



# Introducing Guyana Equality News Weekly

With an impressive 45 years of publishing experience under our belt, Canada's largest Guyanese and Caribbean publication, Equality News, is thrilled to announce the launch of Guyana Equality News Weekly in the beautiful Land of Guyana. Set to debut on Sunday, February 18, 2024, coinciding with the vibrant Mash Celebrations and the auspicious occasion of our publisher's 75th birthday, this marks an extraordinary milestone in our journey.

Guyana Equality News is poised to revolutionize the media landscape with its commitment to independence, balance, and captivating content focused mainly on Guyana. As a token of appreciation to our loyal readers, this groundbreaking publication will be freely accessible to all, ensuring that everyone can engage with the latest happenings in Guyana.

The Equality Media Group, comprising Equality News, Equality Trade Printing, and Equality Short Films tourism productions, has been a trailblazer in serving the overseas Diaspora in Canada, the US, and Guyana itself. Our pioneering efforts, including the production of acclaimed long-format films such as "My Guyana Eldorado," "Guyana: A New Horizon," and



The Guyana Equality team: (l-r) Vickram Singh, Dawarka Persaud, Bhaskar Sharma and Captain Gerry Gouevia

"Guyana: God's Own Country," have played a pivotal role in igniting the flame of tourism in Guyana

Now, with the establishment of our permanent office at 3F Middleton Street, Georgetown, we are thrilled to unveil Equality Travel Fantasy Holidays. This exciting venture promises unforgettable experiences that showcase the beauty and culture of Guyana to travelers from around the globe.

We extend heartfelt gratitude to

our esteemed friends in the community, visionary business leaders, and dedicated politicians who have embraced

and supported this historic endeavor. Together, we are ushering in a new era of media excellence and accessibility.

Just as we've proudly offered Equality News free to readers in Canada for nearly five decades, Guyana Equality News Weekly will continue this tradition of openness and inclusivity. We invite businesses eager to capitalize on exposure in Guyana's premier free newspaper to join us on this remarkable journey.

For inquiries and partnership opportunities, please contact Bhaskar Sharma, Vickram Singh and Dawarka Persaud at Tel: 592-669-5800 Email: equalitynews@rogers.com

Join us as we embark on this exciting adventure, celebrating the richness and diversity of Guyana with the world. Guyana Equality News Weekly: Your gateway to a world of stories, culture, and opportunity.

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# Community Spotlight - People, Places, & Events

## Focus on Silica City ~ A new, smart city Destination ...

<https://dpi.gov.gy/>

### 3800-acres-of-state-land-identified-for-development-of-new-silica-city/

Minister of Housing and Water, Collin Croal, M.P, has announced that some 3,800 acres of land have been identified for immediate development of the new Silica City in the vicinity of the Soesdyke-Timehri area.

The Silica City development project is a brainchild of His Excellency, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali who had proposed the city's establishment while serving as housing minister in 2013. The idea was based on the need for Guyana to have an urban centre that is complementary to the existing capital city of Georgetown.



Minister Croal explained that the project aims to tackle the issue of non-coastal urban settlement development and the challenges of climate change and sea-level rise. It will therefore see the creation of a vibrant, sustainable, resilient and modern city, and this vision is in keeping with the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

"The 'smart city' approach is proposed for creating a new city that is compact, pedestrian-oriented, energy-efficient, interconnected and sustainable, comfortable, attractive and secure.

The University of Miami <https://news.miami.edu/> will be assisting Guyana with a design.

The projected population for this new city over the next 20 years, will be approximately 50,000 or 12,500 households.

Therefore, within the first five years, it is expected that the city would be developed to cater for at least 3,125 households, approximately 625 units annually.



To this end, a preliminary development concept was completed, identifying the key features of the smart city approach in terms of residential and non-residential development, transport and infrastructure, sustainable urban drainage, conservation and tourism district, waste management, alternative energy, technological aspects and agriculture.

Minister Croal said that consultations are ongoing with the utility companies to coordinate the development of their infrastructure since it is

anticipated that a shared utility corridor will cater for all utilities to be routed underground.

"Detailed designs have commenced for a golf course resort facility, an eco-industrial park and streetscape designs which are project initiatives of the new city," he added. Additionally, the design will commence this

corridor will cater for all utilities to be routed underground.

Detailed designs have commenced for a golf course



resort facility, an eco-industrial park and streetscape designs which are project initiatives of the new city," he added. Additionally, the design will commence this year for a first phase housing development within the proposed residential zone of the new city.

The master plan will integrate biophilic design and sustainable features, as well as health and well-being services, following a smart city model, which integrates artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies into its infrastructure.

For example, sensors would monitor changes in traffic patterns so that traffic lights could adjust in real time to weather events, congestion, and accidents. (UoM).

/dsk-1402-24

## the Passionate Eye © Guyana..



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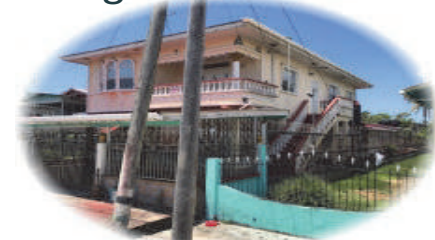
Mahaica Crk Farmlands



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Asking: \$ 50M GYD

### For Sale

#41, WCB, 60x150 Lot.



Asking: \$ 65M GYD



# Nandu: Replica of India's Mukesh

By Dr Vishnu Bisram

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

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

Mohan came from a family of singers. His father was an accomplished and popular taan singer and musician and his mother a religious woman; he also had a sister. Nandu began singing at an early age, and he has been singing classical songs and playing the harmonium since the 1940s entertaining audiences throughout the country. He sang at weddings, baraats,



**Mohan Nandu**



**Historic shot in one frame- Guyana's Legends Mahan Nandu and Gobinram. Center is Parmanand Sukhu**

pujas, satsangs, Mandirs, Bhagwat's or jags and Ramayans, and at concerts and on radio. He sang at several fundraisers including for the PPP. He also partook in Indian singing competitions, winning many trophies in the Mukesh competition. He belted out unforgettable classical and religious hits, evergreen melodies. Everywhere, people yearned to hear him sing and crowded his performances. Mandirs and halls reverberated with applause. He was very close to another iconic singer Shri Gobin Ram. They made quite a team and entertained thousands in West Dem.

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

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

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

Hailing from the West Coast, he entertained crowds mostly in West Demerara restricting Berbicians and Essequibians access to enjoy his musical talent. They only saw him perform in person at concerts on the Corentyne, West Berbice, and Essequibo or when he accompanied popular Pandit Reepudaman Persaud at Ramayana discourses. He accompanied Pt Reepu to

countless kathas all over the country. Mohan was very close to Pandit Reepu whose Dharmic Sabha honored him for lifelong contributions to Indian culture. It is noted that he was one of only a few artistes who did not migrate for opportunities to make a name overseas – quite a patriot. And for that, Guyanese are grateful. He was deserving of national honors.

As he was ailing over the last few years, friends and Swami Aksharananda provided for Mohan Nandu's medicine, meals, house cleaning, and general upkeep.

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



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# CARPHA: Beware of the Sahara Dust

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

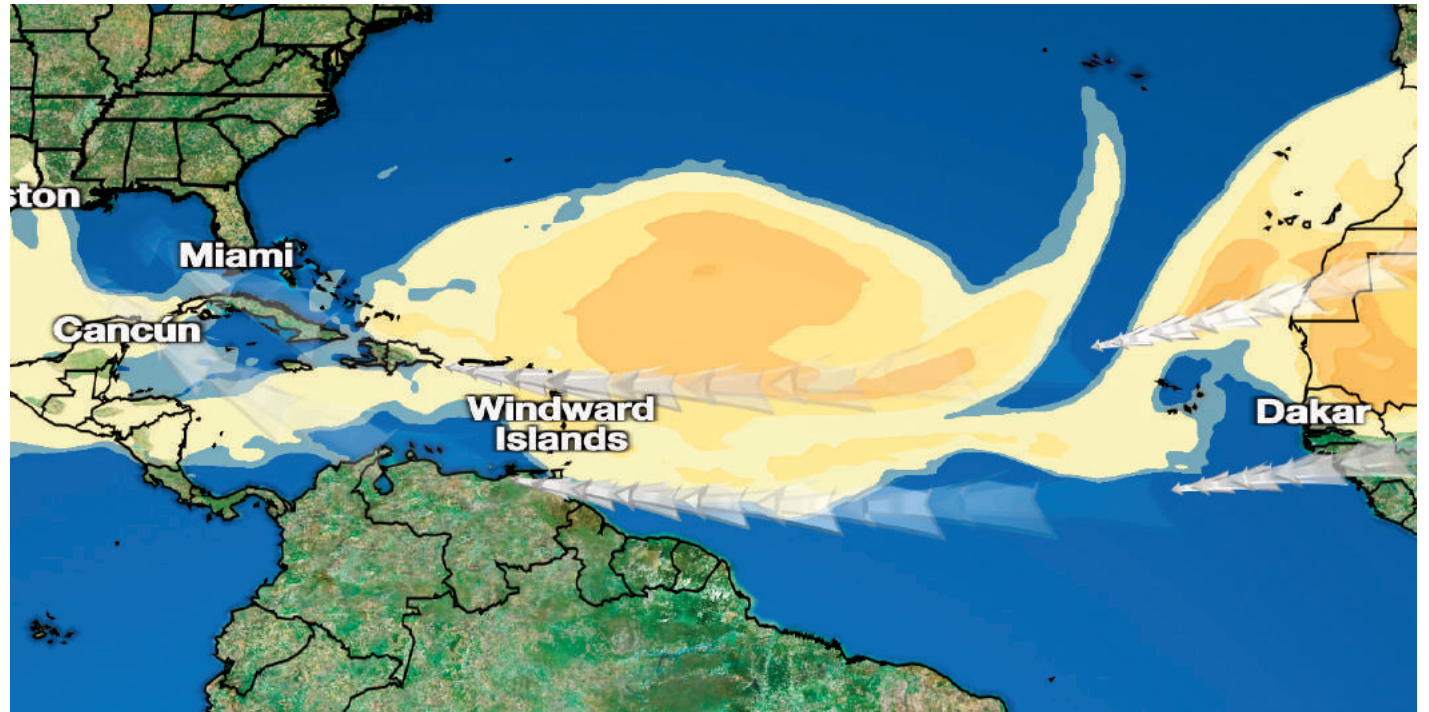
This natural phenomenon has engulfed several regions, posing potential health risks.

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

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

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

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



**Map shows Saharan dust blanketing the entire Caribbean region**

(COPD).

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

These include staying indoors to limit exposure to dust, wearing dust masks when outside, and using HEPA

filters to clean the air inside homes.

Additionally, individuals with respiratory conditions are urged to keep their medication accessible, adhere to prescribed treatments, and seek medical attention if they experience difficulty breathing.

For milder symptoms, over-the-counter allergy medications may offer relief.

By taking these precautions, the Caribbean community can mitigate the health impacts of the Saharan dust plume and safeguard their well-being during this environmental challenge.

## Wedding bells for St Kitts Prime Minister

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

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

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

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

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

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

Drew is a 47-year-old Kittitian medical doctor and the fourth prime minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, having been elected to the National Assembly in the 2022 general election.

Diani Prince-Drew is a diplomat and attorney from St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Warm congratulations have flooded in for the newlyweds across various social media platforms.

Last year, Dr Drew made international headlines after saving a passenger on a flight.

It is reported that sometime during the flight from Miami to St Kitts, the man began having complications and fell unresponsive. The patient was ultimately revived.

Dr. Drew recommended that the passenger be removed from the flight and examined in a specialized facility. He was sent to the JNF hospital for additional medical care.



**Newlyweds: Dr and Mrs Terrance Drew**



# Trinidad and Tobago hit by mystery ship oil spill

Trinidad and Tobago is considering declaring a national emergency over a huge oil spill from a ship that ran aground and overturned this week.

At least 15km (nine miles) of Tobago's south-western coast have been affected, including some of the Caribbean island's pristine beaches.

Some 1,000 volunteers have now joined government staff to clean up the spill.

Divers have been trying to isolate the leak from the vessel, which was abandoned by its crew.

Farley Augustine, the chief secretary of the island of Tobago, on Saturday said the government may designate the accident a Level 3 disaster, the highest.

"Everything indicates that we are going in that direction," he was quoted as saying by the AFP news agency.

The spill is currently Level 2, meaning the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management believes that the country can deal with the spill.



**Oil washing ashore on a beach in Tobago**

A national emergency is declared when local resources become "overwhelmed" and international assistance is needed.

The ship - identified only as The

Gulfstream - capsized last Wednesday off the coast of the Cove Eco-Industrial Estate.

No emergency calls were made.

The incident happened just days before Trinidad and Tobago's carnival celebrations, which are an important source of income for its economy.

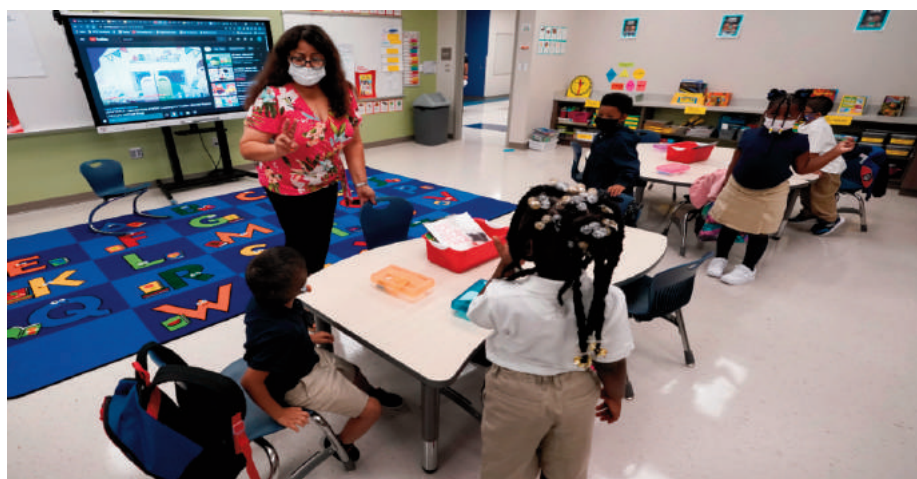
# Florida schools say kids must get parents' permission for BHM lessons

As Black History Month takes center stage in South Florida schools this February, parents are finding themselves at a crossroads as they are asked to sign for their children's involvement in educational events.

Reports are that parents are being asked whether they want their children to participate in various Black History Month educational events, including "class and school wide presentations showcasing the achievements and recognizing the rich and diverse traditions, histories, and innumerable contributions of the Black communities."

The policy, which requires parental consent for participation in such events, is a direct result of an extension of a new state board rule.

According to WPLG Local 10, Miami-Dade School Board Member Steve Gallon said that the policy is an extension of a new state board rule.



**Parents must give their children permission to learn Black History**

This policy stems from the Parental Bill Of Rights, enacted in November last year.

Gallon acknowledged the importance of adhering to the law, but he also expressed concerns about the potential unintended consequences on students

who do not attend these events.

Marvin Dunn, an African-American history expert from Florida International University, believes that parental involvement in this decision could lead to unequal learning.

Dunn argued that when parents become involved in making that decision, keeping some kids out and allowing others in, will lead to unequal learning.

He pointed out that this move could potentially create a generation of individuals who are miseducated when it comes to Black history.

WPLG Local 10 reports that Dunn further criticized the Governor's administration for interfering in the classroom, asserting that it is having a chilling effect on educators and the curriculum.

"The intent of the DeSantis attack on education is to make schools more cautious, to make teachers more cautious about what they taught, and it's working," he said. "It's not about banning books necessarily, it's about banning ideas," he added.



*Maintaining the balance between our 7 peoples*  
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**News**

3F Middleton Street, Georgetown 1 592 669 5800



## Editorial & Opinions

# Guyana Equality News is about you and telling your stories

Welcome to the very first edition of the newest weekly newspaper in Guyana.

Guyana Equality News might be new, but we're no strangers to the news business.

In fact, this paper comes from the experience gained by more than 4 decades of publishing a weekly newspaper in the Canadian market, Equality News.

The longevity of Equality is due to its consistency in bringing news from "back home" to Guyanese in the Canadian and American Diaspora. In addition, Equality also serves the wider Caribbean Diaspora, with a significant readership in the Trinidadian, Barbadian and Jamaican communities.

Given our track record, we felt it was time to bring a quality newspaper back home to local readers. And we also felt it was important for us to make this newspaper widely available by offering it free of cost to readers.

It was not an easy decision to make, given the cost of printing every week, but we believe money should not be a barrier from Guyanese getting the news they need. In these hard economic times around the world, with prices of everything skyrocketing, the average person is finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet.

The last thing you, the reader needs, is another expense. But we know what you really need is a good, reliable source of news that is pertinent to you, and that shouldn't come at a price at this time.

Guyana Equality News is unique as we are

the only paper to offer a free edition to readers.

We are also unique because we bring our decades of publishing experience in a foreign market to our own Guyanese people at home.

We are also using the paper as an opportunity to offer businesses across the board the chance to connect with clients on a regular basis, so whether you are in the business of selling homes or groceries, if you have a store, or if you're selling cars -- whatever the business you are in, you will be guaranteed a dedicated readership weekly that once you advertise, will only boost your business.

In other words, Guyana Equality News presents a win-win for everyone. The reader gets a professionally produced newspaper every week, while businesses across the country can connect with them.

Even better, this paper will be available free of charge at stores and gas stations across the country, which means people will come into your business to pick one up. And while there, they might be encouraged to patronize your establishment.

We should make it clear that Guyana Equality News is not about favouring any political party or group in Guyana. We will offer news in an unbiased way, and certainly, while we will be bringing government news to you regularly, we are not a mouthpiece of any political entity.

This means that you will find fair, unbiased news in our pages. We will also be highlighting good news, to let people know what is positive about the country and its people at a time when

the world is filled with only bad news.

We, as a people, need to celebrate what is good about us. And we also need to show the world that Guyana is rapidly developing not only in industries like oil, gas and agriculture, but in human potential.

Some of the best and brightest students in the Caribbean are from Guyana. In the coming weeks, months and years, we will be telling their stories, to celebrate their achievements with them and the world at large.

We have people who are learning new skills daily to take Guyana into the future, whether this is in technology, manufacturing or industry. We want to tell your stories, too. Just as we want to celebrate the achievements of the country's religious institutions and our very talented musicians and others in the creative arts.

If you have a story idea for us, please contact us at the numbers or the emails listed below. We would love to hear from you.

Also, you have an opportunity to voice your own opinions in our pages by sending us Letters to the Editor. So we urge you to take advantage of that.

If you have a feature picture you would like to share with us, please send it along with a description of the event. We will do our best to accommodate you.

At the end of the day, Guyana Equality News is a paper for you. It is about you.

We ask you to join us in our historic journey to keep Guyanese informed.

**Guyana Equality News is published at 3F Middleton Street, Georgetown, Guyana**

**Publisher/Editor: Bhaskar Sharma**

**592-669-5800**

**592-630-5890**

**Email: Equalitynews@rogers.com**

**dowarka@gmail.com**

**sugarcane-publishing@gmail.com**



# Guyana to get its own UWI-certified medical school

In a significant development for medical education in Guyana, President Irfaan Ali announced on Sunday that discussions are in progress to establish the University of the West Indies' (UWI) School of Medicine in the country.

The school will be located in East Berbice-Corentyne, in Region Six.

There is no timeline yet for the opening of the UWI School of Medicine in Guyana.

President Ali shared this exciting news during the commissioning ceremony of the Pathology Lab at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

This development follows closely on the heels of the groundbreaking ceremony for the New Amsterdam Hospital, where President Ali revealed plans for a dedicated building to accommodate academic activities.

President Ali emphasized the col-

laborative nature of this endeavor, stating, "When we launched the New Amsterdam Hospital, we said that in that facility we negotiated a building for teaching services, and that message went out regionally and globally. Today, I'm pleased to inform you that the University of the West Indies School of Medicine has now approached us to be part of this vision in bringing their campus to Guyana and negotiations and discussions would have commenced."

Ali added that in the negotiations, they are now working on ensuring that the rates are the same as local students in Trinidad and Tobago so there will be "equity and quality matched together."

Acknowledging the existence of the University of Guyana's School of Medicine, President Ali recognized the importance of competition in fostering continuous improvement.

He stated that "Competition is a part of life and a necessity in improving quality."



Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali

# Guyana pledges to help Palestine

Guyana has pledged to contribute a substantial sum of USD\$150,000 to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The Caribbean nation's commitment aims to provide assistance to Palestinians who have been displaced and adversely affected by the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Ongoing Conflict's grim toll

The ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip, which began on October 7, 2023, has had devastating consequences, claiming the lives of more than 25,000 people.

The situation remains a pressing concern on the global stage, with Guyana and other nations striving for a peaceful resolution to this prolonged and tragic conflict.

A strong international appeal

Guyanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Thursday that its decision to support UNRWA resonates with its call for a more robust international response to the persisting crisis in Gaza.

As an elected member of the United Nations Security Council, Guyana is actively advocating for a ceasefire that would facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the war-torn



The Israel conflict in Palestine has created a humanitarian crisis

region.

Consistent support over the years  
Guyana said it has consistently provided financial aid to UNRWA over the years.

UNRWA serves as the primary hu-

manitarian organization that offers vital support to over 2 million Palestinians.

A vision for peace

The government of Guyana envisions a brighter future for both Palestinians and Israelis, one free from the constant shadows of war.

The country added that it is prepared to work as a member of the UN Security Council and with the entire UN membership to accelerate the vision of two independent states living side by side in peace and security and of a peaceful Middle East.



# Quebec's winter carnival a success in spite of Spring-like weather

Organizers of Quebec City's annual winter carnival say the 18-day event was a hit despite unseasonably warm weather that forced the carnival to close one of its main attractions on the last day.

As temperatures climbed up to 4 C, a nine-room ice palace, known as Bonhomme's Palace, began to melt and was closed prematurely on Sunday for safety reasons, says Carnaval de Québec general manager Marie-Ève Jacob.

The palace was only viewable from the outside for the remainder of the event.

"We had some challenges, but it's challenges we're used to having," said Jacob.

It wasn't the first time comparatively balmy temperatures caused problems for this year's carnival organizers.

The ice dome at the event's sculpture garden also had to be closed on Thursday due to safety concerns as temperatures lingered above the freezing mark.

Unseasonably mild weather also forced the closure of the ice dome at the event's sculpture garden on Thursday. (Submitted by Eric Ouellette)

The winter event wrapped up its 70th edition this weekend. This year,



his imposing structure, more than 13 metres tall, was intended for ice climbing

the festival stretched eight days longer with new attractions, requiring about 20 times more artificial snow than last year.

While the mild temperature may have taken its toll on the facilities, it also may have helped attract festival goers, says Jacob.

"Both the first weekend and the last, our numbers were up, so the mild weather was an advantage," she said.

Jérôme Déchêne, the carnival's director of programming, says new activities and attractions likely also contributed to the surge in numbers.

This imposing structure, more than 13 metres tall, intended for ice climbing was one of the new attractions at the carnival this year. (Amélie Auger/Radio-Canada)

He highlights the large-scale opening show, which brought together 50 artists and drew thousands of people,

the return of the Bal de Bonhomme, a masked ball which sold out, as well as two night parades, which drew thousands of spectators.

"This year, we were adding new sites and a new week, so it was a challenge for the team," said Déchêne, adding the format was dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the event and will not be repeated next year. The 71st Carnaval de Québec will take place from Feb. 7 to 16, 2025, with hopes for cold weather, says Jacob.

# Ottawa U clamps down on protests

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) and physicians at the University of Ottawa are demanding action from the school's senior administration about what they call a "campaign of persecution" against students, staff and doctors who have publicly expressed pro-Palestinian views.

In a letter sent to the school Jan. 31, the NCCM said it has learned of several recent instances of "harassment, intimidation, targeting and threatening behaviour" toward those advocating for "the basic human rights of civilian Palestinians."

Uthman Quick, the NCCM's director of communications, said several students have contacted the organization to say they were threatened with suspension or even expulsion for social media posts calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the targeted bombing of medical centres there.



Uthman Quick

While this has been an issue across Canada since the most recent conflict between Israel and Hamas began on Oct. 7, the situation at U of O "seems very acute," said Quick.

He said the council has received

several complaints from staff and students about what's being described as "a climate of fear" on campus.

"There is a very tense situation on campus there, and it needs to be addressed," said Quick.

The NCCM's letter goes on to say the university has "sullied its own reputation," and "failed" in upholding its ethical standards and protecting staff and students who publicly side with Palestinians during the conflict.

In an email to CBC, the university did not respond to the NCCM's letter, nor did it address allegations that students were threatened with suspension or expulsion.

Uthman Quick is with the National Council of Canadian Muslims. He says his group has received several complaints from students and staff at the University of Ottawa. (Craig

Chivers/CBC)

"People are being called to the office and told that their social media posts, things that they're sharing, are antisemitic or make other people feel unsafe," said Dr. Yipeng Ge, a public health and preventive medicine resident at U of O.

The equation to antisemitism is "extremely harmful and manifests itself as anti-Palestinian racism," he said.

Ge himself was suddenly suspended in November after other faculty members complained about a series of pro-Palestinian posts he'd made that included references to "apartheid" and "settler colonialism" in Gaza.

He was reinstated by the faculty of medicine in January, but has since chosen not to continue with the program.



# FIU joins With GAREP Hotel to Promote Compliance With Real Estate Act

The Guyana Association of Real Estate Agents and Professionals (GAREP) held its first general meeting at the prestigious Pegasus Hotel on February 8th with more than 60 agents in attendance to listen to guest speakers Mr. Langevine, Head of FIU, Mr. Jewsaun Edmonson from GBTI, Mr. Bhaskar Sharma from Guyana Equality News and members of GAREP Executive as they presented updates on the recently passed legislation and the role of the Association.

The focus of the meeting was the newly enacted Real Estate Act, the impact on the industry and the role that GAREP would play to ensure compliance, training, promotion of the industry, ethics, disciplinary action and commission structure.

President of GAREP Aleem Hus-sain outlined the importance of the role the Association has to play and laid out the vision for the next five years. "The industry allows for persons with proper training and guidance to make millions of dollars and we must provide exceptional service and become leaders in the field. GAREP will lead the way to ensure that confidence in the market



Participants at the event

leads to increased sales and opportunities for all involved." He also thanked Pegasus' owner Mr. Robert Badal and GM Mr. Montenegro for their support in hosting the event.

Head of FIU Mr. Langevine spoke about the importance of the safeguards that need to be implemented to protect

Guyana and everyone involved in the industry, "We must act in accordance with international standards and ensure that all transactions meet the requirements of the legislation." Mr. Langevine also shared recent updates to procedures that have been enacted in the United States to ensure compliance with the AML.

Vice Presidents Nicola Duggan, Sandy Harry and Pete Persaud laid out the current financial status of the Association, outlined the benefits of membership, process for ethical reviews and need for compliance.

Secretary Neil Mcphoy spoke about the importance of training and education of both agents and owners, while PR Officer Amrita Sookram outlined the marketing strategies that will be implemented to inform local and international prospects of the benefits of real estate ownership in Guyana.

Members challenged the GBTI Representative on the restrictions on mortgage amounts and procedures that banks allow for foreign ownership and were vocal about the challenges they face to operate within the GRA/banking environment.

Mr. Sharma from Guyana Equality News offered all present a free ad in the inaugural edition of the Canadian newspaper that will be launched in Guyana shortly. Members were also given access to special pricing for advertising their services locally.



Transforming the Real Estate Industry: participants at the recent conference



# Narendra Modi: a true son of Bharat

I never thought that, in my lifetime, I would have had the rare opportunity and privilege to witness and see, first-hand, the greatest transformational visionary leader of our generation rising to such prominence and acclaim as the undisputed leader of Bharat - the world's most populous democracy with 1.5 billion souls. It is obvious to me that, Narendra Modi was destined to lead India. The circumstances of his birth, childhood and impoverished family structure prepared him to rise from the ashes like a Phoenix and soar with fearless transformational resilience, as a defining instrument of change for the betterment of his beleaguered motherland. He indicated that, it is his end goal to be completely spent by dedicating his energies and life-force in the unconditional service and upliftment of his motherland, and the world.

Narendra Modi, in my opinion, is touched by a divine spark which empowers his resolve and dedicated commitment to resurrect and restore the tattered cultural fabric and pride of his glorious ancestral traditions and way of life. A resourceful and progressive race of people who built a great civilization by embracing inclusive noble values with ethical standards and reverential respect for the gift of life. His ancestors understood, through inquiry and inferential experience, that every life is sacred and functionally interdependent. Modi embraces and fervently actualizes his caregiving philosophy, as evidenced by his natural predisposition to be benevolent and humanistically generous to all people who are afflicted and need humanitarian help. Modi's selflessness and humility define his unique and unparalleled material detachment.

Modi envisages and hopes that India's ancient civilizational ethics, spirituality and mystical traditions can be a bridge for promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the capacity of Vishwa Guru (world teacher). He is unabashedly proud of his ancient creed, which was nurtured and is based on thousands of years of civilizational maturity and accomplishments in every field of human endeavour. Modi investigated and strengthened his spirituality by soul searching in the Himalayas and at the feet of enlightened Gurus. It is this spiritual conditioning and inquiry which liberates the restless mind from the mirage of materialism and selfish ambitions. No doubt, Modi was inspired and energized by his spiritual mentors to serve a higher purpose for his motherland. This conviction led him to become a committed and dedicated activist who saw the encroaching existential threat that looms with hideous portent to annihilate his glorious culture and absorb every Hindu into their demagogic self-righteous



fold. Today, we are seeing the fulfillment of Modi's dream that is now sweeping India with the revival of a Dharmic creed and belief system which subscribes to a way of life which respect and honor all of God's creation.

Born in 1950 to a very poor (tea sellers) Hindu family in Gujarat, Narendra was the third of six siblings. As a child, he identified with and understood the plight of impoverishment and destitution. Narendra joined the RSS when he was only eight years old and was influenced by the strong Dharmic philosophy, which embodies the organization's ideological identity and character. The operational framework and responsive communal engagement of the RSS grounded Narendra's Dharmic persuasions, gave him a sense of belonging and cemented his passion for selfless service. As a gifted administrator with clinical organizational and execution skills, Narendra became a problem solver and rose up the ranks in the RSS to become the CM of Gujrat. In this CM role, Modi's impressive visionary and leadership skills blazed to new heights by transforming Gujrat into India's most successful and functionally progressive

state without the widespread corruption that was stifling the nation's progress.

In 2014 Modi became India's Prime Minister and set about to change history by resolutely committing himself to reclaim and transform his motherland by decolonizing the mindsets of an implacable bureaucracy that was suffocating efficiency, growth and geopolitical respect. He instinctively knew that the challenges ahead would be tough, given the multitude of festering challenges on many fractured internal political and communal issues coupled with external border tensions with China, Pakistan and Jihadist terrorism in Kashmir.

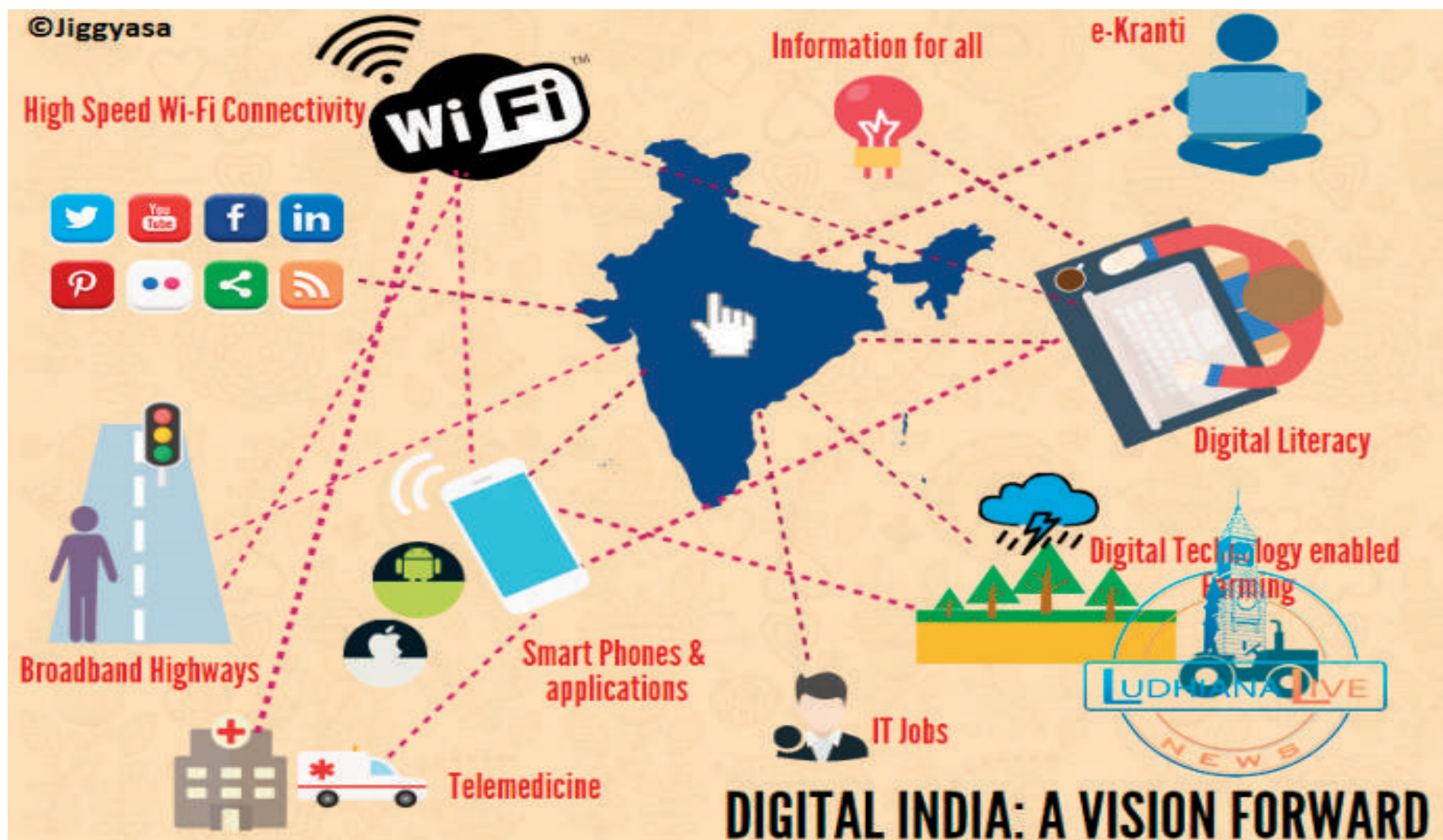
Modi recognized that over 1400 years of hostile foreign invasion, subjugation and forced conversions unceremoniously robbed and cleaved his country to become subservient and apologetic. Also, the incompatible Islamic/Hindu contentious disputes which led to the partition of India in 1947 have again reached new levels of toxic discord, with the potential for escalating communal unrest and violence. Hopefully, integral governance and wise leadership will bridge this divide through education and a better under-

standing of our common human aspirations to be free, unmolested and with the right to exist as equals, befitting our talents, potentials and individual beliefs.

Until recently, Hindus, globally, feared that their ancient culture and faith were under existential threat by the relentless insidious conversion schemes that principally target Hindus. Not surprisingly, given his love and steadfast devotion to this Dharmic creed, Modi recognized that this bigoted demagogic degrading and abuse of Hindu beliefs is an unacceptable travesty of India's secular constitutional charter. A charter which affirmed, with punitive laws, the protection of all religious faiths to be free from harm and harassment and the right to peaceful co-existence and the safe practice of their respective beliefs.

In this regard, Modi has made significant progress in building credible bonds of friendship and cooperation with many Islamic and Christian nations. His guiding dharmic philosophy subscribes to the belief that all life on this fragile planet is one and that our collective survival and progress are co-dependent, as per the Vedic aphorism:





"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." Modi has, time and again, referred to and demonstrated that this noble virtue underpins our common humanity. We have seen his altruistic caregiving as a first responder in providing food, clothes, health supplies and shelter to ALL countries and people who are afflicted with natural disasters, calamities, and viral infections, like COVID.

Also, the exquisite new BAPS temple in Abu Dhabi, which was recently inaugurated by Modi, attests to his bridge-building commitment and inclusivity outreach, by showing that our diversity enriches each other and the world...at large.

**MODI'S UNPRECEDENTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS, SINCE BECOMING BHARAT'S PM.**

#### 1) Promoting peace and unity:

Under Modi's leadership, India has experienced extraordinary transformative changes by leapfrogging with bold strategies, structural reforms and tactical initiatives to not only boost India's GDP by creating value in every sector of India's economy but also to unite the world to stand together in our common quest to live in peace and harmony with the freedoms that everyone is entitled to, as a birthright.

#### REFORMS:

As a visionary social reformer, Modi initiated some bold reforms, which at first drew criticism but have now proven to be the right decision in order to change the archaic processes and roadblocks which was preventing India from reclaiming its glorious historical accomplishments and prestige. Many of these reforms have already proven to be instrumental in increasing India's productive capacity, capabilities

and competitiveness.

#### 2) Clean India Campaign (Swachh Bharat Abhiyan):

Modi launched this program in 2014 with the goal of transforming India into a global leader by investing in key logistical infrastructures with modern roads, trains, airports, toilets, toilets for over 50 million citizens, cooking gas for 30 million families, etc.

#### 3) Demonetization:

India's economy was hemorrhaging with black money corruption and uncontrolled counterfeit pilfering.

To curb this, Modi withdrew the 500 and 1000 rupee notes from circulation to control this contemptible debt-based crime.

#### 4) Goods and services tax:

This initiative was a necessary requirement to simplify and control India's antiquated state-controlled tax structure from a national centralized perspective. Modi introduced a single unified GST Tax which facilitated a more seamless and understandable tax base for the domestic economy and also for the manufacturing sectors' competitive pricing benefit.

#### 5) Digital India:

Here, Modi has leveraged technology to empower all Indians to become more inclusive in the nation's forward march to become the technology hub of the world. This initiative is now a key mandate in the improvement of all Government and corporate services.

#### 6) Save the daughter, Educate the daughter:

The dowry system was like a blight for many Indian families. Many were forced to sell their possessions and even property to marry their

daughters, resulting in many families aborting their Girl fetus. This program is now empowering women to take control of their careers and lives.

#### 7) Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana:

This financial inclusion banking program has now enabled every Indian to have a digital deposit, withdrawal and savings account, nationwide.

#### 8) Make in India:

Recognizing that India must grow its domestic economy and manufacturing base to effectively compete in a dynamic global sphere, Modi is aggressively promoting "make in India" to encourage domestic manufacturing with the goal of attracting foreign investment.

#### 9) Aadhaar:

Every major nation has established that the need for credible identification of its citizens is a must for the effective management of government support services like housing, medical, welfare programs and also national security. India's massive 1.5 billion people needed to be better accounted for with a formalized identity system. As expected, some minority groups found this to be intrusive and criticized the programs as being prejudicial to their self-serving agenda.

#### 10) Abrogation of article 370:

Here, Modi demonstrated great courage and skill in passing this controversial bill to unify and integrate Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh into India's inclusive union territory fold, with the same rights, protection and benefits, similar to every other union territory.

#### 11) Security - Domestic and Foreign:

Modi has invested heavily in protecting India and its citizens from terrorism and also external existential threats from China and Pakistan, principally. India is now the world's third-largest spender on military defence and internal security. India has reduced domestic terrorism by 77%.

#### 12) Foreign Policy and Global leadership

Modi's global popularity, as a transparent principle-based leader, has made him very popular with many heads of state who have come to admire his straightforward leadership and inclusive humanitarian sentiments and predisposition. Modi subscribes to a harmonious and progressive one-world family, where no one is left behind, as a foundational responsibility of good governance and global leadership.

Modi has resolutely committed his body, mind and soul to uplift his beloved Bharat Mata and all of its citizens to live in peace and prosperity. He seeks to reclaim the pride and glory that once defined and showcased India as a great nation which promoted vocational education and spiritual teachings to the, then, know world. However, centuries of invasions and plunder eviscerated and disembowelled his native landscape(s) with horrific destruction, genocides and suffering. Now, he envisages and aspires to ignite a kinder world order where humans can, again, look upon each other and our fragile planet as a sacred gift from God. A very special and wonderful place for all of us to protect and live in peaceful co-existence. All life is sacred and deserving of respect.



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## TRAVEL

# Hindu religious site in Malaysia is getting a major upgrade

The custodians of an ancient Hindu religious site in Malaysia are planning to install an escalator as an alternative for those visitors either unable or unwilling to climb the 272 steps leading to its temple and cave shrines.

The Batu Caves are one of Malaysia's most popular tourist attractions. They serve as a religious site for Hindu worshippers and are the focal point of the annual Thaipusam festival every year.

Located a few miles north of the capital Kuala Lumpur, the site is thought to be around 400 million years old and is easily recognizable by its towering flight of rainbow stairs, which have made it popular with Instagrammers.

To reach the temple housed in a limestone cave at the top, visitors must currently climb 272 steps.

Adding an escalator would make the site "more accessible," a spokesperson for the site's management committee told a press conference Friday.

"We hope the government will assist us since this (escalator) will allow the disabled and elderly who are unable to climb the steps to reach the main temple," said temple committee chairman R. Nadarajah.

Construction of the escalator, as well as a new "multipurpose hall" will begin after this year's Thaipusam festival which falls on January 25, Nadarajah added.

The hall is estimated to cost around 35 million Malaysian (\$7.5 million), Nadarajah said. He did not say how much the escalator would cost.

Tourists visiting Malaysia flock to the Batu Caves to see their famous rainbow stairs, which were painted as part of an effort by the temple's organizing committee to attract more people to the site.

Batu Cave officials say the strategy has worked, pointing out the colorful stairs have become popular with Instagrammers.

However, the rejuvenation has also courted controversy with the Malaysian heritage board, which says the steps were painted before the makeover was approved.



Batu Caves is one of Malaysia's most popular attractions



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# Cedella Marley to donate Bob Marley's guitar to Island SPACE Caribbean Museum

Cedella Marley will donate a guitar that belonged to her father, reggae legend Bob Marley, to the Island SPACE Caribbean Museum in Broward County, Florida.

Cedella made the announcement during the inaugural Reggae Genealogy music festival and concert event at Broward Mall this past weekend, where she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Island SPACE Caribbean Museum.

"I think any Caribbean museum should have a little piece of Bob. So I will be donating to the museum one of my father's guitars. Treat it nice, okay?" she said after accepting her award on stage, presented by Island SPACE President Calibe Thompson.

Cedella has not only contributed to the preservation of Bob Marley's legacy, but has also made significant contributions to Jamaican culture and sports.

She is the CEO of her father's recording label, Tuff Gong International. She also helps run her family's charitable organization, 1Love.

Cedella is the acting director of the Bob Marley Foundation, which seeks to deliver social interventions throughout Jamaica through educational and community development initiatives. Additionally, she oversees Hope Road Merchandising, LLC, a Marley family entity that manages the rights to Bob's name and likeness, and the Marley merchandising conglomerate House of Marley.

Up until last month, she was also a sponsor and official ambassador of the Jamaica Reggae Girlz team. She most notably helped fund the team through their surprise qualification for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup.

She is also a three-time Grammy



Island SPACE president Calibe Thompson (right) presents the lifetime achievement award to Cedella Marley. Island SPACE board member and Reggae Genealogy chair Lloyd Stanbury stands to the left. | Photo: RJ Deed

Award-winning singer.

Marcia Griffiths, dubbed the "Queen of Reggae," along with Patricia "Miss Pat" Chin of VP Records were also presented with Lifetime Achievement Awards, in a nod to the upcoming Women's Month.

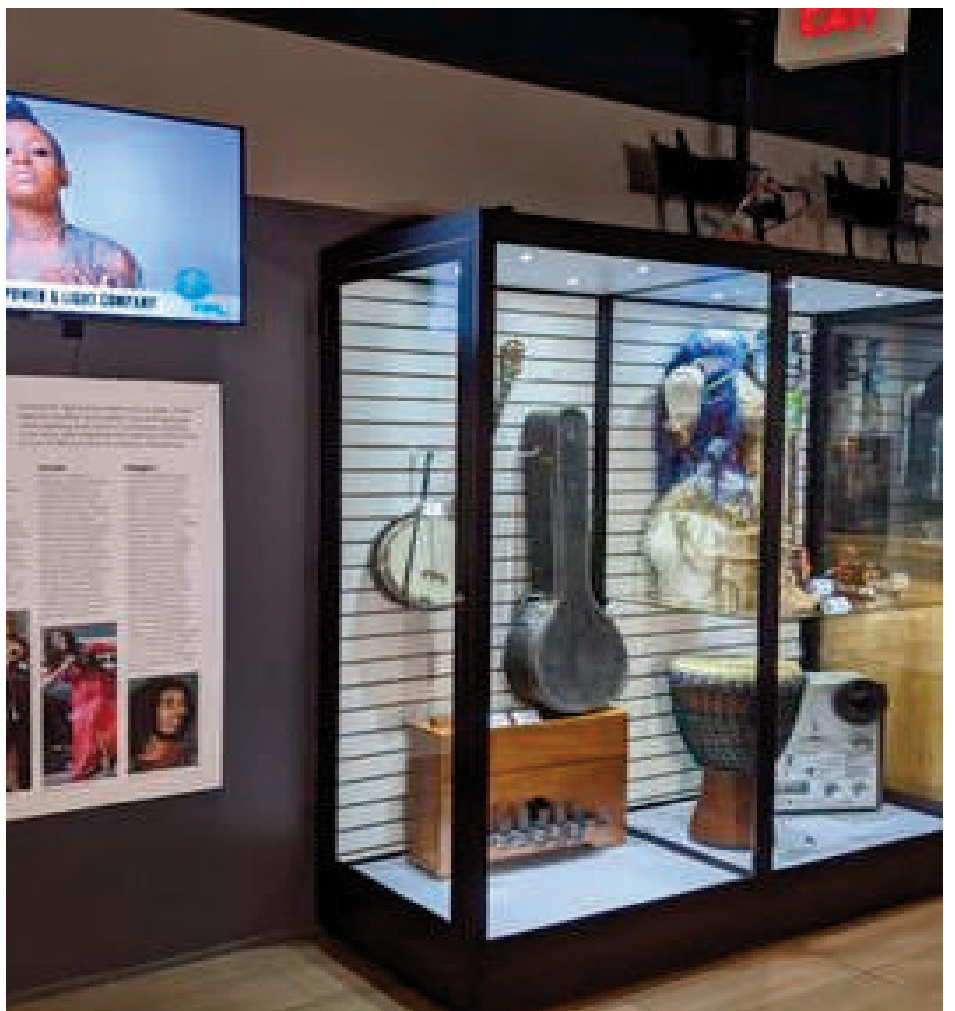
The three women were celebrated for their lasting impact on the global stage through their contributions to Jamaican music.

The significance of this recognition extended beyond the museum's walls, as Broward County Commissioner Hazelle Rogers presented keys to Broward County to all three honorees. She highlighted the importance of blending entertainment with education, particularly within Broward County.

City of Plantation Mayor Nick Sortal echoed this sentiment by presenting keys to the City of Plantation to each of the musical icons, expressing his hope for the enduring presence of Reggae Genealogy within the community.

Rita Marley, the esteemed matriarch of the Marley family, received a private tour of the Island SPACE Caribbean Museum. She gave an endorsement of the museum's efforts to preserve Caribbean music culture.

Island SPACE is the only pan-Caribbean Heritage Museum in the United States.



Some of the artifacts on display at the Island Space Museum



Bob Marley with his guitar



# Marley biopic breaks Box Office records, sparks tourism boom in Jamaica

Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Honorable Edmund Bartlett, heralds the upcoming release of the Bob Marley biopic 'One Love' as a pivotal moment for the nation's tourism and film sectors.

Premiering in Jamaica on January 23 and subsequently showcased in major international cities, the film hit screens worldwide on February 14.

Paramount Pictures' Bob Marley: One Love hit the screens across 3,500 theaters in the US, raking in a solid \$14 million in ticket sales on February 14th.

This impressive debut instantly secured its place as the top-grossing midweek Valentine's Day release to date. The record previously belonged to 2012's The Vow (\$11.5 million).

Audiences gave the film an A CinemaScore, and it boasted a perfect 5 out of 5 rating on Comscore PostTrak.

According to Boxoffice Pro analyst Shawn Robbins, early projections suggest a robust opening weekend haul in the range of \$30 million to \$40 million.

This biopic marks the first time that Bob Marley's life and musical journey is being showcased on the big screen.

Produced in partnership with the Marley family, the film stars Kingsley Ben-Adir as Marley, alongside Lashana Lynch as Rita Marley, and James Norton as Chris Blackwell.

Jamaicans featured in the movie include musicians Naomi Cowan, J-Summa, Aston Barrett Jr., Hector Roots Lewis, Sheldon Shepherd, and singer Sevana.

Filming took place in London, where Marley spent those critical years, and Jamaica.

The film is being regarded as a pivotal moment for Jamaica's tourism and film sectors, according to Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett.

Exit surveys revealed an overwhelmingly positive response, with a staggering 80% of moviegoers expressing a strong inclination to recommend the movie to others. On top of that, Bob Marley: One Love is riding high with a stellar 95% audience score on Rotten Tomatoes.

Looking beyond US borders, the film is set to make waves internationally, with premieres scheduled in 47 markets this week, including Australia, Benelux, Brazil, France, Germany, Mexico, Scandinavia, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

Fans in Italy can mark their calendars for February 22nd, while audiences in Korea and Japan can anticipate releases on March 14th and May 10th, respectively, as the film



continues to captivate audiences worldwide throughout the spring season.

Minister Bartlett underscored the significance of the movie's high-profile premieres, noting the attendance of luminaries like Prince Harry and Meghan Markle at the Jamaican debut, alongside Brad Pitt and other A-listers in Los Angeles.

These star-studded events have captured global attention, providing an extraordinary platform to spotlight Jamaica and its vibrant tourism offerings.

Emphasizing the film's role as a

cultural ambassador, Minister Bartlett anticipates its resonance with audiences worldwide, sparking interest in Jamaica's rich heritage and inviting travelers to immerse themselves in the island's unique culture.

Bartlett's remarks were delivered by Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) Regional Director, Odette Dyer, at the Montego Bay-based dance group First Dance Studios' 10th anniversary media launch at the S Hotel in St James on February 6.

Beyond its impact on tourism,

'One Love' promises to invigorate Jamaica's burgeoning film industry.

By showcasing the life of reggae icon Bob Marley to an international audience, the film amplifies Jamaica's appeal as a prime location for cinematic storytelling.

Minister Bartlett underscored the country's picturesque landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and talented pool of actors and filmmakers, positioning Jamaica as a compelling destination for film production.



# Broward County Stadium undergoes major renovation for ICC Men's World Cup

In preparation for the International Cricket Council (ICC) Men's T20 World Cup in June 2024, the Broward County Parks and Recreation Division has embarked on a \$8.4 million renovation project at Central Broward Park and Broward County Stadium.

The endeavor, aimed at updating the stadium's infrastructure, promises not only to elevate the venue to international standards but also to inject vitality into the local economy.

On Tuesday, Broward County officials commemorated the commencement of this transformative initiative with a groundbreaking ceremony at Central Broward Park and Broward County Stadium.

With cricket being the second most-watched sport globally, the selection of Broward County Stadium in Lauderhill, Florida, as one of three U.S. host sites underscores the significance of this undertaking.

The renovation project is poised to generate a ripple effect in the local economy, offering job opportunities and luring visitors to South Florida.

As the tournament kicks off on June 1, cricket enthusiasts from around



The Central Broward Park and Broward County Stadium: venue for T20 games in June

the world will converge at Broward County Stadium, breathing new life into the region's hospitality and tourism sectors.

The ICC has confirmed a series of major matches scheduled at Broward

County Stadium, including Sri Lanka versus Nepal on Tuesday, June 11, USA versus Ireland on Friday, June 14, India versus Canada on Saturday, June 15, and Pakistan versus Ireland on Sunday, June 16. Notably, the sta-

dium's capacity will double from its current 5,000 to approximately 10,000 permanent seats, thanks to the installation of covered VIP grandstands, general ticketholders grandstands, and other essential facilities.

## Shamar Joseph makes history as first West Indian to secure ICC Player of the Month

Fast-bowling sensation Shamar Joseph has made history by becoming the first West Indian cricketer to be awarded the International Cricket Council's Player of the Month for January, following his outstanding performances in the recent two-Test series against Australia.

Joseph's remarkable display saw him claim 13 wickets during the series, earning him the Man of the Series title. His standout moment came in the final Test match in Brisbane, where he produced a sensational spell, taking seven wickets for just 68 runs to help secure an eight-run victory for the West Indies and their first Test win on Australian soil in nearly three decades.

Expressing his delight at receiving the award, the 24-year-old stated, "I am extremely delighted to win this award. To get such an award on the world stage feels special."

Reflecting on his memorable performance in Brisbane, Joseph added, "Taking the wicket to win the match was a dream! It was a truly memorable moment for me, and I just want to continue to work hard and deliver more match-winning performances for the West Indies with the ball: and when re-

Acknowledging the support he received from teammates and support staff during the tour, Joseph emphasized that the award is a testament to the collective efforts of the team and the fans in the West Indies.

Joseph's impactful debut on the international stage saw him make an immediate impression, with a five-wicket haul in the first innings of the opening Test in Adelaide. His performance included dismissing elite batsmen such as Steve Smith, Marnus Labuschagne, and Travis Head, showcasing his talent and potential as a rising star in West Indian cricket.

Miles Bascombe, Director of Cricket for Cricket West Indies (CWI), extended congratulations to Joseph on behalf of the organization, expressing optimism for his future in West Indies cricket. "On behalf of Cricket West Indies, I wish to congratulate Shamar on this award. May it be the first of many in what is hopefully a long career in maroon," Bascombe stated.

Joseph's recognition as the ICC Player of the Month underscores his exceptional talent and contributions to West Indies cricket, further solidifying his status as a key player in the team's





# ExxonMobil plans offshore oil exploration in spite of Venezuela's incursions

ExxonMobil, the US oil and energy giant, announces intentions to explore for oil offshore the Essequibo region, where Venezuelan gunboats previously chased seismic research vessels in oil concessions granted by Guyana six years ago.

Alistair Routledge, President of ExxonMobil Guyana, reveals plans to drill two exploration wells west of Liza and Payara. Despite tensions, Routledge assures that the exploration activities will proceed as planned.

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro unilaterally extended the maritime boundary in 2015, leading to

naval interceptions of research vessels in 2018. Despite concerns, Routledge affirms the legality of ExxonMobil's agreement with Guyana under local and international law.

ExxonMobil plans to invest approximately US\$60-70 million in each exploration well, with potential cost escalation for additional data gathering and stem drill tests.

Routledge welcomed the Argyle Declaration between Guyana and Venezuela, emphasizing collaboration between the US and Guyana in defence, diplomacy, and energy supply.



One of ExxonMobil's offshore exploration vessels

## Guyana will capitalize on carbon credits to increase its revenue

Guyana is strategically focusing on increasing its revenue from carbon credits as it strives to mitigate its environmental impact, especially in light of its burgeoning offshore oil reserves, Latin Finance reports.

In late 2022, this South American nation inked a significant agreement with US-based oil and gas producer Hess Corporation. Finance Minister Ashni Singh indicated to Latin Finance that Guyana is poised to initiate new carbon credit deals when the market conditions are favorable. The agreement with Hess, a member of a consortium involved in oil exploration in Guyana, encompasses a value of \$750 million in carbon credits spread over a 15-year period.

This landmark deal accounts for approximately one-third of the total carbon credits that Guyana can offer, according to Singh. He expressed that they received multiple offers when finalizing the agreement with Hess, affirming that there is substantial interest from various parties. Singh, in an interview during the World Bank/IMF annual meeting in Marrakech, Morocco, emphasized the importance of timing to secure the best possible price, indicating that carbon credits represent the third source of income for the country, following domestic revenue mobilization and oil revenue. While Singh didn't rule out the possibility of issuing a sovereign bond in the future, Guyana is eager to establish its reputation in the carbon credit market.

The Hess deal holds particular significance for Guyana as private companies, led by ExxonMobil, are scaling up oil production more than 100 miles off its coast. With over 25 discoveries in Guyana's waters, the country is expected to produce approximately 1.2 million barrels of oil per day by 2027.

Guyana's first foray into carbon credits occurred in the early 2000s when it received around \$250 million from



President Dr Irfaan Ali discusses the carbon credit deal signed with Hess Oil

Norway for its efforts in forest conservation. Notably, two-thirds of Guyana is covered by Amazon forests, and the government, under President Irfaan Ali, aims to leverage the country's impressive track record in averting rampant de-

forestation, setting it apart from other members of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization. In a new category known as "high forest cover/low deforestation countries," Guyana ranks first among 33 nations globally. The govern-

ment is resolute in its stance that preserving standing forests is an efficient means of combating climate change and seeks compensation for its conservation efforts.



# Government moves to address Venezuelan migrant influx into Guyana

Guyana Parliamentary Affairs and Governance Minister Gail Teixeira has announced that the Irfaan Ali government is exploring ways to enhance the documentation process for all Venezuelan migrants entering the country.

Minister Teixeira addressed concerns raised by the APNU and AFC Oppositions regarding the influx of migrants from neighboring Venezuela, according to iNews Guyana, and strongly refuted allegations that the government was granting citizenship to numerous Venezuelan migrants for political gain in the upcoming 2025 General and Regional Elections, characterizing such claims as unfounded and illogical.

Teixeira emphasized that there had not been a sudden surge in Venezuelan migrants in recent months; rather, there had been a consistent flow of individuals from Venezuela. She provided a detailed explanation of the citizenship acquisition process in Guyana, high-

lighting the requirement of five consecutive years of residency to become a citizen and the option of marriage to a Guyanese citizen, subject to scrutiny to prevent marriages of convenience.

The minister also acknowledged the need to review the existing citizenship procedures related to marriage, suggesting that couples should spend one year living together before applying. She clarified that even without this criterion, applicants for citizenship in Guyana must undergo background checks and community visits, a process that typically takes about one year to complete.

Teixeira stressed that gaining citizenship in Guyana was not an expedited process and emphasized that Venezuelans, upon becoming naturalized citizens, were granted voting rights—a privilege also extended to Commonwealth citizens residing in Guyana for one year.



Venezuelan migrants making their way into Region Two

## Hackney, Friendship residents to soon benefit from potable water

A total of 1,600 persons living in Hackney and Friendship in Region Two will soon have a continuous supply of potable water, as two new wells are being drilled in the communities.

These wells will benefit 1,400 residents in Hackney and 200 residents in Friendship.

Overall, the two wells will service over 475 households within the Moruca/Providence Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) under which the two communities fall.

Hackney's well which is being drilled at a depth of 288 feet along with the distribution network is slated to be completed by March month-end.

The well in Friendship is being drilled at a depth of 300 feet and its distribution network is anticipated to be completed within four weeks.

Meanwhile, Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water, Susan Rodrigues explained that the Guyana Water Incorporated's (GWI) PAT Rig 421 being utilised to drill the wells is being carried out by the water company's in-house team.

While inspecting the ongoing works at the wells on Wednesday, Minister Rodrigues disclosed that pipes will also be installed along the water-front at Hackney to provide purified water to passersby.

"Additionally, over 40 households in the immediate vicinity will receive connections to their own homes. We will also have standpipes in different areas. The schools [Hackney Nursery and Primary] will benefit from direct



Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water, Susan Rodrigues inspects ongoing work at Hackney's well

connections to the well. We are very pleased with the progress we have here," she emphasised.

The communities' village councils will work along with the GWI's team to install the distribution networks.

The community of Marlborough is also slated for a new well.

Budget 2024 also caters for the drilling of new wells and installation of

water supply systems within the communities of Mashabo, St Denny's/ Tapakuma, St Monica, Dredge Creek, Baracaro, Bethany, and Wakapao.

"We have big plans for this region which we have started already... All of this will be completed before 2025," the minister assured.

Minister Rodrigues also distributed sporting gear to Hackney and

Friendship.

She was accompanied by GWI's Hinterland Services Director, Jailall Ramchand; Prime Minister's Representative of Region Two, Arnold Adams; Overseer of the Moruca/Providence NDC, Althia Giles, other engineers and officials.

(DPI)





President, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, Vice President, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, Senior Minister within the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance and Public Service, Dr Ashni Singh and the Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, Kenji Okamura and his delegation

# Guyana commended for its unmatched economic growth by IMF's top honcho

Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kenji Okamura has commended Guyana for its unmatched economic growth, as the nation is well-positioned to benefit from the steadily rising oil revenues as a result of the hard-won gains from enacting reforms and adjustments over the years.

This was highlighted by the deputy managing director in a statement issued on Thursday as a result of his visit to Guyana.

"The plans put in place by the authorities and the strong progress are benefiting the entire population through better healthcare and educational programmes, housing policies, energy, and transportation infrastructure. Most importantly, these plans are also providing current and future generations with entrepreneurial and work opportunities through very strong economic growth, and a more diversified and climate resilient economy," Okamura emphasised.

mura emphasised.

He also highlighted the government's forward-thinking Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030. The purchase and sale of carbon credits generates revenue for climate adaptation, aids Native American communities, and promotes the use of cleaner, renewable energy sources for growth. The plan which is ambitious aims for greater biodiversity and marine conservation.

Despite the recent economic growth, Guyana still has a lot of infrastructure and human resource development to do.

In light of this, he emphasised his support for government initiatives to enhance economic welfare through investments made by the general population while averting the serious risk of an economic overheating.

Okamura further stressed, "The authorities have managed this transformation successfully, thus far, and we

agreed that continuing to maintain macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability are paramount... We discussed the authorities' efforts to develop a large skilled labour force to ensure a balanced growth path with low inflation and opportunities for well-paying jobs throughout the country."

Guyana received further recognition for spearheading the effort to lower CARICOM's food import bill by 25 per cent by 2025 as it gets closer to attaining food security.

Additionally, he expressed his gratitude for Guyana's outstanding and long-standing relationship with the IMF.

He noted forward to the continued partnership through regular policy dialogue and technical assistance, including through the Caribbean Region Technical Assistance Center,

Okamura, who expressed his gratitude for Guyana's outstanding and

long-standing relationship with the IMF, emphasised that he is looking forward to the cooperation through frequent policy discussions and technical support, particularly from the Caribbean Region Technical Assistance Centre.

President, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, Vice President, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, and Senior Minister within the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance and Public Service, Dr Ashni Singh met with the Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, Kenji Okamura and his delegation, on Thursday at the Office of the President.

Senior Economist in the IMF's Strategy, Policy, and Review Department, Chad Steinberg; Executive Director for Guyana and Brazil Afonso Bevilaqua along with Mission Chief Alina Carare and Alternate Executive Director Reshma Mahabir were also in attendance.

(DPI)



# SBM Offshore Guyana launches second annual Guyana-Monaco Mousetrap Car Grand Prix

Secondary schools in Guyana are invited to participate in the Guyana-Monaco Mousetrap Car Grand Prix 2024. SBM Offshore Guyana has officially launched the competition with support from the Ministry of Education.

The Monaco Mousetrap Car Grand Prix is an annual international competition that is held in the Principality of Monaco. The competition encourages high school students to create a model race car using a mousetrap and the Laws of Physics to propel the car forward by triggering the original trap mechanism. It was created under the High Patronage of His Serene Highness, Prince Albert II of Monaco to promote Science and Engineering to students in a fun, exciting way. Through SBM Offshore, Guyana was once again invited to participate in the international event. Three exciting categories are open for entries – Acceleration, Endurance, and Innovation and Creativity.

SBM Offshore Guyana's Local Content Officer, Garri Fraser expressed, "At SBM Offshore Guyana, we believe that investing in education and providing opportunities for young minds to thrive is crucial for the advancement of our society. We are eager to witness the incredible ideas and solutions that will emerge from this competition and the impact it will have on the participating students. We believe that by empowering the young generation with the tools and encouragement they need, we are investing in a brighter tomorrow for Guyana."

Additionally, Deputy Chief Education Officer with responsibility for Amerindian and Hinterland Development, Marti De Souza, stated, "Having experienced the Guyana-Monaco Mousetrap Grand Prix 2023, I could



Some of the participants at the inaugural Guyana-Monaco Mousetrap Car Grand Prix in 2023

see the great effort put into the projects by the students and their teachers. The entries were very innovative, the designers made great use of scientific and engineering principles. Raphael Persaud of St. Stanislaus College and his teacher deservedly travelled to Monaco and viewed the Monaco Car Grand Prix. SBM Offshore has done a great job in providing this opportunity for our Guyanese students to be engaged in this competition and more so, affording them a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of witnessing the marquee Monaco Grand Prix."

Interested students can register on the website

<https://mousetraprace.sbm.gy/>. Once all the applications have been submitted, an official request will be sent to Monaco, and the mousetrap kits will be mailed to Guyana. Once the schools receive the kits, they will be given a timeframe to complete their mousetrap cars, following which the entries will be judged in the local competition, which will serve as the pre-qualifier for the international leg. The first-place winner of each category will be awarded a cash prize to purchase materials for the schools' Science Departments. Once the three best performers of each category are determined, videos of their performance will be

submitted to Monaco for entry into the international leg.

If a local team is successful in the international leg, SBM Offshore Guyana will sponsor the team's travel to Monaco where they will have a chance to view the Historic Grand Prix. In 2023, Raphael Persaud of St. Stanislaus College was successful in entering the international competition and was granted the opportunity to witness the Race of the Porsche Mobile 1 Supercup, the F1 Drivers' Parade, and the 80th Formula 1 Grand-Prix of Monaco. He also toured Nice, France and Monaco where he visited SBM Offshore's office.

## Windies wins final game, avoids a Down Under sweep

A record sixth-wicket partnership between the hard-hitting pair of Andre Russell and Sherfane Rutherford helped the West Indies avoid a series sweep in the third and final Twenty/20 international against Australia in Perth on Tuesday, with the regional team managing an impressive 37-run win.

After winning the toss, captain Rovman Powell's Windies team made a mammoth 220 for six in their 20 overs, with both Russell (71 off 29 balls) and Rutherford (67 not out off 40 balls) rattling off half-centuries.

Leading the series 2-0 after wins in Bellerive and Adelaide, the Aussies tried their utmost to clinch a 3-0 series win. However, the Windies bowlers hit their lengths beautifully and kept the dangerous Australian batting order at bay to restrict them 183 for five in their 20 overs. Roston Chase led the Windies attack with figures of two for 19 and accounted for the wickets of Player-of-the-Series David Warner and Josh Inglis. Romario Shepherd grabbed two for 31, with second-match centurion Glenn Maxwell (12)

being one of his scalps.

Warner top-scored for the hosts with 81 off 49 balls, with Tim David (41 not out off 19 balls) putting on a show at the back end of the innings with brutal power-hitting. Warner, 37, confirmed he had played his last game on Australian soil and he said he will bow out from international cricket at the end of this year's T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and the US.

"We did not start the series the way we wanted to start it. We had catch-up cricket to play," said Russell, who was adjudged Man-of-the-Match. "We got it right tonight. Congrats to the boys. I think we had a total team effort."

Struggling at 79 for five in the ninth over after losing the wickets of Johnson Charles (four), Nicholas Pooran (one), Kyle Mayers (11), Chase (37 off 20 balls) and Powell (21 off 14 balls), the Caribbean team got a game-changing 139-run partnership off just 67 balls between Rutherford and Russell for the sixth wicket – the highest sixth-wicket

stand in the history of T20Is.

"I was not worried about (Rutherford) being on strike and getting more of the strike. He was going really well. I was just there supporting him."

West Indies were on 179 for five at the start of the penultimate over of their innings which was bowled by Adam Zampa. Russell was on 33 when he was dropped in the over by Tim David, and he made Australia pay by hitting four sixes and a four in the over to push West Indies' score well over 200.

The two-time T20 World Cup champions did not meet the objective of getting a T20I series win, but massive hitting by Russell and Rutherford, to go along with a fine all-round effort by Chase, saw the visitors pull a game back as the series ended 2-1 in the Aussies' favour.

"Congrats to Australia on the series win, but I think we are happy with where we are at as a team. To be here in Australia and scoring 200 runs consistently for the last three games is definitely a plus for us," Russell said.



# Chowtal season has started at Campbellville Mandir

By Dowarka Persaud

The joyful Chowtal season has begun in Guyana, marking the start of the Hindu spring, and bringing our communities together. This lively musical tradition, a cherished part of Hindu culture, fills our hearts with joy each year.

Last Tuesday night, the CAMPBELLVILLE MANDIR was alive with excitement as Chowtal singing echoed through its walls. For about 15 minutes, singers and drummers put their hearts into their music, creating a captivating atmosphere. Everyone was involved, and by the end, both performers and devotees were thrilled.

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Chowtal singing has been a part of Guyana's culture for over 170 years. Originating in India, this folk music is known for its high energy and changing rhythms, captivating both performers and listeners alike.

Before the Chowtal singing, we enjoyed a beautiful session of prayers, pujas, and bhajan singing celebrating Basant Panchmi and Maa Saraswati, the start of the Holi season, led by the priest and members of the Mandir. The President of the Dharmic Sabha, Dr. Vindiya Persaud, Minister of Social Services and Welfare was also present, taking part in the services and showing her leadership by being there for the entire services.

The evening concluded with Arti and final prayers, followed by an announcement for temple members to join the Chowtal singing lessons for the next six weeks leading up to Holi, the festival of colors. The Prasad and Bhojan that followed were delicious too.



Chowtal at the Campbellville Mandir

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# Commemorating the Year of the Dragon- A Magnificent Celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year

By Dowarka Persaud

The Association of Chinese Enterprises in Guyana (ACEG) hosted a magnificent celebration last Friday evening to commemorate the Chinese Lunar New Year, heralding the arrival of the Year of the Dragon. The event, held at the exquisite New Thriving Restaurant in Providence, East Bank Demerara, was a spectacle of style and beauty, treating guests to an unforgettable experience filled with delectable cuisine, mesmerizing musical and cultural performances, and inspiring speeches from dignitaries.

The Year of the Dragon symbolizes auspiciousness, wisdom, fertility, and charm, setting the perfect tone for the evening's festivities. Adding to the event's prestige, notable business leaders and politicians from both China and Guyana graced the occasion with their presence.

The celebration commenced with a sumptuous dinner, featuring a variety of dishes that delighted even the most discerning palates, truly fit for royalty. Dinner was served throughout the evening, allowing guests to savor each moment of the event. The national anthems of Guyana and China reverberated through the venue, setting the stage for the festivities ahead.

Mr. Su Rui Hui, President of the Chinese Association of Guyana, delivered the opening remarks, warmly welcoming guests to the festivities. The evening's entertainment began with a mesmerizing performance of the Soaring Dragon Song and Dance by Guyanese performers, captivating the audience with its beauty and grace.



This was followed by a melodious rendition of the Congratulations Song sung by Gongxi, a Chinese national.

The Windsor Forest Primary School added to the cultural tapestry with a stunning folk dance honoring Chinese

culture and heritage. The evening was further enriched by captivating performances by both Guyanese and Chinese nationals, showcasing their talents and the beauty of the Chinese cultures.

Distinguished guest speakers added depth and significance to the celebration. Her Excellency Guo Hai Yan, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Guyana, highlighted the history and shared values of Guyana and China, emphasizing the continued cooperation between the two nations for mutual benefit. Ambassador Yan graciously interacted with the crowd, engaging in conversations and photo opportunities with the media and business leaders.

The Honorable Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark A. Phillips also addressed the audience, underscoring the rich history of collaboration, understanding, and respect between China and Guyana. He praised the enduring friendship between the two countries, which has flourished over the past 50 years, leading to fruitful exchanges in all areas of national development. He conveyed President Mohamed Irfan Ali's gratitude for China's invaluable contribution to Guyana's development. The Honorable Prime Minister concluded the evening with a heartfelt address, expressing deep appreciation for the opportunity to speak at such a momentous occasion.

In conclusion, the celebration was a brilliant showcase of Chinese culture and tradition, befitting the Chinese people and their rich heritage.

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