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### **US Congressman** lauds Guyana's Ali

United States Congressman Jonathan Jackson, following robust engagements with various groups during his recent visit, has expressed strong confidence in the leadership of President Dr. Irfaan Ali.

In an interview before his departure on Tuesday, Jackson revealed that after meeting with residents in sections of East Bank Demerara and Georgetown, he plans to offer recommendations for potential programs and policies to President Ali.

His visit was marked by fruitful discussions aimed at fostering collaboration and development.

Jackson emphasized that all stakeholders he interacted with shared a common goal: creating a better Guyana for all its people.

He intends to use his insights to help local groups work together more effectively.

His proposed initiatives are expected to benefit both the people of Guyana and President Ali's administration.

**OUT ON BAIL:** Canadian YouTuber Chris Hughes, pictured at centre with local fans, was released on \$100,000 bail in Trinidad on Tuesday on charges of sedition. The vlogger, whose channel is "Chris Must List" was arrested last week after he posted several videos showing interviews with armed gang members in T&T. He is due back in court later this week. Authorities claim Chris violated the law by promoting gang violence in T&T.



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# ICC Men's T20 World Cup: Contractors push to ensure national stadium road ready

DESPITE the challenges posed by the ongoing rainy season, contractors are working tirelessly to ensure that the roads leading to the Guyana National Stadium are ready for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup by June 2. Minister of Housing and Water, Collin Croal, emphasised the importance of the three main access roads—Greenfield, Windsor Estate, and Red Road—in a recent interview.

Minister Croal highlighted that the roads are not only for the benefit of cricket fans but also for the residents of Providence and other commuters. "We are working around the clock to make sure that everyone who is going to the cricket gets there in the safest manner, but as we all can see, the weather isn't helping either. The contractors and their employees are working long hours in the night, and I must give them credit for that, but we have to also remember that these roads are built to benefit all of Guyana, all Guyanese, and tourists," said Croal.

He stressed the importance of proper construction, noting that the extensive infrastructural development includes the removal and reinstallation of old pipelines, electrical wires, and cables, as well as concreting the drains. "With the vastness of these projects, we cannot rush them through just because we need them to be completed; we have to ensure that they are properly done," he added.

Minister Croal expressed his grati-



Works are progressing on the entrance of Massy Road/ Red Road despite the rainy season

tude to the residents of Providence for their patience during the construction. He acknowledged the inconvenience caused by the projects, affecting traffic flow and home entrances, but assured residents that the results would be beneficial for everyone. "On behalf of myself and the government, let me first of all say thank you to the residents of these communities in Providence, especially the ones that have been inconvenienced since the road projects have

affecting the smooth flow of traffic and, in some cases, the entrance of your home," Croal noted.

He also urged drivers to exercise caution and consideration when navigating the under-construction roads, especially during the rainy season. "You cannot drive at a fast rate on a road that has loads of sand and dirt and is wet; we need to use our common sense. There are machines all over these roadways, and we have women and children as you all. Please be careful and stay safe," he pleaded.

During a visit by the Guyana Chronicle to Greenfield, Windsor Estate, and Red Road on Thursday, contractors were observed working diligently despite the inclement weather. Contractors on site expressed their commitment to completing the project by the end of June, as scheduled, despite the challenges posed by excessive rainfall.

The dedication of the contractors and the support of the local community are pivotal as Guyana prepares to host the prestigious ICC Men's T20 World Cup, ensuring safe and efficient access to the national stadium.





A section of the Windsor Estate Road is covered with bitumen and rolled on by heavy-duty machinery



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# **GPHC** conducts first paediatric liver resection in Guyana

THE Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) has announced the successful completion of the first paediatric liver resection in Guyana.

This groundbreaking surgery was performed on an 18-month-old female patient from Linden, diagnosed with a rare and aggressive paediatric liver cancer known as hepatoblastoma.

The patient's journey began with a diagnosis of the large, aggressive tumour, which prompted the formation of multidisciplinary team led by Guyanese Paediatric Surgeon, Dr. Marisa Seepersaud. The goal was to provide the best chance of survival for the young patient.

According to a press release, treatment commenced with a series of chemotherapy sessions, administered by GPHC's oncologist, Dr. Archer, and her dedicated team. The radiology team, led by Dr. Vyphius, meticulously monitored the tumour's response to treatment. After five chemotherapy sessions, the tumour had shrunk by approximately 50 per cent, making surgical removal a vi-

Given the unprecedented nature of the procedure in Guyana, two hepatobiliary specialists were invited to assist the local team in performing the complex surgery, which involved removing about half of the baby's liver. Ensuring the patient's safety during the operation, senior consultants from the anaesthetic department, Doctors Fernando & Arturo, provided their expert care.

Dr. Colin Abel, Head of Paediatric Surgery and Liver Transplant at Busta Mante Hospital for Children in Jamaica, and Professor Steven Dunn, Paediatric Surgeon and Head of Solid Organ Transplant at Nemours Children's Hospital in Delaware, USA, volunteered their expertise for the critical tumour removal. Dr. Seepersaud worked alongside these renowned surgeons throughout the procedure.

"The surgery was a formidable undertaking involving many complex and critical steps and equipment," said Dr. Seepersaud, who is the local lead paedi-



Scene from inside the GPHC during surgery

atric surgeon. The patient's mother expressed confidence in the team's management and consented to the surgery.

On Thursday, May 23, 2024 the nine-hour operation concluded with the complete resection of the tumour. Dr. Seepersaud expressed her gratitude to the GPHC administration for their swift response in facilitating the assistance of the visiting surgeons. Both Dr. Abel and Professor Dunn have shown interest in continuing their support for the Paediwhich the Paediatric Department is immensely grateful.

"GPHC takes pride in the dedication and commitment of the local team, who collaborated across multiple specialties to ensure a successful outcome. The paediatric surgical, nursing and

anaesthetic team performed exceptionally well, despite the unprecedented nature of the case in Guyana," the hospital

The paediatric critical care team continues to monitor the baby, who is expected to be discharged soon. Due to the liver's regenerative capacity, the patient is anticipated to have normal liver function as she grows. Mortality rates for major liver resection surgeries range from five per cent in developed counatric Surgical department, an offer for tries to as high as 31 per cent in less ex-surgical care. This historic achievement perienced regions.

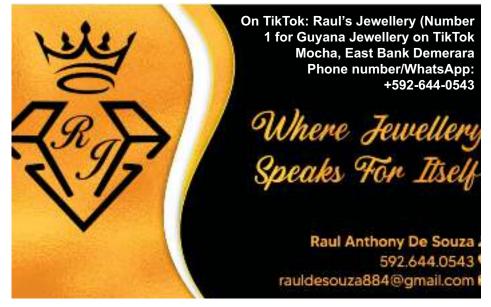
The duration from admission, diag-

nosis, treatment, and surgery was ten weeks at GPHC. Additionally, two other paediatric patients with uncommon tumours also benefitted from surgeries during the team's visit.

A one-year-old female and an eight-month-old female, both with large sacrococcygeal teratomas, have been successfully treated and discharged.

The GPHC administration has expressed interest in future collaborations to benefit Guyanese children requiring marks another significant advancement in paediatric surgical care in Guyana.







## **EDITORIAL & OPINIONS**

# **Guyana after 58 years of independence**

Last week, Guyana celebrated 58 years of independence, a milestone that has not been achieved without severe challenges.

In addition to being labeled one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere, Guyana also had to overcome more than 2 decades of dictatorship under Forbes Burnham. After his death, his successor Desmond Hoyte allowed free and fair elections for the first time in 1992, and this was handsomely won by the PPP led by Dr Cheddi Jagan.

Under his watch, Guyana moved steadily towards progress, as the prospect of new wealth from a fledgling oil and gas industry loomed large on the horizon.

There was still a major hiccup in the works, however, started after the opposition PNC took power again in the mid 2010's. While that government was fairly competent in its management of the country's affairs, it is what its officials did following elections in 2020 that saw fears of history repeating itself gain hold among the population, both at home and in the Diaspora.

In an effort to hold onto power, the PNC did the unthinkable, and cooked the books to show that it had won the election in spite of a strong challenge from the PPP.

It took the bravery of international observers to bring the scheme to light and to foil their plans. Eventually, after many court challenges and a period of uncertainty, the PPP was declared the winner of the election.

Since then, the current government of Dr Irfaan Ali has steered the ship of state to unprecedented heights. The country is now ranked among the most progressive in the region and for that matter, the world, due to Ali's astute management of the oil industry. The country is also playing a lead role in terms of food and energy security and climate change.

While we cannot honestly say that the new found prosperity has found its way to all Guyanese, it does appear that after 58 years, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

More and more Guyanese are benefiting from better educational opportunities, from home ownership, from improved infrastructure and better health care.

Slowly but surely, the oil wealth is finding its way to all corners of the country, where the standard of living is steadily improving.

As we reflect on Guyana's independence and the difficult road it traversed, we have every reason to be proud of the country's achievements.

Guyana is poised for monumental changes and development. At an even more fundamental level, the nation has risen beyond the bitterness of the past and the country is moving inexorably in the direction of 'One Guyana' as envisaged by President Ali.

Fifty-eight years of independence may not be that significant in the long sweep of history, but it is more than enough to give Guyanese that sense of conviction that they are on the right path in the realization of our quest for a peaceful, progressive and prosperous Guyana.

## Agriculture success under Minister Zulfikar Mustapha

Dear Editor,

The Ministry of Agriculture in Guyana, under the leadership of Minister Zulfikar Mustapha, has marked a significant shift in the agricultural landscape, with a particular focus on high-value crops. This strategic redirection has not only revitalised the sector but also underscored the comparative inefficacy of the previous APNU/AFC administration.

Under the APNU/AFC government, the agricultural sector experienced stagnation. High-value crop production, including fruits, vegetables, and spices, saw minimal growth. In 2019, for instance, the sector contributed a mere 3% to the GDP, reflecting inadequate policies and lackluster support for farmers. Furthermore, the absence of substantial investment in technology and training led to suboptimal yields and limited export potential.

In contrast, Minister Mustapha's

tenure has seen a transformative approach. By 2023, the high-value crops sector's contribution to GDP had surged to 8%, a clear indication of progressive policies and robust investment. The introduction of advanced farming techniques, coupled with comprehensive training programs for farmers, has substantially boosted productivity.

Additionally, the ministry's collaboration with international agricultural bodies has facilitated the adoption of sustainable practices and enhanced market access.

Statistical comparisons reveal stark improvements. In 2020, the export value of high-value crops stood at \$20 million

By 2023, this figure had more than doubled to \$45 million, reflecting both increased production and better market penetration. These figures starkly contrast with the previous administration's performance, where annual growth rates barely exceeded 2%.

Minister Mustapha's emphasis on modernising the sector has also led to a significant increase in investment.

Government spending on agriculture rose from GYD 18 billion in 2019 to GYD 30 billion in 2023, a testament to the current administration's commitment to agricultural excellence. This financial influx has enabled the implementation of innovative projects, such as the establishment of agro-processing facilities and the promotion of value-added products, which have fur-

ther bolstered the sector's profitability.

In summary, the proactive and strategic initiatives under Minister Zulfikar Mustapha have markedly uplifted Guyana's high-value crops sector. The comparative figures illustrate a stark contrast between the stagnant growth under the APNU/AFC government and the dynamic, forward-looking policies of the current administration, leading to a flourishing agricultural sector poised for sustained success.

Sincerely,

Fawaz Harry

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# Calgary MP tries to block deportation of Humboldt truck driver

Calgary Liberal MP George Chahal is trying to rally support among his colleagues to block the deportation of Jaskirat Singh Sidhu, the truck driver responsible for the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, which killed 16 people and left 13 injured.

As first reported by The Hill Times, Chahal emailed his Liberal caucus colleagues last week saying he would be publicly advocating for Sidhu to stay in Canada.

"It was a tragic accident that he was involved in, pleaded guilty and served his time," Chahal said. "Mr. Sidhu is my constituent and I've had the opportunity over the past several days to meet with him, his wife and his child and he has asked for forgiveness."

A spokesperson for Immigration Minister Marc Miller's office tells Global News they do not comment on specific cases due to privacy legislation. Chahal says he previously spoke with Miller about Sidhu's case, but has not since sending the email to Liberal caucus.

Sidhu received his deportation order on May 24 during an Immigration and Refugee Board hearing in Calgary.

Despite arguments from his lawyer

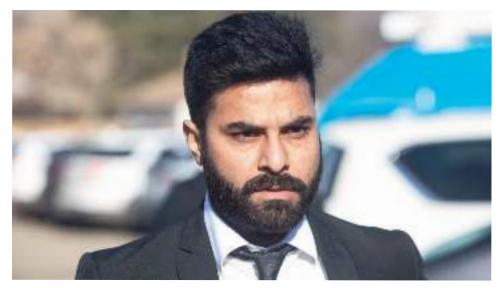
that based on compassionate and humanitarian factors Sidhu should not be deported, the board said it could not consider those factors and had to rule based on "whether the minister has established the facts that support their allegation that you're inadmissible for serious criminality."

This is because despite Sidhu taking full responsibility for his actions, the law states that he is inadmissible to Canada due to the fact he is not a Canadian citizen and committed a serious crime.

At the time, Sidhu's lawyer Michael Greene said he was not surprised by the board's decision due to how the law is written, calling it a "forgone conclusion."

Greene said that since moving here, Sidhu has become a father, and his child has significant health issues and would not be safe in India as a result. Sidhu's wife is also a Canadian citizen.

"The real question that's got to be asked here is, what purpose is served by removing Mr. Sidhu? He's already paid a huge price. And he's definitely not a danger to the public. Nobody thinks he'sa danger," Greene said in an interview.



Jaskirat Singh Sidhu — crash killed 16 people



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### The Economy & Finance | JB's Insight

# Guyana Teachers' Union: A proposal to Consider



Joel Bhagwandin

It is interesting to note that in April 2023, the Grenada Government, and the Grenada Union of Teachers (GUT), inked a multi-year agreement for salary increase and other fringe benefits covering the period 2023-2025. This agreement was followed by successful negotiations that commenced in December 2022. This is a very a good example for the Guyana counterpart (GTU) to follow, which is on the table from the Government's side. The Government has made it clear that it would not be feasible to enter into a multi-year agreement for previous years, which is the proposal that the GTU has put to the Government covering the period 2019-2023. The Government of Guyana has openly disclosed that they are willing to negotiate a multi-year agreement covering the period 2024-2027 or 2024-2029. This author would therefore like to urge the leadership of the GTU to return to the negotiation table with the authorities in good faith. And like their Grenadian counterparts, opt for a multi-year agreement for the period 2024-2027 or 2024-2029, which the Government of Guyana is more than willing to consider and honor.

In a virtual panel discussion hosted by the Guyana Teachers Union (GTU), Dr. Vincent Adams reportedly "lamented the fact that teachers have to protest for better pay in oil-rich Guyana". In making his point, he goes onto argue that Grenada, a spice producing nation is paying their teachers more than what obtains in Guyana. Often, these types of argumentations are conveniently framed within a certain conceptual perspective in mind. But context is typically omitted though crucial to the larger appreciation and understanding of the reality of the situation at hand and more so the relevance. In this article, this author delves into the contextual analysis, which was omitted from the discourse and concludes with a proposal for the stakeholders to consider.

The tagline that Guyana is an "oil-rich" country has the proclivity to drive certain expectations not often grounded in realism and pragmatism. The fact of the matter is that it is not today that Guyana is an "oil-rich" nation. The oil was always there beneath the earth's surface within the sovereign geographic space called Guyana—bil-

lions of years now. It was only recent that this resource known as "crude oil"—was discovered in commercial quantities, just about nine (9) short years ago, after about fifteen (15) years of exploration. Following discovery, it took another five years to monetize the resource, inter alia, the commencement of the production phase.

Guyana's oil wealth in terms of proven reserves currently stands at an estimated eleven (11) billion barrels, worth an estimated US\$832 billion at current price. Production, however, began less than five (5) years ago. To date, only 3% of the total proven reserves, valued at US\$42 billion or 5% of the total present value of the proven reserves have been extracted. Moreover, the Government's share of the revenue inclusive of projected earnings for 2024 is an estimated US\$6 billion (0.7%) of the total present value of the proven reserves—that is, less than 1% of the total value of proven reserves that Guyana has earned thus far.

On a point of correction, Dr. Adams posited that Guyana has the highest GDP. Guyana's GDP is not the highest, the GDP growth rates are the highest of recent and the projected growth over the medium term. The country with the highest GDP is the United States of America, with a GDP of an estimated US\$28.8 trillion (2024). The high GDP growth rate in Guyana is attributed to the scale and rapidity of increased levels of production in the oil and gas sector—from a position of 120k barrels per day since first oil to over 600k barrels per day in 2024. Consequently, production has increased 5-fold since first oil, in less than five years and the oil economy represents twice (2x) the size of the non-oil economy. It is important to note, though, that the high double-digit GDP growth rates will revert to the single digit in the period post 2030, by which time oil production is expected to plateau. Peak production is anticipated to be in the region of 1.3 million barrels per day by 2027-30.

With respect to the reference to Grenada, it is interesting to note that in April 2023, the Grenada Government, and the Grenada Union of Teachers (GUT), inked a multi-year agreement for salary increase and other fringe

benefits covering the period 2023-2025. This agreement was followed by successful negotiations that commenced in December 2022. This is a very a good example for the Guyana counterpart (GTU) to follow, which is on the table from the Government's side. The Government has made it clear that it would not be feasible to enter into a multi-year agreement for previous years, which is the proposal that the GTU has put to the Government covering the period 2019-2023. The Government of Guyana has openly disclosed that they are willing to negotiate a multi-year agreement covering the period 2024-2027 or 2024-2029.

Guyana's education budget is 6x the size of what obtains in Grenada, while Guyana's total number of teachers is 8x Grenada's,

Guyana's education budget represents 87% of Grenada's total national budget,

Grenada has a total student population of 22,000, which would give rise to a student-teacher ratio of 12:1,

Guyana has about 180,000 students, which would give rise to a ratio of 13:1,

579% of Grenada's education budget is allocated towards recurrent expenditure, and 21% towards capital expenditure, whereas in Guyana, 67% of the education budget is allocated towards recurrent expenditure and 33% towards capital expenditure, and

Guyana's budget for teachers wages and salaries is US\$192 million, 2.15x the size of Grenada's entire budget for the education sector.

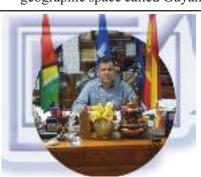
Simply put, teachers in Grenada apparently earn a higher average salary than their Guyanese counterparts because the teaching service workforce population is 8x smaller than Guyana, with a budget that is 6x smaller than what obtains in Guyana. Most notably, the Grenadian Government is not investing in the education sector as heavily as in the case of Guyana—as demonstrated by the allocation of resources towards capital expenditure. This means that perhaps there is not much new infrastructure needed in Grenada's education sector. Therefore, there is more financial resources allocated towards wages and salaries, with of course a much smaller workforce.

In Guyana, the situation is the inverse, whereby significant investments are needed in the physical, social, human, and technological infrastructure for the sector.

For the sake of argument and demonstration, it is not only that the current proposal by the GTU would not be feasible and practicable; they should also consider that with the adjustment for anomalies and across the board increases over the period 2020-2023, there is a higher base salary to start from going forward. There are cases whereby some categories of teachers' salaries were adjusted upwards on the highest end of the salary scale.

Even if the Government was to consider the back-dated proposal, to be prudent, the increases would have to considered based on the old, lower base salaries for that period. For example, the trainee teachers previously were earning a stipend of \$12,000 monthly. That category of teachers is now earning \$90,000 monthly owing to the upward adjustments by the Government in 2022-2023. So, if the GTU is adamant to consider from 2019-2023, the increases that the GTU is requesting would have to be applied to the old base, which was \$12,000, which would have taken it up to \$35,156 for the year 2023 based on the annual increases that the GTU has put forward. Clearly, this is much lower, 2.5x lower than what this category of teachers are earning currently on account of the upward adjustments. Henceforth, it would be in the best interest for this category of teachers to consider increases from 2024 onwards, through a multi-year agreement; such that the benefits accrued therefrom would ultimately be greater than the GTU's original proposal.

In closing, this author would therefore like to urge the leadership of the GTU to return to the negotiation table with the authorities in good faith. And like their Grenadian counterparts, opt for a multi-year agreement for the period 2024-2027 or 2024-2029, which the Government of Guyana is more than willing to consider and honor.





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Brian Tiwarie, OMC, AA - CEO

# Canada announces pilot program for caregivers to get residency

By Amit Singh LBJ REPORTER

Canada has announced new, enhanced caregiver pilot programs as the expiry date for Canada's existing Home Child Care Provider Pilot and the Home Support Worker Pilot approaches.

The existing pilot programs are set to expire on June 17. In their place, the new pilot programs will grant home care workers with permanent resident status when they arrive in Canada, rather than requiring a certain amount of work experience in the country.

They will also be permitted to work for "organizations that provide temporary or part-time care for people who are semi-independent or recovering from an injury or illness."

To be eligible, caregivers must:

- attain a minimum of level 4 based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)
- hold the equivalent of a Canadian high school diploma
- have recent and relevant work experience
- receive an offer for a full-time home care job

This criteria marks a change from the previous pilot programs that required a CLB of 5 and a year of Canadian post-secondary education (or a foreign equivalent). The programs also included a work experience requirement of at least six months. IRCC has yet to make it clear what the work experience requirement will be under the new pilot



**Immigration Minister Marc Miller** 

programs and says more details will be announced closer to the full launch.

In an IRCC news release, Immigration Minister Marc Miller said, "Caregivers play a critical role in supporting Canadian families, and our programs need to reflect their invaluable contributions. As we work to implement a permanent caregivers program, these two new pilots will not only improve support for caregivers, but also provide families with the quality care they deserve."

According to the 2024-2026 Immigration Levels Plan, Canada expects to

welcome more than 15,000 new permanent residents through caregiver programs and as of April 30, 2024, approximately 5,700 caregivers and their family members have become permanent residents since the launch of the Home Child Care Provider Pilot and the Home Support Worker Pilot in 2019.

The demand for caregivers in Canada is rising as the population ages. It is expected that in the next six years, over nine million Canadians will retire. This means that over the coming years, more individuals will need additional care in their homes or institutions.

Further, the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence recently published a report that highlights pressing needs for caregivers in Canada. Among them, it notes that, "Many caregivers are 65+ and may also need care. Nearly one in five caregivers are over the age of 65. Senior caregivers are least likely to access any services or supports to help with their responsibilities."

Finally, families in Canada require a childcare provider as more women, who traditionally take on more of the caretaking duties for young children, seek to enter the workforce.

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**BUSINESS SERVICES** 

# NAREI's gene bank protects traditional crops against climate threats

Have you ever wondered about the future of agriculture as global warming continues to threaten the growth of crops? Climate change can disrupt food availability, reduce access to food, and affect food quality.

With that said, the Government of Guyana, through the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) has been storing specimens of our traditional crops in the gene bank rightfully called, Germplasm Conservation in the event of possible climate anomalies caused by global warming.

Currently, there are copies of plantain, sweet potato, banana, and pineapple in the lab.

Germplasm conservation is a live information source for all the genes present in the respective plant, which can be conserved for long periods and regenerated whenever required. It is the most successful method to preserve the genetic traits of endangered and commercially valuable species.

If you are having a hard time understanding germplasm conservation, think about the movie, Jurassic Park where scientists clone dinosaurs by ex-



Germplasm conservation of traditional crops

tracting pre-historic blood from mosquitoes fossilised in amber. These



Germplasm conservation of traditional crops

mosquitoes landed on trees and got stuck in tree sap which hardened over years. Germplasm is something similar but with plants.

NAREI's Research scientist, Samantha Weever explained that the institute started preserving traditional crops like cassava, plantain, banana, and sweet potato in 2014 to safeguard crops against potential climate threats.

"What we do in the lab is using medium to short-term growth medium to have plants stored in-vitro.

What that does is it protects a particular variety against possible climate threats. Also, let's say a researcher wants to do work on a variety for breeding purposes, we have copies of that plant variety in the lab," Weever explained.

She lamented that researchers would go out into the country, collect accession (parts of the plant), and take them back to the lab where their shoot tips or the nodal segments are placed in a growth medium or conservation medium to ensure they are kept in vitro. At this stage, chemicals are used to retard the growth to allow long-term storage.

After the specimens are kept in a conservation medium for three to six months, they are then removed and transferred to a regeneration medium to ensure that the plant is not affected by that long-term storage. So, they are taken to the field, planted, and monitored periodically to ensure there is no

variation from the mother plant.

"If there is no variation, we take them back into the lab for further storage. We not only multiply for production but we also have to maintain the gene banks of these varieties that are used for breeding purposes or transboundary exchange," Weever explained.

Once the specimens are planted in the field and it is found that there was no variation from the mother plant then segments of that plant can then be taken back to the lab for longer storage. "If it is found that after the six months, there is no variation then we can extend the storage of that plant to up to a year," the researcher noted.

Once the 12-month storage period is completed for that plant, it will then be taken back to the field to determine whether the crop was affected by such long-term storage. The cycle would then be continued.

Recently, Agriculture Minister, Zulfikar Mustapha spoke to a group of farmers from Sand Hill, Region Three, and emphasised the effect of climate change on agriculture. He told the gathering when Guyana used to experience five to six inches of rainfall in two and three months, we are now getting it in two hours.

He urged the farmers to move towards a more modern way of farming and encouraged them to take advantage of shade houses.



An artist's rendition of what the completed East Bank Road should look like

# US\$75.8 M East Bank road project to be completed within deadline

Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, announced during an engagement with stakeholders on Friday. "We expect this project to finish on time within budget and that the citizens get value for money," the minister emphasised.

The 36-month or three-year project being undertaken by China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) entails the rehabilitation of 23.7 kilometres of roadway. The project also includes the restoration of ancillary roads, bridges and culverts, as well as improved safety features among others.

The project is slated to be seamlessly integrated with the Soesdyke/Linden highway through the installation of a roundabout, ensuring smoother transitions for commuters.

Underscoring the importance of efficiency, Minister Edghill emphasised that, "When we [government] say 36 months for a contract that's the end date. "If you [contractor] can get it done faster get it done faster. It doesn't mean you are going to sit and relax and say you have time, we have to use the opportunities that exist right now...So I am urging you to let's get a work plan that can bring us in ahead of schedule because people's patience has an expiry date."

Similarly, the minister urged stakeholders to adopt a facilitative stance towards project development as he acknowledged the great need for public cooperation.

"We can't have an obstructionist approach," he asserted, emphasising the collective responsibility in realising infrastructural advancements.

Moreover, upon approval of the design-build for the project, an unpriced bill of quantities will be made accessible on the ministry's website, to foster transparency and accountability throughout the project's lifecycle.

With the initiative set to mark a significant stride in the nation's development efforts, the EBD road project is poised to alleviate traffic burdens, facilitating vital routes for efficient transportation.

Minister Edghill highlighted, that existing infrastructure developments, such as the Ituni to Tacama road, are integral components of this interconnected network. In addition, the Sheriff Street to Mahaica road and the railway embankment upgrades, aimed at accommodating growing demands will also be linked to the project.

The Minister noted that these significant infrastructural projects are part of the government's strategic efforts to create trade routes to bolster economic development and enhanced connectivity countrywide. (DPI)



# Ali stresses importance of collective action in country's advancements

PRESIDENT, Dr Irfaan Ali has underscored the important role that Guyanese play in building out the country and has urged citizens to work with the government to accelerate the standard of living of each person as his government continues to deliver a better Guyana at their doorstep.

The President made those remarks during an outreach in Canal Bank, Region One (Barima-Waini).

"Here in Region One, there is tremendous excitement among the people; about their future and about the development that is taking place," the Head of State said.

He welcomed residents sharing ideas on how their villages can be further transformed.

"We want people to be engaged, we want people to be part of the decision-making and we want you to prioritise your future and work with us as we deliver for you what your priorities are and that is the philosophy that has guided us," the President told the scores of Canal Bank residents.

As the President reminded residents of the chokehold that the Opposition placed on Guyana's development, Dr Ali said that the implications of that were very noticeable.

"...They [APNU+AFC] went into government and what they did was to destroy the philosophy of building with communities and building for communities," he reminded citizens.

Among some of the negative impacts that affected the indigenous communities, President Ali noted that under the previous A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance for Change (APNU+AFC) administration, 2,000 Community Services Officers (CSOs) were terminated.

The CSOs initiative was launched in 2014 under the Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme (YEAP). It targeted some 2,000 youths



President Ali addresses residents of Canal Bank in Region One. Also pictured is Housing Minister, Collin Croal

between the ages of 16-40 in Regions One, Seven, Eight and Nine.

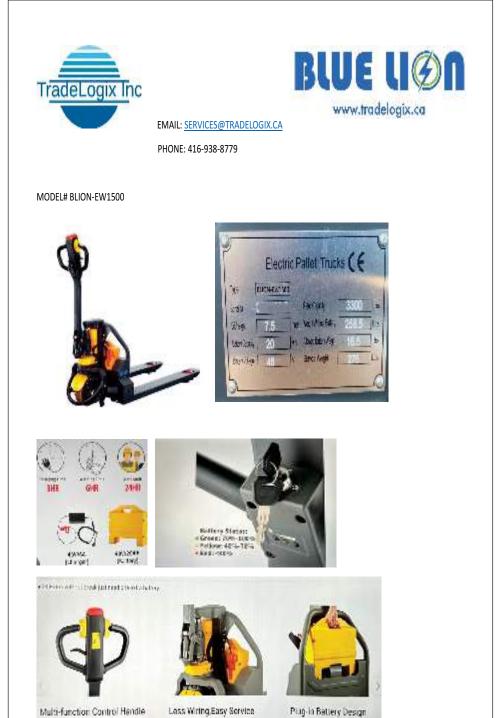
YEAP was part of the then People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government's commitment to youth development, advancement and investment in the lives of the Indigenous People.

Dr Ali then shifted his focus to how some of the traditional sectors collapsed under the rule of the APNU+AFC government.

"I want us to understand that there are choices we make in life and those choices affect us all. In the mining sector, not only the 200 taxes that they [brought] as burden onto the people that we [had] to reverse, but when we came into office, 70 per cent of all the dredges were non-operational. The operations were closed down. The mining sector was in chaos."

The Forestry Commission under the previous coalition government was in such a deplorable state that for three months it could not even pay its employees, according to the Head of State.

"That was the state they left our country in. But we didn't complain, we understand what leadership is. Instead, we embraced the challenges and we have been able to deliver every single promise we made in the manifesto," he said







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# Guyanese must continue to address environmental issues

THE environment plays a crucial role in our well-being, and as such Guyanese are urged to reaffirm their commitment to addressing environmental issues in the country.

This was emphasised during Region Three's Regional Democratic Council's interfaith service and brunch held on Sunday to kick-start the week of activities for World Environment Day.

Held in the boardroom of the Demerara Regional Hospital, Principal Environmental Health Officer at the Ministry of Health, Nayan Persaud stressed that health workers should pay more attention to their environment, and how it impacts their work.

"It is important for us to understand the connection that the environment has with our health, and that the state of our environment directly impacts our wellbeing. Therefore, it is crucial for us as health professionals to understand the importance of environmental preservation," Persaud stated.

Additionally, Senior Environmental Officer, Ian Shamsudeen noted that Guyanese should play a more crucial role in the way they care for their environment.

"To commemorate World Environment Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to addressing desertification, drought, and land degradation through restoration efforts. We can implement



Principal Environmental Health Officer of the Ministry of Health, Nayan Persaud

and support restoration projects, engage and support local initiatives that are aimed at restoring degraded lands," the environmental officer explained.

Acknowledging that there is much work to be done in the local environment, Shamsudeen noted that working together can help to transform degraded landscapes into thriving ecosystems that

will foster food security in the country.

Also present was the Regional Health Officer (RHO) Erica Forte, who also stressed the need for better care of the local environment, both on land and sea.

World Environment Day will be celebrated on June 5, and activities planned for the week include a health

walk, a talk about the environment, and a tree-planting exercise, among other activities.

To commemorate the event, walks were held this morning in several regions. An exhibition was also held at the National Park by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (DPI)



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# Upcoming Africaribbean Forum offers opportunties for region

THE third edition of the Africaribbean Trade and Investment Forum (ACTIF) which will serve as a platform to strengthen trade between Africa and the Caribbean, is also expected to foster deals and collaborations for businesses in various sectors across the two regions.

This is according to Regional Chief Operations Officer at the African Export-Import Bank's (Afreximbank) CARICOM office, Okechukwu Ihejirika, who said in a recent interview that opportunities will be endless for the Guyanese and other Caribbean businesses that will be present at the forum.

This year's forum will be held alongside the Afreximbank's annual general meeting from June 12 to June 14 in The Bahamas and will feature Caribbean-focused business, trade and investment matters inclusive of securing investments, business opportunities and the potential of an Afri-Caribbean Free Trade agreement.

Ihejirika said that specifically for the Guyanese private sector, attending the forum will serve as an opportunity to consolidate on the gains of last year's ACTIF which was held in Guyana where several agreements were discussed and contacts made.

He went on to add that for those who missed the opportunity to take part in the forum last year and benefit from the deals, it is not too late to do. He added that participation will also serve as an opportunity to interact and gain technical knowledge in various areas that have been perfected in the African region.

"Apart from the huge networking and business potential that this brings, there is also a rich array of discussion topics that they can take advantage of to learn about trends, to learn about what is topical and to learn about what needs to be done in fostering the relationship between the two regions," he added.

Further to this, he indicated that Guyana also has a lot to gain as there are plenty of similarities with what is happening currently in Guyana as compared to what has happened in a few African countries.

Against this backdrop, he said that in Guyana, during the second edition of the ACTIF, several deals were signed including with the bank, and a lot of contacts were made which he added is part of the reason for the hosting of the forum and the bank's general meeting in the Caribbean this year.

"A lot of deals were signed physically, which included the bank, and a lot of contacts were also made...we are actually talking to a couple of those [businesses] who made first contact at the event who have now decided to forge business partnerships ahead through creating joint ventures together to enhance the specific area of interest," said Ihejirika.

This, he iterated, is what the event is all about; bringing people together to find good investment opportunities across the African and the CARICOM region.



Chief Operations Officer at the Afreximbank Okechukwu Ihejirika

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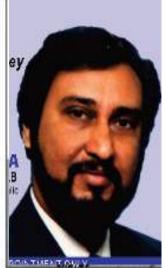
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# Region 7 to get four new nursery schools, one primary

THE Regional Democratic Council (RDC) of Region Seven (Cuyuni-Mazaruni) is preparing to spend approximately \$215 million to build new nursery schools in Karrau, Itaballi, Batavia and Kako, Regional Chairman Kenneth Williams has disclosed.

The regional chair, in a statement on Sunday, said that the RDC has issued tenders seeking contractors to execute the projects.

According to the document, the construction of the nursery school slated for Karrau is estimated to cost \$43 million, the school at Itaballi is estimated at \$47 million, the nursery school at Batavia is estimated to cost \$45 million, and the school at Kako is estimated to cost \$80 million.

The RDC is also seeking contractors to construct a primary school at Wayalayeng, Upper Mazaruni, for \$55 million, to rehabilitate and extend Two Miles Primary School Annex for \$40 million, and to rehabilitate and extend the Kamarang Nursery School for \$27 million.

It was recently reported that over 50 schools across Guyana are being either constructed or extended in a bid to improve access to education, even

as the Ministry of Education is finalising changes to schools' curriculum.

At a press conference, Education Minister Priya Manickchand provided updates on the expansion of the country's education sector.

While Guyana has achieved universal primary education, as noted by the United Nations, Manickchand stated that the country is left to achieve universal nursery and secondary education, and, as such, efforts are underway to facilitate this.

"All over Guyana, we want nursery-aged children to be able to access a nursery school. All over Guyana, we want secondary-aged children to be able to access secondary schools," she said.

This year, she said the government is building nursery schools across the country, along with several primary schools and secondary schools.

Meanwhile, as part of increasing access to education and improving education overall, the minister revealed that her ministry is working on a number of game-changing initiatives in relation to schools' curriculum across the country.

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# World Trade Centre to offer unmatched opportunities for Guyanese

AS Guyana's unmatched economic growth continues to generate global and regional attraction, what promises to be a local version of the renowned World Trade Center (WTC), is scheduled for renovations to meet international standards.

According to a project summary prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the facility at reference will be housed in the former Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL)'s Head Office at 44 High Street, Kingston.

Given that the objective of this massive project is to provide major employment for locals, as well as more opportunities for medium and small-sized enterprises, DDL, the developer, is seeking the EPA's approval to do some renovations on the building.

Notably, DDL says, the building was constructed in 1981, and has seven floors. The renovation process will take one year.

According to a document made available to the Guyana Chronicle, the World Trade Centers Association (WTCA) is an international non-profit organisation representing a global network of WTCs.

Additionally, its main objective is to foster international trade and investment, as well as to promote economic development and cooperation among the different regions of the world.

"In 2022, DDL acquired a licence for the establishment of the center in Georgetown, Guyana. A strategy to promote the interests of small and mediumsized businesses seeking global connections to thrive locally, in order to ensure their sustainability and contribute to the economic development of the country," the document says.

Also, WTC Georgetown will grant Guyanese access to programmes in collaboration with over 322 centers in over 91 countries to facilitate their global potential and foster prosperity through

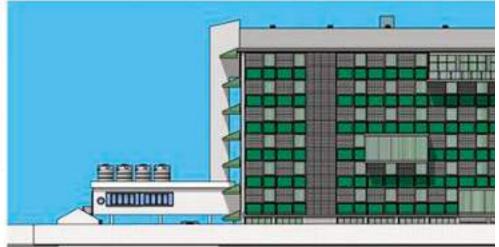
"In addition to all the benefits it will offer to the business community through its network of relationships with centers around the world," the document says, while adding that the facility will have a space that will promote the attraction of tourists, which will serve as an "enjoyable educational" ex-







ELEVATION VIEWS



**Architect illustrations of the renovated World Trade Centre** 

perience for both Guyanese and foreign will make this possible. visitors.

Further, Executive Director of WTC Georgetown, Wesley Kirton, in an invited comment to the Guyana Chronicle, stated that the aim of the organisation is to provide easier access for Guyanese businesses to enter non-traditional markets.

He said on Monday: "So, we will be able to tap into cities that we are not necessarily looking at with, which have the potential for products and services from Guyana."

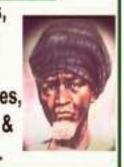
Kirton later went on to say: "What the World Trade Center in Guyana will do is open up opportunities for access to new markets for products and services from Guyana," while explaining that the WTC has a network of 1,000s of businesses as members or associates that offer services and equipment and so when someone wants to source equipment or products, the WTC Georgetown

Further, this organisation will create employment for locals as Kirton noted that there will be both direct and indirect employment.

With the construction "boom" that is ongoing in Guyana, he also said this that area alone holds tremendous employment.

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# Land bonanza: over 430 Soesdyke residents get leases

OVER 430 residents from several communities along the Soesdyke-Linden Highway on Monday received their official leases for their lands, and, according to President Dr. Irfaan Ali, this is just one of many land regularisation programmes being pursued in the area.

The Head of State, while addressing scores of residents, said the government's intention is to support livelihoods through sustainable housing and long-term wealth creation.

"The very fact that you own your lease now has increased your worth by over 400 per cent, overnight. You can take that to the bank, you can get a loan, you can build your home, and the value of land in this area is growing exponentially," the President said.

Simultaneously, works are underway to create some 1,600 new house lots in Hauraruni, a community along the Soesdyke-Linden highway.

Also, another 500 lots are expected to be established at Loo Creek, so as to assist the government in relocating squatters from areas that cannot be regularised along the highway.

Scores of residents from several communities along the Soesdyke-Linden Highway have received their land leases

According to the President, a recent study was conducted and found that only 60 per cent of a squatter settlement in Circuitville can be regularised.

The Guyana Lands Guyana Lands and Surveys has, for some time, been working in the Circuitville community and others along the highway to regularise squatter settlements and provide support to residents.

President Ali further urged residents to work with the government to ensure the smooth relocation of persons residing in un-regularised areas.

"We have estimated that only about 60 per cent of that squatter settlement can be regularised, and we are ready to work with regularising the 60 per cent, but we also want the 40 per cent to understand that not being captured in the area that can be regularised, we want you to agree that we can move you," the Head of State said.

Between the communities of Timehri and Circuitville, there is an estimated 1,400 squatters. The government, he said, will provide support to residents to build new homes.

Dr. Ali said: "With those, we are ready to come to be regularised, you will benefit from the steel-and-cement sub-



President Ali presents a land lease to this elderly resident

sidy... Those of you who want to build wooden homes, we would help you with 900bm of wood.

"We are moving you to give you value to create better lives for you and your family; to give you access to infrastructure, to give you better availability of water, electricity and housing."

The Head of State further urged those who received the leases to their lands on Monday to not re-sell their lands. Instead, he encouraged them to think of the value they have now acquired, and how it will increase.

Dr. Ali said: "Do not sell your land, because your value is going to increase

tremendously; your children would inherit something valuable from you."

With massive investments on the cards, such as the construction of Guyana's first 'smart' community, Silica City, tourism enhancements and rehabilitation of major road networks, communities along the Soesdyke-Linden corridor will see a buzz of commercial activity.

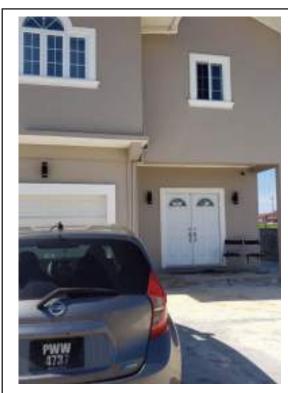
"Your value in the next five years will grow over 2,000 per cent. Don't sell it; keep that value for your children. Let them inherit that value," he pleaded.

Since returning to office in 2020, President Ali has delineated a pragmatic

and inclusive agenda that addresses the decades-old issue of squatting through the opening up new lands for affordable housing development, with accompanying infrastructural works to ensure roads, water and electricity are provided.

In 2022, the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA) surpassed the target of 10,000 house lots, pushing the total number of allocations to over 20,000 in two years.

Currently, hundreds of housing units are being constructed across Regions Three, Four, Six and 10, targeting low and moderate-income families, as well as young professionals.



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Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha will soon be welcoming their first baby

## Richa Chadha opens up about interfaith marriage with Ali Fazal

Actors Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal will soon be welcoming their first child. The couple, who first met on the sets of Fukrey, got married in 2020 during the pandemic but celebrated their union with their closest friends and family members in 2022. Richa and Ali come from different faiths and in a recent interview, when Richa was asked if they were surrounded by naysayers when they first decided to get married, Richa shared that when one falls in love, they do so without filters.

Talking to Galatta India, Richa shared, "If you stand firm with your choice and your immediate family is with you and supportive of you, nobody else really matters. And like I said, a human being is a human being first and when you go and fall in love, your search has no filters on. When you fall in love, that's what it is."

In the same conversation, when Richa Chadha was asked about the restaurants they would frequent in the early days of their relationship, Richa recalled that she did not want her family to find out through the press that she was dating Ali. "I didn't want my family to find out from the press. you know, we also have families. When I was ready to discuss this at home with my family, then I thought I will just come out," she said.

Richa said that she and Ali decided to announce their relationship when she wanted to travel with him for the premiere of Victoria and Abdul at the Venice Film Festival. "He was like but no one knows, so I said let's just tell them now, it's time," she shared.

# Heat kills more than 50 people in India in three days

the past three days as a brutal heat spell continues to grip parts of the country.

Around 33 people died in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh over the weekend due to the heat.

These included people involved in the general election, including polling officials, security guards and sanitation staff - Saturday was the last phase of

In Odisha (Orissa) state, about 20 people died due to heat stroke, officials said.

Every five years, India holds its general election in the summer months of April and May.

But this year, the temperatures have been record-breaking, with the country experiencing frequent, more intense and longer heatwaves.

The federal health ministry says that there have been at least 56 confirmed heat strokes deaths from 1 March to 30 May. About 24,849 heatstroke cases were reported during the period.

However, state-wise figures suggest the actual number could be much higher.

In Odisha, district authorities reported 99 suspected heat stroke deaths in the past 72 hours - of these, 20 cases have been confirmed, the state's Special Relief Commissioner said in a statement.

In Uttar Pradesh, Navdeep Rinwa, chief electoral officer of the state, told reporters that the fam-

More than 50 people have died in India over ilies of deceased election personnel would be given a monetary compensation of 1.5m rupees (\$18,000;

> Mr Rinwa said that a man who was standing in the queue to vote fainted because of the heat.

> "The voter was transported to a health facility,

Suspected heat-related deaths have also been reported from the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.

India's National Centre for Disease Control calls heat strokes a "life-threatening" condition with a mortality rate of 40-64%.

The heat in northern and central India and parts of the west has been unrelenting for the past two weeks, with maximum temperatures hovering around 45-46C for days at a stretch and even climbing up to 50C in some areas.

However, India's weather department says that temperatures are likely to fall in the coming days due to the onset on the monsoon.

Several regions are experiencing severe water and electricity shortages due to a rise in power consumption.

Videos from capital Delhi show people jostling for water from water tankers. Many parts of the capital are also experiencing frequent power cuts.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): You have never been so popular and will be inundated with social invitations over the next few days. You cannot possibly grace them all with your presence, so select those that excite you the most and where you are likely to make new friends.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): There will be times today when it seems as if others are being unreasonable, especially where money is concerned, but there is no point making a fuss about it as they hold all the cards. More to the point they hold the purse strings as well.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21):** If you have another go at a task that proved too much for you in the past you are sure to make a success of it now. With Mercury, your ruler, linked to luck planet Jupiter the universe will make it easy for you – IF you make an effort.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): You seem to be worrying about something that the logical part of your mind tells you is of no consequence at all. Sometimes you can let your emotions get out of hand and this appears to be one of those occasions. Reassert your left-brain authority!

**LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23):** All things are possible for those who believe in themselves and with so much cosmic activity working in your favor at the moment you should be believing like never before. What is too much for your rivals to deal with you will handle with total confidence.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): What occurs today will no doubt amaze you but if you think back to recent events you will realize it is the culmination of a long process of cause and effect. You will also realize that you are perfectly placed to take advantage of the situation.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): The more positive energy you send out into the world the more you will benefit from the events of the next few days. For every action there is an equal reaction, so make sure your actions are constructive and help other people – and the universe will help you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): Good news about your money situation will cheer you up between now and Thursday's new moon but you must NOT think of it as an invitation to go on a spree. If you are lucky enough to get a financial windfall add it to your rainy day fund.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): Partners and loved ones can see things that you have missed, so listen carefully to what they tell you and don't hesitate to act on their good advice. If you have to admit that you got something wrong then do so – don't let your ego get in the way.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): An activity that you previously found to be a bit of a chore will become easier to deal with over the next 24 hours and you may even start to enjoy it. You are at your best when faced with challenges that compel you to raise your game.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): The Sun's link to Venus in your fellow Air sign of Gemini means there is a special aura about you at the moment, one that other people find hugely attractive. Both in your private life and in your work you are very much flavor of the month!

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): If you force yourself to tackle a task you have been doing your best to avoid in recent weeks not only will you make a success of it but your can-do attitude will win points with people in positions of power. Seize the initiative and make good things happen.

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# Grenada makes major crackdown on illegal firearms

In a significant move to combat gun violence, the Grenada police force has successfully confiscated over 25 illegal firearms within the first five months of the year.

The revelation came from Superintendent Esau Pierre, who heads the crimes and operations department.

This action is part of a broader initiative that also includes substantial drug seizures valued at over five million Eastern Caribbean dollars, underlining the force's comprehensive approach to curtailing illegal activities.

Although Superintendent Pierre did not provide a comparable figure for the gun seizures, last year, the police seized 30 guns in total.

This year's ongoing efforts indicate a strong and continuous commitment to reducing the availability of illegal weapons.

Gun amnesty initiative shows positive results

The introduction of a gun amnesty program by Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Dickon Mitchell, in March has shown encouraging outcomes.

Several individuals have come forward to surrender their firearms, actively participating in the government's efforts to address the issue of gun violence head-on.

Commitment to public safety

The police force remains dedicated to employing all resources at their disposal to address the surge in gun-related crimes.

This commitment is underscored by the unfortunate statistic of nine homicides recorded by May, with eight



A gun amnesty introduced by the government has shown significant outcomes

deemed murders.

Out of these, three were directly related to gun violence, leading to the arrest and charging of three suspects.

A broader look at gun-related

crimes

Over a broader timeline from 2019 to 2023, Grenada's authorities have seized a total of 68 illegal firearms.

The last two years have seen sig-

nificant enforcement action, with 78 individuals arrested and charged for offenses related to firearms.

# Surinamese politician nabbed by Interpol in Brazil

Surinamese politician Joel "Bordo" Martinus, a member of the ruling party, faced arrest in São Paulo, Brazil.

The arrest occurred on a Wednesday, as confirmed by the Public Prosecution Service (OM) of Suriname.

This move follows a Red Notice from Interpol Suriname, leading Brazilian Federal Police's Interpol Unit to conduct the operation.

Martinus, previously the chairman of the youth department for the ABOP party under Vice President Ronnie Brunswijk, is now embroiled in severe legal troubles.

Authorities have linked him to various criminal activities including murder, manslaughter, aiding in these crimes, participating in a criminal organization, narcotics violations, and money laundering.

The investigation intensified after authorities discovered a plane buried near the border with French Guiana, pinpointing Martinus as a key suspect.

Furthermore, connections to a drug gang allegedly responsible for a



Joel "Bordo" Martinus.

murder related to this discovery have surfaced, although the victim's body remains missing.

From his undisclosed location,

Martinus has proclaimed his innocence.

He argues that his arrest is politically motivated, orchestrated by adversaries within the ruling party as retribution for his critical views on President Santokhi's administration.

Despite his fugitive status, Martinus remained active on social media, regularly hosting live streams to discuss and critique governmental policies and societal issues.

While the legal proceedings against Martinus and four co-suspects are still pending, the repercussions of his alleged actions have already taken a toll.

Following his identification as a suspect, the Santokhi government relieved him of his role as the director of the Anthony Nesty Indoor Stadium, demonstrating the significant fallout from this high-stakes legal entanglement.

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# JA to prevent entry of substandard lithium-ion batteries

The Jamaican government is actively implementing strategies to mitigate the entry of substandard lithium-ion batteries, as international regulations tighten.

The focus is on safeguarding public safety and protecting the environment from the potential hazards posed by these batteries.

The Ministry of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport, under the guidance of Chief Technical Director Brian Richardson, is spearheading the initiative.

In an interview with JIS News, he shared that the Ministry plans to work in conjunction with the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ) to establish and enforce robust safety and quality standards for lithium-ion batteries, aligning with the 1969 Standards Act.

This collaboration also involves the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce, which oversees the BSJ, to help develop a quality-control standard that caters specifically to the characteristics and risks associated with lithium-ion batteries.

Lithium-ion batteries, favored for their efficient energy storage capabilities, are found in a wide array of devices including electric vehicles, cell phones, and laptops.

Despite their popularity, these batteries can present significant risks such as fire hazards, environmental damage if not properly discarded, and financial losses due to product failures.

Richardson emphasizes the importance of international cooperation in



Lithium ion batteries have been identified as the cause of many fires around the world

formulating effective regulations.

By aligning with leading international regulatory bodies, Jamaica can adopt globally recognized standards and practices, leveraging shared knowledge and avoiding the pitfalls of developing independent standards from the ground up.

At the recent World Fire Congress in Washington DC, the potential dangers of inferior lithium-ion batteries were a key topic of discussion.

Stewart Beckford, Commissioner of the Jamaica Fire Brigade, highlighted the urgent need for Jamaica to prevent the importation of hazardous batteries. The congress served as a platform for fire chiefs worldwide to exchange ideas and solutions for global challenges.

The Jamaican authorities are urging the public to be vigilant in main-

taining battery health, using only recommended chargers, and steering clear of aftermarket or counterfeit batteries.

These measures are part of a broader strategy to ensure that the benefits of lithium-ion technology do not come at the expense of public safety and environmental integrity.

# Disease causing 'mango crisis' in St Kitts

Agricultural officials in St Kitts are responding to an emerging crisis as a disease affects mango trees across the twin-island federation.

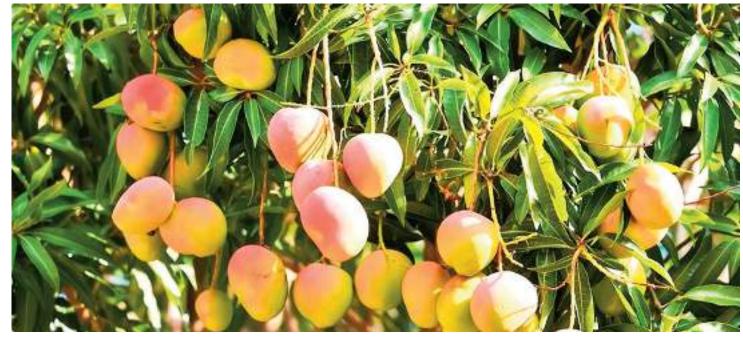
The Plant Quarantine Unit of the Department of Agriculture is spearheading efforts to combat the disease, which threatens a vital component of the local agricultural landscape.

A dedicated team of plant health experts is engaged in rigorous efforts to diagnose the disease that is impacting mango production.

Initial assessments suggest that the symptoms exhibited by the mango trees are consistent with anthracnose, a destructive fungal disease known for its adverse effects on mango fruit quality and yield.

Despite these findings, the precise origin and nature of the disease remain elusive, prompting an ongoing investigation into its cause, methods of transmission, and possible control strategies.

The agriculture officials have called on farmers to maintain vigilance and report any unusual symptoms observed in their mango crops.



Mango trees are being affected by anthracnose, a destructive fungal disease

This proactive approach is crucial for early detection and effective management of the outbreak.

Once cases are confirmed, the Department of Agriculture plans to roll out a comprehensive treatment strategy tailored to curb the spread and mitigate the

impact of the disease.

The response strategy encompasses a multi-pronged approach aimed at containing and eventually eradicating the disease.

This includes conducting extensive surveys to gauge the extent of the out-

break, applying targeted fungicide treatments, and guiding local mango growers on best management practices.

Furthermore, the plan considers long-term measures such as introducing disease-resistant varieties of mango



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# Over 10,000 public sector workers get permanent employment in JA

In a significant shift within the Jamaican public sector, over 10,000 permanent positions have been established, marking a progressive step away from contract-based employment.

This initiative is part of the government's broader commitment to enhance job stability for its workforce.

The announcement was made by the Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. Nigel Clarke, at the 105th annual general meeting of the Jamaica Civil Service Association.

The meeting took place at Jacisera Park, St Andrew, highlighting the government's ongoing efforts to improve employment conditions in the public sector.

Dr. Clarke detailed the sectors where transformations were most notable

The education sector saw the most substantial change, with over 8,000 individuals, including cooks in secondary schools and early-childhood practitioners, being moved to permanent roles.

Additionally, 1,000 civilian members of the Jamaica Police Federation and more than 2,500 employees from the National Solid Waste Management Authority have successfully transitioned to permanent employment.

The transition also includes several contract workers at municipal authorities, which is still in progress.

The overarching goal of these changes, as stated by Dr. Clarke, is to cultivate the finest public service globally.



Jamaica's Minister of Finance and the Public Service Dr. Nigel Clarke

He emphasized that while Jamaica boasts the best public service in the Caribbean region, the ambition extends much further.

The focus is not merely regional but global, aspiring to set a benchmark in public service excellence worldwide.

Focus on compensation and work-

ing conditions

Further addressing the reforms, Dr. Clarke noted that the focus extends beyond employment status to the conditions and compensation of public service workers. He remarked on the historical significance of the recent changes, describing them as some of the most consequential in the history of Jamaica's public sector.

This comprehensive approach not only aims to enhance the efficiency and reputation of Jamaica's public service but also ensures a more stable and fulfilling work environment for its many public sector employees.

# JA Health Minister in hospital after accident

Jamaica's Health and Wellness Minister Dr. Christopher Tufton was hospitalized on Sunday for minor injuries he sustained in an incident that occurred while he was cycling.

It was reported that the minister was hit by a vehicle that was reportedly being driven by a popular dancehall artiste.

In an Instagram post on Sunday, Tufton shared that he was "counting" himself "very lucky" following the traffic incident.

"Well this Sunday wasn't planned! Took a fall this morning on my bicycle," Tufton wrote in an Instagram post early on Sunday afternoon.

He posted a photograph of himself in bed at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI).

The minister can be seen with bandages on his forehead and arm while sharing a handshake with dancehall artiste Valiant.

"Counting myself very lucky because it could have been worse!! Thanks to God and to all who have me in their prayers and sent messages," Tufton stated

"Also, thanks to Valiant who was involved, for rushing me to UHWI, and to the team of doctors and nurses who



Dancehall artiste Valiant visits Health Minister Dr Christopher Tufton in hospital after hitting him with his car

are currently attending to me," the minister concluded his post.

Tufton did not elaborate on how he fell from his bicycle nor the nature of the injuries he sustained from the mishap. He also did not confirm whether it was Valiant who was driving the vehicle he was hit by.

Meanwhile, several persons, including members of both political parties, have been sending thoughtful messages to the minister on social media. "Speedy recovery @christufton," wrote Prime Minister Andrew Holness on X, formerly Twitter.

People's National Party (PNP)

General Secretary, Dr Dayton Campbell, wrote: "Wishing for you a speedy and complete recovery @christufton. Give thanks for life!"

The health minister is well known to be a lover of cycling and routinely rides his bicycle in the Kingston/St. Andrew parishes.

# Sizzla scolds Trinidad and Tobago artistes on support for crime: Cut it out

Reggae icon Sizzla Kalonji (Miguel Collins) scolded Trinidad and Tobago artistes who play a role in violent activities and urged them to "cut it out" during his energetic performance at Redemption the Concert at Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain on June

The veteran conscious singer took aim at the nation's upward spiralling crime rate and connected it to the slew of savage lyrics being spewed by some local singers.

Kalonji, however, admitted that even he sang dubplates – an exclusive custom recording of the artiste's song for a specific sound system or DJ – for Jamaican sound systems with violent lyrics (for sound clash), but they never incited physical attacks on artistes and the public.

"I did soundclash with lyrics for years, and none of our communities in Jamaica had been infiltrated with violent activity. So me nuh want no gangster, no gang, no you, no me, because we sing some gangster songs, we're taking it and killing each other. It doesn't work in Jamaica, so it must not work in Trinidad," Kalonji said.

"We did a lot of gangster songs in Jamaica just for dubplates for sound systems. Don't take the gangster songs in the music and start killing yourself. We don't do that in Jamaica – cut it out. And the artiste them, straighten out the thing.

"And me na blame nobody, not even myself.

"No violence in Trinidad. Cut out the violence."

Immediately after, he belted out long-time hit Praise Ye Jah in hope that the song's lyrics might help inspire a different mindset.

He also encouraged youth to form a non-profit organisation and start doing community services.

"Get a business which is an NGO where you can be tax-exempt and let families all over the world support the children in Trinidad. I'm not used to Trinidad in this bag of gunshots, youth killing each other," he added.

Kalonji, as is customary, sang an array of timeless hits such as Aznaldo, Show Us the Way, Dem Ah Wonder and Black Woman and Child, which took the thousands of patrons back in time to when peace reigned.

He dedicated a segment paying special tribute to women and had them singing and swaying to the lyrics of Woman I Need You, Words of Divine, Give Me a Try and Just One of Those

The night's feature act, Supercat (William Maragh), took the crowd down Memory Lane with a discography of hits including Ghetto Red Hot, Dem No Worry We, Si Boops Deh and Mud Up, among a host of others.

Supercat, 60, as known as Don Dada, paid respects to his countryman Kalonji for unapologetically flying the



Jamaican reggae singer Sizzla Kalonji performs in Port of Spain

banner of reggae over the past 30 years.

Supercat wowed patrons with his unique voice and execution of songs, which seemed more refined than earlier

Longstanding English reggae band Steel Pulse opened the Redemption's ninth edition and did not disappoint, as immortal hits like as Rollerskates, Your House, Chant A Psalm, Steppin Out and Bodyguard were all well received by the mixture of mature and youthful

Bermudan sensation Collie Buddz (Colin Harper) hit the stage just after Steel Pulse and started his 45-minute

set with popular favourite Tomorrow's Another Day. He continued with megahits such as Love and Reggae, Come Around, Mamacita and Blind to You which had the multitudes singing in

Jamaican crooner Christopher Martin was also a charmer to the women, as he wooed them with Better Than the Stars and My Love.

However, Martin captivated the thousands particularly when he delivered the uplifting lyrics of Look on my Face, and his version of Jenn Johnson's gospel song Goodness of God. The latter cast a soothing spell over patrons.

Local reggae stars Jamelody and Mr King also gave flawless performances and added a welcome TT flavour to the worldwide cast.

Additionally, Renuka Mahabir, aka Miss Renuka, won the event's special prize of a \$20,000 gold lion head pendant courtesy AB DeLima jewellery store.

She and three other patrons had a chance to perform a snippet of their favourite song from an artiste on the cast, to which the crowd judged. She sang Supercat's Ghetto Red Hot and took the top prize.

## Worry over gunplay at Port of Spain Hospital

President of the TT Registered Nurses Association Idi Stewart said association members were shocked and horrified over the deadly gun play at the Port of Spain General Hospital (PoSGH).

"As these young men engage in their own turf war, they don't see the need to differentiate safe zones. It appears that the past respect shown to places of worship and hospitals is no more," Stewart said.

In a telephone interview on Monday, Stewart cited a 2019 killing at the PoSGH when a man dressed as a hospital orderly came onto Ward Three in the night and stood over a patient who was nursing stab wounds. The suspect shot and killed the 25-year-old man.

Stewart said the 2019 shooting took place in full view of staff and pa-

"The association at that time requested a number of areas to be addressed. One of those was the issue of having a reduced number of exits and entrances to the facility because it's quite open to the public."

He said the association also re-

quested at that time for all nursing staff to be provided with health insurance, life insurance, and a hazard allowance, but it was never given. His association subsequently provided health and life insurance.

"The government of the day did not see it fit to provide for nursing personnel. We were only asking them to assist with a small contribution to offset costs. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Health did not find that warranted, as they currently do for those in the protective services."

He said the association met with NWRHA staff and its CEO Anthony Blake, to discuss security plans on Monday. Also visiting the PoSGH on Monday was Health Minister Terrence Devalsingh.

"We won't divulge those plans, but we commend the authorities for implementing some of those plans almost immediately."

Stewart said he still has security concerns and stressed that an emer-

gency plan needs to be implemented. "Drills need to be carried out in

case this occurrence raises its head

again." Stewart said there is no formal training or plan in place for active

"There is some training provided by Northwest sporadically to staff in terms of managing aggressive patients, but this is by no means close to what transpired yesterday. It doesn't come close to addressing active shooting sce-

He believes the hospital's location in a hot spot warrants urgent intervention to prevent any future shootings.

"We have limited human resources, so as an authority, we are calling on the government to develop plans to mitigate any future shootings."

When reporters visited PoSGH on Monday there was a visible increase in security with both police and private security guards present. As Devalsingh completed his meeting with hospital officials, several police vans were seen patrolling the compound with officers carrying rifles.

A policeman said while there are police patrols on the compound, the increased presence on Monday was due to Sunday's shooting.

# Samuel Badree: West Indies T20 performance 'underwhelming'

Two-time International Cricket Council (ICC) men's T20 World Cup winner Samuel Badree says the 2024 World Cup co-hosts West Indies were dug out of a hole by a brilliant Roston Chase in their "underwhelming" five-wicket victory over Papua New Guinea (PNG) at Providence Stadium in Guyana on June 2.

The Windies restricted PNG to 136 for eight with solid contributions with the ball from pacers Andre Russell (two for 19) and Alzarri Joseph (two for 34). However, they struggled in pursuit of the modest total and needed a counter-attacking knock of 42 not out off 27 balls from Chase to get over the line in the penultimate over.

At the end of the 16th over, the West Indies slipped to 97 for five when Sherfane Rutherford (two) was caught behind off PNG captain Assad Vala (two for 28). At that stage, the co-hosts needed 40 runs off the last four overs to avoid a major upset.

Chase critically upped the ante in the 18th over, as he clouted a wayward Vala for two fours and a big six over long off to swing the contest back into the Windies' favour before they clinched the win in the next over.

Badree said the victory was far from convincing.

"It was an underwhelming performance from the hosts and one of the pretournament favorites," Badree told Newsday. "Roston Chase dug them out of a very deep hole. But they will be happy with the two points."

On the slow Providence wicket, the West Indies batsmen looked uncomfortable against the spin variation and gentle medium pace delivered by the PNG bowlers. Right-arm medium pacer Alei Nao (one for nine) was a handful during the power play with his sideways movement, and trapped Johnson Charles lbw for a golden duck. He also rapped star West Indies batsman Nicholas Pooran on the pads with a strong lbw shout early in his innings. PNG opted not to review the latter decision, which would have seen Pooran heading back to the pavilion.

"These players have played at this stadium for many years and understand how it plays. I think the lack of pace from PNG made it difficult for the West Indies. But yes, adaptability is important and adjusting plans in real time is key."

Badree, who's a member of the

ICC's commentary team for the June 1-29 tournament, commended the West Indies' effort in both power play phases. He said the intensity and consistency of play cannot be restricted to the 12 power play overs, though.

"We gave too many away in the last five overs with the ball and when we batted we didn't dominate as we should have," he said.

"The bowling was outstanding for the first 15 overs or so – the spinners were clinical."

With two teams advancing from the group phase of the tournament, he said the Caribbean team would have been reminded not to take any opponent for granted.

He said he would not make any changes for the team's next game versus Uganda on June 8.

"Key lessons from the PNG game would be to be clinical all the way through the 40 overs and not underestimate any opposition. T20 is a fickle format.

"Credit has to be given to PNG as it was a spirited effort and they demonstrated an indomitable energy."

Man of the Match winner Chase

said the West Indies were not taking their opponents lightly, but he admitted to an undesirable start from the regional team.

"(PNG) are not an A-list team. They're in the World Cup, so they deserve to be here. We came out with the mentality like we were playing an India or Australia.

"We started a bit slowly in terms of our intensity, but we had a chat at the halfway stage and the guys just wanted to rally and put their best foot forward to win the game."

Chase said the pitch wasn't the easiest to play freely on, but he took a pattern from the approach of the PNG batsmen and gave himself time in the middle.

"I obviously knew from our first-innings bowling it was always going to be hard for batsmen coming in to start. I just gave myself the best chance possible.

"I backed my skills, so when I got in I'd be able to get the ball away. The PNG batters took a while to get in, but once they got in they played their shots and it was easier."

In the second match of the Proteas series at Sabina Park, Jamaica, Chase bagged the Man of the Match award.





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