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Thursday February 29 2024. Volume 42, Issue #09

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Guyana, Canada ink a Cdn\$120M loan agreement

GUYANA and Canada on Sunday finalised an agreement for a CAN\$120 million sovereign loan to further boost support for vulnerable groups. The agreement was signed by Guyana's Senior Minister within the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, Dr. Ashni Singh and Canada's Minister of International Development, Ahmed Hussen, at the Canadian High Commissioner's residence. Hussen, who is visiting this country for the first time, in his address, said the two countries are strengthening bilateral ties with the loan agreement that has been tailored to the needs of Guyana. He said: "Our goal is to support Guyana in generating beneficial social, economic and environmental outcomes for the good of all your citizens, particularly the most vulnerable."

Hussen emphasised the importance of cooperation between Guyana and Canada to achieve sustainable development goals, addressing issues such as gender-based violence, empowerment of people living with disabilities, and support for victims of human trafficking.

Above, Minister Ahmed Hussen of Canada and Minister Ashni Singh of Guyana show off the freshly-inked agreement.

Full story on Page 12



Catastrophic injury? Car accident? Slip & fall? Income disability benefits denied?

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Hundreds of humanitarian workers, and tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians, have been killed in the Israeli conflict

Some Disturbing Messages From Gaza; where do we stand?

By Donald Ramotar

On October 27, 2023, the Israeli regime launched a massive onslaught on the Palestine people living in the Gaza strip. This is a piece of land just about twenty-one miles long and an average of four miles wide. Packed in this tiny area are almost two and a half million civilians. The attack began from the air, using some of the most modern war planes in the world, US made F-16 jets.

Huge bombs are being used daily on the unarmed civilian population. In less than a month of the bombings it was estimated that more bombs fell on Gaza than fell on Hiroshima in Japan in 1945.

In less than four months almost thirty thousand civilians have been brutally murdered. Most of these, tragically, are children and women. This is deliberate since it is now beyond any reasonable doubt that this is a genocide. Killing children and women is just part of the plan to kill as much Palestinians as possible, prevent the young from becoming adults and killing as much women of childbearing age as they can.

The Israeli regime seem ready to kill all Palestinians or to force them to move out of Palestine completely.

This they claim is a response to the Palestinian resistance movement which in October 7, 2023 attacked military installations in Israel as they tried to break out from the open air prison that the Gaza was for some sixteen years before that date. This has been happening with the full support of the United States, the most powerful country in the world.

It is the US that is providing almost all the weapons, all the airplanes, all the bombs to Israel to kill the unfortunate Palestinian people. They give billions in economic assistance to Israel to allow them to pursue their diabolical operation.

The United States and its NATO allied states gave encouragement to Israel to attack Palestine. Recall during the early days of this conflict leaders from NATO countries were falling over each other to embrace the Israeli butcher, Benjamin Netanyahu. Pilgrimages were regularly made to West Jerusalem with pledges of support.

But of all those the US is most outstanding. We mentioned above the military and economic support that they give to Israel. That is only a part of their help to the fascist apartheid regime.

At the diplomatic level, the US has proven to be a bulwark for Israel. Every UN Security Council resolution that called for a cease fire was vetoed by the United States.

Even when the US talk about Israel excesses it continues to pour more weapons to kill Palestinians.

The most they have done is call for a "pause" to allow a little food to go into the Gaza so that those condemned to be killed could eat something before being liquidated.

They have defended all the killings by the Israelis even when medical personnel are deliberately targeted. In some cases, doctors have been shot by snipers in hospitals while operating on patients. Hundreds of these humanitarian workers have been deliberately slaughtered. Working in ambulances as first responders has become an extremely dangerous job.

The same can be said of the systematic murder of journalists. More than a hundred have been targeted and killed. Even those who are US citizens are not represented by the US ruling circles. Like the Israeli regime, the US would like to hide the real atrocities from the public.

That is why its media and those of its NATO allies hardly report or only minimally report on the horrific events of the human tragedy in the Gaza. Only recently we heard that CNN news and, I suspect all the mainstream media in the US must send their stories to Israel for approval before publication.

If you are wondering why is the Arab world is not doing more to defend innocent people in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the answer is the United States of America!

While the announced objectives of US Secretary of State Blinken was to try to get peace talks going, something that he has failed miserably in, the real reason is more likely to stop Egypt, Saudia Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey from taking any meaningful actions to stop Israel. They are ensuring that Israel murderous attacks must go unabated.

The US has to tied up the Arab world militarily and economically that

they have become almost complacent in the destruction of Palestine.

For organizations willing to take bold steps to give tangible assistance to the suffering people of Gaza, such as the Houthis and Hezbollah, are now facing daily airstrikes from the US and UK.

These developments raise many questions. At the center of which is what is really the nature of the US government? Why is the US, which had for decades created the impression of its society being a "humanitarian" state acting as it is, so callously?

The only possible answer is its determination to remain the most powerful country in the world. To do so they are willing to align themselves with the devil himself.

In light of this the steps taken by South Africa to stop the industrial type slaughter must be even more appreciated by peace loving and democratic forces the world over. The Republic of South Arica has become the conscience of humanity.

The United States and its allies are going to use every measure to stifle South Africa's socio-economic progress. They will work to bring about regime change because of the humanitarian and principled position on the Gaza. We must stand firm in solidarity with the people of that great land.

Where we stand on Gaza would define who we are as a country, as a region and as individuals.

Donald Ramotar is a former President of Guyana



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Canada maintains support for Guyana's territorial integrity

CANADA'S Minister of International Development, Ahmed Hussen, has called for a "peaceful, diplomatic" resolution to the ongoing Guyana-Venezuela border controversy.

Hussen, who is visiting Guyana for the first time, made those remarks during a ceremony for the signing of a sovereign loan agreement between the two countries at the official residence of the High Commission of Guyana, on Sun-

"The Canadian Government is concerned with the ongoing tensions between Guyana and Venezuela, we stand with the Guyanese people, we stand with the government and we call for the respect of international law," Hussen

In December 2023, during a period of high tensions, the Canadian Government had issued a statement signaling its support for Guyana after a consultative referendum on the country's Essequibo region took place in Venezuela.

"Please rest assured that Canada supports Guyana's territorial integrity and in any dispute we hope for a peaceful diplomatic settlement in this matter," Hussen added.

Just last week, Guyana's President, Dr. Irfaan Ali, during an interview with six-time Emmy Award-winning Television Producer, Arick Wierson, for Newsweek Magazine, in the United States of America (USA), maintained that the government's primary concern remains the safety and security of its citizens and its economic zone.

Dr Ali had said that the country continues to foster relationships with its regional and international partners.

"[We] are pursuing a path in which we have asked Venezuela to be [a] partner and upholder of international law and to respect the ICJ [International Court of Justice] and the outcome of the ICJ," he said, when asked about recent satellite images showing the expansion of Venezuelan troops near the country's

"Our primary concern is the safety and security of our citizens, our investment and everything that is our territorial space; our sovereign space and our exclusive economic zone and that is why we believe we are pursuing a path of



Canada's Minister of International Development, Ahmed Hussen

diplomacy," he added.

Guyana, Dr Ali said, has been working with both its regional and international partners to maintain a peaceful region. These include the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the United Kingdom, France, Brazil, and the United States of America (USA).

Through these partnerships, Guyana has been working to build a rotegrated approach and joint commitment to ensuring the region remains peaceful.

Last month, Guyana's Foreign Affairs Minister, Hugh Todd, led a delegation to Brazil where a meeting was held with Venezuelan officials.

President Ali had said that the continued conversations between the two

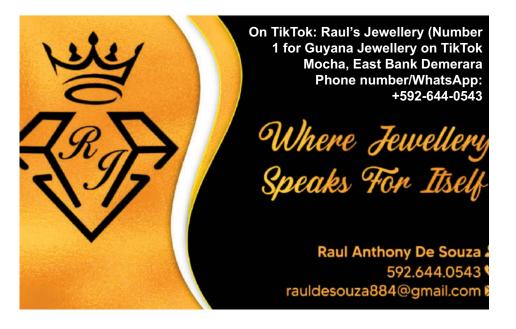
nations will set the stage for another UN Under-Secretary-General. scheduled meeting with himself and his Venezuelan counterpart, Maduro, in keeping with the Argyle Declaration, an 11-point agreement that outlines a pledge from both countries to refrain from escalating the decades-old border controversy among the two states.

In December, the two Heads of bust mechanism of co-operation and in- States met in St. Vincent & the Grenadines. The meeting was facilitated by the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ralph Gonsalves, and observed by Brazil, CARICOM, and a

This historic meeting culminated in what is now known as the "Argyle Declaration," an 11-point agreement that addresses matters consequential to the border controversy, including the fact that Guyana stands firm in its position that the substantial case is before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

According to Guyana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the country remains fully committed to the principles of the Argyle Declaration, in particular the maintenance of peace in Latin America and the Caribbean.







EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

Paying attention to the lyrics

We note with great interest the call by President Dr Irfaan Ali, in his new role as chairman of the Caribbean community (Caricom), to his regional colleagues to pay attention to the lyrics of songs being performed by Caribbean artistes.

Specifically, Ali criticised lyrics that promote violence on Sunday while addressing the opening of the 46th regular meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

"In this region, we owe it to the generation ahead of us to keep our culture alive and to invest in this culture," Ali told his audience. He explained that the 'distinctly different' culture distinguishes the region from others.

"We do not need lyrics that promote violence in this region," the Guyana leader declared.

"As leaders of this region, we have to take this situation very seriously and ensure that the lyrics of the region is the lyrics of Bob Marley, the lyrics of positivity and the lyrics of positive living and positive change. We must take this responsibility on today," Ali noted.

He insisted that Caribbean leaders had a duty to reposition the region's culture in the way it was conceived.

The Guyana President was immediately criticised for his comments, with critics saying that what Ali was calling for was censorship in a region that con-

They claim that the leader was trying to censor artistes from singing freely about the issues they experience at home and across the region.

But we believe this was not Ali's point at all. Instead, we think he was on the right path in asking his Caribbean colleagues to address this issue.

Violence in society is a problem across the region. Countries are grappling with historic crime rates, and gun violence seems to be the order the day in most countries.

There is no question that social behaviour is often informed by popular culture. In Trinidad, for example, a brand of musicians known as "Trinibad" have been pushing violent lyrics on their followers, to the extent where at least one such singer has been banned from performing in another Caribbean country, while at least three purveyors of the genre have been prosecuted for their involvement in crime locally.

Most recently, on February 2, police charged singer Kashif Sankar, also known as "Kman 6ixx," with possession of ammunition, as well as professing to being a gang member, both offenses under the country's Anti-Gang Act 4,

Sankar was due to perform in St. Kitts and Nevis on March 2. Following his arrest, local authorities announced that they were banning the artist from stitutionally supports the right to free performing in the country, saying that

his music could pose security risks to the country.

"The security assessment identified within the artist's work explicit endorsements of violence; promotion of criminal activities; and a consistent glorification of gang life," St. Kitts and Nevis police stated via Facebook.

In April 2023, Trinidad and Tobago authorities arrested singer Prince Swanny for alleged gang links. His arrest forced him to abandon a concert in Dominica.

And, in November 2022, Trinidad and Tobago police charged singer Shakeem Griffith, also known as "Zoom Boss," with murder. He also faces weapons-related charges.

Experts believe that musical genres that glorify gang culture play a fundamental role in the increase, or at least the persistence, of violence in Trinidad and Tobago. However, cultural factors are not the only reason for violence in the country.

"[Trinibad] has contributed heavily to crime and violence because it glorifies revenge and murder," Raymond Ockille, founder of the NGO REACH 'N Inc, told the online magazine InSight Crime, adding that songs normalize the use of violence to resolve disputes, meaning conflicts that could be solved peacefully involve guns instead.

The website noted that studies in behavioral science have found that prolonged exposure to violent subjects may desensitize people to aggression, which may help normalize such behaviors.

So President Ali is on to something here. And he's the first leader to use an international platform such as the Caricom Summit to bring attention to this

The Guyanese leader said that some might feel the matter represented a 'soft issue.' However, he believed that the issue was fundamental.

We agree.

At a time when the region is fighting a crime epidemic, we believe that any action taken by governments to give them a leg up is legitimate.

We are not suggesting that censorship should be the order of the day, but governments have resources to promote more powerful song lyrics by, for example, staging talent shows that financially reward positive lyrics in songs, and by finding other creative ways to push the narrative that all citizens, including artistes, should be socially responsible in their messages.

We applaud President Ali for taking up this fight, and we trust that the other Caribbean leaders take up his challenge to them to find a way to promote more positive cultural expression in their home states.

The last thing the Caribbean needs are songs that glorify violence.

President Ali is a realist and pragmatist

Dear Editor,

THERE appears to be an observable coordinated shift in focus from the usual constant attacks on the Vice President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, to now President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali.

Of recent, some of the most outlandish, shallow, baseless, and ludicrous criticisms of the President surfaced in certain sections of the media.

In particular, an anonymous columnist/column took issue with President Ali's address at the opening of the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Governments CARICOM. The author expressed his/her disappointment because he/she was expecting the usual diplomatic

styled rhetoric. The mystery author then characterised the President's delivery as "theatrics".

Contrary to the anonymous author's opinionated column, President Ali is an authentic, dynamic, and highly respected leader regionally and globally.

The anonymous author is perhaps too accustomed to the usual fluffs and rosy speeches by most leaders. In fact, the recently concluded energy conference had a few such like "fluffs and rosy" styled speeches, that were not necessarily grounded in reality and pragmatism, and actionable.

To put it nicely, the academic types of speeches. This is not President Ali's style. President Ali is action oriented, results driven, and more importantly he is a realist and pragmatist. This is demonstrated in his consistent scholastic deliveries that are always robust and profoundly passionate; not theatrical.

The mystery author then went on to argue that the President outlined unrealistic targets to be achieved by 2030 and that he failed to set out the road man.

However, if the author had really paid attention, the President did set out the framework through which those targets can be achieved. More so, he outlined actionable items for immediate implementation.

Furthermore, that was not the forum to lay out a road map. The

forum for that is the working sessions that followed.

It is quite unfortunate that the many critics of government do not even have the capacity to perform a proper critique, a critique that is robust, constructive, and meaningful, together with an alternative menu of solutions, and the pros and cons of

As a society, there is a great need to improve the quality of discussions, criticisms and debate we advance on issues of national importance.

Yours respectfully, Joel Bhagwandin



Publisher: Bhaskar Sharma Equalitygroup@rogers.com **Editor: Nishad Sharma**

Annual subscription: \$104.00 (including postage)

Funded by the Government of Canada

Canadä

Equality News is the largest weekly newspaper serving Guyanese and Caribbean readers in Canada.

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Equality News International is published by Equality News Incorporated. 104-1920 Ellesmere Road - MB# 234, Toronto, Ontario M1H 3G1

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Rules on single-use and take-away items about to change in Toronto

By Jenna Smith

Toronto's take-out experience is set to undergo changes with the implementation of the city's new bylaw on single-use and takeaway items later this week. Effective from Friday, businesses are legally required to inquire whether customers desire single-use "accessory food items," including utensils, straws, napkins, and paper shopping bags, before providing them.

The bylaw, sanctioned by Toronto City Council on December 15, is a proactive measure aimed at mitigating the environmental impact of single-use plastic waste associated with take-out services. In addition to seeking customer preferences on disposable items, businesses must also accommodate reusable shopping bags and cups if customers opt for them.

Although the initial version of the bylaw encompassed single-use plastic cups, this requirement was subsequently revised. The city emphasizes its commitment to supporting retail establishments in adhering to the bylaw through targeted educational efforts, outreach activities, and collaboration with Business



Businesses failing to comply with the new regulations could face hefty fines

Improvement Areas (BIAs) and other community partners, as mentioned on its website.

Businesses failing to comply with the new regulation could face fines ranging from \$500 to a maximum of \$100,000.

The city estimates a budget of \$450,000 to administer and enforce the program, with \$250,000 allocated for 2024 and \$100,000 for each subsequent year (2025 and 2026). Any additional expenditure will be subject to consideration as part of the 2025 budget.



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Sensitivity to geopolitics may be a factor in updating oil reserves



Joel Bhagwandin

The OGGN network and GHK Lall et.al. are advocating for the Government of Guyana (GoG) to impress upon ExxonMobil Guyana (XOM Guyana) to update the proven reserves based on the number discoveries to date. The current official estimates are an estimated 11 billion barrels.

In one of their press conferences, XOM Guyana had emphasized that they are more focused on the development of projects that will move into production over the medium term. As such, the upward revision of the estimates is not a priority at this stage.

The OGGN "experts" believe, however, that XOM Guyana is not being truthful, such that, according to their expertise, that these estimates can be calculated in two days provided that the data is readily available.

Notwithstanding, while (admittedly) this author has no expertise in petroleum engineering and economics, one can reasonably rely on the established literature on the subject for guidance. Commonsensically though (before getting into the literature and technicalities), a classroom exercise wherein a student learns the calculation of these estimates, is very different from the real-world scenario. Indeed, the actual calculation may be quite simple and could be done, aided by technology, in a matter of hours; but the gathering of the data to do so may well take months. Thus, this simplistic comparison is inappropriate especially since the "OGGN experts" failed to educate Guyanese in terms of what it actually takes to perform an appraisal in a real-world scenario versus a classroom modelling exercise.

So, for example, although it is often said that commercial crude oil was discovered in May 2015. Strictly speaking, it is more likely that the "actual discovery" was made months prior to the official "announcement" in May 2015. In this regard, it is a useful reminder that exploration activities pursuant to the Stabroek block's 1999 Agreement, actually commenced fifteen years prior to the "announcement" of a commercial discovery in 2015.

Similarly, CGX Guyana had an-

nounced the discovery of hydrocarbons at the Wei-well in the Corentyne block in November 2023. However, the company is still appraising that discovery for commercial viability, while bearing in mind that exploration was ongoing years prior to that announcement.

The same is true in the case of Suriname. The first offshore oil discovery was announced in September 2022, but reportedly, post-drill evaluation is ongoing to firm up the potential of the discovered resource. Of note, there has been no investment decisions in Suriname to date.

According to the upstream field appraisal literature, once an exploration well has found hydrocarbons, "considerable effort will still be required to accurately assess the potential of the discovery and the role of appraisal is to provide cost-effective information that will be used for subsequent decisions (development). During appraisal, more wells are drilled to collect information and samples from the reservoir and other seismic survey might also be required in order to better delineate the reservoir". This phase of the appraisal process aims

- Reduce the range of uncertainty in the volumes of hydrocarbons in place
- Define the size and configuration of the reservoir
- Collect data for the prediction of the performance of the reservoir during the forecasted production life

Additionally, reservoir engineers work out development scenarios along with precise recommendations for the number and positioning of the wells, the drilling schedule, the production profile, etc. Activities of the appraisal phase include:

- Planning and execution of a data acquisition programme (seismic)
- Reprocessing existing seismic data
 - Drilling of appraisal wells
- Evaluation of the results obtained from the seismic drilling activities
- Use of the data to update reservoir models
- Carry out initial development planning and an environmental impact

assessment (EIA) study

Evidently, according to the literature, the OGGN experts ignored all of the foregoing considerations. Simply put, the literature has established that in order to update the revised estimated proven reserves based on the total number of discoveries to date; requires additional drilling (post discovery) coupled with a range of other activities as described above. Obviously, these activities to perform the appraisal would undoubtedly take months.

Nonetheless, aside from the aforementioned technicalities involved in the appraisal of hydrocarbon discoveries to determine—with precision their commercial viability and volumes; such an update and announcement thereof, should be sensitive to the geopolitical dynamics (the Guyana/Venezuela border issue).

In previous writings, this author had established that there has been a consistent pattern of behavior on the part of Venezuela in relation to its claims over Essequibo and President Maduro's aggravation over the last eight years, suggesting that it is largely motivated by the discovery of crude oil offshore Guyana.

Towards this end, when the announcement was made in May 2015 that oil was discovered in commercial quantities, almost immediately thereafter, the Venezuelan Presdient, Nicolas Maduro in May 2015 issued a decree (No. 1787)

laying an illegal claim to almost all of Guyana's maritime zone.

In July 2015, Venezuela issued a second decree (No.1859) reiterating its claim. By September that same year, there was an escalation of Venezuelan military activity in eastern Venezuela near the border with Guyana.

Shortly after the "No-Confidence Motion" (NCM) was passed in the National Assembly in December 2018, the Foreign Affairs Minister at that time had reported that the Venezuelans had attempted to land a helicopter on Exxon-Mobil's ship. More recently last year, when the bid-round for new oil blocks offshore concluded, Venezuela complained of Guyana's intention to put up for bid certain oil blocks in the waters adjacent to its coast and concluded with a threat to "apply all the necessary measures" to prevent operations licensed by Guyana in these waters, which Venezuela claims as its own. Therefore, it is in this premises that XOM Guyana and the GoG should tactically delay the upward revision of the proven reserves. At least until after the elections in Venezuela, and as Guyana and Venezuela seeks to rebuild neighborly relations through the spirit of the Argyle Declaration. Finally, as it relates to the appraisal process, it is not just the calculation which, with software tools, can be done within a matter of hours; but the entire process as described herein that could take months to complete.

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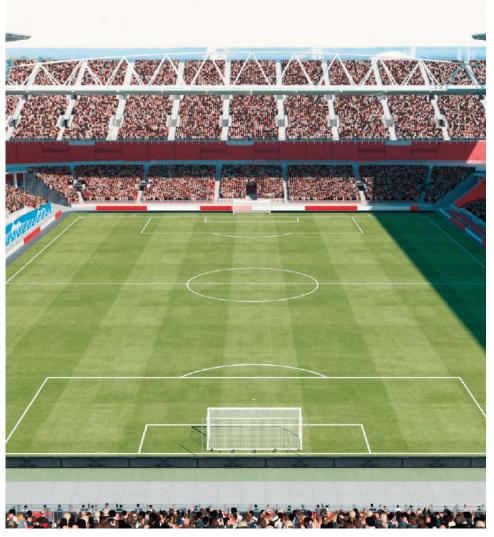
Cost of hosting FIFA World Cup in Toronto spikes to nearly \$380M

By Aziz Abdool

The anticipated cost of hosting one of the world's major sports tournaments in Toronto has surged by almost \$80 million more than initially projected, as revealed by a recent city report. Toronto and Vancouver are selected as Canadian host cities for the 2026 World Cup, which spans the United States and Mexico as well. Despite previous assurances of a substantial economic boost resulting from the matches, cost estimates continue to climb.

In 2018, when Toronto first proposed hosting the games, the city's report estimated a cost ranging from \$30 million to \$45 million. However, by 2022, these projections had escalated to approximately \$300 million. The latest report, released on Monday, now puts the financial burden on taxpayers at around \$380 million. This increase is attributed to Toronto being granted a sixth match, instead of the initially predicted five, along with factors like vendor quotes, safety and security requirements, and "inflationary uncertainty."

The city still anticipates a positive economic impact, with an estimated GDP boost of approximately \$392 million for Toronto, slightly lower than previous projections, and an additional \$456 million for Ontario. Tax revenues are expected to total nearly \$119 million for Toronto and approximately \$139 million for the province. However, these



BMO Field is one of the sites for World Cup Games in Toronto in 2026

figures are based on hosting five games, and the report acknowledges that economic activity may change.

In response to FIFA's announcement of Toronto being awarded six matches, city staff have been reassessing planning assumptions, cost estimates, and potential revenue opportunities. The City Budget Chief, Shelley Carroll, defended the cost escalation, emphasizing the manageable nature of the rise and the expected economic re-

turns in terms of job and economic growth.

Mayor Olivia Chow acknowledged the rise in cost projections, attributing much of it to inflation. She expressed confidence in finding ways to offset costs and emphasized the importance of transparency and realism. Chow mentioned the possibility of increasing the hotel tax, which rose by two percent in the city's 2023 budget.

Some city officials, like Coun. Josh Matlow, voiced concerns about the deal, calling for other levels of government to cover costs falling on Toronto. Matlow argued that the current agreement is unfavorable to taxpayers, and if it continues, the economic impact for Toronto may not justify the costs incurred.

Ontario has committed to providing up to \$97 million for Toronto's FIFA World Cup hosting duties, contingent on matching contributions from the federal government. Matlow stressed the need for greater support from higher levels of government.

Coun. Mike Colle, while acknowledging the increased cost, sees the investment as positive for Toronto. He believes that the matches will be an incredible long-term investment, fostering job growth and putting the city on the world map. The report is set to be discussed by the city's executive committee and later considered by city council on March 20.

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'Bright future' for Guyana-Suriname relations

GUYANA and Suriname's relationship is anticipated to grow stronger, as Suriname's President, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, has underscored that there is great potential for co-operation in many areas between the two nations.

With Guyana and Suriname both being leaders in biodiversity and other areas, President Santokhi, during the launch of the Suriname-Guyana Chamber of Commerce at the Pegasus Corporate Centre on Saturday, called for the level of interest and investments to be taken to the next level.

The Suriname-Guyana Chamber of Commerce Inc., in particular, is a notable representation of the bilateral business relationships between Suriname and Guyana.

Its goals are to promote investment opportunities, foster strong partnerships, and facilitate collaboration in order to strengthen investment relationships, drive economic growth, and advance the prosperity of Suriname and Guyana.

During his feature address, the Surinamese President said: "There are great opportunities for intensive and increased collaborations between the business communities in Suriname and Guyana."

Speaking more on the Chamber of Commerce itself, which was long overdue, the Surinamese Head of State related that it is a platform that will aid in facilitating the ease of doing business between the two neighbours.

Although enhancing trade and connectivity between Guyana and Suriname, through the construction of a bridge across the Corentyne River, has been an idea since 2010, plans to actualise this vision are far ahead today than ever before.

According to President Santokhi, he is excited to "set the first building block" for the Corentyne River Bridge with President, Dr Irfaan Ali, who he referred to as his "brother."

Notably, during Guyana's Ministry of Public Works' 2023 end-of-year press conference, Minister of Public Works, Juan Edghill, said that the evaluation of bids for the construction of the Corentyne River Bridge has been completed.

A joint executive decision on modality and financing is being examined by the governments of Guyana and Suriname, which include the respective foreign affairs, finance, and public works ministers.

"Once that evaluation report would have been agreed, and the way forward declared by that joint team, the two presidents would then announce the start of the work on the Corentyne River Bridge," Minister Edghill had re-



Guyana President Irfaan Ali with Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi

lated.

The Corentyne River Bridge will facilitate the movement of goods to Suriname, allowing farmers to transport their produce with ease.

The proposed bridge will stretch 1,100 metres, with 22 spans each measuring 50 metres in length.

It will be constructed through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement, and according to the Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain model (DBFOM). Under this model, the successful contractor or joint venture will be responsible for the final design, construction, financing, operation, and maintenance of the bridge.

While underscoring how deep the relationship between Guyana and Suriname transcends, Guyana's Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance and Public Service, Dr. Ashni Singh, during the launch, while delivering remarks, lauded the growing partnerships being explored.

"The reality is that businesspeople, entrepreneurs on both sides of the Corentyne River have been pursuing business opportunities where they exist and converting them into real opportunities to do business. But perhaps it is timing now not to leave this to grow organically. Perhaps it is timely now, given where over two countries are economically...," he said, adding that the time is ripe to now put in place a formal mechanism like the chamber to facilitate expanded and diverse business and commercial opportunities.

The Minister then went on to say: "But we want, equally, this close bilat-

eral relationship that we enjoy from the official level is close geographic proximity that we enjoy that is so evident and obvious, we want those relationships to be translated into real and demonstrated business and commercial relations, and this chamber serves for perpetually that very important objective."



Guyana pledges US\$2M from carboncredit earnings to CARICOM

RECOGNISING that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is extremely vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, Chairman of CARICOM, President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali has announced a US\$2 million financing towards the Regional Adaption Fund.

Speaking at an event to mark the opening of the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM Sunday afternoon, President Ali reiterated the country's commitment to the Bridgetown Initiative.

The Bridgetown Initiative, piloted by Barbados' Prime Minister Mia Amort Motley calls for the overhaul of the current global financial system led by the IMF and the World Bank to enable mobilisation of more private financing for the climate transition and improved resilience in vulnerable countries.

According to the Head of State, Guyana strongly supports the initiative and will be taking responsibility on its own to invest in the region's climate resilience.

"To this end, I want to say that to support these adaption efforts of the region, Guyana is committing US\$2 million out of our revenue earned from the sale of our Carbon Credits as part of our



Guyana is getting carbon credits for protecting the rainforest

LCDS (Low Carbon Development Strategy) to the regional adaptation fund," the Guyanese President announced at the National Culture Centre (NCC).

Additionally, oil giant ExxonMobil's Global Trust Fund has committed another US\$3 million for sustainable projects, to build resilience and improve productivity within the region, including food security.

"With this support, the Regional

Adaptation Fund will have an investment of US\$5 million to start with," the CARICOM chair further disclosed.

The CARICOM Chair and Canada's Minister of International Development Ahmed Hussen have also agreed on the importance of ramping up access to climate financing at scale and using an efficient mechanism to accomplish the mission.

"And in saying this, I reminded the

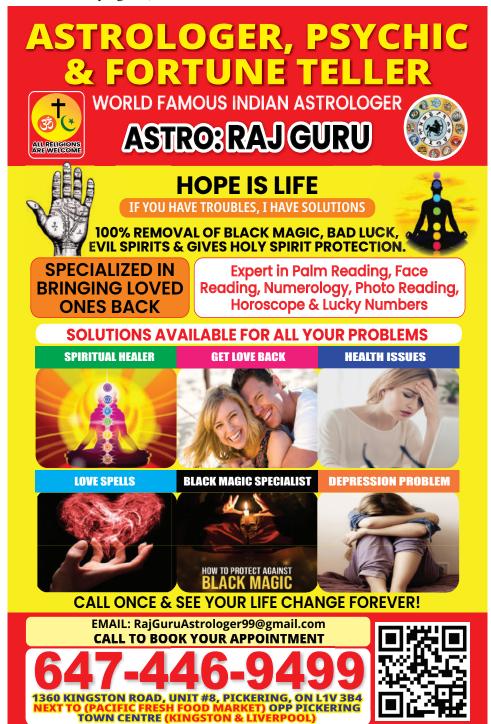
minister that there is a substantial commitment that was made to heads at the Canada-CARICOM summit and we are now looking in the coming weeks to activate that commitment, to have those funds disbursed and ready to support the region's adaption and resilience strategy," he further stated.

The Carbon Credit Fund, the Guyanese President referred to, is the US\$750 million monumental agreement with global energy giant – Hess Corporation – which will see the company purchasing 2.5 million carbon credits annually.

In 2023, Guyana received its first payment of US\$150 million with 15 per cent (US\$22.5M) disbursed to 242 Amerindian, riverine, and remote communities across Guyana, leading to the implementation of 811 economic and social projects.

Climate resilience is one of several pressing issues that will be discussed at the conference that will be hosted at the Guyana Marriott Hotel, in Kingston, Georgetown. Other critical areas include energy security, food security, regional transportation, regional security, including the situation in Haiti, and border issues, among others. (DPI)







Guyana, Canada sign agreement for CAN\$120M sovereign loan

Guyana, Canada sign agreement for Cdn\$120M sovereign loan

GUYANA and Canada on Sunday finalised an agreement for a CAN\$120 million sovereign loan to further boost support for vulnerable groups.

The agreement was signed by Guyana's Senior Minister within the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, Dr. Ashni Singh and Canada's Minister of International Development, Ahmed Hussen, at the Canadian High Commissioner's residence.

Hussen, who is visiting this country for the first time, in his address, said the two countries are strengthening bilateral ties with the loan agreement that has been tailored to the needs of Guyana.

He said: "Our goal is to support Guyana in generating beneficial social, economic and environmental outcomes for the good of all your citizens, particularly the most vulnerable."

Hussen emphasised the importance of cooperation between Guyana and Canada to achieve sustainable development goals, addressing issues such as gender-based violence, empowerment of people living with disabilities, and support for victims of human trafficking.

"This loan is tailored towards the needs of Guyana. It will focus on our mutual priorities and interests. It's about protecting the most vulnerable populations. It's about making sure that as we grow our economies, we promote gender and power and we fight gender-based violence.

"It's about empowering people with disabilities and enabling them to

participate fully in the economy and the society. It is about supporting victims of human trafficking. It's about strengthening the pension systems," the Canadian official added.

Guyana is the first country in the Western Hemisphere to benefit from the sovereign loan programme which aims to generate beneficial social, economic and environmental outcomes by providing concessional financial support to eligible recipients.

The programme provides tailored support to the needs and priorities of eligible states, as it relates to poverty reduction and peace and security.

"The relationship between Canada and Guyana is going through now a new phase of affairs, rooted and grounded in economic and commercial ties that did not exist previously near anything near to the scale that we're seeing now," Dr. Singh said during his remarks

He added that as the country undergoes rapid development, the government remains 'ever mindful' of the need to provide improved support to vulnerable groups.

"We have retained at the highest level of our priorities, the objective of ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society experience the physical and tangible [benefits], including and in particular in relation to the delivery of social services," the senior minister said.

Dr. Singh added that the sovereign loan programme which is intermediated through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), makes a substantial contribution to efforts already being made by the government through its Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.

The loan programme also features a climate-resilient debt clause to access funds in the event that Guyana experiences a climate incident, a natural disaster, a pandemic or an epidemic.

This frees up critical resources required to respond immediately to a crisis

In brief remarks, Canada's High Commissioner to Guyana, Mark Berman said the loan agreement is merely just the beginning of continued partnerships between the countries.

Describing Sunday's signing ceremony as 'symbolic', Berman said the loan agreement highlights Canada's support to Guyana's efforts in strengthening social services for its citizens, in particular the most vulnerable.GUYANA and Canada on Sunday finalised an agreement for a CAN\$120 million sovereign loan to further boost support for vulnerable groups.

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Ali to Caribbean nationals: 'Pressure leaders to address trade barriers'

ALTHOUGH Caribbean leaders have been pursuing massive investments and programmes to achieve regional food-security goals, trade barriers among some Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states remain a hindrance to the movement of produce across the region.

In addressing this issue head on, Chairman of CARICOM and Guyana's President, Dr. Irfaan Ali on Sunday sounded a call for the people of the Caribbean to hold their respective leaders accountable and address the existing barriers.

"We are continuing work to address the removal of trade barriers within member states and the people of CARICOM must put pressure on the leaders of CARICOM to remove the trade barriers. It is of no use and purpose for this region," Dr. Ali said, during his address at the opening ceremony of the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government held at the National Cultural Centre, on Sunday.

Trade barriers include any regulation or policy that restricts trade, especially tariffs, quotas and licences, among other things.

The importance of addressing this issue is amplified by ongoing ef-



Caribbean leaders at the Georgetown summit of CARICOM, currently under way in Guyana

forts of the Caribbean leaders to slash the region's exorbitant food-import bill by 25 per cent in the next year.

Guyana has been leading the charge for food security, with President Ali holding the responsibility for food security and agriculture, while the country's Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha is the chairperson for CARICOM's Ministerial Task Force on Agriculture.

Guyana has been steadily increasing its food production and expanding the cultivation of new crops such as corn, soybeans, and wheat to meet the demands of not only its do-

mestic market, but also the entire region.

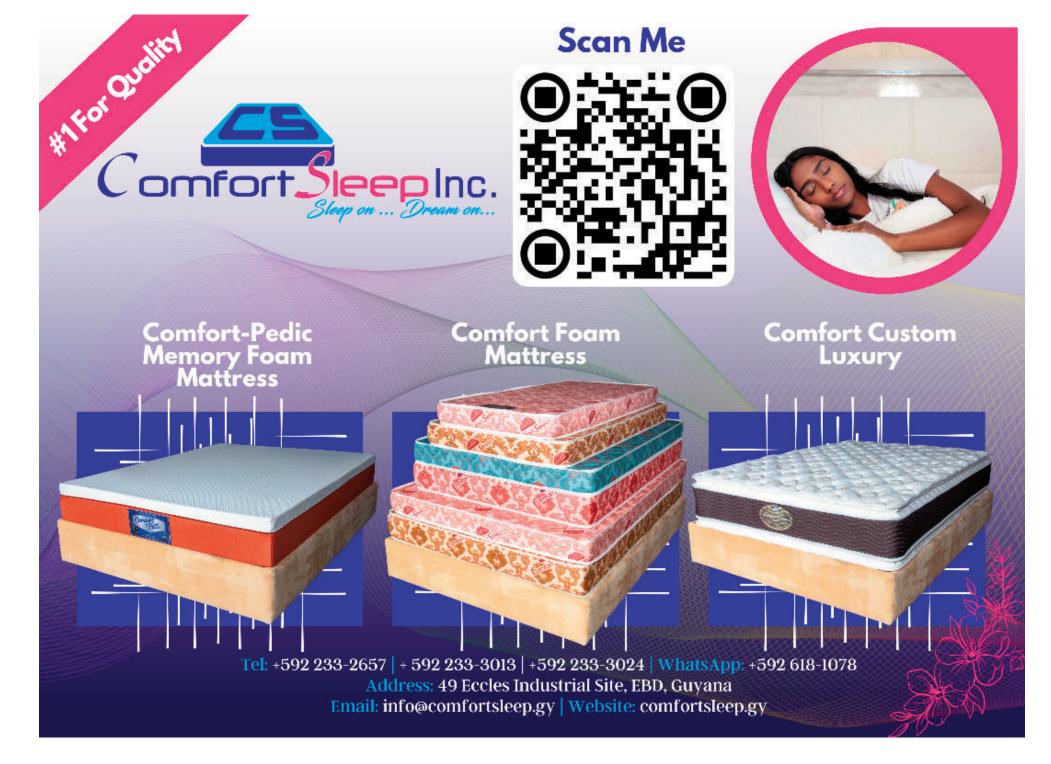
"People of this region, call upon your leaders to remove these barriers. Let them hear you loudly, these barriers need to go and must go urgently," President Ali stressed.

Although these barriers exist, food trade among CARICOM nations have increased, with ongoing partnerships such as the black belly sheep project in Guyana, the expansion of shade houses in Barbados, and the further expansion of rice cultivation in Trinidad and Tobago, all aimed at assisting the region to meet its '25 by 25'

target.

While heavy focus is being placed on increasing the region's food production, President Ali highlighted the need for a new target to be set within the realms of food security: this is eliminating the region's malnutrition and hunger rates by 2030.

"We are proposing to bring together the human assets that this region nurtured into international pain to bring their goodwill together as ambassadors to mobilise international financing of support, so that we can end hunger and malnutrition in this region," Dr. Ali said.



US support for Guyana's sovereignty 'unwavering,' says US Envoy

AMBASSADOR Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US envoy to the United Nations, has reaffirmed the United States' unwavering support for Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The ambassador reiterated her nation's position during a press conference at the US Embassy, on Monday.

Addressing concerns raised because of recent satellite imagery showing Venezuelan military assets moving along the border, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield emphasised that while Venezuela has made threats, there has been no military action.

Local journalists questioned the ambassador on if she believes that there is a "defence deficiency" in the region to deal with potential threats from Venezuela.

"The issue, whether there's a deficiency in defence, I think is really hypothetical. There is, as far as we've all seen, there have been no actions taken on the military side by Venezuela," Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield said.

Despite the lack of military action, the United States remains vigilant and committed to supporting Guyana.

The ambassador reiterated the US' position that any changes to the long-standing border agreement, established in 1899, would need to go through legitimate international processes.



Flashback: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and Guyana's Dr Ali

"We have been clear in our support for Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity as it's laid out in the agreement in 1899, and that no changes in that agreement can be made without it being done by competent entities, such as the ICJ [International Court of Justice]," Thomas-Greenfield asserted.

The ongoing controversy recently escalated with Venezuela's increased

military presence near the border. The ICJ has been tasked with resolving the issue, a process the United States deems the appropriate path forward.

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield underscored the United States' commitment to regional stability and international law, echoing the sentiments of the Guyana government and CARICOM members.

Recently, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said that the United States has been "monitoring closely," the Venezuelan military movements along Guyana's border.

He, however, noted that any military movements by Venezuela were considered minor.

"Our assessment is that whatever military movements there have been by Venezuela have been of a very — of a small nature and size and scale and scope. We see no indication that there's about to be hostilities, or that the Venezuelan military would be capable of conducting any significant military activities there," Kirby said, underscoring the US' stance on urging a peaceful resolution to the situation.

Venezuela, last year, had increased claims to two-thirds of Guyana's Essequibo region.

This area is known for its wealth in oil, timber, and other natural resources, drawing attention and contention from both sides.

In response to Venezuela's actions, Guyana has been bolstering its defence and diplomatic efforts with the help of international partners, including the United States, aiming to counter security threats while promoting regional stability.



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Guyana First Lady vows to work to ensure end to 'period poverty'

FIRST Lady Arya Ali's mission to ensure that every girl has access to the basic necessities for menstrual hygiene has been a successful initiative, and it has been a testament to the power of collective action. However, Ali stated on Monday that she still has a lot of work ahead of her since she wants to broaden its reach to include vulnerable women.

She made this disclosure while giving an update on her brainchild, the Menstrual Hygiene Initiative, at the Umana Yana in Kingston, Georgetown.

She said that millions of girls in the Caribbean lack access to the resources and facilities needed to control their menstrual cycle in a way that respects their privacy, dignity, and safety, and that some of them "don't know" what menstruation is or how to handle it in a hygienic way.

The First Lady reminded that although menstruation is a natural and normal biological function and a sign of good health, stigma intensifies some cultural views about menstruation, which leads to girls being excluded, undermining their social status and confidence.

She pointed out that this is one of the main barriers preventing girls from attending school and performing well, along with the restricted availability of period facilities and sanitary menstruation products in schools.

She cited a study done in 2021 by the Ministry of Education, which revealed that one-third of female students in secondary schools in Guyana find it difficult to access or purchase sanitary pads, and over half of them require assistance in order to obtain them.

She related that the menstrual cycle accounts for between one to six days of school absence for 84 per cent of female students annually. She continued by saying that this supports the mounting data regarding the negative effects of period-related difficulties on school attendance.

First Lady Ali emphasised that a girl who is empowered to manage her menstruation safely, hygienically and with confidence and without shame, is more likely to stay in school and do well.

Moreover, she stressed: "Investing in good menstrual hygiene management to enable women and girls to reach their full potential is a measure to build the nation's human capital over time."

In an effort to eradicate period poverty in Guyana, the Office of the First Lady started the Menstrual Hygiene Initiative in September 2021.

Every year, over 32,000 schoolgirls receive free sanitary pads thanks to this initiative. The programme is designed to guarantee that all girls have access to menstrual hygiene products, irrespective

of their age, socioeconomic background, or place of residence.

First Lady Ali said that because of the assistance of kind contributors, this "life-changing" project has grown, and in 2022, the government allocated \$50 million for the first time in the history of the nation, to be used to provide menstrual products to schoolgirls.

She shared that the goal is to empower girls, dismantle obstacles, and build a more inclusive society in addition to offering a physical product. After achieving this milestone, she revealed that the focus has now switched to giving menstrual hygiene supplies to women, starting with those who are re-



First Lady Arya Ali

ally vulnerable, such as those receiving care in institutions.

Guyana, she highlighted, is well on its way to becoming the first nation in

the Caribbean and Latin America to give menstrual hygiene products to its women and girls at no cost.

She declared: "This would be a remarkable achievement for our country and by extension our region."

Further, she said this would establish Guyana as a leader in gender equality on a worldwide scale.

First Lady Ali stated that she is dedicated to collaborating with a range of stakeholders, including governmental agencies, non-profits, and the commercial sector, in order to realise the initiative's objectives. She noted that collaboration can have a significant impact.

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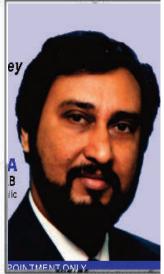
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Omai large gold find will boost Guyanese economy - President Ali

Before Canadian mining company, Omai Gold Mines announced its updated Mineral Resource Estimate (MRE) of 2 million ounces of gold – the company met with President Irfaan Ali and disclosed that they are on track to return to their 'glory days'.

During the Private Sector Commission (PSC) Annual Dinner, the headof-state told the attendees, "There are some tremendous opportunities coming in mining. Today (February 5) I had a meeting with OMAI for example, they are coming back on stream in the type of numbers that you will hear announce soon."

President Ali stated that according to what the company related to him, Omai's new operation would be similar to their previous one in Guyana which started in the 1990's. The mining company had wrapped up its operations here after 24 years. In its prime, Omai produced over 3.7 million ounces of gold.

In 2020, Omai returned to Guyana and has been exploring their old gold mines located in Region Seven (Cuyuni-Mazaruni). By 2026, Omai and three other Canadian mining companies are expected to start gold production in their respective mining projects in Guyana. The company had said that their work completed thus far, has put them on track to become the next largescale gold mine to open in Guyana.

"It's an 18 year mine so the type of logistics for transport, logistics and the spin off for the rest of the economy would be enormous," President Ali told the private sector members.

Omai holds a 100% interest in the gold project, which encompasses two gold deposits: the shear-hosted Wenot Deposit and the adjacent intrusivehosted Gilt Creek Deposit. The latest assessment incorporates expansions to the Wenot and incorporates the previously disclosed Gilt Creek deposit, solidifying the project's potential for substantial gold production.

The combined MRE from the Wenot and Gilt Creek deposits now stands at 2.0 million ounces of gold grading at 2.15 g/t gold in the indicated category and 2.3 million ounces of gold grading at 2.26 g/t in the inferred cate-



Wenot gold deposit in Guyana (Omai Gold Mines photo)

gory. This represents a notable increase compared to the previous resource estimate conducted in October 2022, with indicated ounces seeing a 4% uptick and inferred ounces experiencing a substantial 28% surge.

Of particular significance is the expansion of the Wenot deposit, with indicated resources rising by 10% to 834,000 ounces and inferred resources skyrocketing by 45% to 1.6 million ounces, attributed to heightened gold grades in both categories. Notably, approximately 39% of the Wenot resource mate, highlighting the noteworthy rise ing the potential to rival its historical now lies west of the historical pit, pre- in gold grades.

senting an area ripe for initial mining operations, according to Omai Gold Mines.

Situated 500 meters north of the Wenot deposit and beneath the past-producing Fennel pit, the Gilt Creek deposit boasts 1.2 million ounces of gold in the indicated category and 665,000 ounces of gold inferred.

Elaine Ellingham, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Omai Gold Mines, expressed satisfaction with the substantial increase in the mineral resource estibrownfields project, that Omai is prov-

Ellingham highlighted that the project's contained ounces now surpass the total gold production from the former mine, achieved at comparable grades. "The Omai Gold Mine produced approximately 3.8 million ounces at an average grade of 1.5 g/t Au between 1993 and 2005, when the gold price was less than US\$400/oz.," the CEO noted, adding, "We believe that with the current Mineral Resource Estimate combined with the many benefits of a

Guyana to attend Commonwealth meeting in Zanzibar

THE United Republic of Tanzania is all set to welcome ministers and attorneys-general, including from Guyana, to the Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting, which will open in Zanzibar on March 4, 2024.

According to a press release, the meeting of law ministers, held every two years, is a leading platform for collaboration among the 56 Commonwealth countries, which share a common legal tradition.

The theme of this year's meeting is, "Technology and Innovation: How digitalisation paves the way for the development of people-centred access to iustice."

Under this theme, law ministers will examine ethical ways to use technology to make legal services and information more accessible to people, while exploring responses to threats, such as cybercrime.

Speaking about the meeting, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland KC, commended the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania for making exceptional arrangements for the meet-

Secretary-General Scotland drew attention to the pressing need to close the access to justice gap, which currently affects two-thirds of the world's population.

She highlighted the detrimental consequences of the lack of people's access to justice on development, inclusive growth, and conflict prevention.

The Secretary-General continued: "At a time when increasing conflicts are undermining respect for international law, ensuring equal access to justice remains a fundamental precon-

dition for building peace and security for all."

She said: "Our priority is to help all our member states deliver equal access to justice for all. That requires legal systems which can meet the needs of all.

"The upcoming Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting offers us a vital platform to discuss the growing threats to the rule of law and find innovative ways to deliver the changes which will guarantee justice for every one of the 2.5 billion people living in our Commonwealth."

Strengthening of CARICOM on agenda of heads at Summit

THE strengthening of the CARI-COM Single Market and Economy (CSME) was the subject of frank discussion when regional leaders met on Monday, an indication that this integrated development strategy remains high on their agenda.

Leaders from all 15 CARICOM member states are currently in Georgetown, Guyana, for the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government.

On the first day of official business, the inter-governmental organisation's chairman and Guyana's President, Dr. Irfaan Ali, disclosed that interventions will be discussed to strengthen the sub-committee to ensure that work is being done.

"At this meeting we will have some mechanism through which the sub-committee and senior legal officers [can] step up and push forward the work of the CSME and this community," he said.

The CSME unit of the CARICOM Secretariat acts as an implementation office to support member states. It is considered to be the most viable platform to support the region's growth and development agenda.

At the opening ceremony held on Sunday at the National Cultural Centre, President Ali had disclosed that the subcommittee has been behind in its implementation of initiatives.

"We have 133 pages of decisions under the CSME that are awaiting implementation...we must correct this, we have a responsibility to correct this," he had said

The body overseas the implementation of provisions for the removal of trade and professional restrictions.

According to CARICOM, these provisions facilitate the right to establish businesses, to provide regional services, the free movement of capital and the coordination of economic policies.

Some of the major aspects of the CSME include: consumer affairs; competition policy; social security; contingent rights; immigration arrangements for free movement of persons; government procurement and trade and competitiveness in the region.

In 2019, at the 40th Regular Meeting of the Heads of Government held in St Lucia, leaders had highlighted that the CSME was high on the agenda.

At that meeting the Head of Government had put forward several measures for determined action.

Among the measures were a more formalised, structured mechanism for en-



President Ali flanked by CARICOM's Secretary General Carla Barnett to the right and a CARICOM official to the left

gagement with the region's private sector and labour; expansion of the categories of skilled nationals entitled to move freely and work within the community, to include agricultural workers, beautyservice practitioners, barbers and security guards; ensuring community-wide recognition of each member state-issued CARICOM Skills Certificate; reinforcing regional security mechanisms; and permitting the region's citizens and companies to participate in public procurement processes across the community.

Over the next few days, the CARI-COM leaders will engage in crucial discussions on a range of issues. According to CARICOM, there will be discussions on climate change and climate financing; regional security, including the situation in Haiti and border issues; regional transportation; financial matters, including replenishment of the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF); global and hemispheric issues.



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Legendary Singer Pankaj Udhas dies after a prolonged illness

Legendary singer Pankaj Udhas passes; Modi saddened by loss

Legendary singer Pankaj Udhas, who gave show, 'Aadab Aarz Hai', performed at concerts memorable hits like 'Chitthi aayi hai', died after a prolonged illness in Mumbai, his family confirmed today. He was 72.

"With a very heavy heart, we are saddened to inform you of the sad demise of Padma Shri Pankaj Udhas on 26 February due to a prolonged illness," read a statement from the Udhas family.

Udhas, who made a mark as a playback singer in Hindi films, including "Naam", "Saajan" and "Mohra", died around 11 am at the Breach Candy hospital, news agency PTI said quoting a family source.

'Chandani Raat Mein', 'Na Kajre Ki Dhaar', 'Aur Ahista Kijiye Baatein', 'Ek Taraf Uska Ghar' and 'Thodi Thodi Piya Karo' are among his evergreen ghazals.

The singer, who also started a talent hunt TV

around the world and had many albums to his name.

Soon after the news of his death broke, tributes poured in. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Pankaj Udhas' "ghazals spoke directly to the soul".

"We mourn the loss of Pankaj Udhas Ji, whose singing conveyed a range of emotions and whose Ghazals spoke directly to the soul. He was a beacon of Indian music, whose melodies transcended generations. I recall my various interactions with him over the years," said the Prime Minister.

"His departure leaves a void in the music world that can never be filled. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti," he added.

The singer rose to fame with Mahesh Bhatt's 1986 film 'Naam' starring Nutan, Kumar Gaurav, Sanjay Dutt, Poonam Dhillon, Amrita Singh and Paresh Rawal.



today is simple: if you make an effort to get along with other people they will make an effort to get along with you. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true: if you look for confrontation you will find it – and lose!

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): The gods of fortune seem to be working in your favor at the moment but if you want your good luck to continue you would be wise not to aim too high or push too hard. There is always a limit to what life will give

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): You're not short on selfbelief at the moment but with Mars squaring up to Jupiter you need to be careful that your ego does not take total control. A rival will happily cause trouble for you if you give them half a chance.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): As one of the zodiac's water signs you are no stranger to strong emotions and a Mars-Jupiter link warns you could go over the top big time today. No matter what other people might say or do it can only harm you if you allow it to.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): You are in one of those grooves when you don't have to try too hard to get what it is you desire. Unfortunately, once you have got it you may then realize it's not what you wanted after all. Think carefully before making your next move.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): You won't be able to hide your feelings or fake indifference over the next 24 hours. On the work front especially someone will annoy you to such an extent that you just have to speak up about it. Try not to shout

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): Even if you have fallen out with someone it is still possible to kiss and make up, but only if you are prepared to make the first move and maybe back down a bit as well. It all depends on how much their friendship means to you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): The Sun in Pisces is an excellent omen for creative activities, but today's Mars-Jupiter link could disrupt things a bit if you expect as much of other people as you expect of yourself. Not everyone is capable of operating at your rarified level.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): Good news of one sort or another will come your way over the next 24 hours but not everyone will be happy that you've been blessed, so take nothing for granted and keep your eyes and ears open. Don't let your rivals catch you napping.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): Your confidence is on a high but what occurs over the next 24 hours could make you question if a choice you made was the right one. Maybe it was and maybe it wasn't but you can't change it now, so stop worrying and move on.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): You like to think you are the sort of person who is not swayed by your emotions but deep down you know that is not entirely true. If you lose your cool today consider it a timely reminder that you are human like everyone else.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): Something will go wrong today but no matter how stressful it might be it is only a blip in an otherwise remarkable run of success. Deal with it and get past it quickly, because there are so many more wonderful



things up ahead. Our advertising works! Try a low cost ad in **Equality News and** reap the benefits of the only print weekly newspaper

Both major parties claim victory in Jamaica's local elections

Both major political parties in Jamaica, the ruling Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP) are laying claim to victory in the wake of Monday's local government elections.

The Electoral Commission of Jamaica stated that an official count will be taken on Tuesday, with the prospect of several closely contested divisions reaching the parish courts for a final verdict.

But this did not stop the leaders of both political parties from declaring victory, based on the preliminary results.

"The Jamaica Labour Party has won," JLP Leader Andrew Holness said at a press conference late last night, noting that preliminary results from the Electoral Office of Jamaica show his party leading in seven municipal corporations.

In parallel, preliminary results indicate the People's National Party is ahead in four municipal corporations, with two others deadlocked.

However, PNP President Mark Golding also declared on Monday night that the "PNP has come back", claiming victory in the local polls.

Speaking with journalists at the PNP's headquarters on Old Hope Road, St Andrew, Golding explained that his party is on track to win the popular vote and has increased the number of divisions it controls.

The PNP is leading in Hanover, Manchester, Westmoreland, and St Mary municipal corporations, based on preliminary results.



Supporters of both the JLP and the PNP celebrate after Monday's vote

The JLP is ahead in St Catherine, Portland, St Ann, Trelawny, St James, Clarendon, and St Elizabeth.

The PNP received major support in Kingston and St Andrew, and is now tied with the JLP. If flipped, the wellknown Mayor of Kingston Delroy Williams will lose his post as mayor.

The St Thomas municipal corporation is also tied.

The preliminary results also show the PNP's Leon Thomas winning the mayoral race in Portmore, defeating the JLP's Markland Edwards by 14,921 to 10,095. Independent candidate Howard Hamilton received 269 votes.

Meanwhile, political turncoat Romaine Morris won the Mocho division in the Clarendon Municipal Corporation for the PNP, beating the JLP's Clement Alves. He won 1,240 votes, beating Alves' 1,049. Morris joined the PNP in January.

Darrington Ferguson held the Papine division for the PNP, defeating political turncoat Venesha Phillips of the JLP for a place in the Kingston and St Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC). Ferguson won 2,113 votes while Phillips got 1,854. Independent candidate George Planto received 61

First timer to representational politics Jesse James Clarke of the PNP was elected councilor for the Trafalgar division in the KSAMC. He won 1,691 votes, beating Kari Douglas' 1,021. She switched to the JLP in 2020.

The Electoral Office of Jamaica has reported a preliminary voter turnout of 29.6 percent. Voter turnout in the 2016 local government elections was 30.6%.

Over two million Jamaicans were eligible to cast their vote in the longawaited local government elections, which were postponed three times.

Musicians pay tribute to 'Peetah'

Scores of musicians have paid tribute to Peter "Peetah" Morgan, the lead vocalist of the Grammy-awardwinning Reggae band Morgan Heritage, who died on February 25 at age

The group issued a statement on social media, announcing his passing.

"It is out of sincere love that we share that our beloved husband, father, son, and brother and lead singer of Morgan Heritage Peter Anthony Morgan has ascended today," the group said

"Our family thanks you in advance for your overwhelming love and support, and we ask your continued prayers as we go through this process. We also ask that you please respect our privacy during this time of healing."

The group did not disclose Peter's cause of death.

Several musicians have paid tribute to the leading voice of Morgan Heritage, including veteran dancehall artist Buju Banton, who said he was working on a special project with Peter for the

last two weeks.

Buju Banton:

"Over twenty five years ago, I was invited to listen to a new group on the horizon. I was in NYC. I went to a place called Bushwick, Brooklyn, to listen to this set of new musicians/artists. I was completely in love with the sound, the work ethic and the good vibe I felt. That day I immediately added them to my European Tour dates and would go on to bring that sound to the world with the help of Penthouse's Donovan Germain," Buju wrote on Instagram.

"We have always kept it honest with all we have done for our people and people of the world by extension. I spent the last two weeks of your life with you working on a very special project only to wake up today learning that you took a shortcut Peter. I am so saddened by this sudden turn of events. You a totally a reggae music superstar who gave from where our father said we should, our hearts," he added.

"All those memories, all that

laughter, all those tours. I am going to miss you Peter and I will comfort myself with this thought. You cannot come to us but we must come to where you are. Until then Peter, I love you. The brother I never had," Buju ended.

Maxi Priest

Another veteran in the music industry, reggae singer Maxi Priest, also paid tribute to Peter Morgan, saying: "My heart goes out to the entire Morgan family, loved ones, friends, management, the crew, staff, fans and the entire entertainment world on the passing of my good friend, Peetah Morgan, lead singer of Morgan Heritage. Wow, this is a hard one to take. I am so devastated, I feel cold, stunned, and speechless. ... We've lost another gem 💙 . I was so looking forward to meeting out on tour again, my friend and brother. The works you have done, the

Stonebwoy

Ghanaian afrobeats and dancehall Stonebwoy musician referred to the

music that you have brought to this

world, and your voice will live on."

singer as "Uncle Peter" in his post on social media. "Uncle Peter! The Morgan Heritage Family Took Me As Son. Served Me The Opportunity To Open Up For The Band On Tour in 2015. Introducing Me To The International Reggae/Dancehall Audience And Since I Never Look Back.. You Always Introduced Me On Stage with so much Love and Believe And Expressed How Proud You Are Of Me For Championing The Reggae/ Dancehall Genre In Ghana GH With So Much Passion And Investment. And That Alone Is Still Enough Fuel That keeps Me Going.

We Shall Continue To Celebrate You For The Great Impact Created During Your Time Here With Us On The Mission."

Scores of other musicians also paid tribute to Peter Morgan, including Shaggy, Popcaan, Capleton, Tarrus Riley, Stephen Marley, Freddie McGregor, and others.

Former Dominica PM James freed on bail after 20-minute lock-up

Former Prime Minister of Dominica, Edison James, found himself in the spotlight once again on Friday after he was released on bail of EC\$50,000 after an estimated 20 minutes in a holding cell.

This development follows his commitment to stand trial at the High Court on charges of incitement, stemming from events that transpired during a United Workers Party (UWP) rally in 2017

During the UWP rally on February 7, 2017, calls were made for the resignation of Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, leading to James' subsequent charge of "encouraging, persuading, or instigating by words, causing persons to jeopardize the safety or endanger the public peace."

This charge has placed Edison James, along with former opposition leader Lennox Linton and current UWP leader Dr. Thomson Fontaine, at the center of an alleged incitement case.

Magistrate Michael Laudat's dismissal of a no-case submission filed on behalf of James led to James expressing



Edison James makes his way out of lock-upon Friday

his anticipation of the trial.

However, he also criticized the magistrate's handling of the situation,

suggesting external pressure influenced the decision to send him to trial and into a holding cell. Despite this, James maintained his composure, noting his understanding of the legal process, including the availability of bail.

Lennox Linton, who is facing his own trial in the magistrate court, expressed surprise at James' treatment, highlighting James' consistent attendance at court proceedings since 2017. Linton emphasized James' obedience to the court's directives, questioning the necessity of placing James in a holding cell

Despite the challenges faced, both James and Linton urged their supporters to participate in a planned protest, stressing the importance of defending Dominican rights. James appealed to the populace to recognize the broader implications of their actions, emphasizing that the struggle was not merely against Skerrit's administration but for the protection of Dominican democracy.

The prosecution in the cases against the opposition politicians is being led by Trinidad-based criminal attorneys Israel Khan and Keith Scotland.

CARIBBEAN ROUNDUP

Cops probe surge of violence in St Lucia

Police authorities in St. Lucia are intensifying their investigations following a series of violent episodes that have rocked communities across the island.

In the southern town of Vieux Fort, two individuals were killed, while numerous others sustained injuries during a recent outbreak of gun violence.

Meanwhile, a separate fatal incident occurred in Dennery, a serene fishing village nestled along St. Lucia's eastern coast.

Vieux Fort has once again found itself thrust into the spotlight due to surge in violent confrontations.

Last year, amidst escalating tensions, the government enlisted the support of the Barbados-based Regional Security System to help quell the rising tide of gun-related crimes.

St. Lucia has recorded 17 murders so far this year.

There were 75 murders in 2023, most of which the police linked to gang violence and rivalry.

UK funding water supply in Grenada

In a significant development for Grenada, the

United Kingdom government has allocated a grant of US\$20 million.

This funding injection aims to revolutionize the water infrastructure, particularly in the southern region of the island.

The funds are being made available through the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Fund, which is administered by the Caribbean Development Bank.

The upgrade project was unveiled on Wednesday and will be executed by the National Water and Sewerage Authority.

Commencing later this year, the upgrade project is anticipated to span until early 2026.

Rising water costs cause concern in A&B

In the aftermath of a sales tax increase, Antigua and Barbuda face another economic challenge with the announcement of rising water costs.

The decision was disclosed in a post-Cabinet meeting briefing.

The hike in water rates will first affect commercial customers starting March 1, with residential rates to be adjusted subsequently.

General commercial customers will see an EC\$10 rise per 1000 gallons, a 20 per cent increase, while the cruise port faces a hefty 75 per cent increase of EC\$25 per 1000 gallons.

Melford Nicholas, overseeing the Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA) stated that emphasized the necessity of these adjustments, pointing out their role in repaying loans for enhanced water infrastructure.

By recalibrating the rates, the authority plans to cover loan obligations while improving water access and quality for all.

While the rate increases have sparked concerns among residents, particularly due to inconsistent water supply, people have been assured that these measures will lead to better service reliability.





Guyanese businessman denies involvement in Tobago oil spill

In response to circulating allegations on social media, Mohamed Qualander, the chief executive officer of Queensway Group Inc based in Guyana, has denied any association with the recent oil spill affecting Trinidad and Tobago.

In a statement released to the press, Qualander expressed "great concern" over assertions linking him to the vessel allegedly responsible for the spill.

According to reports, a message posted on social media claims "that a vessel carrying fuel that capsized off the coast of Trinidad & Tobago belongs to Mohamed Qualander also known as 'Arafat'.

However, he asserted his lack of ownership of any fuel-carrying vessels and emphasized his non-involvement in fuel trading activities.

Following the dissemination of these claims, Qualander disclosed receiving numerous inquiries from various quarters, including friends, family, and business associates, expressing apprehension and disbelief regarding the accusations.

Qualander disclosed that the matter has been escalated to the Cyber Crimes unit of the Guyana Police Force for further investigation and resolution.

Meanwhile, Trinidad and Tobago's government has announced collaborative efforts with international experts to address the aftermath of the oil spill.

Engaging the services of Texasbased T&T Salvage and QT Environ-



The overturned barge spilling oil off the coast of Tobago

mental from Minnesota, alongside local authorities, the government aims to mitigate environmental damage and expedite clean-up operations.

Preliminary investigations by Trinidad and Tobago's Coast Guard have shed light on the oil spill's circumstances

Confirmation of the involvement of two vessels—a tugboat and a barge—has prompted a concerted effort involving regional agencies and consultants to identify the vessels and their owners.

Trindad and Tobago's Ministry of National Security said the TTCG is collaborating with other local and regional agencies, including the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), the Guyana Coast Guard (GCG), the Maritime Services Division, and IR Consilium, through consultant Dr Ian Ralby, to identify the vessels and their owners.

It has been established that the vessels were purportedly en route to Guyana. However, they failed to reach

their destination as planned.

Efforts are underway to ascertain the extent of the environmental impact and any potential casualties resulting from the incident.

The spillage, characterized by black, oily deposits spanning from Scarborough to Lowlands in Tobago, poses a significant threat to the region's biodiversity. Authorities are working to contain and mitigate the ecological repercussions, prioritizing the preservation of Tobago's natural habitat.

US ramps up fight against JA lottery scammers

The Biden administration is intensifying efforts to combat lottery scams originating from Jamaica, viewing it as a critical component of a broader strategy aimed at reducing the country's significant crime rates.

These criminal activities are largely fueled by the influx of illegal firearms into the country.

The initiative involves a collaborative effort between Jamaican authorities and American security agencies, focusing on the eradication of lottery scams that have predominantly targeted elderly citizens in the United States for over a decade.

According to Radio Jamaica, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, Uzra Zeya, highlighted the complex nature of lottery scams, emphasizing their role in a larger criminal network that generates over a billion dollars in illicit revenues annually.

This vast sum of money significantly contributes to the demand and market for illegal weapons.

Jamaica's struggle with violent crime is exacerbated by the seizure of more than 600 illegal firearms annually, most of which are traced back to the United States.

Zeya acknowledges the necessity of a multi-lateral strategy to address this issue effectively.



The lottery scam in Jamaica generates an estimated one billion dollars annually

She expresses optimism about making progress through the implementation of the Safer Communities Act in the United States, which has substantially increased penalties for those involved in the illegal arms trade.

This legislation introduces stringent measures

against the circulation of "ghost guns" and "straw purchases," where firearms are acquired under false pretenses by individuals intending to pass them on to criminals who would otherwise be unable to access them.

Pirates of the Caribbean? US couple feared dead after yacht hijacked

A joint investigation has been launched by the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF) and the Royal Grenada Police Force into the disappearance and presumed death of two U.S. citizens.

The couple has been identified as Ralph Hendry and Kathy Brandel.

Reports are that three escaped prisoners have been identified as the main suspects in the case.

The individuals, Ron Mitchell (30), Trevon Robertson (25), and Atiba Stanislaus (23), all from Paradise, Saint Andrew in Grenada, previously escaped from the South St. George Police Station where they were detained on charges of rape, and robbery with violence.

The investigations indicate that after the suspects had escaped, they hijacked a yacht named 'Simplicity' that was moored at Grand Anse Beach in Grenada and kidnapped the couple.

The investigation also reveals that while sailing from Grenada the suspects committed several criminal acts, including bodily harm to the couple.

On Monday, February 19, 2024, the suspects, illegally entered the south-western coast of St Vincent and the Grenadines sometime in the afternoon and docked a yacht off Wallilabou, Anchorage.

The saga continued as the yacht was discovered off the southwestern



Feared dead: Ralph Hendry and Kathy Brandel

coast of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on Wednesday, February 21, 2024.

The scene showed clear signs of violence but no trace of the couple onboard

This discovery prompted an immediate manhunt, culminating in the capture of the suspects in the village of Petit Bordel.

Their arrest has sparked a collaborative effort between Grenadian and Vincentian authorities to unravel the full

extent of this tragic incident.

Legal proceedings and continued search

Following their apprehension, the suspects faced immigration-related charges in the Kingstown Magistrate Court, to which they pleaded guilty.

As they await sentencing, the search for Hendry and Brandel continues, with regional security forces and coast guards from both islands intensifying their efforts.

The whereabouts of the couple remain a mystery, with authorities presuming their unfortunate demise.

Community and family response

The RSVGPF has expressed its condolences to the family of the missing couple, acknowledging the difficulty of this time.

A meeting with the Acting Commissioner of Police, Trevor Bailey, provided the families with updates on the investigation's progress.

Caribbean braces for upcoming heat season

The Barbados-based Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF) has issued its latest forecast for the upcoming months, highlighting significant climate patterns and potential hazards for the region.

According to the forecast, the Pacific's El Niño event is expected to weaken, while near-record warm temperatures are anticipated in the Tropical North Atlantic from March to May.

El Niño, characterized by the abnormal warming of surface waters in the

eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, plays a pivotal role in shaping global weather patterns.

As the region moves into the warmer phase of this phenomenon, the Caribbean is poised to experience above-average temperatures and recurrent heatwaves as early as April.

CariCOF's Caribbean Climate Outlooks publication indicates that March may witness high evaporation rates and a peak in the frequency of short dry spells.





This could exacerbate ongoing drought conditions and increase the risk of wildfires, particularly in the far northwest and southeast regions. However, from April to May, a notable shift is expected, with rainfall intensity and frequency projected to rise sharply.

This surge in precipitation heightens the potential for flooding, flash floods, and associated hazards across most areas, excluding the ABC Islands (Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao).

As of February 1, 2024, several Caribbean territories have already experienced long-term drought conditions. These include Antigua, Dominica, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Mar-

tinique, St. Kitts, Suriname, northern Belize, Eastern Cuba, northern Guyana, Haiti, Trinidad & Tobago, and the Windward Islands.

Looking ahead, CariCOF warns that by the end of May 2024, additional regions may face evolving or persistent drought, including southwest Belize, Grand Cayman, inland portions of French Guiana, northeastern and inland portions of Guyana, southwest Puerto Rico, and northern Suriname.

There is also a possibility of drought development or continuation in other areas such as Central Cuba, Dominica, coastal French Guiana, northern Guyana, and Tobago.

Suriname to be added to interregional ferry routes

SURINAME will now join TT, Barbados and Guyana as routes for the inter-regional cargo ferry set to operate in the region.

The initiative was first announced in January.

In a press release on Monday, the Office of the Prime Minister said Dr Rowley was in Guyana for the 46th Regular Meeting of the Caricom Heads of Government. It began on Sunday and ends on Wednesday.

The release said some topics discussed included maritime transportation, which "engaged leaders.

"It is expected that Suriname will be added to the ferry's route."

Rowley said he was pleased with the interest in the decision to launch the ferry and assured government's commitment to ensuring the commercial preparatory work is completed.

"He said while the Government will facilitate the incubation of the project, it is hoped that the private sector will play an integral role in the expansion of the ferry service."



The Galleons Passage is the ferry tipped to be used on the inter-regional route

Other topics included increasing food production, national security, violence in Haiti, the Caribbean Development Bank and CSME (Caricom Single Market and Economy).

Rowley also met with the envoy of the minister of foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Omar Shehadeh and Canada's minister of international development Ahmed Hussen

Lawyer demands \$\$ for doomed divers

Defence attorney Prakash Ramadhar has signalled his intentions to approach the Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister for him to instruct the board of state-owned Paria Fuel Trading Ltd to decide on the proposal of a \$5 million ex-gratia payment to each family of the divers killed in the Paria diving tragedy.

"If it is that we do not hear from Paria in relation to the ex-gratia payment, we may very well have to approach the PM and his office and the line minister to ask them to give a directive to Paria as to what decisions they should take," Ramadhar said.

He spoke at a press conference at his law office in San Fernando on Monday about the tragedy he called a national travesty and a national disaster.

On February 25, 2022, five divers – Christopher Boodram, Kazim Ali Jnr, Fyzal Kurban, Yusuf Henry and Rishi Nagassar – were repairing a 30-inch pipeline at Paria's Pointe-a-Pierre facility when they were sucked into it.

Only Boodram survived.

They were employed with Land Marine Construction Services (LMCS). A report from the commission of enquiry (CoE) into the tragedy recommended charges against Paria and LMCS. The Occupational Safety and Health Authority and Agency (OSHA) has filed 12 charges against LMCS, Paria and three of Paria's executive managers. Those charges remain on hold, pending a ruling by the Privy Council for a decision on whether OSHA can file claims after six months from when the cause of action became known to it. OSHA complaints are against LMCS, with two against Paria, its general manager Mushtaq Mohammed and terminal operations manager Collin Piper and one against technical and maintenance manager Michael Wei.

Ramadhar represents the Kurban and Henry families, and Kurban's widow, Celisha Kurban, was also at the press conference on Monday.

The attorney said it might be incumbent upon those who advise the PM to advise him to invite members of the families to a meeting to give them at least some comfort and to show that someone in authority cares or is in their corner.

"We do not wish to embark on longterm legal battles that would only benefit lawyers and not the people who matter most. Matters take years at an incredible cost to the state, in which we, the people, pay," he said.

"If we could avoid that, we would. But if there is a battle to be engaged, we need also to know as soon as possible."

Ramadhar recalled that he and his legal team had promised to file an action against Paria and LMCS before the second anniversary of the tragedy.

While they have yet to file, the team is prepared.

The reason for not filing, he added, was due to comments by Dr Rowley after the final report of the CoE was laid in Parliament.

Rowley had said that the tragedy was a legal matter of liabilities and responsibilities, and it would be quite unusual at this stage for the Government to override the responsibility and role of the board and other entities involved.

Rowley added it was not a matter for the state to jump in.

"The Prime Minister might be right that it is up to the board to make decisions.



Prakash Ramadhar

But they must make a decision, one way or the other. We do not have the luxury of them taking their glorious time. If an exgratia payment is made and we are satisfied with it, that will bring an end to legal litigation."

"If they decide they are not going to give ex-gratia payment, then we have no choice but to file an action in the High Court. Justice in this country ought not to be found only in the courts. The court must be used only as a last resort, not as a

first action."

Ramadhar recalled that he and his team wrote to the corporate secretary of Paria on February 2 about whether the families were going to be paid or not. The attorneys wrote several other letters to the board.

The state board has not responded. Instead, Ramadhar said his office got a response from the law firm Johnson, Camacho, and Singh saying there is a consideration for the proposal.

"One would expect that the right and decent thing to do, having regard to the circumstances of this tragedy, would have been for Paria and LMCS to make an exgratia payment," Ramadhar said.

"We know the delays in court can be overwhelming, and for those who have limited or no resources, it could be an act of suffocation. It is a slow-burning crime for this matter not to be resolved and for every day that passes adds to the orgy of horror and shamelessness that we now see in this society."

Ramadhar added that the lawyers from the firm, responding on behalf of Paria, had also responded to two pre-action protocol letters last year indicating that the company had no liability in the tragedy.

"I would have thought that Paria's board would have taken advice from its lawyers (to) respond as the board and not from the lawyers. That tells me that we are in troubled waters," he said.

He added that the divers' families are the ongoing victims of a failure to act by instruments of the state. The ex-political leader of the Congress of the People said he was not politicising the issue, having left politics in 2020.

Barbados women to begin defence of regional cricket titles

Defending champions Barbados will aim to defend their respective regional titles when the women's CG United Super50 and T20 Blaze tournaments are hosted in St Kitts from March 4-25.

played from March 4-13 at three different venues: the Conaree Cricket Centre, St. Paul's Sports Complex and Warner Park. Meanwhile, the T20 Blaze will be played solely at the Warner Park venue and will be contested from March 17-25.

Barbados will begin their Super50 title defence against Jamaica on March 4, with Guyana, Leeward Islands, TT Divas and the Windward Islands all vying to upstage Barbados, who have West Indies captain and the International Cricket Council's (ICC) 2023 T20 player of the year Hayley Matthews within their ranks.

Both tournaments will be played in a round-robin format, with each team playing a total of five matches.

On Friday, a Cricket West Indies (CWI) release said the hosting of the Super50 and T20 Blaze tournaments signals the start to a busy year for women's cricketers in the region. Following the conclusion of the respective regional

tournaments, the West Indies women will tackle Pakistan in April, Sri Lanka in June and will also set their sights on the women's ICC T20 World Cup which will be held in Bangladesh in October. The West Indies women will end the The Super50 tournament will be year with a tour of India in December.

> CWI director of cricket, Miles Bascombe, said it was the perfect time to continue the momentum in the women's

> "This year's CG United Super50 Cup and T20 Blaze will be a great opportunity to build on what we started in 2023," Bascombe said.

> "With the creation of the West Indies Women's Academy and the commendable performance of the under-19 women's team in the historic inaugural ICC women's under-19 Cricket World Cup last year, the ladies have the perfect opportunity to put their names forward for selection into any of these squads by their performances in the CG United Super50 and T20 Blaze tournaments. We are all looking forward to some scintillating performances over in St Kitts."

> Last October, CWI announced an increase in the prize structure for the women's regional tournaments. The Super50



The Barbados Women's team

US\$20,000, with the T20 Blaze winners up will receive US\$10,000 and set to pocket US\$10,000. The runners- US\$5,000 respectively.



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Equality at the CARICOM Summit

The Forty-Sixth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) will formally open at the National Cultural Centre in Georgetown, Guyana, on Sunday, 25 February 2024, at 5pm.

The Meeting is being convened under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of Guyana, who will deliver the feature address at the Opening Ceremony. Dr. Carla Barnett, CARICOM Secretary-General, and the Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit, Outgoing Chairman of CARICOM and Prime Minister of Dominica, will also address the gathering.

The business sessions of the four-day Meeting will be held at the Guyana Marriott Hotel, also in Georgetown. Heads of Government will hold discussions with the Meeting's Special Guest, His Excellency Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil, as well as with other high-level Guests.

Discussions during the business sessions will include the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and an update on the implementation of the free movement of all Community Nationals by 31 March 2024, as mandated at the 45th Regular Meeting in July last year.

The CARICOM Chairman, as lead Head of Government with responsibility for Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security in the CARICOM Quasi Cabinet, will update the meeting on the Community's 25 by 2025 initiative to tackle the Region's rising food import bill and improve intra-regional trade.

The Meeting will discuss climate change and climate financing; regional security, including the situation in Haiti and border issues; regional transportation; financial matters, including replenishment of the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF); global and hemispheric issues including developments in the Middle East; Reparations; and the 2024 ICC Men's T-20 Cricket World Cup.

Equality is on the ground in Georgetown and the coverage of the meeting is carried in the pages of this issue.







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ICC MEN's T20 WORLD CUP 2024 GUYANA MATCH SCHEDULE



WI v PNG



Sun June 2, 2024



AFG v UGA



Mon June 3, 2024



PNG v UGA



Wed June 5, 2024



NZ v AFG



Fri June 7, 2024



WI v UGA



Sat June 8, 2024

Semi-Final 1

Wed June 26, 2024



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