Jagdeo in economics, which were peer reviewed and published in journals of regional or international standing"? This question exposed Dr. Brandli's fundamental illiteracy on these matters. In any profession, there are those who operate in academia and those who become practitioners. In this case, there are economists who are not practitioners, but work in academia conducting research and publishing in peer-reviewed journals, and there are practitioners who actually work in policymaking. Dr. Jagdeo is not an acacemic economist, he is an accomplished practicing economist of the highest order.

The second question I would like to address is (Q6) where he asked..."it is common knowledge that the PPP continued the Hoyte/Greenidge Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) after they took power in 1992. What are the differences between the ERP and the Jagdeo doctrine? Please explain to the readers". Well, it is this author's most esteemed privilege in taking the liberty to explain this to Brandli et.al., chiefly since there are some misconceptions about the ERP.

Strictly speaking, Brandli asked the wrong question. The questions that Brandli should really ask are how and why did the ERP came about? The ERP was engineered consequentially owing to the fact that it was the PNC Government under the leadership of L.F.S Burnham who bankrupted the economy, attributed to egregious macroeconomic policies and management altogether.

Following his demise, he was succeeded by the late Desmond Hoyte, by which time the economy was already bankrupt and needed to be rescued. Hoyte then had no choice but to immediately engage the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to assist with a bailout package. The IMF then ochestrated the ERP programme, which was imposed upon the Hoyte administration as the only option for the "commencement of economic recovery", not full recovery. The PNC along with their apoloto take credit for the ERP. Nevertheless, the fact is that the ERP is nothing sophisticated or fantastic that requires exceptional brain power to put together. The ERP basically was a two-pronged strategy: (1) it imposed austerity measures, this was where the size of the public service shrank because that involved terminating public servants as part of the austerity measures (cutting costs). Further, this explained why free university education was no longer free as it was part of the cost cutting measures, inter alia, the ERP. And (2) the economy was a socially planned economy; more than 80% of the economy was owned and controlled by the State, hence the privatization of State assets became necessary. In other words, liquidation of State assets aimed at generating liquidity, which aided the commencement of a long journey of economic recovery. As such, the ERP could not have singularly achieved full economic recovery and stability.

With respect to the obtainment of full economic recovery and stability, this was where the "Jagdeo doctrine", as Brandli puts it, was birthed following the 1992 elections which was won by the PPP/C. As the finance minister at that time, Dr. Jagdeo was instrumental in negotiating debt forgiveness from many of the country's creditors. This played a pivotal role in the journey of economic recovery.

In 1994, the PPP/C government embarked on the formulation of a national development strategy, which was finalized in 1996. This strategy's incremental implementation commenced immediately thereafter in 1997 to the present PPP/C Government. It is public knowledge that the 1996 national development strategy was led by Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo as the finance minister, which was followed by the poverty reduction strategy, followed by the national competiveness strategy, followed by the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) (2009), to the current expanded version of LCDS, all of which were led by Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo. So when Brandli asks Dr. Persaud to identify five peer reviewed academic papers, these were five (5) pragmatic policy papers, and implementable development strategies that were led by the Vice President, previously in his capacity as a former finance minister and former president.

By the time the former President Dr. Jagdeo completed his second term, the economy's debt-to-GDP was reduced from 900% (1992) to less than 50% (2011), debt service to revenue ratio reduced from over 150% to 30%, inflation was reduced from 87% (1992) to 2% (2011), interest rates reduced from 30% (1992) to 11% (2011), exchange rates stablised at \$200, foreign reserves stood at US\$750 million representing 5 months import cover from zero in 1992, GDP moved from US\$300 million to

EQUALITY NEWS

Joel Bhagwandin US\$3.7 billion

(2011), per capita income increased from US\$500, to US\$4,900.

From inheriting a bankrupt economy with practically zero savings in the bank, the former President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo exited Government leaving a total of G\$101 billion liquid cash in the Government Deposit Accounts in the banking sector at the end of 2011. This amount, when adjusted for present value (PV) is worth G\$150 billion in today's money. Resultantly, the sum total held in the Government Deposit Accounts together with the foreign reserve balance of US\$750 million, would give rise to a total of G\$252.5 billion (2011 value), with a PV of \$348.5 billion. Of key note, this remarkable achievement was accomplished with zero oil money and zero oil discovery more than a decade ago under the stewardship of former President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo. Furthermore, the political opposition consistently sought to destablise his government. To this end, a few key events of such were as follows:

-1992-1997: there was a short period of street protests and violence having restored democracy, following which the economy took off (short period of stability).

-1997-2001: prolonged street protests and disruption.

-2002–2003: prison break, crime wave spiraled out of control and politically motivated disruptions.

-2004–2008: unrests, politically motivated disruptions.

-2008-2012: Lusignan, Lindo Creek, Bartica massacre, violence erupted when protestors blocked the Wismar Mckenzie bridge.

It is worth noting, too, that together with the foregoing political challenges, there was the adverse economic impact engendered by the 2005 floods (natural disaster) that resulted in a loss of 60% of GDP. Yet, inspite of all of the aforementioned challenges, former President Jagdeo managed to achieve all of the previously mentioned economic conditions and financial viability and stability.

Brandli's attack on Dr. Persaud was unfortunate. He (Brandli) may have inadvertently set aside his supposedly scholastic faculties of thinking, failing to reflect for a moment that in so doing, he has exposed his inherent idiosyncratic weaknesses. Most ludicrously, nine out of every ten letters authored by Dr. Brandli, he dedicates at least two elongated paragraphs about his academic credentials and experience. Only an inordinately insecure academic of Dr. Brandli's stature would inadvertently diminish his academic standing to self agrandizement, to the extent of vehemently craving validation of some sort from the powers that be.



gists such as Brandli have always hasten



Trudeau's Jamaica holiday didn't break the rules: ethics commissioner

By Nishad Sharma LJI REPORTER

Interim Ethics Commissioner Konrad Von Finckenstein informed Members of Parliament on Tuesday that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's trip to Jamaica did not violate rules governing gifts and travel for elected officials. Von Finckenstein clarified that the stay was considered a gift from a longtime family friend, businessman Peter Green, and therefore, it adhered to regulations.

Addressing the House of Commons ethics committee, Von Finckenstein revealed that Trudeau's office had consulted with his office before the Jamaica trip. The Ethics Commissioner's office conducted research on Trudeau's relationship with Peter Green and determined that Green is a friend without ties to the Canadian government. The rules permit MPs to accept gifts or travel from parents or friends.

However, there might be changes on the horizon for MPs' travel rules. The ethics committee unanimously supported a motion from NDP MP Matthew Green, proposing that two parliamentary committees explore altering the rules to prohibit MPs from accepting sponsored travel. Under Green's proposal, MPs would be allowed two international trips annually, funded from their MP office budgets.

Presently, MPs can accept trips sponsored by interest groups, as long as they declare them to the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. Despite recent adjustments preventing registered lobbying groups from sponsoring travel, Canadian MPs still benefit from substantial international travel funding, including to countries like Israel and Taiwan.

While MPs can use their office budgets for up to two trips yearly to Washington, D.C., or New York City, other funded travel must stay within Canada.

The ethics committee is expected draft a letter in the coming days, rec ommending these changes to the Parliament's procedure and House affairs



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

\$84,000.

Board of Internal Economy, which over-Trudeau defended the Jamaica trip, sees budgets and the parliamentary asserting that his family took a holiday with friends, following all rules. Von **Opposition Conservative members** Finckenstein's testimony also covered the broader rules governing gifts and initiated Von Finckenstein's appearance before the committee, seeking to investravel that MPs are allowed to accept.

> As Von Finckenstein nears the end of his term as interim ethics commissioner, his appointment, which began on August 30 for a six-month period, will

Canada has been without a permanent ethics commissioner.

Duff Conacher, co-founder of Democracy Watch, praised the initial efforts to curtail sponsored travel for MPs but highlighted the need to address additional unethical loopholes in federal ethics rules. Conacher emphasized the importance of an independent, non-partisan process for selecting the ethics commissioner, advocating against secre-

mas holidays. Reports suggested

tigate Trudeau's communications with

the ethics commissioner's office regard-

ing the Jamaica trip during the Christ-

committee and the House of Commons'

precinct.

Trudeau stayed at Green's Prospect Es- expire on February 29. Since Mario tive appointments by the ruling party tate resort, estimated to be worth up to Dion's retirement on February 21, 2023, cabinet.



Guyana will not depend on oil and gas for development: PM

THE government will not "throw back" and depend on oil and gas to propel Guyana forward, according to Prime Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, who underscored that robust and strategic planning will be the root of the nation's development.

During the last day of the budget debate, the Prime Minister said that the nation's transformation and the vast number of opportunities for citizens have the APNU+AFC "shivering."

Despite heckling from the Opposition bench, Phillips was not deterred from outlining how far Guyana has advanced since the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) assumed office in August 2020.

"This is all part of a holistic vision of growth. Our responsibility is to manage the oil revenues wisely," he said, stressing that the diversification of the nation's economy is a top priority of the government.

"We will not throw back and depend on oil and gas to move our country forward," the Prime Minister told the National Assembly.

Stressing that this year's fiscal package is "transformational," he also said: "The allocations in this budget all form part of the necessary and imperative plans of our government."

He went on to say: "Mr. Speaker, before August 2020, our nation was grappling with numerous challenges," adding that these obstacles that stood in the way of the country's development included poor economic infrastructure, inadequate policies and services, among other deficiencies.

Reflecting on the state of Guyana under the previous APNU+AFC administration, Prime Minister Phillips said that the current government has worked assiduously to return "our country and our people to a state of hope."

"Total neglect with zero opportunities for economic growth and the improvement of the lives of our people," was the hallmark of the period 2015-2020, according to Phillips. livering on its promises. He said it is a vehicle to foster transformation and more opportunities for all.

Phillips also related that with the massive allocations to propel growth, the annual fiscal plan will "fast-track" development.

The Prime Minister debunked the opposition's claim that the budget is solely about distributing wealth.

He argued that it serves as a vessel for strategic investment for the country's foundation to craft a better future.

Moreover, while refuting the arguments from the APNU+AFC Parliamentarians concerning the funds set aside for infrastructure, the Prime Minister outlined how it could create opportunities for all Guyanese. He then set the record straight and pointed out how a significant amount of money is being allocated to the education and health sectors to bolster their capabilities. Prime Minister Phillips outlined how the government is crafting a robust framework, and did not shy away from pointing out that the government's investments are being praised by persons regardless of their political affiliation. Even though the Prime Minister, within his presentation, called for the Opposition to join with the government and support them in building out Guyana to benefit all citizens, he was met with resistance to unity by the

APNU+AFC.

Phillips continued his presentation on promoting a united Guyana where all Guyanese will be able to reap a plethora of benefits that will give a better quality of life.

"Our people, both PPP/C and APNU+AFC supporters have embraced our government's infrastructural and other projects," the Prime Minister said.

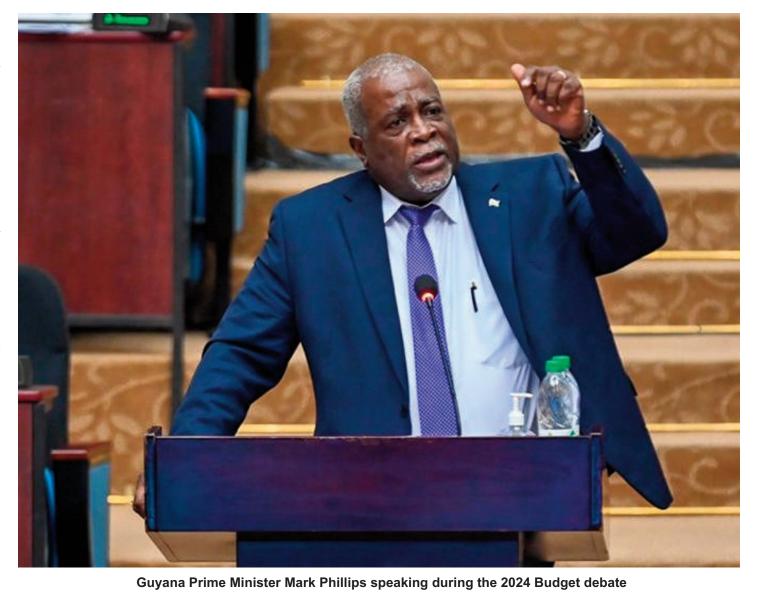
He went on to say: "Mr. Speaker we have moved Guyana to a stage where the citizens are participating in the development of their country and their communities."

The Prime Minister did not mince

this plan will help to add more than 500 megawatts (MW) of electricity capacity for residential and commercial users that can contribute to a fifty per cent reduction in electricity costs."

The gas-to-energy project, which has been allocated \$80 billion in Budget 2024, was spotlighted by the Prime Minister.

The Gas-to-Energy Project will see a 200km 12-inch diameter pipeline channeling natural gas from the Liza Phase One and Liza Phase Two Floating, Production, Storage, and Offloading (FPSO) vessels to a power plant and Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) facility that will be built in Wales. The conversion of natural gas from ExxonMobil's offshore operations to electricity is a key component of the PPP/C government's objective to lower energy costs by at least 50 per cent through an energy mix, which incorporates gas, solar, wind, and "hydro" power.



Placing the coalition's tenure under a microscope, he said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the citizens saw mismanagement of this major public health issue.

"So, our government knew that we had our work cut out for us, to turn it all around," Prime Minister Phillips told the House.

He underscored that the PPP/C administration could "talk the talk and walk the walk," so the party's pledges always materialise.

The Prime Minister said that Budget 2024 further serves as an example of the PPP/C's commitment to dehis words when he stated that his sector is not being left on the back burners and he is not immobile in his capacity as Prime Minister.

Phillips said: "This is not a Prime Minister without a portfolio... This is the people's Prime Minister!"

He then remarked that the PPP/C administration is creating a nation that will benefit from its natural resources.

Prime Minister Phillips turned his attention to the numerous projects that are being rolled out by the government to foster clean and cheaper energy.

He related: "The government aims to incorporate a mix of clean and renewable energy – solar, hydro, wind, and natural gas energy resources to meet the country's energy needs over the next five years. It is envisioned that



President receives global Africa award for transformational leadership

DESCRIBING it as a "significant milestone," the Afro-Guyanese Union expressed their appreciation for President Dr. Irfaan Ali's acceptance of the esteemed Global Africa Leadership Award conferred upon him by the Africa Prosperity Network (APN) in Ghana.

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"This award is a significant milestone in recognising Guyanese leadership on the global stage," a press release read.

The unprecedented economic growth that Guyana is undergoing, according to the organisation, has been the hallmark of President Ali's leadership since he assumed office in August 2020.

Additionally, it was acknowledged that in light of the country's progress, the President is ensuring that this is accomplished while upholding the utmost standards of human dignity and unity.

"President Ali's efforts to promote 'One Guyana' have been especially impactful in our diverse society, fostering a sense of unity and inclusiveness," the press release read.

Dr. Ali's dedication to advocating for both domestic and international matters, particularly his steadfast endorsement of global reparations and restorative justice, serves as evidence of his commitment to rectifying historical injustices and promoting a just and equitable global framework.



President Irfaan Ali (left) receiving the award

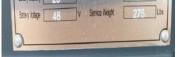
It was stated that this initiative is a manifestation of his comprehensive vision for reconciliation and restoration, encompassing Guyana and the global African communities, with the objective of healing and promoting progress for Afro-descendants.

The organisation then stated: "The APN award recognises President Ali's role in the handling of the Essequibo controversy and highlights his capabilities in handling complex international challenges with poise and dignity. His diplomatic skills and unwavering commitment to justice and equity have set a standard for leaders worldwide."

"The Afro-Guyanese Union applauds President Ali's achievements and is honored to witness a leader of his caliber representing Guyana on the global front."









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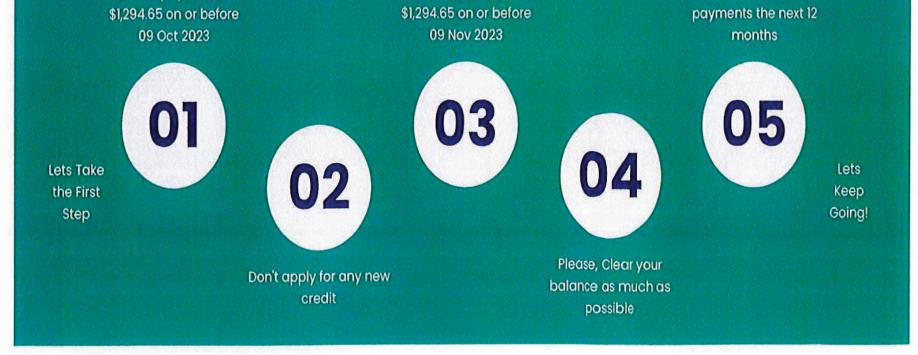
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Electronic single window for trade to go live in March

RECOGNISING the many hurdles that entrepreneurs face when starting up and managing a small business in Guyana, the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce will bring on stream an electronic single-window system for trade transactions.

This was last week disclosed by the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Oneidge Walrond, who during the 2024 budget debates told the National Assembly that the new initiative is a part of several policies outlined in the fiscal package to support small business owners across the country.

"These various developments have not come by chance they have come because we have a vision and we are putting in the work to realise this day in and day out," Walrond said.

She further disclosed that works on the electronic single-window for trade transactions is in its advance stages and it is projected to go live in March this year.

"The electronic single-window for trade will to a large extent automate the process for clearing items for import and export, delivering a substantial decrease in the time and expenses associated with the trade related process."

A sum of \$600 million has been budgeted for this initiative.

Meanwhile, a new legislation will be tabled to the National Assembly to assist small business owners to capitalise on their assets.

"This year we intend to bring to the house the security interest and immoveable, property bill, one of the principle objectives of this bill is to enable small business owners to capitalise movable property so as to gain access to finance."

"For example, a small business owner can move more readily to use let's say an excavator or other piece of machinery at collateral for a loan," she said.

President Dr. Irfaan Ali in January 2021 announced that the central government will be undertaking modernisation of the institutional and legislative infrastructure to establish a single-window approval system for building permits and construction permits, a project which has been already commenced by the Central Housing & Planning Authority and the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

In addition to focusing on enhancing businesses' ability to guarantee that competitive goods and services are produced locally and to support a contemporary, practical business environment, the ministry is exploring methods to promote entrepreneurship and simplify doing business in Guyana.

A sum of \$450 million has been set aside in Budget 2024 for the replenishment of the Small Business Development Fund and \$331 million to the Small Business Bureau.



The single window system will be used for trade



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Barriers hindering trade opportunities for Caribbean, African states

TRADE opportunities between Caribbean and African states are tremendous, but leaders must first examine existing trade barriers to further foster stronger collaborative ties.

This is according to Guyana's President, Dr. Irfaan Ali, who on Saturday told hundreds of African leaders at the African Prosperity Dialogues in Ghana that there are vast, untapped opportunities that can help to stimulate advanced trade between the two regions. But as of now, trade between the two continents are not ideal.

In fact, according to 2020 statistics, less than 0.1 per cent of Africa's exports are destined for Caribbean countries. Exports from Africa to the Caribbean have been trending downwards since 2015.

"Trade between Africa and the Caribbean is highly concentrated around primary minerals; more than 40 per cent of the Caribbean exports to Africa are chemicals. These are things we need to fix. The opportunities are there for massive increases in the trade between Africa and the Caribbean," President Ali said.

The Guyanese Head of State, who is also the current Chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), suggested that leaders examine the existing trade barriers.

"We have to fix the issues of trans-



Barriers hindering trade opportunities for Caribbean, African states - Ali

port and logistics, we have to fix the rules between ourselves that will help to stimulate trade and advance trade between our countries. There are tremendous opportunities," he said.

President Ali noted that while the Caribbean's population might seem small, there is a massive market for trade.

For example he said: "Aquaculture, the size of the aquaculture market in the US [United States] alone is \$4 billion annually and Guyana is among the most competitive country when it comes to aquaculture and the production of fish products for the United States market. What we can give is access to [a] market over 400 million people in which we have trade arrangement and trade agreement."

He added: "You have the knowhow, you have the technology, we gave the land, [and] we have the competitive advantage." He then asked: "what if we merge?"

He noted that leaders now have to

embrace new opportunities and look at the traditional areas.

Last November Guyana hosted the AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum where the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) signalled its intention to support the Caribbean in its efforts to enhance its transport infrastructure.

Afreximbank's President and Chairman of the Board of Directors, Benedict Oramah, had said that the bank has already approved US\$1.5 billion in funding to enable member states of CARICOM to ratify the Partnership Agreement with Afreximbank, enabling states to tap into the bank's various financial instruments.

The financing institution at that time had begun the process of establishing its first regional headquarters in Barbados, where the first AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum was held in 2022.

Afreximbank is also in the process of developing the Afreximbank Africa Trade Centre in Barbados and once fully established, regional trade between African and Caribbean nations is expected to grow exponentially.

With this major initiative already on the cards, President Ali reiterated that there is still massive opportunities that could be explored.





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200 exhibitors, 21 countries confirmed for energy conference, expo

WITH a rebranded focus and several high-level officials expected to attend, Guyana's Energy Conference and Supply Chain expo will see the country being further positioned as a powerhouse in the industry.

The third edition of the conference will be held from February 19-22 in Georgetown and has already seen on board, 200 exhibitors and dignitaries from 21 countries across the globe.

At a news briefing on Monday, the conference's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Kurt Baboolall, said this year's "expo" has been packaged as "a familyoriented event," focused on the correlation of the energy sector and tangible developments in the country.

This, he said, fits perfectly into this year's theme: "Fuelling Transformation and Modernisation."

"From a macro lens, what it means is that Guyana is using its income from the energy resources to fuel developments and other sectors and transforming and modernising it," Baboolall said.

He related that just about 19 topics will be discussed at this year's conference, including: Trends, challenges and best practices; building resilient supply chains in the face of disruptions; growth and collaboration strategies for emerging economies, and investing in Guyana. Discussions will also be held from a youth perspective on the oil and gas industry. President, Dr. Irfaan Ali will headline this year's conference and he will be joined by Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, the Prime Minister of Qatar.

Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Keith Rowley; Prime Minister of The Bahamas, Philip Davis; Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, the President of Suriname Chandrikapersad Santokhi and former President of Colombia, Iván Duque Márquez will be



sphere. We are already on our way to on our way to achieve that and we are Texas, but I think we can rival them at achieving that ... I think already we are now competing with some big ones in some point in time," he said.

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among several other high-ranking officials to attend this year's conference.

Natural Resources Minister, Vickram Bharrat, said that this year's conference will showcase investment opportunities in tourism, agriculture, forestry, and mining sectors, as Guyana is rightfully positioning itself as a powerhouse.

"A lot has happened from the last conference to this one. And an increase in production definitely spills opportunities throughout the value chain.

"It is attracting a number of countries, a number of leaders in the sector and we will continue to work together. The government and the committee will continue working together to make this expo the premier expo in the hemi-





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EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1 2024 Police Force's forensic, investigative capabilities to be enhanced

TO bolster the investigative capabilities of the Guyana Police Force (GPF), the government will be making substantial investments in forensic science and technological advancements to deal with increasingly sophisticated criminal activities.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs Anil Nandlall made this disclosure during the opening of a training programme in restorative justice on Monday.

"We are investing in these programmes and policies right across the divide. We have recognised, like the rest of the world, that we have to change our approach to investigation if we are going to succeed," Nandlall said.

In the 2024 budget, \$250 million was specifically allocated to improve investigative and forensic capabilities. This investment will facilitate training programmes both locally and regionally.

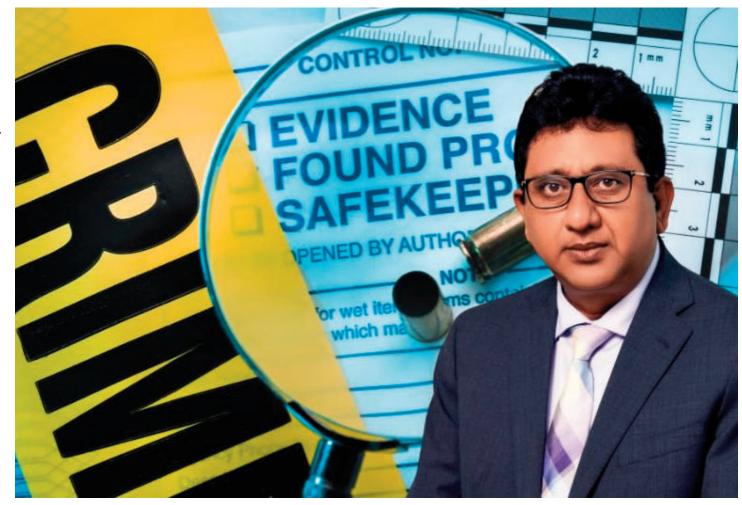
Reflecting on the evolving nature of crime, Nandlall remarked: "With the technological changes that are taking place across the globe, crime has not remained stagnant. The criminal has wised up. The criminal takes advantage of technological changes."

A pivotal development in this initiative is the operationalisation of a DNA analysis workflow system, acquired in 2022.

This state-of-the-art technology has significantly bolstered forensic crime-fighting capabilities within the Guyana Police Force.

In 2023, the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory (GFSL) analysed a significant number of biology cases, involving over 900 DNA specimens.

Nandlall highlighted the importance of evolving law enforcement techniques in response to these changes, noting: "In the face of that, we can't have the same type of approach to policing, which we may have 30 years ago. So, we are investing heavily in forensic



science, in all forms."

Additionally, over 30 police officers and five officers from the Ministry of Human Services will receive a fully paid scholarship to India for training in forensic interviews.

Nandlall pointed out that the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) – a Government of Guyana initiative which seeks to offer Guyanese an opportunity to advance their education through online and distance learning (ODL) mode – scholarship programme has been expanded to include dozens of disciplines in forensic investigative methods and techniques, as well as social programmes and counselling programmes.

"I'm pleased to report that dozens of police and social workers have been

Attorney General Anil Nandlall

enrolled in our GOAL scholarship programmes to take advantage of these opportunities," Nandlall said, as he explained that the initiative not only enhances the technical skills of law enforcement personnel but also integrates social service perspectives into their training.

The GFSL's performance in 2023 paints a picture of a robust and evolving forensic capability.

The laboratory performed analyses in 606 cases, involving over 9,000 pieces of individual evidence. These cases encompassed a wide range of substances and evidence types, marking a significant improvement from the 551 cases processed in 2022.

New to 2023 is the laboratory's ability to identify corrosive substances

and new psychoactive substances. This enhancement reflects the government's commitment to staying ahead of evolving criminal methodologies.

DNA testing at the GFSL involves comparisons and matching of evidence to suspects, family testing (even when the suspect's DNA is unavailable), and paternity testing. A wide range of samples, including cheek cells, hair, blood, and touch DNA, can be collected and submitted for testing.

The GFSL was established in 2014 and comprises four analytical departments (toxicology, documents, trace evidence, and Chemistry) and six non-analytical departments (security, quality system, information system, facilities operation, evidence, and administration).

Owners counting losses after huge Berbice fire

IN a devastating turn of events on Monday morning, a fire of unknown origin tore through two longstanding businesses in Corriverton, Berbice, leaving owners grappling with substantial losses.

The blaze, which ignited in a twostorey wooden building, quickly engulfed Mahin and Son Upholstery Works before spreading to the adjacent Ritz Hotel, Restaurant, and Bar. As flames ravaged the structures, a third building suffered significant scorching.

Mahendra Persaud, 54, owner of the upholstery establishment, recounted the harrowing moment when he first noticed the smoke.

"I was stitching and smelled smoke, so I thought someone was burning garbage outside," Persaud stated. "But when I went out and came back in, I saw smoke inside. When I opened the door, there was bare fire."

Despite his efforts to extinguish the flames, Persaud was unable to contain the inferno. With the assistance of a customer, he salvaged only a single machine and a few rolls of upholstery. Devastatingly, Persaud's building was reduced to ashes. "I collected advances from people, plus I recently bought materials, all gone," he lamented, tears welling in his eyes. Additionally, Persaud sustained minor burns to his foot during the ordeal.

The Guyana Fire Service swiftly responded to the emergency after receiving an alert at 09:34 hours. Firefighters from the Corriverton Fire Station, aided by crews from Rose Hall, arrived at the scene to find one building destroyed and another engulfed in flames. Despite their efforts, the blaze had already caused extensive damage.

Meanwhile, Kamaldea Othra, 62, affectionately known as "Rita," owner of the Ritz Hotel, recounted her own experience with the fire.

Othra was enjoying a morning cup of coffee on the lower floor of her threestorey building when her granddaughter alerted her to smoke seeping through the windows. Rushing outside, Othra witnessed thick, dark smoke billowing from the neighbouring premises. As flames spread through the wooden ceilings of her hotel, Othra evacuated the building to ensure her safety.

The Ritz Hotel has been an integral part of the Corriverton community for many years, making its destruction all the more heartbreaking for locals. As firefighters battled the blaze, residents of Springlands gathered, watching in despair as two beloved businesses succumbed to the flames, leaving behind millions of dollars in damages.

An investigation into the cause of the fire is currently underway, as both business owners grapple with the daunting task of rebuilding their lives from the ashes of this tragic incident.

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Gov't 'stepping harder on accelerator' to advance development

HIGHLIGHTING that two of Guyana's major productive industries were in total disrepair under the A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance For Change (APNU+AFC) administration from 2015-2020, President, Dr Irfaan Ali on Monday called out the coalition for now trying to use the bauxite and sugar industries as "diversionary political tools."

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The Head of State, in a live broadcast statement on his official Facebook page, said that the main goal of the opposition, APNU+AFC, is to pursue a "divisive" approach to politics.

According to statistics provided by the Finance Minister, Dr Ashni Singh, who joined the President during the broadcast, the bauxite industry was most successful during the PPP/C's tenures in office.

From 1979 to 1992, when the then People's National Congress (PNC) held the governing office, the industry's production levels were significantly low when compared to the PPP/C during 1993-2014.

Thereafter, a decline was recorded when the A Partnership for National Unity assumed office during the years 2015 to 2020.

President Ali and Dr Singh presented a graph which showed that there was a higher average of production under successive PPP/C governments compared to the PNC/APNU+AFC.

According to the Finance Minister, during 2015-2020, several operators had suspended operations which saw hundreds of workers being laid off.

He said that the economic life of communities at Kwakwani, Ituni, Linden and New Amsterdam had collapsed under the coalition, as these were the communities that were hubs for bauxite production.

Now, the government is making significant investments to increase production and support the modernisation of the industry, and this has led to the projection of a massive production increase. "We tried to first of all resuscitate the industry from circumstances in which we found it, creating an investor-friendly environment once again, generating optimism and a positive output for the sector," Dr Singh said This led to a massive investment made by a private operator in Linden, Region 10-Bosai Minerals Group-in which a US\$120 million Kiln was purchased to boost production output by one million tonnes this year. Over the next



President Dr Irfaan Ali and Finance Minister Dr Ashni Singh during Monday's live broadcast

two years, this investment has been estimated to create 1,000 new jobs.

"The investment that we are making in things like gas, energy and bringing down the cost of electricity will once again make it viable for Guyana to get back in aluminum production," Dr Singh added.

Talks have already commenced in getting more investors involved in the industry and potentially creating a hub for aluminum production.

"Our policies are guided by what is best for the country, what is best for the people for the country," President Ali said.

Shifting attention to the sugar industry, President Ali reminded that it was the previous government which had a mis-



guided philosophy that led to the decline of the industry.

In 2017, the then APNU-led government had closed several major sugar estates across the country, leaving thousands of persons without jobs.

A former Vice-President of the APNU+AFC government, Khemraj Ramjattan, had maintained that the coalition's move was transformational, as it is not wise to spend "good money behind bad sectors."

Over 40,000 persons had either directly or indirectly lost sources of income when the estates were closed and investments were stymied.

At the last general elections, the PPP/C government vowed to reopen these estates and upon assuming office major investments were made to fulfil the manifesto pledge of rehiring and increasing sugar production.

Thousands of persons have since been rehired and, to date, according to recent statistics provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, over 8,000 persons are employed across the sugar belt.

The APNU+AFC, however, "don't understand the intricate nature of the economy," President Ali said.

And despite the narrative being touted by the opposition, the government is working on a system with the relevant workers' unions to improve wages.

A plan is also being established to advance the skill levels of workers to further support the optimising and mechanisation of the sugar industry.



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THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1 2024

EQUALITY NEWS



Avantika feels the role of Karen "breaks stereotypes" for women

Avantika embraces challenge of being a 'Mean Girl'

Avantika Vandanapu plays the role of "bimbo" Karen Shetty in the new Mean Girls musical and feels it's a chance to change perceptions around South Asians in the film industry.

The ditzy character was originally played by Amanda Seyfried in the 2004 film, but Avantika joins a new cast and thinks it can "break stereotypes".

"Of what we encourage women to be and what we encourage women to think like," she tells BBC Asian Network.

In the original film, teen royalty Karen is a character who arguably doesn't think much, whether it's putting her whole fist in her mouth, having a "fifth sense" or crushing on a cousin.

But for Avantika, hearing the line "God Karen, you're so stupid" was actually pretty empowering. "Karen feels like somebody who embraces

being a bimbo and embraces being someone who's sexual.

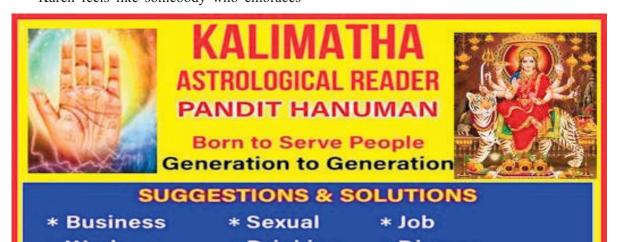
"I think playing that kind of character, especially as a South Asian woman is really, really crazy," the 19-year-old says.

The musical, like the film, has been written by Tina Fey, and Avantika praises the team "for casting someone who visually also feels antithetical to someone who was like that".

She says it's important for her as an actress to "not spend my entire life in this industry forever being perceived as someone who can only play the shy nerd".

"And that people see me as something different.

"It's validated this feeling that I can truly play different characters and embody different people."





ARIES (March 21 - April 20): Mars in the career area of your chart endows you with a burning desire to succeed and the more challenges you are confronted with over the next few days the more you will like it – and people in positions of power will be mightily impressed.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): Even if you are the sort of Taurus who prefers not to take chances you will be hugely adventurous over the next few days. With your insatiable curiosity you want to broaden your horizons in every way possible so you get to know more about the world.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): The fact that some people are easily fooled is not an excuse to take advantage of them. If you have a better grasp of what is going on in the world than they do you must make it your mission to open their eyes and ears to reality.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): Mars in your opposite sign will confront you with partnership challenges but it will also give you the energy and drive to deal with them. Remember, you don't have to be confrontational, in fact you will accomplish more in the long-term if you work as a team.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): Don't be afraid to show your ruthless side today, especially on the work front where it would appear that some of your colleagues are not pulling their weight and leaving you to do the bulk of the lifting. It's time for an attitude adjustment!

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): You feel more confident and carefree than you have in a long time and you can use that positive outlook to get ahead in the world professionally and improve your private life too. The more of an effort you make the more you will enjoy yourself.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): You need to accept that there is only so far you can go on your own and that won't be far enough to bring about the change of lifestyle you crave. Try pairing up with someone who shares your sense of ambition – together you can make it work.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): Aim to give 100 per cent every minute of every day. You have never been the sort to settle for second best and there is no reason why you should lower your standards now. Aim high, fly fast and be a force for good in the world.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): You need to be more careful about how you make use of your resources. The most precious of those resources is time and if you take on too many aims or tell others you can do things for them when you cannot your time could run out very quickly.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): With Mars, Venus and Mercury all moving through your sign you have all the skills you need to get whatever it is you want most from life. If you can, persuade others to do things for you. If you can't, don't be afraid to be a little more forceful.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): You won't know for sure if people in positions of power like your ideas until you tell them what they are. Yes, of course, they could reject them out of hand but that's not a good enough reason to say nothing. You must speak up today.

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



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PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): Some of your opinions may not be popular with people who don't like changes but that's too bad. You can see which way the wind is blowing and you have every intention of letting it blow you all the way to success, even if it means leaving others behind.

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EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1 2024

International warrant issued for ex-Suriname President Desi Bouterse

The Public Prosecution Service in Suriname is taking swift action against former president Desi Bouterse, as he continues to evade his 20-year prison sentence for murder.

The authorities are now in the process of issuing an international arrest warrant for the 78-year-old exleader, who has failed to report to a local prison for the second time.

Desi Bouterse, once a towering figure in Suriname's political landscape, has been at the center of a highprofile legal battle since his conviction.

On two separate occasions, he has defied court orders to present himself at the Santo Boma prison, located just south of the capital, Paramaribo.

His initial failure to appear last Friday has left many questioning the whereabouts of the former president.

Another of the convicted men, 68year-old Iwan Dijksteel has also failed to report to prison.

The Court of Justice on Wednesday sentenced former Surinamese President Desi Bouterse to a 20-years in prison.

The ruling marks the latest development in a long-standing case that implicates Bouterse in the heinous murders of 15 individuals on December 8, 1982.

Bouterse, now 78 years old, was absent as the Court handed down its decision.

Reports are that he had appealed against his conviction that had been handed down in August 2021, when the Court Martial of Suriname upheld the 2019 military court ruling of a 20-year jail term following a trial that had been going on for several years.

In 2017, Desi Bouterse and 23 co-



Desi Bouterse, former President of Suriname, has failed to report to prison to start his 20 year sentence

defendants appeared in the military court after the Court of Justice had earlier dismissed a motion to halt the trial.

The charges stemmed from the December 8, 1982 murders of 15 men, a group that included journalists, military officers, union leaders, lawyers, businessmen, and university lecturers. Throughout the proceedings, the

prosecution asserted that the victims

had been apprehended on the nights of December 7 and 8, then subsequently transported to Fort Zeelandia, the Surinamese National Army's former headquarters.

According to reports, these men suffered torture and were executed without trial, with their fates sealed during this period of unlawful confinement. While no order for his immediate arrest has been announced, Justice Dinesh Sewratan said that the 15 men were murdered without conscience and that there was indeed premeditation.

Taking into account the historical context and the legal landscape of the time the crimes occurred, Justice Sewratan opted for the highest available sentence of 20 years.

Negril may become a parish: Holness

With legislation in the works to make the town of Portmore, Jamaica,

as populations grow, as countries grow and we shouldn't be afraid of it, we



we could seek to establish a parish and it be clouded in political accusations.

its own parish, Prime Minister Andrew Holness said similar changes are being considered for the resort town of Negril in Westmoreland.

While commenting on plans for Portmore parish status during the official launch of the \$4.4-billion Portmore Resilience Park on Thursday, Holness hinted that the Negril might be considered for similar administrative changes.

"There is another area where its own administrative personality is emerging and which we will have to consider some change in how their affairs are administered, and that is Negril. You will understand that the town of Negril has grown; it has grown out of Westmoreland into Hanover and it is now creating a problem as to which Municipality has charge over its development," the Prime Minister said.

"So, these are things that happen

should embrace it as part of the change and that is how we as Jamaicans start to take responsibility In for our own future and destiny. So, we need to put aside the political fear," he added.

Portmore is the only town in Jamaica that has municipality status, as all parishes on the island do. The town also has its own city council and mayor.

Municipality status for Negril, which is now shared by the Hanover and Westmoreland municipal corporations, could pave the way for the town to become a parish.

In the meantime, the Prime Minister also gave an update on the legislation to make Portmore Jamaica's 15th parish, saying although it has been drafted, the government will not have it approved in Parliament before the local government elections.

Andrew Holness

The elections, which were last held in November 2016, are slated to be held no later than February 28, 2024.

"Our Bill is ready to go to Parliament. We were ready for a little while now, we will not take it to Parliament, we will probably... table it but we will not pass it, because there is no way that No, we would never do that, and I want the people of Portmore to be assured of that," he said.

The Prime Minister said the decision is necessitated by the need for proper administration of the affairs of the rapidly developing municipality.

"I use political in two senses, one sense is the contest for power and the other sense is the administration of the affairs of the people, the participation of the people in the administration of their affairs. Portmore has reached the point, and it has reached that point long ago, where we must now provide for the proper administration of its affairs –economic, social, cultural, infrastructure, security – all of the local affairs," he noted.

Holness said there is a standard process engaged for changing political geographical boundaries.

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1 2024

New 'Connect Caribe' ferry service to be launched in Caribbean

A private sector-led regional ferry service was launched in Barbados on Tuesday 23 January aimed at increasing and improving transportation among the Caribbean countries.

EQUALITY NEWS

Upturn Funds Caribbean in collaboration with Pleion Group Incorporated unveiled the joint-venture partnership, which it said has led to the establishment of the new private sector-led ferry company - "Connect Caribe"

Speaking at the launch held by stakeholders, the co-founder and chief executive officer for the Caribbean region, Andre Thomas said discussions are currently ongoing between regional leaders including this country's Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley and his Guyana and Barbados counterparts on the services offered by Caribe as well as the benefits attached.

"We are in talks with the governments...There is a significant discussion on how we can integrate and tackle this huge opportunity and problem. I believe that where there are problems, there are opportunities...so there will be signifi-



The T&T ferry, Galleons Passage, has been tipped as the vessel to run the inter-Caribbean rpute

cant collaboration between the service that will be done by the governments and our service," he said.

Thomas said its services will be a game changer in the transportation industry. He further noted that the three proposed vessels will have the capacity to transport up to 8,000 passengers, cargo and manufactured goods and proThomas noted that the service, scheduled to begin in the last quarter of 2024, will offer weekly and daily round trips, linking Barbados with Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, St Vincent, Grenada, Dominica, Antigua, Suriname, and Guyana. He said specific focus is also being placed on the BarbadosTrinidad-Guyana route.

But exactly how much are passengers expected to pay?

"A standard fare on our service would cost only US\$100 plus whatever charges come from that particular government. So for US\$100, we want you to be able to move from Barbados to Trinidad," Thomas said.

CARIBBEAN ROUNDUP Suriname Health Minister comes under gun fire

duce.

Police in Suriname are searching for a man who fired several gunshots at the home of Health Minister, Amar Ramadhin on Wednesday morning.

Police said that no one was injured.

They also reported that hat they were provided with a description of the gunman by a guard at the minister's residence at Emielaan, located in the capital, Paramaribo.

Authorities found nine shell casings and said that the gunman, dressed in a white T-shirt and black pants, fled on a bicycle.

Ramadhin has confirmed the incident.

Wanted Grenadian businessman nabbed in T&T

The Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF) has collaborated with regional law enforcement agencies, leading to the apprehension of a key suspect in Trinidad and Tobago. The RGPF revealed that this successful operation was the result of a concerted intelligence effort involving multiple agencies.

Teams from Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, and other regional entities led to the arrest of Mc Donald.

RGPF has expressed its gratitude towards its regional counterparts, highlighting the crucial role played by Trinidad and Tobago's law.

Ex-T&T Top Cop sues National Security Minister for defamation

In a bold move, former Trinidad & Tobago Police Commissioner Gary Griffith has filed a defamation lawsuit against National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds.

The lawsuit seeks to prevent the senior government minister or anyone associated with him from speaking, further publishing, or making other similar defamatory comments about him. The lawsuit stems from Minister Hinds' televised statements last October, where he raised concerns about Griffith's performance as commissioner of police. suit, serving it to Minister Hinds a day later.

No new Covid protocols needed, says Bahamas PM

Bahamas' Prime Minister Philip Davis says that there is no need to implement COVID-19 protocols in the country, despite a recent surge in cases since December 2023. This decision comes in the face of warnings from health officials regarding the escalating COVID-19 situation.

Prime Minister Davis has announced that while masks are recommended, they will not be made mandatory. The Ministry of Health in the Bahamas has reported a concerning increase in COVID-19 cases. Over the past six weeks, a total of 36 cases have been documented, with 26 cases occurring in December alone.

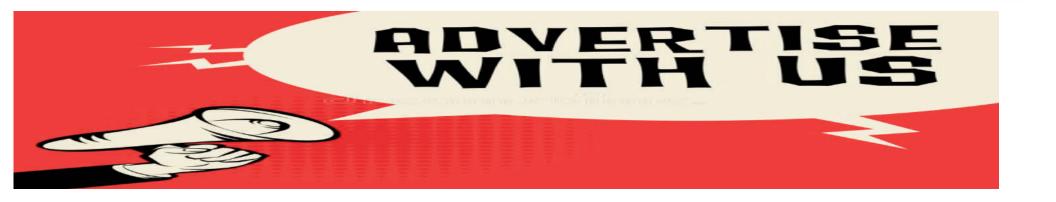
Dwayne Mc Donald, a businessman from Mt Pleasant, Carriacou, who had been on the radar of the RGPF, was recently captured in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mc Donald was sought by the police for his aleged connection to the May 2023 death of Victor Randy Mc Intosh, also a resident of Carriacou.

Initiated on January 18th, the legal battle officially began when Griffith's legal team filed the lawAdditionally, the country has sadly recorded one COVID-19-related death during this period.

Former Health Minister, Dr. Duane Sands, has voiced his concerns about the government's lack of transparency in addressing the COVID-19 situation.

He believes that the authorities should be more forthcoming with residents about the reality of the pandemic within the country.



Former Jamaican MP Jolyan Silvera charged with wife's murder

Former Jamaican member of Parliament Jolyan Silvera also faces a gun charge in relation to the murder case of his wife, Melissa.

The Judiciary of Jamaica revealed that Silvera is being charged with the offense of using a firearm to commit a felony, along with murder.

The revelation was made following backlash over the presiding judge's decision to bar the media and family members from being present for his first court appearance last week.

The judiciary, in a statement released today, indicated that it has long been established that cases before the Circuit Court Division of the Gun Court are held behind closed doors to protect relevant parties such as witnesses.

The Gun Court Act states that "In the interest of public safety or public order, no person shall be present at any sitting of the Court except - (a) members and officers of the Court and any constable or other security personnel required by the Court; (b) parties to the case before the Court, their attorneys, and witnesses giving or having given their evidence, and other persons directly concerned with the case."

The former St. Mary Western representative for the People's National Party will next appear in court on February 8.

Following his first court appearance on Thursday, Silvera's defence at-King's Counsel torney Peter Champagnie spoke to the media.

Champagnie noted that his client is maintaining his innocence.

Investigation Division (MID) charged the former St. Mary Western representative on Friday following a third round of questioning. Jolyan, 52, was taken into custody on Thursday afternoon.

It was previously reported that 42-"He has maintained his position of year-old Melissa died in her sleep on two previous occasions as part of the

November 10, 2023, at the couple's residence in Stony Hill, St. Andrew. But the police later upgraded their probe to a murder investigation after her postmortem examination revealed she was shot at least three times.

Head of the police's crime and security portfolio, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Fitz Bailey, on Thursday, confirmed that the probe brought forth sufficient evidence for Jolyan to be brought in as a suspect.

Police had questioned Silvera on

probe. At that time, Silvera's attorney Peter Champagnie said his client was not being treated as a suspect.

In a press conference on Friday, DCP Bailey said the investigation continues as the police believe that other charges will be laid against Silvera.

The Commanding Officer for the Major Investigation Division, Superintendent Richard Hilton, said that during the investigation, the team visited the crime scene at the couple's home and observed things that were "not normal."

Jolyan Silvera and his wife Melissa in happier times

innocence from day one. I am not saying that he is, because I understand that there is a report to that effect. No lawyer should ever really say that because if you so are certain, then you would be a witness," he said. Detectives assigned to the Major

B'dos deputy speaker removed after sex charges Deacons Farm, St. Michael Barbados' Prime Minister Mia Mottley has supported the removal of Neil Rowe from his role as the deputy speaker of the Parliament. The decision, she explained, will allow Rowe to address a legal matter currently before the High Court. Last September, Magistrate Deidre McKenna ruled that Mr. Rowe should stand trial in the High Court.



The charge against him alleges that in September 2022, he engaged in sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent, or was reckless as to whether she consented.

The ruling Barbados Labour Party, which commands all 30 seats in the Parliament, convened yesterday to deliberate on the matter.

During the session, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business, Santia Bradshaw, tabled a motion to revoke Mr. Rowe's appointment as deputy speaker.

The motion was passed unanimously, resulting in Neil Rowe's removal from his position.



Neil Rowe — parliament votes to remove him as Deputy Speaker

EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1 2024

American woman fined \$52K after stripping at Sangster Airport

The American woman who was last week caught on camera stripping naked and being restrained by security officers at the Sangster International Airport (SIA) in Montego Bay, Jamaica, was fined a combined total of \$52,000 when she appeared in court on Monday.

The woman, whose identity has not been disclosed but who is said to be a dentist, pleaded guilty to the charges of resisting arrest, indecent exposure, and disorderly conduct.

During Monday's court proceedings, the woman's attorney, Mark Williams, informed the court that his client's family struggles with mental health issues.

"She, herself, has always been a high-functioning person, and one who has functioned at the highest level in her profession. But it appears as if she had a psychotic episode that morning," the attorney said.

He also told the court that his client is on anxiety medication.

Presiding judge Kaysha Grant-Pryce subsequently ordered the defendant to pay a fine of \$50,000 or spend 20 days in jail for resisting arrest, \$1,000 or five days in jail for indecent exposure, and \$1,000 or five days in jail for disorderly conduct.



Footage off of video shows the woman being restrained at Sangster Airport while stripping

According to police reports, on January 23, at about 11:00 am, the woman was in the departure terminal at the SIA, preparing to board a United Airlines flight to Las Vegas, when she began behaving in a loud and boisterous manner as she and another woman got into a confrontation.

The woman then went on to hurl expletives at security officers who at-

tempted to intervene, escalating to her stripping off her clothing and getting into a physical altercation with an officer who tried to restrain her.

After several minutes of intense confrontation, the woman was eventually restrained and escorted to the Cornwall Regional Hospital where she received medical attention. She was subsequently arrested and charged for her actions at the airport.

Following the incident, a threeminute-long viral video emerged on social media showing the woman's actions at the airport. In the video, she is seen and heard hurling expletives, removing her clothes and throwing them at onlookers, and resisting officers' attempts to restrain her.

UK woman charged after cocaine found at NMIA

A Jamaica-born British woman is facing charges following the discovery of cocaine concealed within powdered milk packets during an attempt to board a flight bound for London.

Mitzie Graham, a 53-year-old health care assistant, has been remanded until March 6, awaiting a bail application by her attorney.

She is charged with possession of,

dealing in, and taking steps to export cocaine.

Reports are that on January 17, around 5 p.m., Graham checked in at the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston, Jamaica, with plans to board a flight destined for London.

During security screening, 4.8 kilograms of cocaine was discovered concealed in nine large packages of "Lasco"





Cocaine was contained in packages of Lasco

in her suitcase.

The estimated street value of this illicit cargo is an eye-catching US\$144,000, equivalent to nearly J\$21 million.

Reports are that Graham's attorney, Orville Morgan, revealed that it was his client who voluntarily informed the police officers that she was transporting the milk product on behalf of a friend named 'Munchie.'

Reportedly, 'Munchie' had requested Graham collect the packages.

Reports are that the woman told the ma

police about the items after they enquired about the ownership of the contents in her luggage.

It is further reported that following Graham's arrest, protesters gathered in front of Munchie's home in London, calling for her to hand herself over to the police.

During the recent court appearance on Friday, Morgan expressed his intent to seek bail for his client during the upcoming court date.

Graham was subsequently remanded.

EQUALITY NEWS THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1 2024

Kamla: Anti-crime Town Hall meetings are for UNC to listen to ideas

Trinidad & Tobago Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar has said the anti-crime town hall meetings which the UNC is hosting are not for the party to tell the public its plans to fight crime.

She made this comment when she addressed the UNC's second anti-crime town hall meeting at Naparima College, San Fernando on Monday night.

"There are some who are of the view that we – meaning my MPs, my senators and myself – that we should come and talk down to you, that we should come and tell you our plans."

But Persad-Bissessar said this is not the purpose of the meetings.

That, she said, is for the UNC to get feedback from ordinary citizens and qualified people about how to deal with crime.

"Together we can take all of these suggestions and build on defence strategies and solutions to fight crime."

When she announced the party's anti-crime town hall meetings last December, Persad-Bissessar said all the suggestions and recommendations made during the meetings will be compiled into a crime action report.

Persad-Bissessar added that the UNC was holding these meetings after it failed to reach agreement with the Government about bipartisan talks to deal with crime.

In an October 12 letter, the Prime Minister wrote to Persad-Bissessar about scheduling bipartisan crime talks imme-



Opposition leader Kamla Persad Bissessar during the UNC's anti-crime town hall meeting

diately after the budget debate in Parliament.

Dr Rowley proposed several pieces of anti-crime legislation for discussion.

Attorney General Reginald Armour, SC, was nominated as the leader of the Government's team to the talks.

Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister Stuart Young, National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds, Housing Minister Camille Robinson-Regis, Public Utilities Minister Marvin Gonzales and Tourism, Culture and the Arts Minister Randall Mitchell were the other members.

On November 3, Armour wrote to Persad-Bissessar asking her to nominate her team for the talks. Persad-Bissessar criticised Rowley for not planning to attend the talks, and no UNC team was nominated.

Rowley subsequently criticised the UNC, saying it was seeking to score political points and not being serious about addressing crime.

Cro Cro ordered to pay \$250K libel: calypso not a weapon President of the Trinbago Unified King said there was no need to pass more."

President of the Trinbago Unified Calypsonians Organisation (TUCO) Ainsley King says he has no issue with the court judgment ordering four-time Calypso Monarch Weston "Cro Cro" Rawlins to pay businessman Inshan Ishmael \$250,000 in damages for defamation.

Justice Frank Seepersad, in his judgment on Monday, said while some parts of Rawlins' 2023 calypso Another Sat is Outside Again were "fair comment," there were defamatory portions which were "salacious and derogative." King said there was no need to pass legislation to give calypsonians special protection from defamation laws, as they need to "know the difference between right and wrong" and use the art form positively.

"I've heard people talk all kind of thing, that people and calypsonians have to stand up for black man and all them things. But I don't think that is a good way to go, because it's a matter of right and wrong. It's not about ethnic group and all that." King also agreed with Seepersad's concerns over divisive content and lyrics, which fuel racial tensions, being performed at calypso tents and national competitions. He said TUCO's current executive is trying to "rebuild and reignite that special and greatness back into calypso" after years of its being used for politics and "to bash other ethnic groups." "Calypso is suffering as a result of that. The industry is not in a good place, because it has so much misconceptions with the music, and we need to fix it, because it's not by mistake that our music is not the top in the Caribbean any

He said Jamaican music has surpassed calypso in popularity, as Jamaicans chose not to make the same mistakes as calypsonians.

"The judge is totally right and it's time that people start pulling themselves together. If this art form have to grow, we have to use it in a progressive way the art form either to help or hurt people.

"A man could use a gun to protect himself, and he could also use a gun to hurt others, to kill others. But it's what you choose to use the tool to do."

Attorney-at-law and public relations officer for TUCO Rondell Donawa said Rawlins has the organisation's sup-

Speaking after the ruling, King said the judgment should remind calypsonians of the standards they should meet when performing.

"We have to maintain a level of respect and order in the place. And we cannot just do anything, say anything to people. I think calypsonians need to be careful because we have a beautiful art form, a real nice art form, and we shouldn't use it as a weapon against people."

He said he believed justice was served and the calypso fraternity should "accept the ruling for what it is." that will attract growth and expansion.

"Let we use this as an example to understand that calypso needs to be used in a positive way to build the nation, to motivate people, to make people smile."

He added calypsonians need to "think about the country as a whole" when writing their songs and focus on "the right set of practices...that will work holistically for the country."

"Think about motivating the citizens of this country. Think about educating the citizens of this country. Think about uplifting the spirit of the people of the country.

"We have a responsibility to use (calypso) in the correct way. Don't use it to bash and to hurt other people."

He compared the power of a calypso to a gun, saying artistes could use port.

"We stand firm in support of our calypsonians and the ability to express themselves through song without having to be muzzled or muted for whatever circumstances based on one's feelings."

He said he felt Ishmael did not earn a "total victory," as some of Rawlins' lyrics were deemed to be fair comment, which is a defence for defamation.

He added the sum Rawlins was ordered to pay was far less than what someone would have paid if there was found to be a "total defamation of character." However, he added while TUCO continues to support calypsonians in their delivery and their messaging of free speech, there must be a recognition that TT is "becoming a litigious society."

Lara, Hooper in tears, regional leaders hail young West Indies

AS Australian batsman Josh Hazlewood's off stump was uprooted by Guyanese pacer Shamar Joseph, tears of joy were shed by West Indians around the world. The West Indies, with four players making their Test debuts on tour, had clinched a phenomenal Test victory Down Under, by eight runs.

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Joseph, 24, in just his second Test match, tore through the top-ranked Australian batting on Sunday with pace, controlled aggression and an iron will.

Joseph's remarkable figures of seven wickets for 68 runs at The Gabba, Brisbane, helped the visitors draw the two-match series 1-1. It was their first Test win on Australian soil in 27 years.

Looking on from the commentary booth while working for Fox Cricket was West Indies legend Brian Lara, who has had his share of battles with the Aussies.

"West Indies have done it," the 54year-old Lara shouted as Hazlewood lost his wicket.

Overcome with euphoria, Lara hugged his former nemesis and ex-Australia wicketkeeper/batsman Adam Gilchrist, who was also doing commentary.

"It's unbelievable," Lara said as his

eyes swelled with pride. "Twenty-seven years to beat Australia in Australia. Young, inexperienced, written off – this West Indies team can stand tall today. West Indies cricket can stand tall today. Today is a big day in West Indies cricket. Congratulations. Congratulations to every single member of that cricket team. What a wonderful occasion."

Another West Indian legend in Australia, Carl Hooper, was shown in the corner of ABC's commentary studio with his head in his hands while facing a wall. When he turned around, Hooper, who also hails from Guyana, wiped tears from his eyes before turning around again and walking back to the wall.

West Indies white-ball coach and former captain Daren Sammy certainly enjoyed the performance, as he posted on X (formerly Twitter), "Are you not entertained."

Another ex-West Indies captain, Dwayne Bravo, congratulated the team on Instagram and paid kudos to skipper Kraigg Brathwaite and Joseph. He said, "Big congratulations to skipper Kraigg Brathwaite, well done on leading this young team to be able to create history! You deserve all the accolades that will be coming your way, Shamar



West Indies' Shamar Joseph raises the ball after taking seven wickets

Joseph....Enjoy the moment and it's a day all WI fans will remember for a very long time."

Former South African batsman AB de Villiers said he was in tears reading about Joseph's rise to international cricket. Joseph was born in Baracara, a remote village in Guyana with less than 400 people. Baracara, which can only be accessed by boat, did not have internet up until 2018. Life was tough but Joseph was determined to succeed. He left Baracara for New Amsterdam after a falling tree almost killed him.

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CoE: Company should be charged with corporate manslaughter in divers' deaths

the "DPP consider charging Paria with

what is commonly known as corporate

The divers-Rishi Nagassar,

Henry and Christopher Boodram, em-

ployees of LMCS, were sucked into a

30-inch underwater pipeline after a

differential pressure (Delta P) event

During the CoE, Paria had

were in the pipe between 2.45 pm and

5.30 pm on the day and only became

aware when Boodram emerged. Paria

did not allow a rescue mission for the

The deaths and the public furore

which followed, led to the CoE, which

cost \$15.5 million. The report said

there was enough evidence for prose-

cution of both Paria Fuel operations

Kazim Ali Sr individually and Paria

and LMCS as employers for a number

this report, the OSH ACT requires that

any such proceedings before the In-

"However, at the time of writing

manager Colin Piper and LMCS'

of offences under the OSH Act.

other divers and Boodram was the

sole survivor in an ordeal, which

lasted five days.

claimed it did not know the divers

tenance work at Berth No6 in the

Pointe-a-Pierre harbour.

occurred while they were doing main-

Kazim Ali Jr, Fyzal Kurban, Yusuf

manslaughter".

The Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited in Trinidad should be charged for corporate manslaughter.

It's one of 52 recommendations from the 380-page report produced by Jerome Lynch, KC, chairman of the Commission of Enquiry (CoE) into the Paria pipeline tragedy which lead to deaths of four divers on February 25, 2022.

The report, which was submitted to President Christine Kangaloo on November 30, was laid in Parliament by Energy Minister Stuart Young last week.

Lynch said Paria breached its duty of care to Land and Marine Construction Services Ltd (LMCS). In turn, LMCS breached its duty of care to its workers.

Recommendation 40 said: "We recommend to the Director of Public Prosecutions that on the evidence before this tribunal, we find that there are sufficient grounds to conclude that Paria's negligence could be characterised as gross negligence and consequently criminal. We do not conclude that the same is true of LMCS as we are of the view that they were effectively prevented from pursuing a rescue by Paria."

Recommendation 41 asked that

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dustrial Court must be filed within two years of the incident becoming known - in other words 24th February 2024," it said.

Lynch's recommendation was that the company implement stringent measures to ensure all divers are of a certain accreditation.

"That compulsory regulation of all commercial diving operations be introduced with a regime of financial penalties and criminal sanctions for companies and individuals failing to adhere to them," the report recommended.

In his final press conference, Lynch said it remains factual that in an industry inherently dangerous in its operations, there are no compulsory standards in Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition, the report looked at inadequacies in the contract between LMCS and Paria and the fact that no provision was made for a Delta P event in the contract.

Furthermore, there was no certificate of environmental clearance for the area, which was crucial to regulatory compliance.

Lynch recommended that the new draft dive standards be made compulsory immediately.

In the report, it said, "All realistic

options should have been considered. Even if the camera revealed that which they sought, no plan to carry out a rescue had been put in place. No attempt was made to engage with the country's best experts in commercial diving which had arrived on site."

The report said Paria had a "common law duty of care given the inherently dangerous nature of the work".

"That non-delegable duty of care arises in addition to LMCS duty of care. Paria was in breach of their nondelegable duty of care," it said.

Despite Lynch's recommendation that Paria be investigated for corporate manslaughter, the crime of corporate manslaughter is not codified in T&T's legislation. However, such a charge is possible in common law.

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