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NEW HOSPITAL: President Dr Irfaan Ali turned the sod to commence the construction of a new US\$161 million modern hospital in New Amsterdam, Region Six—a significant step towards establishing a Level Five facility in the region. President Ali emphasised that the hospital is not just a standalone facility but will operate on a hub-and-spoke mechanism, connecting health centers in the region through telemedicine. The structure will include a minimum of five operating theatres, one specifically for cardiac surgery and advanced digital X-ray and CT Scan machines. It will be the second public facility to house an MRI machine and will be equipped for transplants. Two additional buildings will be constructed within the compound – one for a teaching facility and another for a modern psychiatric facility. VAMED Engineering is executing the project. Pictured here, from L-R. Hon. Zulfikar Mustapaha (Minister of Agriculture) David Armogan (Region six chairman Guyana), Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony (Minister of Health) and H.E. Dr. Irfaan Ali (President of Guyana)



GUYANA-TRINIDAD-BARBADOS FERRY: A former transport minister in Trinidad and Tobago is applauding a plan by T&T, Guyana and Barbados to create a company that will establish a ferry service between the countries. Chan-dresh Sharma (inset) made the comment in response to an announcement by Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali that all three Caricom states would be embarking on a new trade-related project and that a company was formed on Thursday to do so. Speaking at the signing of the agreement for the construction of a 220-metre long four-lane Wismar Bridge in his country on Friday, Dr Ali said the new bridge will create more opportunities for trade between Brazil, Guyana and other Caricom nations including the trio that is planning to invest in ferries. Ali announced that T&T, Guyana and Barbados had formed "the first company ... a joint company that would work to the introduction of a ferry system for passenger and cargo between Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Barbados. That would open up massive opportunities!" Dr Ali said. In response, Sharma said it was a welcomed initiative towards the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) and may help to reduce regional travel expenses. "I think it's an excellent idea, long overdue. The cost of goods roving through the islands—one of the huge challenges we face is the timely delivery of goods and costs. The countries coming together to pursue such will increase trade, will increase the movement of goods and services. When we think of goods, we also have to think of the services that the goods will require to reach its destination and to be consumed as well, even if it's goods that may be for house building or in agriculture," Sharma said. Above is a picture of a ferry of the type being considered by the new inter-country company.

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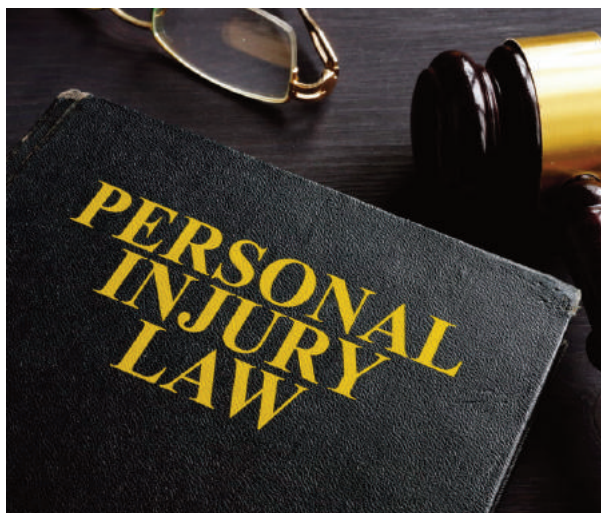
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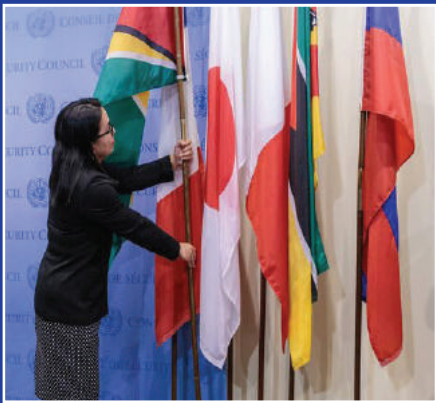
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PRESIDENT ALI PLEDGES CONTINUED PROGRESS, HIGHLIGHTS NEW YEAR PLANS



*His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali,
President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*

President Ali delivered a hopeful New Year's address to Guyanese, outlining achievements of 2023 and promising further progress in 2024. He highlighted resilience in the face of challenges, economic growth, and investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and security.

Read Full Text of the President Ali's New Year 2024 Address to the Nation

My fellow Guyanese, Happy New Year! It is with immense joy and optimism that I extend warm greetings to all Guyanese, both at home and those in the diaspora. As we bid farewell to the

old and welcome the new, I wish every one of you a joyous and prosperous New Year.

GRATITUDE AND THANKSGIVING

I express the nation's deep gratitude to those who have selflessly served during the past year. To our brave men and women in uniform, we owe a debt of appreciation for the sacrifices they have made and continue to make in maintaining vigilance against all threats, from within and beyond our borders. Their dedication ensures the safety and security of our Motherland.

To the nurses, doctors, and all medical

personnel who have been guardians of our health and well-being, we extend a heartfelt appreciation.

I also extend a special word of thanks to our educators who continue to shape the minds and values of our youth.

The same gratitude extends to our public servants, farmers, fisherfolk, miners, and foresters, each playing a vital role in our national development.

To our mothers and fathers, our elders, we recognize and appreciate your invaluable contributions. The lessons you impart and the wisdom you share are the bedrock upon which the strength of our society is built.

To the young people of our nation, thank you for your vitality and vision for a better world. Your enthusiasm and energy infuse us with hope and inspire us to strive for a better tomorrow.

Heartfelt acknowledgement is also extended to the private sector, which has remained steadfast at the wheel of our economy, helping to steer our nation towards our goal of shared prosperity.

As we step into the New Year, we are filled with the promise of a fresh start. It is a time to right wrongs, make resolutions, and strengthen the bonds

of friendship and family. The New Year is also a time to look back and learn from the year that has now faded into the recesses of history, but whose lingering effects still remain.

REVIEW OF 2023

The past year, tested our collective determination as a nation. It brought trials, threats and triumphs, development, and instances of despair.

We mourned the loss of our precious angels at Mahdia and the tragic deaths of our heroic servicemen in a helicopter crash. In these moments of anguish, our people united, sharing grief and providing moral and material support to those who have lost loved ones. These tragedies were indeed jolting, but they did not floor us. We did not wilt or waver. We proved that we are a resilient nation. We rose to the challenge, surmounting our difficulties and collectively shouldered our burdens. Every time misfortune hit us, we stood tall and unified.

The past year also witnessed a threat to our sovereignty and territorial integrity. I am heartened by the unity displayed by our people in defending our Motherland and unequivocally rejecting any unfounded claims

to our territory. Our commitment to peace and the resolution of disputes through peaceful means, and in accordance with international law, remains unwavering.

I extend my thanks to the Opposition for standing in solidarity with the government on this crucial and critical issue. I thank all Guyanese for the massive outpouring of patriotic fervour in response to the threats we faced. Together, we presented a unified front against threats to our territory, reinforcing our collective determination to protect the sovereignty of our beloved Guyana.

The past year also saw successes and triumphs. Our economy remains on a rock-solid footing, registering in 2023 phenomenal economic growth that is estimated at almost 40%. This achievement is not just a number; it is a reflection of the concerted efforts and strategic decisions made to propel our economy forward.

Our national transformative development agenda is not merely a plan on paper; it is being actively rolled out, and our citizens are witnessing the breath of transformation that accompanies these investments. As a consequence,

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GUYANA JOINS THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL: PARTNERING FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY

History was made on January 2nd as Guyana officially took its seat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2024-2025 term. Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations, Ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-

Birkett proudly raised the Guyana flag alongside those of other Council members, marking a momentous occasion for the nation.

This isn't Guyana's first time on the Council, having previously served in 1975-1976 and 1982-1983. But this time, the country arrives

with a clear vision: "Partnering for Peace and Prosperity."

Ambassador Rodrigues-Birkett in a brief statement acknowledged the growing complexity of maintaining international peace and security in a world facing multidimensional

challenges. She emphasised the need for proactive conflict prevention and comprehensive responses to existing conflicts. Importantly, she stressed the importance of a people-centered approach, including the involvement of women and youth, to find solutions.

Guyana's tenure on the Council will be rooted in a firm commitment to multilateralism and guided by the priorities of (i) climate change, food insecurity and conflict; (ii) peacebuilding and conflict prevention; (iii) women, peace and security; (iv) protection of children in armed conflict; and (v) youth,



Guyana Ambassador alongside those of other newly elected Security Council members outside the Council chambers

peace and security.

To further these priorities, Guyana has already endorsed the "Joint Pledge on Climate, Peace, and Security" and joined the "Statement of Shared Commitments on Women, Peace, and

Security."

Guyana's entry into the UN Security Council marks a significant step forward for the nation and a promise to contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous world for all.



The Guyana Team

HISTORIC DEAL SIGNED: NEW US\$35M MACKENZIE/WISMAR BRIDGE TO BOOST TRADE AND LOGISTICS

The government has signed a contract with the China Railway Construction Corporation Limited (CRCC) to build a new US\$35 million bridge across the Demerara River. The new bridge will connect the towns of Mackenzie and Wismar in Region 10 (Upper Demerara-Berbice).

The contract signing ceremony took place in Linden, and was attended by President Dr. Irfaan Ali. President Ali said that the project must be completed in two years' time to support the increased number of vehicular crossings in the mining town.

The current bridge was constructed in 1967 by the Demerara Bauxite



President Ali, government ministers and other officials turning the sod for the new bridge

Company (DEMBA). The structure is a two-lane bridge that has become a crucial road link for the region. However, it is no longer able to handle the increased traffic volume.

The new bridge will be a four-lane concrete bridge, and will be able to accommodate much more traffic. It

will also be wider and taller than the current bridge, which will allow for larger vessels to pass underneath.

The new bridge is part of a larger development plan for Guyana. The president noted that the government is investing in infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges,

and airports in order to boost the country's economy. The new bridge will connect the Linden to Lethem trail with Georgetown, Guyana's capital city and commercial hub.

The Linden to Lethem trail is also connected to Brazil in the south by the Takutu

Bridge at Lethem. And in the north and east, new infrastructure projects such as the East Bank highway expansion and the forthcoming Corentyne Bridge connecting Guyana and Suriname will position Guyana as the logistics hub of northern South

America.

The new bridge is expected to be completed in 2026. It will be a major boost for the economy of Region 10, and will help to improve transportation links between Guyana and its neighbours.



The current bridge which was constructed in 1967

GUYANA'S LEADERS CRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROADMAP



The leaders in discussion

Guyana's top brass, President Irfaan Ali, Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Prime Minister Mark Phillips, and Finance Minister Dr. Ashni Singh, are putting their heads together to build a robust roadmap for the nation's economic development. This collaborative effort, evident in a recent Facebook post by President Ali, promises a **"careful and considerate approach"** to meet the aspirations of Guyanese.

The post emphasises two key pillars of the plan: long-term vision and inclusive growth. The leaders are not just tackling immediate concerns; they are crafting a sustainable framework

for future generations. This translates into policies that prioritise fiscal responsibility and widespread wealth creation, ensuring everyone benefits from the nation's progress.

President Ali's words, **"resilient approach to managing our finances and growing wealth at every level in our society,"** resonate with this commitment to financial prudence and equitable distribution. This marks a significant shift from short-term fixes to a long-term strategy that prioritises sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

The involvement of these key figures further underscores the government's dedication

to transparency and collaboration. By working together and engaging with the public through social media, the leadership team sends a clear message: Guyana's future is being built on a foundation of shared vision and collective effort.

While the specifics of the development plan remain under wraps, the focus on resilience, inclusivity, and long-term vision offers a promising glimpse into Guyana's economic future. Citizens can anticipate a roadmap that prioritises responsible financial management, equitable distribution of resources, and a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

GUYANA IN TALKS WITH FIVE POTENTIAL INVESTORS FOR OIL REFINERY

Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo has confirmed that talks regarding a potential oil refinery in Guyana are still active, with five investors currently shortlisted. This comes despite divergences from the government's initial parameters and ongoing exploration of alternative options like strategic reserves.

During a press conference at the Office of the President, Shiv Chanderpaul Drive, Georgetown, the vice president revealed that after discussions with interested parties, only five investors remain in contention.

One shortlisted group is from the Dominican Republic. He explained that some investors seek changes to the government's initial refinery specifications, sparking discussions about fairness and project nature. **"If you change the parameters, you often change the nature of the project and you're wondering whether it would be fair to the other people. So, clearly, the need for energy security is vital,"** he explained.

competitor to the refinery concept, the government is also studying strategic oil reserves.

The vice president emphasised the need for careful assessment of all options, ensuring long-term economic and developmental benefits for Guyana. **"This is not something that we are just going to do on a whim. We are looking at every option, and all the studies, and numbers, because often it's the numbers that will ultimately influence the decision. These things have to be viable and good for our country in the long run, because an investment of that nature, is about 30,**

to think it through carefully," he said

The proposed refinery, initially envisioned for Crab Island, would process 30,000 barrels of oil per day to meet regional demands and promote value-added production.

A functioning refinery could provide Guyana with the facility to process crude oil into various components for different industries (fuels, transportation, paving, electricity, chemicals). It will increase autonomy and stability in fuel supplies for both Guyana and the Caribbean region, and contribute to potential job creation, revenue generation, and industrial development.



AI-generated refinery image

BUDGET 2024 TO BE PRESENTED THIS MONTH- TO FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT, DISPOSABLE INCOME

Guyana's national budget for 2024 is set to be presented to the National Assembly in January, according to Vice President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo. This announcement was made at his first press conference of the year, held at the Office of the President in Georgetown.

"We're working in earnest to get the budget out early so we can continue



Senior Finance Minister presenting the 2023 Budget to the National Assembly

the development programme and fulfil the promises that we made to the people," Dr Jagdeo expressed.

He emphasised the budget's focus on two key pillars: Implementing mechanisms to increase disposable income for citizens. This could involve salary increases, tax reductions, and job creation initiatives; and Developing Guyana's economic and social

infrastructure. This includes investments in areas like education, healthcare, and transportation. These priorities align with the PPP/C's manifesto of 2020, which aim to build a foundation for prosperity for all Guyanese.

The 2024 budget follows the successful passage of the 2023 budget, the largest in Guyana's history at

\$781.9 billion. This budget included no new taxes and focused on policies to increase disposable income, such as raising pensions, public assistance, and the "Because We Care" cash grants.

The upcoming budget is expected to continue these efforts and provide further details on the government's plans for development in 2024.

TECHNICAL TEAMS PREP FOR SECOND MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENTS ALI AND MADURO

Efforts are underway to schedule a meeting between technical teams from Guyana and Venezuela, paving the way for a second face-to-face encounter between President Irfaan Ali and Nicolas Maduro in Brazil. This follows the December 2023 meeting in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, aimed at easing tensions over the Essequibo territorial dispute.

Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who facilitated the first meeting, confirmed efforts to schedule a technical team session in Brazil before the leaders' next encounter. **"...I am profoundly encouraged by the letter dated January 2, 2024, from the President of Guyana to the President of Venezuela in respect of arranging the first meeting of 'The Joint Commission'"**



Prime Ministers Gonsalves and Skerit along with the regional leaders facilitating discussions between Presidents Ali and Maduro during the December meeting

in Brasilia to advance further "the Argyle Declaration" and its purposes," Prime Minister Gonsalves said in a letter to both Presidents.

This session will involve Foreign Ministers and technical experts from both countries, as agreed upon in the "Argyle Declaration"

signed at the first summit in December. The December meeting, brokered amid rising tensions due to Venezuela's renewed claims on the Essequibo region, resulted in an 11-point declaration promoting peace and avoiding escalation.

Venezuela has long claimed the Essequibo

region, representing two-thirds of Guyana's territory. This claim intensified recently with a Venezuelan referendum and map redrawing, prompting Guyana to take the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Despite these discussions, Guyana maintains its position of seeking

a final and binding resolution through the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

PM GONSALVES BLAMES "INNOCENT OVERSIGHT" FOR PHOTO WITH VENEZUELAN MAP THAT INCLUDES GUYANA'S ESSEQUIBO

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Gonsalves has addressed the controversy surrounding a recent photo of him posing with a Venezuelan map including Guyana's Essequibo region. He claims the incident was an "innocent inadvertence" on his part.

In a letter addressed to Presidents Ali and Maduro, PM Gonsalves explained that the photo was taken at an event in December 2022, where someone associated

with the Venezuelan Embassy placed the map in front of him without his knowledge. He assumed it was related to the event's theme of honouring Simon Bolivar.

While acknowledging the sensitive nature of the issue, Gonsalves expressed regret that the photo had caused unnecessary tension.

Despite this incident, PM Gonsalves reaffirmed his commitment to facilitating dialogue between Guyana and Venezuela and hopes to move forward from this misunderstanding. He emphasised the importance of understanding the emotional complexities surrounding the dispute while seeking peaceful solutions.



GUYANA GEARS UP FOR NOVEMBER 2025 ELECTIONS: REGISTER NOW AND MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

Guyana's upcoming general elections are drawing closer, with Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo hinting at a possible November 2025 date. To ensure your vote counts, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) is holding a crucial Claims and Objections exercise, which began on January 2nd, 2024.

WHO CAN REGISTER?

Guyanese citizens by birth, descent,

naturalisation, or registration

Citizens from a Commonwealth country living in Guyana for at least one year

Anyone who turned 18 years old by December 31, 2023

HOW TO REGISTER:

Visit your local GECOM Registration Office between January 2nd and 15th, 2024.

Bring your original Birth Certificate, valid Passport, Adoption Certificate, Form F,

or Naturalisation Certificate/Certificate of Registration.

ALREADY REGISTERED?

Check the Preliminary List of Electors (PLE) online at <https://gecom.org.gy/public/home/resource-hub/cno2024-1> or at your local GECOM office.

Make sure your information is accurate. If not, update it during the Claims and Objections exercise.

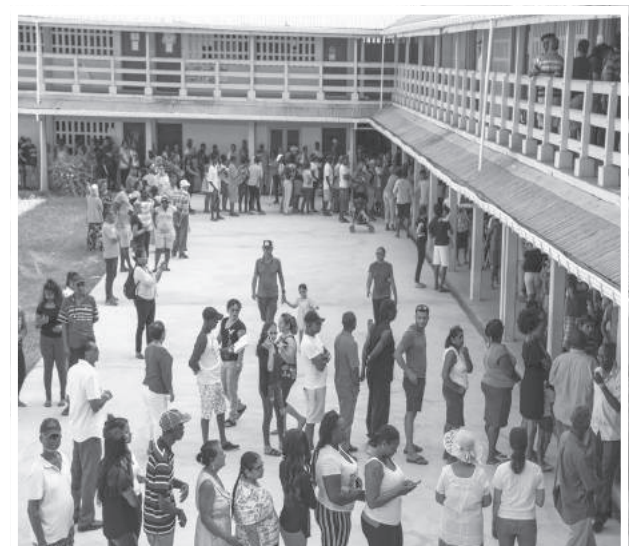
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You can object to someone's registration if you believe they shouldn't be on the list.

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Register, update, or object during the Claims and Objections exercise. Your vote matters!



Voting at the March 2, 2020 General and Regional elections

PRESIDENT ALI ASSUMES CARICOM CHAIRMANSHIP - PROMISES GROWTH AND REGIONAL SOLIDARITY

Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of Guyana, officially assumed the Chairmanship of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on January 1, 2024. In a stirring statement he outlined his vision for the year ahead with focus on regional security, food and energy security, climate change, and advancing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

REGIONAL SECURITY AND PEACE

President Ali emphasised the unwavering commitment to maintaining CARICOM as a Zone of Peace, highlighting efforts to resolve border disputes peacefully and combatting crime and illegal weapons trade through the “War on

Guns” campaign. He pledged continued support for Haiti’s return to stability, and reiterated the region’s adherence to international law.

FOOD AND ENERGY SECURITY

Recognising the importance of food security, President Ali acknowledged the progress made towards the “25% by 2025” target of reducing the region’s food import bill, and pledged to build on these achievements. He also stressed the need for reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy services to support agricultural innovation and improve regional transportation.

CLIMATE CHANGE

President Ali firmly advocated for early

operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund established at COP28 and fair access to financing for SIDS and low-lying coastal states disproportionately impacted by climate change. He highlighted their ongoing call for major emitters to fulfil their emission reduction commitments.

CARICOM INTEGRATION

Underscoring the importance of the 50th anniversary of CARICOM, President Ali reiterated the commitment to free movement within the Community, establishing a regional capital market, and increasing participation from various sectors in building the CARICOM Single Market and

Economy. He also emphasised the need for partnerships with young people to drive innovation and economic development.

IMPROVED LIVES FOR ALL

President Ali stressed the core objective of CARICOM: improving the lives of citizens through high-quality healthcare, relevant education, secure living environments, job creation, and a conducive investment climate. He expressed optimism for the future, citing CARICOM’s existing achievements and ongoing initiatives.

GUYANA’S LEADERSHIP

President Ali expressed Guyana’s honour in holding the



President Ali with the Caribbean Community’s (CARICOM) Secretary General, Dr Carla Barnett, at the Office of the President on Shiv Chanderpaul Drive

Chair for the first half of 2024 and invited all CARICOM Heads of State and Government to attend the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference in Georgetown in February

2024. He urged everyone to approach the year with optimism, and a shared desire for unity and prosperity.



HMS Trent

The deployment of the United Kingdom (UK) patrol vessel HMS Trent to Guyana for joint exercises has sparked concerns about escalating tensions between Guyana and Venezuela. However, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, General Secretary of the People’s Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C), assured that the exercises are routine and pose no threat to Venezuela.

Dr. Jagdeo, at a press conference, emphasised that President Ali has

assured both St Vincent and the Grenadines’ Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves and Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro that the exercises are purely defensive in nature.

He reiterated that Guyana has no intention of invading Venezuela and respects the Argyle Declaration, which prohibits both countries from using force against each other.

The exercises are part of a larger effort to bolster Guyana’s defence



General Secretary of the PPP, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo

capabilities, and better protect its exclusive economic zone and territorial integrity.

Dr. Jagdeo clarified that these measures are not meant for offensive purposes, but rather to enhance Guyana’s ability to police its own borders. “Whatever we do here has been routine, and has been long planned, and it’s part of our building a defensive capability in Guyana,” he stated.

Despite Venezuela’s historical claims to the



President Dr Irfaan Ali

Essequibo region, Dr. Jagdeo emphasised the importance of peaceful dialogue and diplomacy.

The Argyle Declaration serves as a crucial step towards de-escalating tensions and fostering a more cooperative relationship between the two nations.

Following recent speculations, President Ali had issued a firm statement on his facebook page addressing concerns about activities within the country’s territory. He reiterated

that neither Venezuela nor any other nation should fear any threat or aggression emanating from Guyana.

“We harbour no ambitions or intentions to covet what does not belong to us,” declared President Ali, emphasising Guyana’s unwavering commitment to peaceful relations with all neighbours and regional states. He reaffirmed the nation’s dedication to promoting and pursuing national development while upholding peace as a core principle.

President Ali clarified that Guyana’s internal security partnerships with regional and international players solely aim to enhance internal security within Guyana’s borders, and pose no threat to any other nation. He

dismisses notions of these partnerships being used for offensive purposes or constituting aggression against any state.

Instead, President Ali underlined Guyana’s long history of positive partnerships, both regionally and internationally, aimed at strengthening internal security. These collaborations, he emphasised, are driven by a desire for stability and progress, not aggression or territorial ambitions.

Concluding his statement, President Ali extended his best wishes to the people of Venezuela, highlighting their shared status as neighbours. This gesture further reinforced Guyana’s commitment to maintaining peaceful and friendly relations with all regional states.

MONEY TRANSFERRED FROM NRF IN 2023 KEPT IN LINE WITH BUDGET ALLOCATION

On December 27, the Guyana Government transferred US\$152.1 million (equivalent to G\$31.6 billion) from the Natural Resource Fund (NRF), bringing the total withdrawn for 2023 in line with the budget

allocation, a release from the Ministry of Finance noted.

This final withdrawal marked the culmination of a year of transparent and accountable management of Guyana’s oil wealth, as stipulated

by the amended NRF Act of 2021. The Act mandates annual parliamentary approval for NRF withdrawals, ensuring responsible and sustainable utilisation of these resources for the benefit of the nation.

The NRF, established in 2019, receives revenue from Guyana’s oil production. It is intended to provide a buffer against resource price volatility, fund long-term development projects, and benefit

future generations.

The government’s responsible management of the NRF is a positive step for Guyana, promoting confidence and attracting further investments.

The success of the

2023 budget allocation demonstrates a commitment to fiscal responsibility and good governance, paving the way for a sustainable and prosperous future for the country.

CABINET SHUFFLE:
MINISTER SONIA PARAG TAKES OVER LOCAL GOVERNMENT MINISTRY,
DR. ASHNI SINGH NOW RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

In a surprise announcement on his Facebook page, President Dr Irfaan Ali revealed that Minister Sonia Parag has been reassigned to lead the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Minister Parag, who headed the Public Service Ministry, will now focus on accelerating community-oriented programmes and initiatives within local government structures like the Neighbourhood

Democratic Councils (NDCs), Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs,) and municipalities, working alongside the Minister within the Ministry Anand Persaud.

“We want to empower local governance as we deliver better lives for our people,” President Ali emphasised.

To fill the Public Service void, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with



Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development Sonia Parag



Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance Dr. Ashni Singh

responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, will take on the additional portfolio. This expansion of Singh’s responsibilities reflects the crucial role the Public Service Ministry plays in shaping management policies and overseeing the flagship Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) programme.

GOAL, a key part of President Ali’s commitment to human development, provides

over 20,000 scholarships for online and distance learning, empowering individuals to advance their education and contribute to the nation’s growth.

This cabinet shuffle signifies the government’s commitment to both strengthening local governance and prioritizing public service development, with key figures at the helm of each crucial sector.

NEW HIGH-RISE COMPLEX
TO CENTRALISE GOVT SERVICES

The government is set to begin construction of a massive new high-rise office complex in the first quarter of 2024. The complex, which will house several government ministries and agencies, is expected to be completed by 2026.

The project was announced by Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, at a year-end press conference in December 2023. Minister Edghill said that the complex will be located about one kilometre east of the second roundabout at the new Eccles/Haags Bosch roundabout and will be built on 20 acres of

land.

The complex will feature four towers that will have the capacity to hold approximately 6,000 staff. The goal of the project is to increase efficiency by consolidating government agencies into one location, thereby improving the delivery of services to citizens.

“Rather than people running from different places to get service from an agency, several agencies will be in one complex,” Minister Edghill explained. “So, when you drive there and you park and you come out, you could get

several services done.”

The project has been funded with a \$2.6 billion budget allocation that was approved in 2022. The contractor for the project is Caribbean Green Building Inc.

The public works ministry will be the first to be relocated to the new complex. The ministry has under its purview the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD), the Work Services Group, and the Transport and Harbours Department, among several others.



The complex will feature four towers that will have the capacity to hold approximately 6,000 staff

SOD TURNED FOR TIMEHRI SANDS GOLF COURSE

Born from the DaSilva family’s newfound love for golf during the pandemic, the Timehri Sands Golf Course and Country Club is much more than just a sporting facility. It’s a vibrant symbol of Guyana’s thriving investment climate, welcoming environment for diaspora contributions, and commitment to diversifying the nation’s economy.

Minister of Culture Youth and Sport, Charles Ramson hails the project as a testament to improved systems and a strong signal of Guyana’s openness to diaspora investments. Speaking at the sod-turning ceremony, the Sport



Minister of Culture Youth and Sports, Charles Ramson MP with the owners of the gold course, the DaSilva Family

Minister emphasised that Timehri Sands is not just about oil and gas, but represents the wider range of opportunities available in the country.

Minister Ramson was particularly pleased with the environment his ministry has created for the sports sector transformation. He highlights the importance of sending

signals about major developments, especially those beyond the oil and gas sector, to attract diverse investments.

The US\$3 million, 72-acre course, owned by the DaSilva family, aligns perfectly with the government’s vision of hosting world-class events and expanding the sports sector. Minister Ramson emphasised the

potential for boosting sports tourism, youth opportunities, and national sporting variety.

The diaspora unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by Rosalinda Rasul, reiterated the government’s support for feasible projects that contribute to Guyana’s economic development. She encouraged diaspora members with passionate projects to reach out, citing Timehri Sands as proof that the systems work and support is available.

Kurt DaSilva, son of the investor and head of public relations, outlined ambitious plans. He envisions working with ministries to introduce golf into school curriculums, partnering

with regional investors to host international tournaments, and offering a comprehensive facility with training, a clubhouse, a spectator track, and equipment sales.

The project is expected to be

completed in two years. The golf course, when completed, is expected to facilitate both local and international tournaments. It will consist of nine holes and imported grass maintained by a sprinkler system.



Minister Charles doing an honorary hit into the golf site

BERBICE MOM RECEIVES DREAM HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

A single mother in Berbice received the ultimate Christmas gift: a new, fully furnished home courtesy of the government's Men on Mission (MoM) initiative and generous support from the community.

President Ali personally visited the Belvedere community along the Corentyne coast to present the keys to the mother of six. Joining him were senior officials like Finance Minister Ashni Singh, Housing Minister Collin Croal, and Guyana Defence Force's Chief of Staff Brigadier Omar Khan.

"This glorious moment," the President declared as he cut the ribbon, **"is a reminder of the community's support and your responsibility to yourself and your children."** He encouraged the mother to embrace government's resources for personal development, and



Anita Lloyd and her family were chosen by MoM after her situation was highlighted by members of civil society

prioritise her children's education.

Private businesses generously furnished the house and pledged to provide school supplies for the children. This heartwarming collaboration embodies the true spirit of Christmas and community.

President Ali, emphasising the government's commitment to housing, highlighted the success of distributing house lots and improving homes through MoM and the Housing Ministry. **"Providing shelter is replicated a thousand times over,"** chimed in Senior Minister Singh, praising the President's dedication to housing needs.

The Chief of Staff revealed plans for an expanded MoM programme in 2024, involving communities in educational initiatives aimed at positively impacting youths.

FAMILIES GET NEW HOMES IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



Antonio Alexis holding the certificate to his new house

Five families received the most precious gift of all: the keys to their own homes in time for Christmas. Thanks to the government's Adequate Housing and Urban Accessibility Programme, their dreams of homeownership became a reality.

Four families in Parfaite Harmonie and one in Diamond/Grove finally have a place to call their own. Tandasey Oneil, one of the lucky recipients, beamed with joy. **"No more mortgage,"** she exclaimed, her voice filled with relief. **"Debt-free and our**

own home – it's the perfect Christmas present!"

Candase Wrights, another beneficiary, spoke of the significance of this moment. **"No more rent worries, no more studying by candlelight. This is a new chapter,"** she declared, her eyes shining with gratitude. **"From struggle to privilege, it's a turning point."**

For Burton Kelly, the wait is finally over. **"Five years,"** he said, tears welling up in his

eyes, **"but today, I move into my own home. Thank you, government, for this milestone!"**

Antonio Alexis, a single father, watched his children dance with excitement. **"I expected February, but this is a surprise Christmas miracle,"** he shared, his voice thick with emotion. **"Finally, a roof over our heads."**

And for Hilbert Pilgrim, a pensioner, the timing couldn't be better. **"Just right,"** he smiled, his daughter by his side. **"My own home, at long last."**

These families weren't just handed houses; they were handed hope. Their hard work and resilience paid off, with the government and the Inter-American Development Bank providing a helping hand. Each two-bedroom house, complete with kitchen and bathroom, is a testament to their faith and perseverance.

Housing Minister Collin Croal celebrated this achievement. **"More than just allocating land, we want to empower ownership,"** he stated. **"These core houses address a crucial need, offering stability and opportunity."**

With 75 houses already allocated and \$1.2 billion invested, the programme is making a difference.



Housing and Water Minister Collin Croal handing over a core home to Candase Wright

HOUSING MINISTRY CROSSED 30,000 HOUSELOT MARK IN THREE YEARS - ALLOCATED OVER 9,600 IN 2023

Guyanese have reason to celebrate as the government allocated 9,612 housing lots in 2023, pushing the total over the past three years to a remarkable 30,466. This impressive achievement signifies a commitment to affordable housing for all, with a focus on empowering women, youth, and low-to-middle-income earners.

The year 2023 saw the highest annual allocation yet, with 8,578 residential lots, 181 residential-commercial lots, and 860 regularised lots. Region Four dominated with 7,118 allocations, followed by Region Three with 1,079, according to Minister of Housing and Water, Collin Croal at a press briefing at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC).

The Dream Realised flagship



A young woman receiving her house lot from Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water, Susan Rodrigues

programme fueled the allocation of 28,368 residential lots.

Minister within the Ministry, Susan Rodrigues highlighted that over the last three years, 40% of house lots went to women, and 53.3% of all recipients were aged 35 or under.

Meanwhile, Minister Croal informed that the ministry

continues to seek additional lands to meet the needs in other areas, even as new housing areas are being developed in Regions One, Two, Seven, Nine.

Despite exceeding allocation targets, Minister Coal noted the 75,509-application backlog inherited in 2020 has shrunk to 63,032, with 13,000 new applications received.

The continued focus on expanding land acquisition, diversifying housing options, and streamlining the application process will be crucial in meeting the remaining demand and fulfilling the government's 50,000-lot manifesto commitment.

GUYANA ON TRACK FOR FREE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: PHASED APPROACH STARTS IN 2024

President Ali has announced a phased plan to make education at the University of Guyana (UG) free, starting in 2024. This fulfils a key promise of the PPP/C government to open up higher education opportunities by 2025. The president made this announcement during a live broadcast- 'A conversation with the president'.

The first step focuses on current UG students with outstanding loans. The president assured that addressing their loan burden will be a priority. This initiative reflects the government's commitment to ensuring affordability and accessibility of higher education.

Meanwhile, the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) programme continues to make a difference. Over 20,000 scholarships have been granted for various academic levels, from certificates to PhDs. The programme initially aimed for 20,000 scholarships, but its overwhelming success led to an expansion.

Furthermore, the government is investing in preparing future generations for key sectors like oil and gas and hospitality. The Oil and Gas Training College and the Hospitality Institute in Port Mourant, Region Six are being established to equip Guyanese youth with the necessary skills.

DEMERARA BANK OPENS LEONORA BRANCH - FUELING REGIONAL GROWTH IN GUYANA

Demerara Bank Limited (DBL) recently celebrated its expansion and contribution to Guyana’s development with the opening of its ninth branch in Leonora, Region Three. The impressive \$485 million facility operates entirely on solar power, showcasing the bank’s commitment to sustainability.

During the commissioning President Ali lauded the bank’s success, attributing it to a supportive government policy framework,



The impressive \$485 million facility

sound fiscal planning, efforts. “Banks do not and collaborative become successful by

themselves, it is the policy framework, it is the government, it is the fiscal planning,” he underscored.

He highlighted the significant reduction in non-performing loans from 12% in 2018 to 3% today, showcasing the bank’s stability and responsiveness to national needs.

President Ali also urged DBL to embrace “innovation, reorientation, and integration” to stay ahead in the evolving financial landscape. The bank plans a digital

transformation next year, aiming to reduce physical transactions and embrace a faceless banking system. This shift, driven by technology, is envisioned to unlock opportunities for nearshoring, creating jobs, and stimulating the economy.

President Ali pointed to impressive growth in private sector credit, with notable increases in key sectors like rice milling (59.2%), agriculture (34.9%), and mining (25.1%). DBL played a crucial role in facilitating this growth, contributing to the overall development of Guyana’s economy.

President Ali also highlighted the government’s plans for Region Three, including new infrastructure projects like a stadium, hotels, apartment buildings, and shore base facilities. He envisions the region undergoing massive transformation in agribusiness, investment opportunities, manufacturing, and industrial development.

CJIA SOARS PAST 729,000 PASSENGERS IN 2023, AIMING FOR MILLIONS MORE



Public Works Minister Bishop Juan Edghill welcoming home Guyanese and visitors from abroad in the annual CJIA Christmas Meet & Greet

The Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) is taking off at record speed. The airport processed over 729,000 passengers in 2023, reflecting an 11% increase compared to 2022.

This surge has been bolstered by government initiatives and a thriving oil and gas sector.

“We’re seeing growth, and we are looking forward to the million mark very soon,” declared Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill at the ministry’s year-end presser. The government aims to transform Guyana into a premier tourism hub, connecting the Caribbean and South

America through its vibrant airport.

Cargo handled at CJIA also saw a substantial jump, exceeding 11 million tonnes – a 25% increase over last year. Imports and exports both flourished, with agricultural exports soaring by 45%, proving the government’s

agricultural plan is bearing fruit.

The increased traffic reflects the success of government investments in infrastructure and services. New airlines joining the fold contributed to 4,316 landings, further fueling the airport’s growth.

T&HD SHINES IN 2023: BOOMING METRICS, CARGO HUB, AND IMPROVED SERVICE

The Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD) had a successful year in 2023, exceeding expectations and demonstrating its vital role in Guyana’s transportation network. Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, highlighted these achievements during the ministry’s year-end press conference, dispelling misconceptions and showcasing the department’s diverse and dynamic operations.

Eye-catching

statistics:

- **Vehicle Movement Surge:** An impressive 106,627 vehicles traversed various T&HD routes, testament to the department’s reach and importance beyond the water taxis plying similar routes (481,648 vehicles).
- **Cargo Champion:** T&HD facilitated the transportation of a substantial 195,623 tonnes of cargo, underlining its vital



The MV MA Lisha has transformed North West operations

contribution to the logistics and trade sectors.

- **Essequibo Flourishes:** The Essequibo route saw bustling activity with 472,723 passengers, 106,397 vehicles, and 182,55 tonnes of cargo crossing the waterway.
- **Operational Excellence:**
- **Demerara Bridge**

Efficiency: Despite occasional news-making incidents, the Demerara Harbour Bridge saw 97% of its retractions for marine traffic occur during off-peak hours, minimising disruption, and showcasing efficient management.

- **Bridge Growth:** Ocean-going vessels increased by 8%, tug and barges by a remarkable 86.9%, and a total of 8,348,322 vehicles crossed the bridge in

both directions (a 28% increase over 2022), highlighting the need for the upcoming four-lane bridge.

- **Enhanced Connectivity:**
- **North West Progress:** The MV MA Lisha has transformed North West operations, with weekly services and even two boats operating on some days, offering improved accessibility and frequency for underserved regions.

CANAWAIMA FERRY COMPLETED 538 TRIPS BETWEEN GUYANA AND SURINAME IN 2023

The Canawaima Ferry Service, a crucial link between Guyana and Suriname, has seen remarkable success in 2023, completing 538 round trips between January and November. This impressive feat was announced by Public Works Minister, Bishop Juan Edghill,

during a recent press conference.

“This is more than just once daily,” Minister Edghill emphasised, highlighting the ferry’s consistent operation. “They have moved 14,466 vehicles across the Corentyne River,” he added, showcasing

the service’s vital role in facilitating trade and transportation.

The Canawaima Ferry Service provides seamless travel for passengers and essential cargo, with over 88,000 passengers utilising the vessel throughout 2023. Furthermore,

the service has proven financially successful, generating a profit of \$46,214,782 with expenditures amounting to \$140,159,764. This financial stability reflects the ferry’s efficient and robust operations.

To further enhance

the travel experience, a new duty-free shop was launched in August, offering travellers a wider range of goods and services.

Looking ahead to 2024, exciting plans are underway to optimise the ferry’s performance and passenger comfort. These include the procurement of a new marine engine. This will ensure enhanced reliability and efficiency, minimising

disruptions and delays.

Renovation of the loading ramp is also on the card. Repairs and the replacement of wooden rails with galvanised iron will improve safety and durability.

Also in the pipeline is the construction of a new washroom: This will provide much-needed convenience for arriving passengers, enhancing their overall experience.

GUYANA'S OIL BOOM: A MODEL OF MANAGEMENT

Despite criticism, Guyana's oil and gas industry is shining brightly, lauded as one of the best-managed in the world. This claim is backed by reports from esteemed institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

At a recent press conference, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, General Secretary of the PPP/C highlighted several key factors contributing to this success:

LOCAL CONTENT ACT: This 2021 law empowers Guyanese,

opening doors for hundreds to find work and launch businesses in the oil sector. Dr. Jagdeo emphasised its unprecedented nature, calling it **"unbelievable"** to industry experts due to the high level of local involvement.

NRF REFORM: Transparency and accountability reign supreme in the Natural Resources Fund, thanks to government reforms. It's now a model for others around the globe.



Overall, Dr. Jagdeo painted a picture of a thriving, well-managed oil and gas industry

MODERNISED REGULATIONS: The Petroleum Activities Act received an update, and a 2023 auction for oil blocks ensured fair competition, replacing the old **"first-come-first-served"** system, Dr Jagdeo pointed out.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP: Guyana is at the forefront of ending gas flaring, boasting stricter environmental permits than most. Dr. Jagdeo proudly proclaimed this as **"great progress"** in

the sector.

CARBON CREDIT DEAL: Guyana is a pioneer, striking a major deal with Hess Corporation for the sale of high-quality carbon credits.

Overall, Dr. Jagdeo painted a picture of a thriving, well-managed oil and gas industry in Guyana. While criticism exists, the country's achievements in transparency, local participation, and environmental responsibility are undeniable.

ANNAI AND KARASABAI LATEST BENEFICIARIES OF SOLAR FARMS



Prime Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd), Mark Phillips commissioned two solar mini-photovoltaic (PV) farms

Prime Minister Mark Phillips brought a wave of renewable energy and digital opportunities to the remote communities of Annai and Karasabai in Guyana's hinterland. He commissioned two solar mini-photovoltaic farms, illuminating the path towards brighter futures for the Region Nine residents.

"Energy means everything to us," declared the Prime

Minister, emphasising the government's commitment to bridging the energy and digital divides across the country. The solar farms, with capacities of 41.5kW in Annai and 46.5kW in Karasabai, will provide reliable, clean power to public buildings and fuel community development.

Beyond powering lights, the projects also bring connectivity.

The Annai community centre received a \$5 million facelift, and a new ICT hub will connect residents to the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) and other online opportunities. Prime Minister Phillips pledged full functionality of the hub, promoting education and fostering



The newly built ICT Hub under the Office of the Prime Minister's ICT Access and E-Services for Hinterland, Poor, and Remote Communities Project.



The Solar PV Mini-grid installed in Annai is a 41.5kW (ground-mounted) PV Array comprising 83 – 505Wp solar PV modules.

a more connected "One Guyana." These mini-grid systems align with Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy, marking a shift towards renewable energy sources.

In Karasabai, the Prime Minister emphasised the government's comprehensive approach to development, aiming to improve lives and livelihoods through such initiatives. He encouraged residents to harness the new energy source for economic growth, venturing into cottage industries and boosting production.

Dr. Mahender Sharma, head of the Guyana Energy Agency, urged responsible usage of the solar power, ensuring its sustainability and long-term benefits.



The switch is turned on at Kamwatta

Over 100 households in Guyana's hinterland villages of Kamwatta and Parakeese in the Moruca sub-region are now basking in the glow of electricity for the first time. This milestone was achieved thanks to the commissioning of two generators, each costing \$13.5 million, marking a

significant step forward in the government's electrification programme for Amerindian communities.

The official switch-on ceremony was a momentous occasion for the residents. Minister of Housing and Water, Collin Croal

KAMWATTA AND PARAKEESE GET FIRST TIME ELECTRICITY ACCESS



Parakeese electricity generating system commissioned

had the honour of officially turning on the generators, symbolising the dawn of a new era for these communities.

In Kamwatta, 80 households are now

connected to the grid, while Parakeese benefits from a system that can power up to 80 homes, currently serving 25. This electrification not only brings light and convenience to residents, but also unlocks new possibilities for education, healthcare, and economic development.

Minister Croal urged the community members to take ownership of their newfound resource and ensure its longevity through proper maintenance. He emphasised, **"This is part of the continuation of government's programme for electrification for communities... the current households that you have now, the generator is expected to power everyone."**

The hinterland electrification programme goes beyond generators. The government is also actively installing solar panels in Amerindian communities across the country. This approach ensures a sustainable and environmentally friendly source of power, complementing the grid-based systems.

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW DEMERARA RIVER BRIDGE
MOVING AHEAD - PRESIDENT ALI CONDUCTS INSPECTION



President Ali visited the eastern end of the construction site

President Ali inspected the construction site of the new Demerara River Bridge, receiving positive updates on progress. With 33% of the bridge structure already completed, the project is steadily pushing towards its December 2024 completion deadline.

Construction (Caribbean) Co Limited, the contracted firm, assured the President of their continuous round-the-clock work. The company currently employs 378 workers across the Peter's Hall and La Grange construction sites.

Currently, the focus is on drilling and casting piles to create the foundation for the decking platform. Some piles have already been poured at the eastern end, and soon concrete work will begin on the western side as well.

President Ali, accompanied by Minister within the Ministry of Public Works Deodat Indar, also visited the eastern landing site and identified areas for connecting roads. These roads will link the bridge to the Heroes

Highway and the under-construction Eccles-Ogle highway, significantly improving traffic flow along the West Bank of Demerara, the East Coast of Demerara, and to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport.

The new bridge promises to not only replace the aging existing Demerara Harbour Bridge, but also revolutionise transportation within Guyana. Once complete, it will offer a wider, four-lane crossing with increased capacity, reducing travel times and boosting economic activities.



Some 33 per cent of the bridge structure had been completed

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS DONE ON DHB IN 2023

While a new Demerara River Crossing is being built to ease traffic congestion, the existing Demerara Harbour Bridge (DHB) received some much-needed repairs in 2023. Critical maintenance works were undertaken to ensure the bridge's structural integrity and keep it operational for the thousands of people who rely on it daily.

Major Enhancements:

- New retractor span (Span 9) installed: A crucial component for opening the bridge to allow for river traffic.
- 95 buoys were rehabilitated and installed: These maintain the stability of the bridge's pontoons.



Maintenance work being carried out on the bridge

- 56 pontoons were rehabilitated, the floating platforms that support the bridge's roadway.
- 239 wire ropes were replaced: These connect the buoys to the anchor blocks.
- 204 anchor blocks were replaced, securing the bridge to the riverbed.
- 9 transom beams were replaced to support the bridge's deck.
- 77 end posts were replaced, providing structural support at

the bridge's edges.

- 175 anchor chains were replaced, securing the pontoons to the anchor blocks.

These efforts ensure the bridge's smooth operation and continued service to the thousands

who rely on it daily.

Meanwhile, a total of 4,035 vessels transited the retractor span in 2023, with nearly equal northbound and southbound traffic. Through careful management and

collaboration with stakeholders, bridge openings for marine traffic are strategically timed to minimise disruptions during peak traffic hours.

The DHB also took a significant step towards building human capacity and fostering skilled professionals. In January, it was licensed as a Master Apprenticeship Training Centre, and in October 2023, training commenced for 11 young adults in welding and fabrication. This two-year programme equips participants with both theoretical and practical knowledge, preparing them for successful careers in bridge maintenance and related fields.



Maintenance work being carried out on the bridge

MAJOR STELLING UPGRADES
PROMISE EFFICIENT TRAVEL

Travellers across Guyana can look forward to a smoother and more efficient experience as major upgrades to four key stelling are nearing completion. Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, made the announcement recently, highlighting the significant progress on these multimillion-dollar projects.

Kingston Goods



Passenger waiting to board the MV MA Lisa in Mabaruma Region One

Wharf is 35% complete, while Port Kaituma Stelling stands at 77%. Progress is also underway at Kumaka Stelling with 18% completion and Morawhanna Stelling at 34%. All four projects are expected to be finalised by the third quarter of 2024.

These upgrades, particularly in Region One (Barima-Waini), aim to ease the

transportation burden for residents and ensure the prompt delivery of goods and services. The improved facilities will also be able to accommodate the US\$12.7 million MV MA Lisha, a massive 70-meter-long, 14.5-meter-wide vessel.

Twice the size of the current MV Kimbia and MV Barima, the MV MA Lisha can transport 274 passengers, 10 cars, four trucks, and 10 containers of cargo at a speed of 14 knots per hour. This translates to considerably

shorter travel times for passengers, and faster delivery of goods to the region.

These stelling upgrades align perfectly with the PPP/C government's manifesto commitments to improve the lives of citizens. The focus is on enhancing waterborne travel, boosting business and economic trade, and facilitating the safe, efficient, and comfortable transportation of goods and services.

A SEASON OF SERVICE:

HIGHLIGHTING ACTS OF KINDNESS THAT SPREAD CHRISTMAS CHEER



DHARM SHALA RECEIVES \$1.5 MILLION BOOST FOR A HEARTWARMING CHRISTMAS



The warmth of Christmas extended beyond festive lights and sugary treats this year at the Dharm Shala in Albouystown. President Ali, continuing a heartwarming tradition, visited the institution on Christmas Day, bringing not only holiday cheer, but also a generous \$1.5 million donation to support the care of the elderly residents.

This marks the fourth Christmas President Ali has spent with the Dharm Shala family, a testament to his commitment to honouring and supporting the elderly community. In his remarks, he commended the management and staff for their dedication, recognising the vital role institutions like the Dharm Shala play in upholding “the humanness of living and humanity itself.”

He highlighted the institution as a beacon of love and care, particularly in these times of global challenges. He emphasised the invaluable contributions of the elderly population to Guyana’s development, ensuring they are celebrated not just during the holidays, but throughout the year.

Beyond the president’s words, the day was filled with festive spirit. Residents enjoyed a delicious Christmas feast accompanied by musical entertainment. President Ali even spread joy beyond the Dharm Shala walls, distributing toys to children in the community, ensuring everyone felt the warmth of the season.

This isn’t the first time President Ali has shown his support for the Dharm Shala. Last year, he donated \$2 million and waived the institution’s water charges. This ongoing commitment reflects the government’s dedication to ensuring the well-being of vulnerable populations, particularly the elderly who have served as the foundation of Guyana’s growth.

Founded in 1921 by Pandit Ramsaroop Maharaj, the Dharm Shala has stood for over a century as a haven for the elderly. Its mission of providing benevolent services to this vulnerable group continues under the leadership of his granddaughters, Pamela and Kelly Ramsaroop.



SPREADING CHRISTMAS JOY TO THE HEART OF TIGER BAY

On Christmas Day, President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and Prime Minister Brigadier Mark Phillips brought joy to hundreds of children in Tiger Bay and surrounding areas by treating them to a delicious breakfast, and showering them with gifts.

The event, held at the One Guyana Kitchen opposite State House on Main Street. The Department of Public Information (DPI) was present and captured the heartwarming moments as the children received their gifts and enjoyed their meals.

Following the toy distribution at the One Guyana Kitchen, the Prime Minister and Minister of Public Affairs, Kwame McCoy took to the streets of

Tiger Bay to personally share toys and breakfast with even more children.

Prime Minister Phillips noted that the government distributed a large quantity of gifts to children across the nation throughout the holiday season.

“We had ministers who went countrywide distributing toys, distributing hampers; all part of the Christmas spirit of giving and based on my last check, we would have distributed over 20,000 toys since we started,” the Prime Minister told DPI.

He also encouraged Guyanese to focus on family during the Christmas celebrations, saying, “Spend time with your family. Let

it be family activities, a family Christmas day in the sense that you stay home, spend time with your family and make it a good day. Keep the Christ in Christmas.”

Minister McCoy later joined Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Oneidge Walrond for a similar event for the children of Sophia.



SHARING THE JOY OF GIVING: KINGSTON SEAWALL ESPLANADE TRANSFORMED INTO MAGICAL CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND

The spirit of Christmas was alive and well in Guyana thanks to the First Lady Arya Ali’s Foundation and the generous support of Digicel, ANSA McAL Distribution Inc., and Caribbean International Distributors Inc. Over 1,000 children enjoyed a night of festive fun at the inaugural Christmas Tree Light-up and toy distribution held at the Kingston Seawall Esplanade.

Despite facing a challenging month for the nation, Mrs. Ali emphasised the importance of hope and joy during the holiday season. “It was special to see so many smiling faces which reminded me of the hope that baby Jesus brought to this world when he was born,” she shared.

Cont’d on page 14





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Battery Voltage	48 V
Service Weight	275 Lbs



Charging Time
3HR



Working Time
6HR



Work Shift
24HR



48V/6A
[Charger]



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LIC # 10530

State-of-the-art assets being acquired to transform police force

WITH the aim of integrating the country’s security institutions, the Government of Guyana, for the first time, will be establishing a marine and aviation division within the Guyana Police Force (GPF).

This was according to President, Dr. Irfaan Ali, during a sod-turning event for the modern US\$28 million Brickdam Police Station, on Monday.

The Head of State, while addressing members of the Joint Services and other stakeholders, said the government is now in the process of obtaining state-of-the art assets to facilitate the integration of the Guyana Police Force with other security institutions.

“We are building out, for the first time, a marine division that would be capable of utilising our river asset in crime fighting and proactive intelligence work. So, right now, we are in the process of acquiring state-of-the-art marine assets to support the work of the Guyana Police Force,” the President said.

As it relates to the introduction of the aviation division, the President explained that the aim is to build air capacity and capability for the Guyana Police Force that will be integrated with the Guyana Defence Force (GDF).



Guyana Police Force is being equipped with state-of-the-art technology

“We are going to move a lot of our air capacity and capability to the new hangar at Ogle that the Guyana Defence Force is constructing and rehabilitating right now. We hope in that hangar to not only add to the air capability and capacity of the Guyana Defence Force, but to add two modern pieces of equipment to support the air

division of the Guyana Police Force,” Dr. Ali said.

According to the President, these include choppers with drone capability. He said that the government is creating a cohesive base for the Joint Services as it relates to assets.

“In the Guyana Police Force, for example, we will have an integration

between the chopper, the sea craft, what I call sea craft capability, the air capability and land capability, of course, in the land capability, we are already investing heavily in bikes, motor vehicles, buses, ATV’s,” the Head of State said.

US top security officer to visit Guyana

THE US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense (DASD) for the Western Hemisphere at the US Department of Defense, Daniel P. Erikson will be in Guyana from January 8 – 9.

According to a press release from the US Embassy, DASD Erikson is responsible for US defense and security policy for the 34-nation region that encompasses Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and South and Central America.

His visit to Guyana underscores the continued importance the United States places on the US-Guyana bilateral defense and security partnership in support of regional stability.

DASD Erikson is scheduled to meet with the Government of Guyana, Guyana Defence Force (GDF), and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders to discuss the US defense and security partnership with Guyana and regional partners.

“DASD Erikson’s visit to Guyana is his first trip overseas in 2024, and it signifies the importance of the bilateral defense and security partnership, as the GDF continues to grow, in the short-term with robust military-to-military engagements, and in the long-term as the nation continues to modernise its defense institutions,” the US Embassy said.

Further, the embassy said: “The United States continues to work

closely with its allies around the world to strengthen alliances and partnerships by improving interoperability, deepening information-sharing and planning, and conducting complex joint and combined exercises.”

Daniel P. Erikson is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Western Hemisphere at the US Department of Defense. In this capacity, he serves in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and is responsible for US defense and security policy for the thirty-four nation region that encompasses Canada, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

Mr. Erikson served as the Western Hemisphere policy lead for the Biden-Harris Transition. He previously served in the White House as special advisor to then-Vice President Joe Biden, where he covered foreign affairs and national security issues in the Americas.

Prior to the White House, he served in the US Department of State as senior advisor for Congressional and Inter-Governmental Affairs and senior advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs. In 2017, he received the State Department’s Superior Honor Award for his diplomatic contributions to US-Latin American relations, including the advancement of bipartisan policies to support security and development in Central America and Colombia.

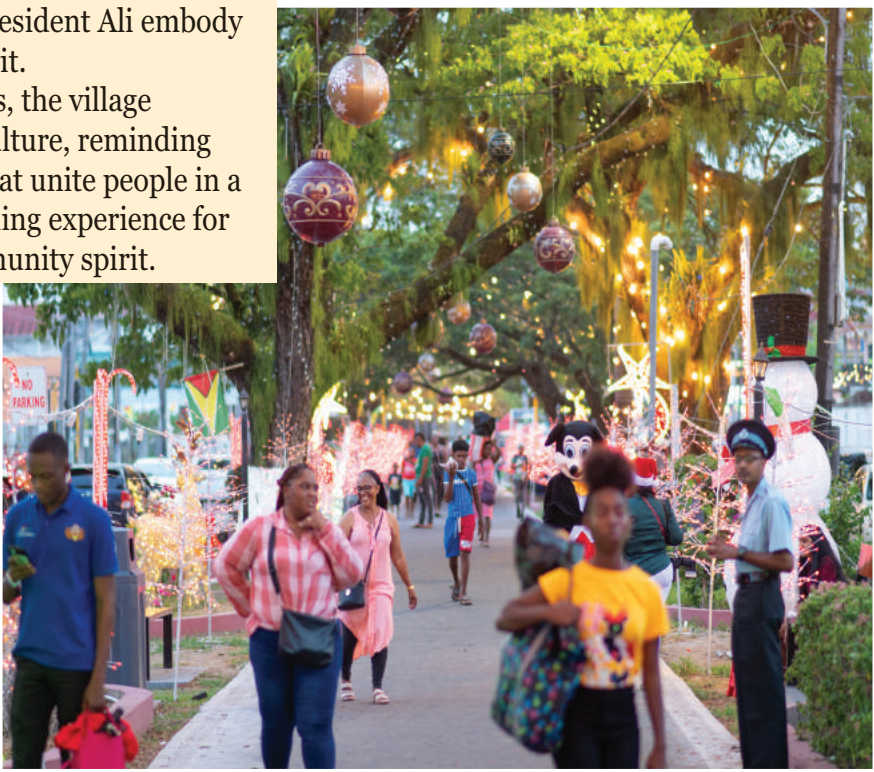


DASD Erikson: to meet with the Government of Guyana

Main Street's Magical Christmas Village: Where Festive Lights Meet Guyanese Spirit



Main Street in Guyana transforms into a magical Christmas Village, adorned with twinkling lights, festive music, and tempting Guyanese treats. Locals showcase crafts, while food stalls offer aromatic delights. The spirit of community thrives as families gather, and visits by President Ali embody the season's giving spirit. Beyond the decorations, the village celebrates Guyanese culture, reminding us of the simple joys that unite people in a vibrant and heartwarming experience for festive cheer and community spirit.





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A SEASON OF SERVICE:

HIGHLIGHTING ACTS OF KINDNESS THAT SPREAD CHRISTMAS CHEER

Cont'd on page 11



The event featured a dazzling Christmas tree lighting ceremony, heartwarming carols, and of course, the highlight of the evening – a joyous toy distribution that brought smiles to countless children’s faces.

“I ask that as we celebrate this season, we continue to keep in our prayers, all of those who have lost loved ones during the year and for whom

this Christmas falls on heavy hearts,” Mrs. Ali added in a touching message. The First Lady’s Foundation, established in 2018, is dedicated to empowering women and children in Guyana. This Christmas event exemplifies the foundation’s commitment to spreading joy and fostering a sense of community during the holiday season.



The joy then cascaded across Regions Six and Ten, bringing smiles to hundreds more. Even children in remote hinterland communities were not left out. The “Wish Upon a Star” initiative has touched hearts and sparked a wave of solidarity. Businesses, individuals, and public

institutions have come together, making this dream a reality. Minister Persaud expressed her deepest gratitude to all who played a part, turning this event into a dazzling display of compassion and generosity.



Phillips, wife of the Prime Minister, visited the maternity ward to spread cheer, and gift the new mothers with essential supplies for their newborns. “One of the greatest gifts or one of the best blessings, in fact, for a woman is becoming a mother,” Mrs. Bowen-Phillips said. “And so,

I’m excited that they have this responsibility to care and nurture another human being.” She added, “It’s an opportunity for me to wish them all the best for the new year and to hope that all their dreams in terms of the growth and development of their children will come through.”



WISH UPON A STAR: HOLIDAY MAGIC LIGHTS UP LIVES OF HUNDREDS OF CHILDREN

Christmas wishes soared into reality as the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security’s “Wish Upon a Star” toy drive spread joy to hundreds of children across Guyana. This heartwarming initiative, launched in 2020, targets young hearts who have faced trauma, hardship, or the loss of loved ones,

ensuring they don’t miss out on the magic of the season. Minister Dr. Vindhya Persaud, believes every child deserves the thrill of having his or her wish granted. The celebrations began at the ministry’s headquarters, where over 600 beaming faces, aged four to fifteen, received their gifts.



SEVEN CHRISTMAS BABIES WELCOMED AT GPHC, NEW YEAR’S BABIES RECEIVE GIFTS

On Christmas Day, the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) welcomed seven “Christmas babies” into the world thanks to the dedication of its healthcare workers. First Lady Arya Ali visited the hospital to celebrate the occasion, and commend the medical staff for their tireless efforts.

“December 25th symbolises hope, and

the beginning of new possibilities,” Mrs. Ali said. “The birth of these babies brings just that - hope of a life full of exciting possibilities. May their lives be filled with love, happiness and success.” The hospital continued to be blessed with new life on New Year’s Day, as seven more babies were born. Mrs. Mignon Bowen-



Leader heading to Georgetown for Energy Expo

Qatar PM for Guyana visit

SHEIKH Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, the Prime Minister of Qatar, is confirmed to be among the growing list of dignitaries and world leaders to attend and make presentations at the region’s largest energy conference and expo in Georgetown, Guyana next month.

The Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo returns for its third installment from February 19 – 22, 2024, with an impressive lineup of industry experts, policymakers and foreign officials who will offer insights as keynote speakers and through their participation in several panel discussions.

The inclusion of the Prime Minister of Qatar as a featured speaker reflects the commitment of both nations to foster international partnerships and share expertise in the crucial field of energy.

Anthony Whyte, Chairman of the Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo said, “We are honoured to welcome the distinguished Prime Minister of Qatar as a featured speaker. His presence underscores the global significance of our event, highlighting the shared commitment to advancing sustainable energy solutions and fostering international collaboration in the ever-evolving energy landscape.”

Sheikh Mohammed previously served as the country’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2017 and 2016 to 2023, respectively, and Chairman of the Qatar Investment Authority from 2018 to 2023, where he provided leadership to the QIA Board of Directors and ensured QIA’s sound governance framework through accountability and sound decision-making.

Additionally, as the Chairman of Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Sheikh Mohammed directs the fund’s operations and the expansion of its activities to reach more than 70 countries around the world, notably in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

Sheikh Mohammed brings a wealth of experience and leadership in finance, investment, development and accountability. His participation highlights the international significance of the Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo as a platform for fostering collaboration and sharing best practices.

Sheikh Mohammed was notably praised for his recent meeting with CIA Director William J. Burns and head of Mossad David Barnea in Qatar where they reached an extension of the ceasefire by two days and exchange of more than 100 Israeli hostages for 240 Palestinian prisoners in the 2023 Israel–Hamas war.

He will be joined by other world leaders, including the President of Guyana, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali; the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Keith Rowley; the Prime Minister of The Bahamas, Philip Davis; the Minister of Industry, Energy, and Technol-

ogy of Newfoundland, Canada, Andrew Parsons along with several others to be announced at a later date.

To be held at the Marriott Hotel in Georgetown, Guyana, the conference is a premier gathering of industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders committed to shaping the future of energy and supply chain sectors.

The Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo is poised to be a landmark event, facilitating discussions that will shape the trajectory of the energy sector in Guyana and beyond. The participation of the Prime Minister of Qatar adds a significant international dimension to the conference, highlighting the global importance of sustainable energy practices.

Sheikh Mohammed was born and raised in Doha, Qatar. He is part of the



Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani

Qatari royal family as a member of the House of Thani. He holds a bachelor’s degree in economics and business ad-

ministration from the College of Business and Economics at Qatar University (2003).

On March 7, 2023, in a cabinet reshuffle, through Amiri Decree, he was appointed as the Prime Minister of Qatar.

Sheikh Mohammed’s priorities as Prime Minister include advising His Highness the Amir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, on the formation of ministries in the country and assisting His Highness perform his duties and exercise his roles.

Sheikh Mohammed also heads the Council of Ministers sessions, including managing discussions and supervising the coordination of work between ministries to achieve unity between governmental agencies and ensure the integration of their activities.

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\$11 BILLION EBD HIGHWAY EXTENSION UNDERWAY

The East Bank of Demerara (EBD) is set for a major infrastructure boost with the commencement of the \$11 billion Diamond to Buzz Bee Dam (Craig) four-lane extension project. This ambitious initiative marks the latest chapter in the ongoing expansion of the EBD highway, stretching from Mandela Avenue to Craig.

The 4.6-kilometre stretch of asphaltic concrete road will not only ease congestion, but also unlock new economic opportunities for the surrounding communities.

Minister of Housing and Water Collin Croal recently emphasised the importance of the project, stating that the \$11 billion allocation includes two crucial contracts for major revetment works at Buzz Bee Dam. These works are essential for stabilising the riverbank and preventing erosion,



Section of the \$13.3 billion Heroes Highway extending from the Eccles Dumpsite Road to Diamond

ensuring the long-term durability of the highway. This latest development marks another significant milestone in the ongoing transformation of the

EBD highway. The project builds upon the successful completion of the previous phases, including the \$2.6 billion Mandela Avenue to Eccles Road: commissioned in April 2022, this phase laid the groundwork for the expansion, and the \$13.3 billion Heroes Highway: extending from the Eccles Dumpsite Road to Diamond, this stretch was recently commissioned and renamed in honour of

the five Guyana Defence Force ranks who died in a tragic helicopter crash. Furthermore, Minister Croal announced the planned extension of the Eccles Industrial Road, connecting the Windsor Estate junction directly to the EBD Public Road. This additional infrastructure project will further enhance connectivity, and boost industrial activity.

HEROES HIGHWAY-EASING TRAFFIC, BOOSTING DEVELOPMENT

The newly opened Heroes Highway, a four-lane artery stretching from Eccles to Great Diamond, is already making waves in Guyana. Residents along the East Bank Demerara corridor are raving about the project's impact, praising its ability to ease traffic congestion, spur development,

and even create new opportunities. Grove resident Heman Ramphal, calls the highway **“a monumental step”** in alleviating the area's notorious traffic woes. Neil Rafeek, meanwhile, sees it as a **gateway to faster commute and booming development**,

“opening up a lot of lands” and **“taking Guyana to a different height.”** For Lydia Basdeo, the convenience is undeniable. She no longer has to take her grandson on a long detour to school, thanks to the highway's direct access route. Shameika Henry echoes this

sentiment, highlighting the benefits for all residents and the ease of travel to Georgetown. Shantie Brummell Bumbury sees the highway as more than just a practical solution. She recognises it as a **“timely manner to pay respect to our fallen heroes,”** while acknowledging the



Heman Ramphal

increased value it brings to the area. For Jasodra Appallsammoy, it's about everyone. **“Less traffic, faster journeys, easier access for each**



Jasodra Appallsammoy

and every one of the drivers,” she says, capturing the essence of the highway's impact.

DEADLINE EXTENDED FOR CEMETERY AND CONVERSATION TREE ROAD PROJECTS - CONTRACTOR PUT ON NOTICE

Two vital road projects - Cemetery Road and Conversation Tree Road, have received a deadline extension. However, Public Works Minister, Bishop Juan Edghill, issued a stern warning to the contractors: complete these projects within the revised timeframe or face termination.

CEMETERY ROAD

The \$475 million project was awarded to Avinash Construction and Metal Works

Company and initially expected to be completed in July 2023. Progress is significantly behind schedule, prompting the Minister's strong warning. Failure to meet the new deadline will result in contract termination and the project being awarded to a new contractor or the Special Projects Unit (SPU). The Cemetery Road project is part of a larger \$1.4 billion enhancement project



Cemetery Road is being upgraded for \$475 million, going from two to four lanes

along the Independence Boulevard and Cemetery Road corridor.

TREE ROAD

The \$1.8 billion project is divided into two sections: Lot One, which is progressing

satisfactorily, and Lot Two, which is experiencing major delays. Lot Two, awarded to Trinidadian-owned Kalco Guyana Inc., faces termination if not completed by this month. The Conversation Tree Road project aims to provide alternative routes for entering and leaving Georgetown. The Minister emphasised the importance of these thoroughfares for

Georgetown's traffic flow and stressed the need for swift completion. **“These are two important thoroughfares that we can't allow to languish like this,”** he emphasised. The message is clear: contractors tasked with upgrading Cemetery Road and Conversation Tree Road have one final chance to deliver. Failure to meet the January 2024 deadline will lead to swift action by the Public Works Ministry.

DIAMOND/GROVE ROAD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT GETS GREEN LIGHT

Diamond/Grove residents can breathe a sigh of relief as Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, officially announced the upcoming road development project. Starting in the first quarter of 2024, this ambitious plan promises smoother journeys and enhanced connectivity along the East Bank Demerara corridor.

Minister Edghill emphasised the government's full commitment to the project's success,

addressing concerns and providing detailed information at a recent meeting with residents and the Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC). The entire stretch from Diamond will be revitalised, with dedicated teams tackling different segments. The Ministry's Special Projects Unit (SPU) will handle upgrades from Diamond to Good Success, ensuring close oversight and quality control. A contracted

party will handle the Good Success to Timehri section, chosen through a competitive bidding process, Minister Edghill explained. He highlighted that both the government and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) will finance the project, demonstrating a strong commitment to infrastructure development. With additional government funding, the Soesdyke Junction to Timehri stretch is set



Section of the Diamond Grove Road that will be upgrade

to become a four-lane highway. The minister assured that the SPU and the contractor will coordinate closely to minimise inconvenience to residents and commuters during construction.

Additionally, a bypass road through Third Avenue, Diamond will provide an alternative route for lighter vehicles, easing congestion on the main road. Minister Edghill acknowledged the

inevitable inconvenience that comes with development, but urged residents' support and understanding. By working together, the community can ensure the project's successful completion and reap the long-term benefits of a modern and efficient road network, he noted. A dedicated feedback mechanism is established for residents to voice their questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding the project.

NEW DIAMOND HOSPITAL PROMISES UPGRADED HEALTHCARE FOR 40,000 RESIDENTS

The nearly completed Little Diamond Regional Hospital will soon bring significantly improved healthcare access to approximately 40,000 residents of Diamond and surrounding areas. This state-of-the-art facility is part of a larger government initiative to upgrade medical services across Guyana.

Health Minister Dr. Frank Anthony recently visited the construction site, reiterating the government's commitment to building a world-class healthcare system. The hospital is expected to be operational by 2025.

This project is one of six regional hospitals under construction across Guyana, each aimed at enhancing healthcare accessibility and quality nationwide. By the end of 2024, the physical infrastructure of all six hospitals, including Diamond, is expected to be completed.

Minister Anthony emphasised the comprehensive services the new facilities will offer: 24-hour accident and emergency care, 24-hour laboratory services, advanced imaging equipment, including digital X-rays, and CT scans, two fully-equipped operating theaters and a minor theater, outpatient facilities and 75 in-patient beds.

The Little Diamond Regional Hospital will cater to a wide range of medical needs, ensuring timely and effective care for the local community. This project complements the ongoing effort to upgrade primary healthcare access at over 240 facilities across the country, ultimately benefiting all Guyanese citizens.



Health Minister Dr. Frank Anthony and team with contractors and other officials at the site

MAJOR PROGRESS IN GUYANA'S HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE IN 2023

Guyana's healthcare system is undergoing major transformation, with significant progress made in developing health infrastructure in 2023. Six new regional hospitals are on track to be operational by 2025.

These hospitals, located in Suddie, New Amsterdam, Lima, De Kinderen, Diamond, Bath, and Skeldon, are currently in the foundation stage. Over the next quarter, their infrastructure will begin to take shape, with completion expected by 2024. Following this, equipping and staffing will take place, aiming for all six hospitals to be fully functional by early 2025.

Each of these hospitals will be equipped with a range of modern



An artist impression of the New Amsterdam Regional Hospital

facilities and services, including 24-hour accident and emergency units, ultrasound suites, digital x-rays, CT scans, two operational surgical theatres, a minor theatre, outpatient facilities and 75-bed inpatient facilities.

This substantial investment in healthcare

infrastructure will significantly improve access to quality medical care for Guyanese citizens.

PEDIATRIC AND MATERNAL HOSPITAL

Construction of the new Pediatric and Maternal Hospital at

Ogle is also moving forward at a rapid pace, Minister of Health Dr. Frank Anthony stated. The foundation has already been laid, and further infrastructure development is expected to occur during the first quarter of 2024. This 256-bed hospital will provide specialised

care for mothers and children.

ADDITIONAL HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENTS

The health minister noted that this year, will see tenders issued for the construction of five more hospitals: Bartica, Lethem, Moruca, Kato, and Kamarang. This further expands the government's commitment to improving healthcare accessibility across Guyana.

OTHER HEALTHCARE INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

In 2023, \$2 billion was invested in upgrading 271 health facilities, including staff quarters. Several hospitals, including Diamond, Aishalton, Moruca, Mahdia, and Mahaicony, received

new surgical theatres. District hospitals in Port Kaituma, Kamarang, Annai, Karasabai, and Sand Creek are also undergoing expansion, with completion slated for mid-2024. Additionally, neonatal units are being upgraded, and six regional hospitals have received new equipment.

These comprehensive healthcare infrastructure developments represent a significant step forward for Guyana's healthcare system. The new hospitals, upgraded facilities, and specialised care centres will undoubtedly improve the health and well-being of Guyanese citizens for years to come.



25 NEW TELEMEDICINE SITES PLANNED FOR HINTERLAND AND RURAL AREAS

The government is ramping up its telemedicine programme, aiming to bring quality healthcare to 25 additional hinterland and rural areas in 2024. This ambitious initiative is part of a larger push to ensure everyone in Guyana has access to efficient and effective medical services. This was revealed by Minister of Health, Dr. Frank Anthony at the ministry's year-end



A Community Health Worker (CHW) and a patient of Gunns Village interacting with a specialist

press conference held at a game-changer for healthcare in remote areas. It allows patients to

connect with specialists via video and audio equipment, even when they're miles away from a hospital. This means faster diagnoses, quicker access to specialist care, and improved health outcomes for everyone involved.

The telemedicine programme was officially launched in 2022 with four pilot sites in Amerindian communities. It quickly expanded to 25 more communities in 2023,

thanks to a \$1.8 billion government investment. Now, the programme is set to reach even further, with 25 new sites planned for 2024.

The minister noted that telemedicine benefits patients in rural communities and even those living in urban areas who might struggle to access specialist care. By providing real-time consultations, the programme reduces the need for travel and saves valuable time for both

patients and healthcare providers.

Each telemedicine site will be equipped with the necessary technology, including digital stethoscopes, pulse oximeters, and ultrasound machines. This allows Community Health Workers to gather vital patient data and connect with specialists at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) 24/7.

RICE INDUSTRY REAPED BOUNTIFUL HARVEST IN 2023



Rice production surged by a remarkable 7% in 2023

Guyana’s rice agricultural sector. recent press conference, Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha, announced this achievement at a highlighting the impressive harvest of 653,706 metric tons of paddy – an increase

of 43,111 metric tons compared to 2022. Favourable weather conditions throughout the year played a key role in this success story, boosting average yields from 6.2 to 6.3 tons per hectare. The financial rewards were equally impressive, with rice exports generating a whopping \$45.2 billion, translating to US\$210 million – a staggering \$3 billion increase over 2022. The minister attributed this export boom to securing new international markets, demonstrating Guyana’s growing prominence in the global rice market. To further bolster this momentum, the government is actively investing in infrastructure and research. A recently renovated plant-breeding lab in Region Five will collaborate with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), to develop bio-certified and zinc-enriched rice varieties, ensuring sustainable and nutritious harvests.

Additionally, eight new drying floors have been built across the country in the past three years, and the Black Bush Polder seed processing facility is now operational, offering enhanced support to local farmers. Minister Mustapha reaffirmed the government’s commitment to expanding rice production in the years to come, exploring new avenues for growth and solidifying Guyana’s position as a leading rice producer on the world stage.

SUGAR PRODUCTION SPIKES 28 PERCENT IN 2023

Guyana’s sugar industry is back on the map, experiencing a remarkable 28% surge in production in 2023! Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha, proudly announced the achievement during the ministry’s year-end review, highlighting the jump from 47,049 metric tonnes in 2022 to a remarkable 60,204 metric tonnes in 2023. This sweet success stems from a powerful combination of strategic investments and renewed commitment. The year 2023 saw an \$8.1 billion injection into the industry’s revitalisation efforts, paving the way for crucial milestones like the reopening of the Rose Hall Sugar Estate. Beyond raw tonnage, Guyana is diligently diversifying its sugar offerings. Packaged sugar sales climbed 54% in 2023 compared to 2022, driven by innovative branded products like Albion Gem and Demerara Gold Sugar Stick Sachets. The construction of new packaging plants at



Packaged sugar sales climbed 54% in 2023 compared to 2022

Albion and Blairmont are expected to further amplify this value-added focus. The revitalisation doesn’t stop there. Minister Mustapha highlighted that Guyana

is actively embracing mechanisation, with plans to convert over 5,000 hectares of land for mechanised harvesting and loading within the next two years. This not only boosts efficiency but also creates jobs, as evidenced by the 4,692 new employees welcomed into the industry in 2023. The overall workforce now stands at a healthy 8,294, showcasing the positive ripple effects of the industry’s resurgence. Minister Mustapha

aptly summarised the situation, stating, “We are seeing clearly a revitalisation of the sugar industry and we are seeing more and more people are benefitting.” This remarkable story of success is testament to the government’s dedication to building a robust agricultural sector, ensuring food security, and enhancing livelihoods across Guyana.

HIGH-VALUE CROPS YIELD \$25.4M FOR YOUNG FARMERS

G u y a n a ’ s young agricultural entrepreneurs are reaping the rewards of their hard work, with the Agriculture Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programme (AIEP) generating a whopping \$25.4 million in revenue as of December 2023. This impressive figure, announced by Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha, highlights the programme’s success in stimulating economic growth and boosting production of high-value crops. Launched in 2022, the AIEP empowers young people through direct financial rewards: As shareholders in a company formed under the programme, participants receive dividends from the programme’s earnings; Entrepreneurial training: The programme



Production of high-value crops at NAREI

equips participants with the skills and knowledge needed to run successful agricultural businesses; and Infrastructure support: Construction of shade houses across the country provides crucial facilities for cultivating high-value crops. The results speak for themselves. Approximately 90 new shade houses built in 2023, bringing the total to 365 since 2021; over 70% of

AIEP participants are now successful entrepreneurs; and diverse range of high-value crops flourishing in shade houses, including lettuce, carrots, broccoli, and herbs. The momentum is far from over. A US\$4.5 million AIEP hydroponics programme was launched in October 2023, to further introduce 300 young

people from various regions to cutting-edge cultivation technologies. M e a n w h i l e , collaboration with private sector partners like Victoria Greens Crops is further expanding hydroponics production and supplying high-end herbs and spices to restaurants and hotels. Minister Mustapha expressed his satisfaction with the programme’s

impact, stating, “These are projects that we are encouraging young people to come into agriculture... today, we are seeing hundreds of those young people who are now involved in agriculture for their livelihoods and that augurs well for us.”



Production of high-value crops at NAREI



Production of high-value crops at NAREI

HOPE CANAL-INSPIRED DRAINAGE SOLUTIONS FLOW TO REGIONS 5 AND 6

Relief is on the horizon for flood-prone regions like Five and Six, as designs for massive drainage canals are set to be completed by February 2024. These Hope canal-like structures promise to revolutionise drainage and irrigation, offering much-needed respite from heavy rains and parched dry seasons. The government is investing heavily in these mega projects, with a dedicated budget of \$6.4 million allocated for design completion. The National Drainage



Designs for massive drainage canals are set to be completed by February 2024

and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) received a hefty \$5.3 billion boost from works across the country, earmarked for critical drainage and irrigation.

Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha at a recent press conference, emphasised the dual purpose of these canals. Not only will they efficiently drain excess water during heavy rainfall, but they will also act as reservoirs, storing precious water for irrigation during dry periods. This innovative approach promises to combat both floods and droughts, creating a more resilient agricultural landscape. Minister Mustapha recently briefed

President Ali on the latest developments of these structures, highlighting their potential to transform agricultural practices in Regions Five and Six. This collaborative vision underscores the government’s commitment to long-term solutions for water management. While Regions Five and Six are the immediate focus, the vision extends far beyond. Minister Mustapha has identified several canals across the country, including Friendship, Den Amstel, Craig, and Mahaicony Creek, in dire need of rehabilitation and modernisation. With an additional \$2.5

billion allocated for nationwide D&I works, the government is taking a comprehensive approach to tackling related challenges. The mega canal project is a beacon of hope for farmers and communities struggling with the vagaries of weather. By combining effective drainage with water conservation, these innovative structures promise to create a more sustainable and resilient future for Guyana’s agricultural sector. With the designs nearing completion and construction set to begin soon, the dream of a well-watered land is closer than ever before.

GUYANA’S FARMERS FLOURISH DESPITE DRY SEASON - A STORY OF GOVT SUPPORT AND RESILIENCE

Dry season woes? Not in Guyana! While many countries wrestle with droughts’ impact, Guyana’s agricultural sector is not only surviving, but thriving. This success story owes much to a dedicated government, and the unwavering spirit of its farmers. Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha credits comprehensive and sustainable policies for this triumph. From building better drainage systems to distributing vital supplies and expanding farmland, the government’s proactive approach has provided farmers with

the necessary tools to weather the dry spell. But their support goes beyond resources. The establishment of farmers’ markets across the country empower producers to bypass middlemen and directly connect with consumers, ensuring fair prices for both parties. **“We’ve seen a rise in vegetable and fruit prices elsewhere, but here, production remains strong. We’re confident of reaching our year-end targets – a testament to our hard work and modifications,”** stated Minister Mustapha.



The establishment of farmers’ markets across the country empower producers to directly connect with consumers,

Aquaculture is another area witnessing exciting growth. A \$100 million investment in 10 prawn ponds at Onverwagt promises a fresh harvest within three months, marking a

new chapter in Guyana’s seafood journey. And the expansion doesn’t stop there. Farmers in Region Five will soon benefit from 20,000 acres of newly developed land in the

MMA/ADA scheme, while diversification efforts introduce new crops like millet alongside established staples like corn and soya. Modernisation is

key too. Guyana boasts the Caribbean’s largest hydroponics farm in Mon Repos, with three more in the pipeline across different regions. **“We’re witnessing an agricultural revolution, one that’s making Guyana a regional leader in revitalising the sector,”** proclaimed Minister Mustapha. So, while dry seasons may come and go, one thing remains clear: Guyana’s agricultural sector is on a roll, fueled by government support, resilient farmers, and a vision for a modern, food-secure future.

CUT ROSE PROJECT BLOOMS WITH OPPORTUNITY - SINGLE PARENTS TO REAP THE BENEFITS

The “Cut Rose” project, a blossoming initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture, is set to expand, bringing rewards to single parents and women across the nation. This project, envisioned as a source of income and employment, is already flourishing, and plans are underway to share its bounty with even more communities. Conceptualised to empower single parents, the project offers a valuable opportunity. Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha, expressed his enthusiasm at a recent press briefing: **“I am looking forward...to**



In the first half of 2023 alone, the project amassed \$4 million and yielded over 12,000 roses

move it to different parts of the regions, too...so that other single parents can get the same kind of

opportunities.” The project’s success is evident not just in vibrant blooms, but also in the smiles of those

it benefits. As Minister Mustapha noted, **“What is more effective is that we have a lot of single parents who are purchasing these roses and they are making a profit for their livelihoods from this project.”** He encouraged even more participation, stating, **“I am encouraging more of them to ensure that they engage our officers there...So that we can make the roses cheap to them for them to make a profit.”** The price difference is stark. Georgetown’s flower shops sell roses for \$1,000 to \$2,000,

while single parents in the Cut Rose project can purchase them for as low as \$300. This translates to significant profit potential for participants, making the project both empowering and financially rewarding. The project’s reach extends beyond individual wallets. Roses cultivated through this initiative graced the “Night of Reflection” event for fallen soldiers, showcasing its contribution to national commemoration activities. The Cut Rose project has already borne impressive fruit. In the

first half of 2023 alone, it amassed \$4 million and yielded over 12,000 roses from its shade houses at the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI). Additionally, it aims to provide job and training opportunities for single parents while aiming to reduce rose imports by 30% by the end of the year. With its focus on empowering single parents, generating income, and contributing to national events, the project is blossoming into a fragrant symbol of hope and opportunity.

GUYANA WORKING FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN LIVESTOCK FEED BY 2025

Guyana is charting a course towards self-sufficiency in livestock feed production by 2025, aiming to break free from import dependence, and become a net exporter in the Caribbean region. This ambitious goal hinges on the significant progress made in 2023, with nearly 10,000 acres of corn and soya beans already cultivated.

Driving this agricultural diversification is the vision of Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha. He announced at the year-end press conference that production is slated to ramp up dramatically in the coming years, reaching 26,000 acres by the end of 2024 and culminating in 30,000 acres by 2025. This will not only secure domestic livestock feed needs, but also position Guyana as a key supplier within the Caribbean market.

The potential benefits are vast. As Minister Mustapha emphasised, domestic feed production promises to drive down the cost of meat, particularly poultry and other staples. This, in turn, will bolster food security and affordability for Guyanese citizens.

Government's investment has been crucial in paving the way for this agricultural expansion. The Tacama Savannah has been designated as a key development area, boasting 41 kilometers of newly constructed roads and 9,000-tonne silos to support corn and soya bean processing. These investments are attracting new investors, further fueling the growth of the sector.

Guyana's economic boom plays a vital role in attracting these investors. As the fastest-growing economy in the world, the country presents a fertile ground for agricultural ventures. Investors like Santa Fe, Iring Integrated, Sheriff Group, and Farmland Incorporation are already tapping into this potential, contributing to the diversification and expansion of the sector.



BRACKISH WATERS SHRIMP PRODUCTION REELS IN \$1.3 BILLION IN CATCH



Processing of shrimp in a facility

Guyana's brackish water shrimp industry is surging, hauling in a whopping \$1.3 billion between January and November 2023. This impressive haul, a 49% increase over the same period in 2022, reflects the government's commitment to boosting food production and economic growth.

The success story begins with the Corentyne Coast, where brackish water shrimp production has blossomed since its inception. Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha anticipates further growth, aiming to reach 120,000 kilograms monthly within six months. This ambitious target is fueled by rising demand for these tasty crustaceans.

Beyond shrimp, Guyana's 2023 fisheries sector has been a record-breaker. Marine production hit a five-year high, exceeding 42,000 metric tonnes, and tambaqui harvesting has already commenced.

The government's commitment to cage culture is evident in the six cages currently stocked with tambaqui fingerlings in communities like Mashabo, Mainstay and Capoey. This initiative, with plans for replication in other regions, aims to diversify and strengthen the fisheries sector.

In 2024, the government plans to invest in 50 additional cages, further solidifying its dedication to aquaculture.

President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali's vision for Guyana as a major regional and international food producer is well on its way, with the fisheries and aquaculture sectors playing a crucial role in generating income, jobs, and nourishment for Guyanese citizens.

OPPOSITION'S SUGGESTION TO FUND SALARY INCREASE FROM NRF INTEREST FINANCIALLY UNSTABLE- DR JAGDEO

Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo has rejected the opposition's proposal to use interest earned from the Natural Resource Fund (NRF) for higher public servant salary increases, calling it **"wild rhetoric"** and financially unsustainable.

The opposition's economic advisor argued that NRF interest could cover a salary increase exceeding the 6.5% granted in 2023.

Dr. Jagdeo at his first press conference of the year, held at the Office of the President in Georgetown, countered, stating that even with current NRF holdings and 5% average interest, only GY\$2.7 billion would be generated – far short of the GY\$7.9 billion needed for the 6.5% increase.

He emphasised that the NRF is not meant



Vice President Dr Bharrat Jagdeo

for immediate spending, but for long-term development and future generations. **"They [the opposition] don't know the purpose of an NRF. It's not to take every cent you earn on interest,"** he stated.

He pointed out that using interest alone wouldn't cover public sector salaries, potentially leading to irresponsible spending and debt accumulation, as occurred under previous PNC governments.

He cited the 2021 NRF Act amendments emphasising parliamentary approval for withdrawals and responsible resource management.

Dr. Jagdeo reminded citizens of the **"downward spiral"** Guyana experienced under the opposition's past policies, particularly their tendency to

spend beyond means and burden future generations with debt. **"We had to pay back, get some written off, etc. but every cent we paid back in debt that was wasted or unwarranted, we lost an opportunity for development, either better health care or education for our people,"** he noted.

COUNTERS NORTON'S "GIMMICK" CLAIM ON FREE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Dr Jagdeo also fired back at Opposition Leader Aubrey Norton's criticism of the government's plan for free university education. Norton called it **"a political gimmick."** Jagdeo asserted that the

PPP/C is simply fulfilling its campaign promise, not playing political games.

Norton labelled the free university plan a political gimmick following President Ali's announcement of its gradual implementation.

He reminded Norton that the APNU/AFC raised UG fees during their term, highlighting the contrasting approaches.

He said the PPP/C made a clear five-year commitment to free university education and is actively working on a phased approach.

Dr. Jagdeo explained that the government's plan prioritises existing loan students, with clear and consistent rules being established for all. He argued that writing off existing loans effectively makes education free for

those students, contrary to Norton's claim of slow progress. **"Effectively, we're already doing free education from now, because we're planning to write off what you have to pay. Effectively we're doing that (and) Norton saying we're not doing it fast enough,"** the vice president expressed.

Beyond loan forgiveness, Dr. Jagdeo pointed to the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) programme, which offers scholarships through partnerships with prominent universities for courses relevant to Guyana's needs. With 20,000 scholarships awarded since 2021, the programme demonstrates another fulfilled manifesto promise.

OVER 3,300 TRAINED IN 50 TRADES IN 2023

The Board of Industrial Training (BIT) under the Ministry of Labour was busy in 2023, equipping 3,335 individuals with valuable skills in 50 different occupational areas. This impressive feat was achieved thanks to a \$488 million budget allocation, showcasing the government's commitment to workforce development. Here are some key highlights from the BIT's 2023 performance: 154 persons with disabilities received training through BIT programmes in partnership with disability organisations Collaboration with the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) resulted in training of 312 individuals in Regions Five and Six as heavy-duty equipment operators 638 women were trained in 21 non-traditional fields like construction, welding, and electrical installation, challenging gender stereotypes in the workforce 420 Community Service Officers (CSOs) were trained as tractor operators Minister Joseph Hamilton emphasised that these training programmes align with the government's manifesto commitments, ensuring targeted and impactful skills development. **"In every region, wherever they are located, BIT continues to execute training**

programmes in those communities... these programmes and training are not haphazard," he highlighted. Meanwhile, construction and rehabilitation of six training facilities are underway, offering wider access to skills training in New Amsterdam, Corriverton, Mahaica, Lethem, Bina Hill, and Mongriippa Hill, Bartica.



Trainees in a workshop

1,520 INMATES GAIN SKILLS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

In a remarkable effort to reduce recidivism and promote successful reintegration into society, the Guyana Prison Service (GPS) has empowered over 1,520 inmates with valuable skills in 2023. This initiative, aligned with the Prison Service's goal of facilitating a smooth transition back to civilian life, offers a beacon of hope for inmates and their families.

The GPS implemented a diverse range of programmes across its five prison locations, tailoring them to individual needs through thorough assessments. These programmes focused on equipping inmates with essential reading and writing skills for further education



Over 1,520 inmates empowered with valuable skills in 2023

and employment opportunities.

They also tackle fostering healthy relationships with loved ones, providing support and strengthening family ties.

Learning healthy coping mechanisms to manage emotions and prevent conflict is also addressed, in addition to developing culinary skills and nutritional

knowledge for potential careers in the food service industry.

Other areas tackled include promoting healthy relationships and understanding the harmful effects of domestic violence and Men on a Mission (MOM) sessions aimed at providing mentorship and guidance to young male inmates, empowering them to

make positive choices.

Instilling civic values and responsibilities for active participation in society, and equipping inmates with practical skills in carpentry and joinery, welding, masonry, plumbing, animal and crop husbandry, information technology, and agriculture, opening doors to potential employment also formed

part of the programme.

The Sentence Planning Unit conducted thorough assessments of each inmate's needs, followed by approval from the Sentence Management Board, to ensure each training programme was tailored to their specific skills, interests, and future aspirations. This personalised approach maximises the effectiveness of the programmes and increases the likelihood of successful reintegration.

The GPS recognises the importance of collaboration in achieving its goals. Training programmes are executed through partnerships with various ministries, internal and external facilitators, and

the private sector. This collaborative approach ensures access to diverse expertise, resources, and potential employment opportunities for inmates upon release.

Director of Prisons, Nicklon Elliot, emphasises that these training programmes are part of a larger national strategy to demilitarise prisons in Guyana. The focus is shifting from punishment to rehabilitation, with a commitment to building partnerships with the private sector to address the growing demand for skilled labour. This progressive vision aims to create a more humane and effective prison system that empowers inmates to become productive members of society.

LABOUR MINISTRY RECOVERED \$69M FOR EMPLOYEES IN 2023

The Ministry of Labour was a champion for workers in 2023, recovering a remarkable \$69 million on their behalf. This impressive figure, announced by Minister Joseph Hamilton, signifies the ministry's dedication to protecting employee rights, and ensuring fair treatment in the workplace.

Through successful legal action and negotiation, the ministry secured the significant sum in compensation for employees facing issues like unpaid wages, termination benefits, and leave entitlements. The ministry



Labour Minister Joseph Hamilton

addressed a staggering 912 complaints from employees, resolving 85% through effective mediation and intervention.

Recognising a high volume of complaints

from the private security sector, the ministry implemented targeted initiatives like seminars, leading to a decrease in complaints.

Ensuring compliance with labour laws, the department conducted 12,700 workplace inspections across all regions, safeguarding workers' well-being.

Beyond individual cases, the ministry works towards improving overall industrial relations through conciliation, education, and advocacy, promoting a stable and fair work environment.

GUYANA DIVERSIFIES EXPORTS WITH \$1.8B IN NON-TRADITIONAL CROPS

G u y a n a ' s agricultural sector is booming, with exports of new crops reaching over \$1.8 billion in 2023. This diversification beyond traditional commodities like rice and sugar demonstrates the country's commitment to food security and leadership within the Caribbean.

Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha announced the impressive figures at the ministry's year-end press conference. He highlighted the export of 8,926 metric tons of non-traditional produce, generating \$1.86 billion

(US\$8.8 million). This success signifies progress towards achieving food security within the Caribbean region.

R e c o g n i s i n g the crucial role of agro-processing and marketing in this growth, the government invested heavily in 2023. Minister Mustapha emphasised the \$589.5 million allocated to enhance opportunities for agro-processors and exporters. This includes ensuring their products meet international quality standards, such as ISO requirements.

With these positive developments, Minister

Mustapha expressed confidence in Guyana's position as a leader in CARICOM food security. **"Since 2020,"** he stated, **"Guyana has emerged as the leader in CARICOM, advancing the agri-food system agenda. We are a leading voice in prioritising food security and position in the agriculture sector."**



2023: A YEAR OF TRIUMPHS FOR GPHC ORTHOPAEDICS - 748 EMERGENCY SURGERIES CONDUCTED

The Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation's (GPHC) Department of Orthopedics achieved remarkable success in 2023, performing a staggering 748 emergency surgeries amid a total of 1,602 procedures. This is testament to the dedication and skill of the hospital's team, who tackled even the most complex cases with unwavering commitment.

CONQUERING COMPLEXITIES:

- Pelvic and acetabular surgeries:** Moving beyond conventional surgeries, the department tackled intricate procedures near the pelvis and acetabulum, areas known for their challenging nature.
- Enhanced precision with new CT scan:** The recently acquired CT scan machine played a crucial role in this success. It allowed surgeons to meticulously



CEO Robbie Rambarran and Heads of the various clinical departments

study fractures and plan surgery with utmost accuracy. reconstructions, a vital procedure for athletes' knee stability. surgeries for young patients, ensuring specialised care for this vulnerable group.

COLLABORATION AND EXPANDING REACH:

- Mastering the spine:** The department also successfully performed complex spine surgeries, addressing issues from both the front and back (anterior and posterior approaches). These procedures require exceptional skill and precision.
- Joint replacement surgeries:** Through a collaboration with Operation Walk, 62 joint replacement surgeries were performed, offering relief and restored mobility to patients.
- Scoliosis surgeries reintroduced:** A 25-year hiatus ended with the successful completion of seven scoliosis surgeries. This remarkable achievement was possible due to improved skills and availability of essential instrumentation.
- Sports medicine expertise:** Sports medicine saw its share of triumphs, with successful anterior cruciate ligament
- Focus on paediatric care:** Partnering with Hero Mission, the hospital conducted eight complex orthopaedic

BOOMING OUTPATIENT CLINIC:

The Surgical Outpatient Clinic also



Head of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at the GPHC Dr. Rafi Rozan

witnessed a surge in activity, catering to 11,906 patients, including 2,550 new cases and 9,356 revisits. This robust clinic serves as a vital entry point for patients seeking orthopaedic care.



Ten young patients, aged 8 months to 16 years, recently received life-altering heart surgeries

GPHC RECORDS LOWEST NEONATAL DEATH RATE IN HISTORY



Coordinator of Neonatal Services at the GPHC Dr. Sara Singh

The Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) achieved a remarkable milestone in 2023: the lowest number of neonatal deaths in the hospital's history. This encouraging news was shared by Dr. Sara Singh, Coordinator of Neonatal Services, during the hospital's year-end press conference.

The dedicated team at the GPHC Neonatal Unit provides care for newborns up to 28 days old. With an average of 70-100 admissions daily, 55-60 babies require

some form of treatment. In 2023, a total of 785 babies received critical care, with 637 delivered at the GPHC itself and the remaining 148 referred from emergency rooms or other healthcare facilities.

MILESTONE ACHIEVED: FEWER TINY LIVES LOST

Despite the high volume of patients, the NICU witnessed a stunning drop in fatalities. "We have unfortunately lost 98 neonates," Dr.



Nurse cares for a patient of the NICU at GPHC

Singh stated, "but this is the lowest number of deaths in one calendar year ever recorded in this hospital's history." This translates to a significant reduction from the average annual death rate of 150 neonates.

Furthermore, November 2023 marked another remarkable achievement - only one neonatal death occurred in the NICU that month.

Dr. Singh reported that presumed sepsis and prematurity were the most common

diagnoses among admitted newborns. Respiratory support was also frequently required for a significant portion of the patients.

The commitment to improving neonatal care extends beyond the GPHC walls. Facilities at the West Demerara, Linden, Suddie, and New Amsterdam hospitals were upgraded and equipped with ventilators to provide optimal care to newborns.

DRAMATIC DROP IN MATERNAL DEATHS

Meanwhile, the hospital has achieved remarkable progress in improving maternal health outcomes. Here are the key highlights:

- Decreased maternal deaths:** Compared to 2021 and 2022, 2023 saw a drop in maternal deaths, with only 10 recorded. This includes declines in both direct and indirect pregnancy-related deaths.
- High survival rates:** 303 critically ill pregnant women were successfully treated and survived, showcasing the effectiveness of medical interventions.
- Global benchmark met:** Guyana's stillbirth rate remains under the Every New Born Action Plan target of 20 per 1,000 births.

KEY IMPROVEMENTS:

- Timely C-sections:** Emergency caesarean sections now take just 10-15 minutes on average, significantly improving response times.
- Enhanced patient care:** Increased staffing, specialist consultations for every patient, and improved fetal monitoring contribute to better outcomes.
- Specialised support:** Addition of a urogynecology specialist and a maternal-fetal medicine unit is planned to address complex cases.

Overall, these advances indicate significant progress in the GPHC's obstetrics and gynecology department, offering hope for further reductions in maternal mortality and improved healthcare for expecting mothers in Guyana.

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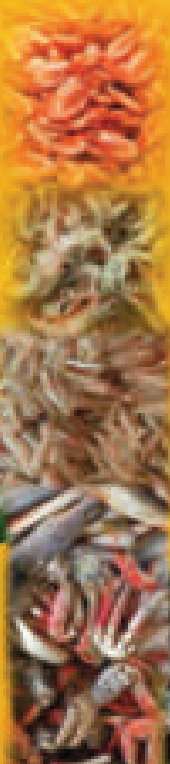
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Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), has once again called out the PNC-led APNU+AFC opposition for promoting racial tensions in Guyana. During a recent press conference, he accused the opposition of using **"race to divide our people"** as a **"defining characteristic"** of their party.

Dr. Jagdeo highlighted the existence of established mechanisms to address instances of racial discrimination, such as the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC). He pointed out that despite accusations from the opposition, no complaints have been lodged with the ERC, despite its authority to investigate and recommend solutions.

This, he contends, demonstrates the opposition's lack of genuine interest in tackling actual cases of discrimination.

While acknowledging the possibility of individual acts of racism, Dr. Jagdeo strongly refutes claims of institutionalised racism. He emphasised the need to collectively identify and eradicate instances of individual bias to achieve true equality. He contrasted this with the PPP's commitment to inclusivity and equal access to opportunities across all ethnicities and social groups, citing improvements in areas like employment, education, and housing during their administration. **"All of our people have seen a growth in disposable income, including Afro-**

DR. JAGDEO ACCUSES PNC-LED APNU+AFC OF FUELING RACIAL DIVISION



Dr Jagdeo emphasised the tangible progress made in communities traditionally considered PNC strongholds

Guyanese. All of our infrastructure, them are treated people have seen including Afro- better, they got back improvement in Guyanese. Our the cash grant... social and economic children, all of our pensioners,****

people living with disabilities...those are the facts," he said.

He further emphasised the tangible progress made in communities traditionally considered PNC strongholds, such as Linden. He cited job creation programmes, land allocation initiatives, and housing projects as evidence of the PPP's commitment to development across the entire country, regardless of political affiliation.

The opposition's tactics of playing the **"race card,"** as he characterised them, are condemned as harmful attempts to divide the nation.

UNITY AND PATRIOTISM PAVE THE WAY FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR GUYANA

President Irfaan Ali at a recent Private Sector Commission (PSC) event painted a hopeful picture for Guyana, where a surge in national unity and patriotism fuel resilience and pave the way for a brighter future for all.

This newfound strength, he believes, is the result of both the nation's inherent resilience and his administration's conscious efforts to cultivate a strong sense of national identity, particularly among the

youth.

Recent events serve as prime examples. From the outpouring of solidarity following the tragic Guyana Defence Force's helicopter crash to the nationwide response to Venezuela's assertive claims, Guyanese have consistently come together as one, showcasing a deep sense of shared identity and pride.

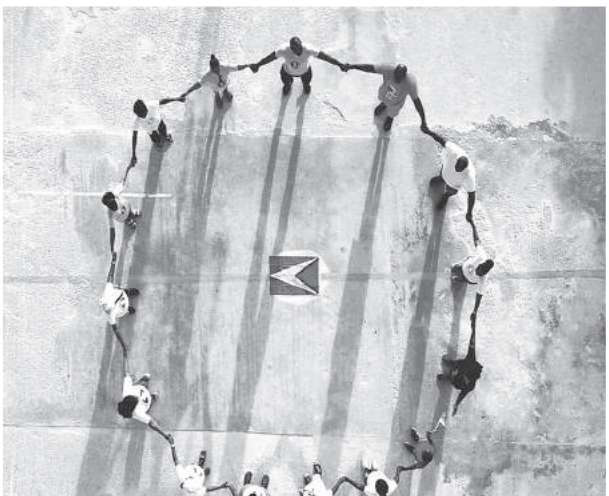
President Ali's dedication to fostering this unity extends beyond mere reaction.

His initiatives range from promoting civic education and cultural events to celebrating national heroes and historical milestones. These efforts aim to instill a strong sense of national values, especially in the younger generation, ensuring a future built on a foundation of shared identity and purpose.

He applauded Guyanese for their unwavering unity, emphasising it as the **"fundamental force that binds the nation**

together." He sees this spirit not just in official pronouncements, but in the heartwarming everyday acts of children embracing their heritage. This surge in national pride, he urged, is a chance to be seized.

The Venezuelan issue served as a catalyst for this national awakening. Guyana's comprehensive awareness campaign fueled a collective sense of unity, culminating in the powerful **"Circle of Unity"** event. This gathering, encompassing people from all walks of



Circle of Unity

life, stood as a symbol of the unbreakable spirit of a united Guyana.

For President Ali, this inclusive response is a testament to the nation's inherent strength and a glimpse into a future where unity and patriotism act as the driving force for progress and prosperity. He urged Guyanese to embrace this spirit and work together to build a brighter future for all.

NO TOLERANCE FOR ETHNIC DIVISION, SAYS DR. JAGDEO - EMPHASISES CASE OF RICKFORD BURKE AND HIS ONLINE CONDUCT

In a firm stance against racial discord, General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C), Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, declared his party's unwavering commitment to combating any attempts to divide Guyanese along ethnic lines.

This resolute message resonated during his year-end press conference at Freedom House, addressing the recent court summons served on New York-based social media commentator, Rickford Burke.

While acknowledging



PPP General Secretary Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo

the principles of free speech and expression, Dr. Jagdeo emphasised the PPP's non-negotiable stance against those who

weaponise their freedom to sow discord and stir ethnic tensions. **"We will fight people with all of our strength...**

who seek to divide our people... and reverse the progress we have made in fostering peace and equality," he declared.

For Dr. Jagdeo, individuals like Burke, who leverage social media for harmful ends, must be held accountable for their actions. Their physical distance from Guyana doesn't shield them from the consequences of their online words and deeds. **"They use social media as a weapon... against the government, but also against private**

citizens... extorting people... This cannot be free speech... they should get a free pass whilst everyone else in this country would have to account to the laws of the country," he stated.

The issue extends beyond blatant hate speech, encompassing also the fabrication and dissemination of false information. Dr. Jagdeo emphasised the need for personal responsibility in online interactions. **"If you're so certain that you have all the facts, then by all means you don't have to worry**

about being sued... Now people can say whatever they wish... but if it's seditious... they too must be held accountable," he stressed.

Rickford Burke currently faces a court summons requiring his presence at the Vigilance Magistrate's Court in March 2024 on charges stemming from his online activities. Past charges against him relate to inciting racial hostility, sedition, and public terror.

PRESIDENT ALI PLEDGES CONTINUED PROGRESS...

Cont'd from page 2

development is sweeping across our country like a breath of fresh air.

My government has increased the salary base of all public servants by more than 21.5% since 2020; resolved anomalies in the salary of more than 5,000 health workers and 9,000 members of the disciplined services; implemented a series of measures for teachers, costing billions of dollars, to address salaries, allowances, incentives and duty free.

We have also increased the tax threshold from \$65,000 to \$85,000; increased old age pension by 60%, public assistance by 75%; distributed more than \$7 billion in flood relief cash grant; restored the cash grant for school aged children and increasing it to \$35,000 per child with a \$5,000 uniform cash grant, taking it to \$40,000 per child, and making it available to private school children; distributed a \$250,000 one off cash grant that benefitted almost 5,500 severed sugar workers; introduced the dialysis programme, making \$600,000 per annum available to dialysis patients; invested more than \$7.7 billion to support household income through the COVID-19 cash relief programme; removed the VAT on water and electricity; reduced the tax on fuel to 0%, costing an estimated value of \$17 billion; directly supported our farmers and fisherfolk through the investment of billions of dollars; launched the part time job programme, bringing new entrants into the workforce and unloading more than \$10 billion of disposable income in communities and vulnerable families; the removal of VAT on data, cellphones, ATVs, all of his contributed to the transformation we are seeing; the removal of corporate tax on health and education services, aimed at easing the burden on the population.

In addition, a \$5 billion programme was implemented to address cost of living in 2023, covering public servants, teachers, public agencies, farmers, pensioners, community workers and others. Specific measures

were also implemented to improve home ownership.

The mining and extractive sector benefitted from billions of dollars in incentives through measures that include the removal of vat on machinery and equipment; removal of VAT on all ATVs for mining, forestry, agriculture and manufacturing; removal of VAT on exports; removal of VAT on lubricating oil; reduction of the sliding scale final tax rate on gold from 3.5% (over US\$1,600) and 3% (over US\$1,300 and under US\$1,600) to 2.5%; and the removal of 10% tributors tax, benefitting thousands of workers in the mining industry

From the national to the regional and local levels, our infrastructure is undergoing improvements. The government's commitment to building a modern and efficient economy is evident in the incredible changes taking place. Roads, bridges, schools, hospital and public facilities are being constructed and upgraded, enhancing connectivity and accessibility for all Guyanese.

Investments are pouring into our nation, creating economic opportunities for growth and job creation. The private sector, an essential partner in our journey, is firmly at the helm of our economy, contributing to the steering of our nation towards further prosperity. Investments, both domestic and foreign, are instrumental in driving the engine of progress and securing a better life for our people and future generations.

Guyana continues to provide regional and global leadership, particularly in the crucial areas of food, energy, and climate security. Our commitment to these critical issues reflects our understanding of the interconnectedness between global, local and regional challenges and the need for collective action. By leading in these areas, we not only contribute to our well-being but also to making the world a better place.

In 2023, we did not only shine in the area of

our economy. Our social services – housing, water, sanitation, education and health – continued to improve, bringing greater benefits to our people. We took active steps to improve security and boost the quality of other public services offered to the public.

We basked in our moments of glory and triumph. Who will ever forget how our spirits soared in 2023 when the Guyana Amazon Warriors clinched victory in the coveted Caribbean Premier League final, right here at home? Who will forget how this team brought our people together and how much its success lifted our nation? Our sportsmen and sportswomen continue to excel, bringing immense joy and glory to our nation. Their achievements not only showcase the talent and dedication of our athletes but also serve as a source of inspiration for the entire nation.

THE NEW YEAR

My government pledged to improve the lives of our people. We are honouring that promise. The fruits of our collective efforts are beginning to ripen. The future of Guyana is bright and promising. We have set Guyana on a course of sustained growth and prosperity. The New Year – 2024, will see us advance more rapidly along this path as we shape the destiny of present and future generations.

In the next couple of weeks, we will unveil the 2024 Budget. This Budget will detail our expenditure and revenue plans for the coming year. It will deliver on our promise to continuously improve the lives of Guyanese.

I do not wish to steal the thunder of the Honourable Minister of Finance, but I wish to provide you with a broad outlook of what Guyanese can expect in 2024.

Guyanese are going to benefit from improved infrastructural and public services, including water, housing and education. Several major road projects are slated for completion, and will make commuting easier.

We expect in 2024 sugar production to

be increased, as we continue to invest in the sector's contribution to rural employment and the rural economy. Rice production, aquaculture and other initiatives will lead to increased food production.

This New Year will also see significant investment in education, including preparations for the roll-out of free university education in 2025.

The capacity and capabilities of our Defense Force will be strengthened to allow for improvements in the defense of our sovereignty and our territorial integrity.

The carnage on our roads will be greeted with a robust road safety and traffic management plan. I intend to have a national conversation on this issue within the coming days, out of that conversation, new laws, regulations and technology will be implemented to stop the carnage on our roads.

Cost-of-living interventions will be made to cushion any spikes in prices in our economy. We want to put more money into the pockets of people. Our policy making matrix will address this ideal and the idea of putting more money in the pockets of our people.

Workers will continue to benefit from increases in their wages and salaries, augmenting the other measures, which we will take to enhance household disposable incomes.

Work will commence on the construction of a new international-branded hotel near the Georgetown Seawall. Ongoing construction of other hotels will be intensified.

Guyana's energy security plans will be advanced through the ongoing works for the building of a gas-to-shore energy plant that will reduce energy costs. The hinterland electrification program will be expanded to bring electricity to more hinterland residents.

Investments in culture and sport infrastructure will see improvements in sports grounds, playfields and cultural facilities.

We will also be addressing in a very

frontal way, the issues of mental health, suicide; advancing measures to increase disposable income; supporting the building of consortiums to further enable our people to benefit from the opportunities here; manufacturing and industrial development expansion, supporting through incentivizing investment in manufacturing and industrial development; more community investment aimed at creating community safe spaces, community security, community livelihood, community empowerment.

We will see a robust plan to further advance the security architecture and infrastructure of our communities and country. Direct policies and policy orientation towards tourism initiatives and expanding our tourism product, and comprehensive policy to address squatting, especially on the Linden-Soesdyke Highway.

These are some of the measures, some of the issues that we will confront in a very frontal way in 2024.

I assure all Guyanese that the government will continue to work tirelessly for your upliftment in the coming year.

On this point, I want to pause and recognise the tremendous work of the cabinet, the government, and all those technicians who are supporting the multitude of projects and investment that are geared at the transformation of our country.

I thank your families that allow you the extended time in national service.

Together, let us face the challenges and embrace the opportunities that lie ahead, confident in the strength of our unity and the promise of a brighter future.

May the New Year bring prosperity, peace, and progress to every one of you!

Happy New Year and God bless you all!

Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana January 1, 2024





Guyanese

DIASPORA DIGEST



KEEPING THE DIASPORA INFORMED

EDITION 58

Guyana’s first couple celebrate six years of marriage



On December 30, Guyana’s President Irfaan Ali and First Lady Arya Ali celebrated their 6th wedding anniversary. The couple exchanged heartfelt messages on Facebook, expressing their love and appreciation for each other.

President Ali wrote, “Happy 6th anniversary of navigating life together! Happy anniversary to my dear wife First Lady Arya Ali.”

First Lady Ali responded with an equally touching message, “My life changed after I met this man 8 years ago. Today marks 6 years since we’ve been married, and since that day, you’ve made me happier than I ever thought I could be, happier than I thought I deserved to be, and as happy as I could possibly be. Happy Anniversary, My Forever & Always!”

The couple’s social media posts were met with an outpouring of love and well wishes from friends, family, and supporters. Many Guyanese citizens took to the comments section to congratulate the President and First Lady on their anniversary and wish them many more years of happiness together.



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Napa 紹菜
Reg: \$1.29

79¢
lb

Mama Squash 妈咪瓜
Reg: \$1.29

99¢
lb

Yu Choy 油菜
Reg: \$1.79

139¢
lb

Bunch Broccoli 有头西兰花
Reg: \$1.99

159¢
bunch

Andy Boy Bunch Rapini 西人油菜
Reg: \$3.99

259¢
bunch

Romaine Heart 袋装西生菜
Reg: \$3.99

259¢
bag

Lemon in Bag 袋装黄柠檬
Reg: \$3.99

299¢
bag

Red Pepper 红椒
Reg: \$4.99

359¢
lb

Red Delicious Apple 红苹果
Reg: \$1.59

99¢
lb

Blue Jay Orange 兰鸟橙
Reg: \$1.79

129¢
lb

Bosco Pear 波士啤梨
Reg: \$1.79

139¢
lb

Lucy Rose Apple 苹果
Reg: \$2.99

159¢
lb

Red Seedless Grape 无核小提
Reg: \$3.99

299¢
lb

Mini Watermelon 迷你西瓜
Reg: \$3.99

299¢
ea

Pineapple (Large) 大菠萝
Reg: \$4.99

359¢
ea

Sun Candy Tangerine 4Lbs 小甜桔
Reg: \$4.99

399¢
box

Vietnam Red Meat Pomelo 越南青柚
Reg: \$6.99

499¢
ea

RESTAURANT SPECIAL

Green Leaf Lettuce 唐生菜
27.00
case

Broccoli 西兰花
32.00
case

Andy Boy Head Lettuce 圆生菜
36.00
case

Red Pepper 11LB 红椒
38.00
case

Spanish Onion 大洋葱
39.00
case

US Tomato 美国番茄
42.00
case

Sunkist Oranges 新奇士橙 72s
42.00
case

Lemon 黄柠檬
42.00
case

Celery 西芹
45.00
case

Lime 青柠檬
45.00
case

Yellow Plantains 黄大蕉
68.00
case

Frozen Pangda Basa Fillet 鱼柳 8x3.5LB
60.00
case

Headless White Shrimp 无头白虾 21/25 4x6lb/case
150.00
case

TYJ Spring Roll Pastry 8.5' 春卷皮 20 shts x40 pkts
55.00
case

Extra Large Egg 箱装大鸡蛋
53.99
case

Jasmine Tea 5Lb 茉莉花茶
20.00
bag

Aroy-D Coconut Milk 椰奶 24x400ml
43.99
case

Container S32 容器
41.50
case

ADM All Purpose Flour 面粉 20kg
19.99
bag

Monosodium Glutamate 味精 22.7kg
60.00
ea

Capri Vegetable Oil 蔬菜油 16L
37.99
case

Bamboo Chopsticks 竹筷子 30x100pcs
60.00
case

Squid Brand Fish Sauce 箱装鱿鱼标鱼露
28.00
case

Lucky Brand Fish Sauce 箱装幸福鱼露 24x700ml
28.00
case

Lee Kum Kee Kum Chun Oyster Flavoured Sauce 6x2.2kg 李锦记锦珍鲜味蠔油
39.00
case

Lee Kum Kee Hoisin Sauce 李锦记海鲜酱 1.75L
53.00
case

NG-18 New Gen Eco-Friendly Packaging 一次性餐盒
24.00
case

Redpath Sugar 白糖 20kg
32.00
bag

FROZEN

THAI GOLD Head-on Frozen Shrimp 40/50 速冻虾 380g
Reg: \$6.99

499¢
ea

Tasia Calamari Rings 500g 鱿鱼圈
Reg: \$8.99

699¢
ea

Cocked Rock Carb 1.32lb
Reg: \$10.99

799¢
ea

Coco Glace Coconut Dessert 220g 椰子甜品
Reg: \$3.99/ea

2/\$5.00

Cool Ocean Mackerel 池鱼
Reg: \$2.99

229¢
lb

King Basa Steak 650g 巴沙鱼扒
Reg: \$3.99

299¢
ea

Milk 2 Go 6x200ml 巧克力奶
Reg: \$6.99

459¢
ea

Buenas Shredded Young Coconut 454g 椰丝
Reg: \$2.99

199¢
ea

Great Lake Trubot Fish 桂花鱼
Reg: \$5.99

499¢
lb

Baguio Sweet Longanisa 甜肠 375g
Reg: \$4.99

299¢
ea

SH Cooked Whole Clam 煮熟全蛤 340g
Reg: \$2.99

188¢
ea

Golden Saba Turonitos Banana 454g 香蕉卷
Reg: \$5.99

399¢
ea

GROCERY

Mr. Goudas Calrose Rice 日本米 15Lb
Reg: \$18.99

1399¢
ea

Mr. Goudas Instant Oats 速溶燕麦 900g
Reg: \$2.59

159¢
ea

Fofojoy Instant Honey Ginger Drink Series 288g 蜂蜜姜晶
Reg: \$2.99

199¢
ea

Chin Chin Grass Jelly Series 凉粉 540g
Reg: \$2.59/ea

2/\$3.00

WuFuYuan Tapioca Pearl 珍珠粉圆 1kg
Reg: \$6.99

459¢
ea

Vinacafe Instant Coffee Mix 咖啡 20x20g
Reg: \$4.59

299¢
ea

Taky Food/Vietnamese Steamed Rice Roll Mix 越式粉卷 400g
Reg: \$2.29

139¢
ea

Mikko Banh Khot Flour For Rice Pancake 500g 米饼面粉
Reg: \$2.99

188¢
ea

Bamboo Tree Vietnamese Rice Paper Series 340g 越南米纸
Reg: \$2.99

188¢
ea

Master Sardines 425g 沙丁鱼罐头
Reg: \$1.99

99¢
ea

Knorr Liquid Seasoning 家乐牌调味料 250ml
Reg: \$1.99

99¢
ea

Angel Evaporated Liquid Creamer 405ml 炼奶
Reg: \$1.99

99¢
ea

Huy Fong Chili Sauce 481ml 越南蒜蓉辣椒酱
Reg: \$5.99

459¢
ea

Maggi Cooking Sauce 鲜露 680ml
Reg: \$3.99

279¢
ea

Aji-nong Pork 170g 猪肉
Reg: \$4.59

279¢
ea

Royal OX Rice Sticks 400g 牛皇沙河粉
Reg: \$1.99

129¢
ea

COF JiangXi Rice Vermicelli 江西米粉 400g
Reg: \$2.59/ea

2/\$3.00

Shodoshima Instant Japanese Udon 200gX4 乌冬面
Reg: \$2.99

188¢
ea

MEAT

Lean Pork 瘦肉
Reg: \$3.59

259¢
lb

Beef Rib Eyes 肥牛
Reg: \$7.99

699¢
lb

Frozen OX Tail 牛尾
Reg: \$6.99

599¢
lb

Frozen Cow Feet 急冻牛脚
Reg: \$2.99

199¢
lb

Chicken Leg Meat 鸡腿肉
Reg: \$4.59

359¢
lb

SEAFOOD

Fresh Sea Bream 新鲜海银鱼
Reg: \$7.99

499¢
lb

Frozen Fresh Head-on White Shrimp 冰鲜有头南美白虾
Reg: \$5.99

699¢
lb

Frozen Fresh Squid 冰鲜鱿鱼
Reg: \$5.99

499¢
lb

Fresh Pickeral 新鲜碧古鱼
Reg: \$5.99

459¢
lb

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