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Guyana Minister of Health, during a recent visit to Bath Regional Hospital's construction site and assessed the ongoing project progress. It was observed that the work on the building's roof is currently in progress and is expected to be finished by the end of April. The Hon. Minister is confident that the hospital will be completed on schedule and to the highest stan-

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#### **President Clinton in Guyana**

Guyana Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali hosted dinner for former US President Bill Clinton, the French Minister of the European Union and Foreign Affairs, Stephane Sejourne and a delegation from the Dominican Republic at State House last evening.

According to the Guyanese Head of State, these visits are timely and target the country's economic development and growth.

He said that former President Clinton has been a friend of Guyana, championing the rights of biodiversity and forest conservation in the face of climate change.

Mr Clinton, the 42nd President of the United States (1993-2001), is currently in Guyana as the special guest of the Dominican Republic's Chamber of Commerce Caribbean Forum, which starts today.

Meanwhile, President Ali noted that the Dominican Republic's choice of hosting the forum here fortifies the strength of the relationship between the two countries and their private sectors.

Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd), the Honourable Mark Phillips; Vice President, the Honourable Dr Bharrat Jagdeo; other Government Ministers; private sector leaders, US Ambassador HE Nicole Theriot, EU Ambassador HE Rene Van Nes and British High Commissioner HE Jane Miller were also at the dinner.



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Reunion Gold says it can now proceed with accessing permits for the Oko West project in Guyana

# Guyana gravely concerned over new law declaring Essequibo region part of Venezuela

The Government of Guyana on Friday said it is "gravely concerned over the adoption of a law by the Venezuelan National Assembly declaring the Essequibo region of Guyana, which constitutes more than two thirds of its national territory, to be a constituent part of Venezuela."

On Thursday, lawmakers in Venezuela approved the creation of a new state in Guyana's Essequibo Region, an area that has been the subject of an age-old controversy, despite an ongoing international court case and the Argyle Declaration signed on December 14.

The move by the Venezuelan National Assembly comes three months after Venezuelans voted in a referendum to officially make the Essequibo region part of Venezuela.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the move by the Venezuelan National Assembly is a "flagrant violation of Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity and is in breach of the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter."

"It is also an egregious violation of the Order on provisional measures issued by the international Court of Justice on December 1, 2023 and it is a violation of the Argyle Declaration of December 14, 2023 agreed to by the leaders of CARICOM and Brazil, the representative of the United Nations Secretary General and by the Presidents of Guyana and Venezuela."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs assured that Guyana remains committed to peace on its borders and in the region.

"It will not allow its sovereignty and territorial territory to be usurped. Guyana will exert all of its efforts under international law to ensure that its sovereignty and territorial integrity remain intact," the statement said.

Further, Guyana called on the in-

ternational community to uphold the rule of law by rejecting "Venezuela's illegal expansionism and by insisting that Venezuela revert to the International Court of Justice which has before it the case for a full and final resolution of the controversy over the land border between the two countries"

Venezuela has been increasing its military presence on its border with Guyana.

Just last week, a row erupted between the two nations over sand and stones at Eteringbang, Cuyuni River, Region Seven.

Fortunately, the argument between the Guyanese and Venezuelan soldiers ended in hand-shakes and smiles, the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) said on Friday.

In a statement the GDF denied that its soldiers were forced to hand over any "items" to the Venezuelan army but said that there was an "encounter" in the river.

"On Wednesday, 20 March 2024, at approximately 11:50 hours, during an administrative journey, ranks of the GDF and the Venezuelan Army had an encounter," GDF said before adding "The incident attracted the intervention of both the GDF and Venezuelan Commanders who arrived at the scene shortly thereafter."

The GDF noted that, "At no time during this interaction were our ranks dispossessed of items or returned items".

"The matter was addressed amicably and ended with a shake-of-hands by both Commanders," the GDF said.

Notwithstanding, published reports claimined that two Guyanese soldiers were held by the Venezuelan army for an hour before being re-

It was reported that at the time of their detention the soldiers were dressed as civilians.



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## China's CNOOC says Guyana main driver of overseas oil production

In its recently published 2023 Annual Report, China's CNOOC outlined Guyana's pivotal role as a significant source of reserves and production growth for the company.

Situated in the northeastern offshore region of Guyana, the Stabroek Block boasts water depths ranging from 1,600 to 2,000 meters. CNOOC holds a 25% equity interest in this asset, alongside ExxonMobil Guyana, the operator with a 45% interest, and Hess Guyana Exploration Ltd. with 30%.

Stabroek Block is one of the largest exploration discoveries globally in recent years. Last week, the company announced it recorded US\$17.2 billion (124 billion Yuan) in net income 2023, a dip in profits compared to 142 billion Yuan in 2022 – with earnings included from profits made from Guyana's Stabroek Block.

The Stabroek Block witnessed a remarkable discovery in 2023 with the unveiling of the Lancetfish field, located in ultra-deepwater and deep-sea layers. Lancetfish field is one of the eight discoveries made by Exxon in the Stabroek Block, since 2022, and according to CNOOC holds an estimated reserve of 746 million barrels of oil.

According to disclosures by the operator, the block has accumulated over 30 new discoveries, with a total estimated recoverable resource volume of approximately 11 billion barrels of oil equivalent.

It was stated that the Liza Phase One and Phase Two oil fields in the block are already in production. By the



China and Guyana have a mutually beneficial relationship

end of 2023, these projects were producing steadily above their design peak daily output, with a net daily production of approximately 81,000 barrels of oil equivalent. Additionally, the Payara project in the block commenced production in 2023.

ExxonMobil Guyana announced the discovery of oil in 2015 and swiftly moved to commence production activities by December 2019. Production from the Stabroek Block developments sits above 600,000 barrels per day (bpd) – with Exxon having the Liza 1, Liza 2 and the Payara projects online. The oil

companies have embarked on an aggressive drilling campaign in the Stabroek Block targeting three other developments: Yellowtail, Uaru and Whiptail projects. It should be noted that Yellowtail and Uaru have already been approved, while Whiptail is under review awaiting government approval any day

On Thursday, CNOOC disclosed that the Bohai oilfields offshore China remained the largest crude oil production base in China, while Guyana and Brazil continued to serve as the main drivers of the company's overseas pro-

duction growth.

In a recent development, Exxon-Mobil and its block partner CNOOC have both moved to arbitration to assert their rights over Guyana's golden oil field, the Stabroek Block. This is as a result of Chevron's US\$53 billion takeover of Hess. Buying over Hess Corporation would give Chevron access to Hess' most valuable asset in Guyana. The case was filed at the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris, arguing that Exxon and CNOOC have a right of first refusal over Hess' stake.

### Petrochemical plant still on the table

Negotiation talks between Guyana and the Dominican Republic for the setting up of a Petrochemical Plant here are still on the table, as the nations look at every aspect of the project to be able to fine-tune things before giving it the green light.

Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to Guyana Ernesto Torres-Pereyra told the media on Saturday, that the talks are ongoing and due to the size and nature of the project it will take some time to come to a point where the go ahead is given. He was speaking at a press conference to address former US President Bill Clinton's visit to Guyana.

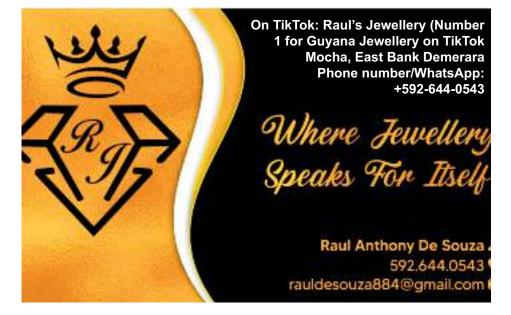
The ambassador said that, "Of course I would like to see an even more dynamic exercise but building the partnerships that also takes time. With regards to the petrochemicals the conversations are ongoing, but the agreements were signed in August and this types of projects, they are not only

massive in terms of the amount of investment that they (require) but also in terms of planning."

He explained that the project goes beyond architecture and engineering and that there is also an environmental aspect which will address the impacts it will have. The Governments of Guyana and The Dominican Republic in August 2023 signed six Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) which concerned oil exploration, agriculture, tourism, bilateral investments, as well as the establishment of an oil refinery and petrochemicals plant, following President Irfaan Ali's visit to the Spanish-speaking country.

In one MoU, the two nations have agreed to seek investors from both countries to collaborate on the establishment of a 50,000 bpd refinery in Guyana. Dominican partners will have a majority 51 percent stake, while the Guyanese government indicated it would not participate as a

shareholder. Another MoU focuses on the potential for setting up a petrochemical plant, seeing it as an avenue for economic growth, job creation, and fortifying the industrial infrastructure for both nations and the region. Recognizing the importance of the petrochemical industry in transforming crude oil and natural gas into vital products like urea, asphalt, and fertilizers as well as the potential to satisfy the current demand for these products regionally, both have committed to identifying qualified companies capable of constructing this plant, with the Dominican government holding at least 51% of the shares.





#### **EDITORIAL & OPINIONS**

### Venezuela up to its tricks again

Venezuela is not about to let go of its claim to Guyana's Essequibo Region.

Despite ongoing proceedings before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Venezuela has attempted to assert itself to lay claim to Guyana's territory, citing a December referendum as "justification."

It did so in the last week by passing a law to create a new state, called "Guayana Esequiba". The law establishing the new state delineates its borders, encompassing Guyana's territory.

Venezuela last year had increased claims to two-thirds of Guyana's Essequibo region and put the matter to a referendum. In spite of a minimal turn-out of voters, the end result is that the Venezuelan government of Nicolas Maduro claim it was given the authority by the Venezuelan people to proceed with its claim.

The matter is still before the ICJ, which ruled last December that Venezuela cannot proceed with its claim on Essequibo until the matter goes through the full court hearing.

The historical context of the controversy traces it back to the Arbitral Award of 1899, which definitively settled the the Caribbean and South American re-

It is clear, by its actions, that boundary between Venezuela and Guyana.

> Back then, Venezuela agreed to accept the new boundary and adhered to the award for six decades until the early 1960s when Guyana was on the brink of independence.

> In 1966, Venezuela raised the matter again, but ultimately agreed to resolve the issue through diplomatic channels as per an agreement made in

> The matter has largely been left alone since then until around 2018, after it became apparent that Essequibo contained one of the world's largest reservoirs of oil -- discovered only through exploration by Guyana and its international partners.

> With the spectre of untold oil riches at hand, Venezuela once again raised the issue of the border, this time moving far more boldly than it had previously. This led to the latest salvo fired by the Bolivarian state last week, when it passed the law creating the new state.

> These antics could have been treated as such were it not for the serious military threats Venezuela poses to Guyana. Maduro's army is the largest in

gion, while Guyana doesn't really have one of note.

This is why Guyana's Attorney General Anil Nandlall on Tuesday underscored the importance of diplomatic dialogue and adherence to international law in resolving the controversy, referencing the Accord signed by the Presidents of Venezuela and Guyana in December, 2023, brokered by CARI-COM and CELAC, which aimed to deescalate the conflict.

"During all of this, Guyana has emphatically maintained that the matter must be resolved by the ICJ. Further, Guyana has always maintained that diplomacy and dialogue must prevail over threats and confrontation," he said.

Nandlall urged stakeholders to utilize their platforms to condemn Venezuela's actions, demand compliance with international law and advocate for peaceful resolution through diplomacy.

"This is not a favour to Guyana, but it is discharging a duty we owe to ourselves and indeed the world, if we are to be true to the founding principles of this organization," he said.

The USA is taking notice, and has reaffirmed its unwavering support for Guyana in this matter, which comes as

no surprise since the major players in Guyana's oil industry are American.

The US has also linked the latest development by Venezuela in creating the new state as posturing by Maduro in the run-up to Veneuzelan elections due on July 28.

"What we see President Maduro doing, with elections that are now scheduled for July 28, [he is] trying to create a state of emergency and possibly being able to stay in power and continuing on with that humanitarian crisis [which] has been happening in Venezuela," US Southcom Commander General Laura Richardson said.

Clearly, this is a mess that is not going away any time soon, especially since Maduro has already indicated his country is not bound by any ruling made by the ICJ.

Once oil riches are at play, the stakes will remain high.

We call on our readers to call on their Canadian and American representatives to pressure Maduro to back off and respect both the 1899 Award, and the 1966 Geneva decision on the matter.

International pressure might be the only answer to this one.

#### The humanitarian crisis in Gaza

Dear Editor,

More than a hundred years after the Polish-British author Joseph Conrad wrote "Heart of Darkness," a haunting description of the genocidal horror of colonialism and imperialism in Africa, the world continues to witness a similar erasure of the thin line that divides humanity from savagery.

Civilisation, Conrad noted, is a fragile veneer that masks a propensity for violence that percolates in the human psyche. And when that veneer is ripped off in countries like Sudan, Haiti, Ukraine and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, we are most certainly going to catch a glimpse of what Conrad described in "Heart of Darkness."

Make no doubt, what we are seeing on our television screens is a sanitized version of terror compounded by human misery. The staggering statistics tell only a small part of the cruelty that is now leading to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

Over 31,000 Palestinians have been murdered in five months and somehow, in some sick twisted way, they might be the lucky ones. Thousands of children have been left orphaned, on the brink of starvation, shivering in Gaza's winter, with no shelter and no parents or grandparents to comfort them.

A three-story whitewashed apartment complex built to host visitors at the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Doha, Qatar is now home to 1,500 children who have had one or more of their limbs amputated due to Israel's massive bombing campaign in Gaza. Countless more children are trapped in Gaza and the West Bank without medical assistance. The long-term health and mental impact will sting them for the rest of their short

The United Nations says 1.9 million Palestinians, more than double the entire population of Guyana, have been uprooted and are internally displaced in Gaza. Many have been forced to flee from one area to another repeatedly over the last five months. A million are now iammed into Rafah, a tiny sliver of land on the border with Egypt, and Israel's deadly firepower threatens to rain even more hell down on them.

Finding something, anything, to eat is an ordeal of immense magnitude.

Famine looms large and international relief agencies are in a panic. In the first 17 days of this month an average of 159 aid trucks per day crossed into Gaza, well below the target of 500.

If Palestinians don't die from starvation, observers say, they will most certainly die from one of many diseases oozing out from the rubble. The World Bank estimates that 45% of all residential buildings in Gaza have been leveled by Israeli bombs since October 2023. Nutrition screenings conducted by UNICEF show that rates of acute malnutrition among children in northern Gaza and Rafah have nearly doubled in just over a month.

With more than 155 thousand vulnerable and at-risk pregnant and breastfeeding women in Gaza, add another 73 thousand in the West Bank, and factor in 690 thousand menstruating women and girls in Gaza with no access to clean water and hygiene supplies, you begin to see why the international community believes this is a watershed moment.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) who has seen their staff targeted and killed by Israel's occupation forces – 168 and counting – says only 8 of its 24 health-care facilities are currently operational. Access to clean water could alleviate the rising malnutrition rates and fend off starvation, but UNRWA says it is only able to salvage water from seven pre-existing wells.

As this humanitarian crisis deepens with each passing day, grassroot organisations in every country of the world continue to raise their voices in protest to demand a permanent ceasefire and the immediate recognition of an independent Palestinian state. These organisations, once disconnected, are now rapidly coalescing into a global mass

And here at home, "Guyana for Palestine," an independent grassroots organisation made up of a diverse group of students and young professionals, has raised more than GY\$7M in just a few days in aid for Gaza. The organisation says it plans on raising more funds in the coming days and weeks.

> Regards, Nazim Baksh



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## Brampton doctor grateful after Elon Musk pays expenses for Covid X post

By Jenna Smith

LJI REPORTER

Elon Musk's platform, formerly known as Twitter and now referred to as X, has announced its intention to cover the legal expenses of a Canadian doctor who faced scrutiny from regulators due to her COVID-19-related tweets.

In a statement on the X News account, the company expressed its support for Dr. Kulvinder Kaur Gill, characterizing the regulatory actions against her as attempts to suppress her speech. Dr. Gill had been cautioned by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario in 2021 for tweets, including one questioning the necessity of COVID-19 vaccination.

Facing significant legal costs, Dr. Gill initiated a crowdfunding campaign, seeking \$300,000 to cover expenses related to legal battles, including a lawsuit she filed against what she described as an online smear campaign. After reaching out to Elon Musk for assistance, Dr. Gill announced via a video post on X that Musk had pledged to cover the remainder of her crowdfunding campaign

and support her in appealing the regulatory cautions.

Public records indicate Dr. Gill's previous legal actions, including a dismissed lawsuit against multiple defendants, which resulted in significant costs awarded to the defendants.

Elon Musk's offer to fund legal expenses for individuals facing unfair treatment due to their activities on the platform was reiterated in August. However, bioethicist Kerry Bowman noted that while Musk appears selective in his defense of freedom of speech, Dr. Gill's case also raises concerns about her responsibilities as a physician and the potential social harm caused by her statements regarding COVID-19 vaccination.

Musk's acquisition of Twitter and subsequent rebranding to X has led to substantial changes, including the removal of the verification system and a reduction in the workforce. Concerns have been raised by experts regarding the proliferation of misinformation on the platform, particularly regarding sensitive topics like the Israel-Hamas conflict.



Dr Kulviner Gill: grateful to Elon Musk



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### **Orgasmic Excitement and the Con**struction of a Political Narrative



Joel Bhagwandin

At the 140th session of the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), a number of questions were raised by the UNHRC in relation to Guyana's anti-corruption framework, that stimulated orgasmic excitement in certain quarters in Guyana; mainly, the APNU+AFC and their allies.

Since his return to politics in 2015, the Vice President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo has been the subject of constant attacks by his opponents (the APNU+AFC) and others alike. Especially since under his stewardship as Leader of the Opposition, he managed to successfully unseat the APNU+AFC from the office of government. Now that he is back into government serving as a key technical, strategic, and political support to His Excellency, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali; his opponents have intensified their attacks aimed at denigrating him and to diminish his influence. But none of these efforts on the part of his opponents shall succeed, owing to the fact that their attempts at so doing have no credible basis to stand on, hence their failure.

For the younger generation's benefit who are now following politics and more broadly current affairs, it is not today that the Vice President has been accused of being involved in corruption. He's been constantly accused of

same as a former President of the Cooperative Republic.

The more recent incident that seems to trigger orgasmic excitement for the APNU+AFC and their associates, was the VICE interview. But the fact is that the VICE interview, while indeed was a set-up as it turned out to be, the recording vindicated the Vice President. And one can delve deeper into who was behind the VICE interview. By this time, it is not that difficult to ascertain. As a gentle reminder, in 2020 the APNU+AFC, having recognized that they had lost the elections of March 2020, and that they were caught transparently trying to alter the results of the election in their favor, the party had recruited a U.S firm to lobby the U.S Government, with the view of managing the APNU+AFC's credibility (which they don't have). The question one should therefore ask is whether it was the said lobby firm that was/is proving international political advisory services to the APNU+AFC and whether VICE was orchestrated by that firm, to create a certain narrative to sell to the U.S Government in favour of the APNU+AFC.

Interestingly, the media forgot about that lobby firm, and no one from the media has ever enquired about that firm since 2020, and whether it is still

on a retainer [presently] and who is financing the lobby firm.

Notwithstanding, more importantly to note is that all of the specific allegations of corruption leveled against the Vice President, were disproven. For example, the facts surrounding the Skeldon modernization project and the root cause (s) for its failure proved that it was Booker Tate that ought to have been fully responsible. Having so established, the PPP/C Government had moved to the Court with the aim of seeking compensation for damages. However, in 2015, the APNU+AFC formed the Government and shortly thereafter, withdrew the appeal filed by the previous PPP/C Government against Booker Tates for damages, which was in the region of G\$4.5 billion (with a present value (PV) of \$7.7 billion). The question is why did the APNU+AFC Government withdrew the appeal against Booker Tate for their mismanagement of Skeldon?

Other projects include the Berbice Bridge and the Marriot hotel, all of which were remarkably successful and publicly transparent in terms of their financials. Moreover, when the APNU+AFC assumed office in 2015, two known accountants were selected, as opposed to following the correct procurement procedure in accordance with the Procurement Act, to perform forensic audits of government agencies, such as the Berbice Bridge, GPL, Guyoil, etc. Yet not a single piece of evidence was uncovered to implicate the Vice President or anyone else in the PPP/C Government.

Of interest to note, when those two accountants were selected, the procurement law and regulation were breached to facilitate millions of dollars in contracts to the two aforenamed individuals who were/are staunch antigovernment critics at that time and presently. For ease of reference, this author had dealt with the procurement breach by the former APNU+AFC Government in order to ensure that their anti-PPP/C spokespersons received the contracts for the forensic audits. (See link here https://www.guyanastandard.com/2023/

10/19/bhagwandin-raises-questionsabout-quality-of-forensic-audits-bygoolsaran-and-ram-in-2015/).

Finally, worth mentioning is that the anti-corruption framework consistent with the United Nations convention, the strengthening of same—that is, began under the Vice President, when was the [former] President of the Cooperative Republic. For example, as former President, he enacted the Integrity Commission Act, amendments to the Procurement Act, amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Act, the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, the Audit Act, and the amendment to the Constitution to provide for the establishment of the Public Procurement Commission, just to name a few.



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Brian Tiwarie, OMC, AA - CEO

## Canada takes step to prepare for potential Donald Trump return

By Aziz Abdool

LJI REPORTER

Canada undertook a significant diplomatic mission this week in anticipation of a U.S. presidential election with potentially far-reaching consequences. More than a dozen Canadian diplomats stationed across various U.S. cities converged on Washington to engage with numerous American lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

The specter of Donald Trump's possible return to the White House loomed large over their discussions, particularly concerning one specific policy that has garnered attention this year. The former president has hinted at implementing a global tariff on imported goods should he secure victory, signaling a departure from his previous trade strategies.

Details surrounding Trump's proposed policy remain scant, with mentions of a potential 10 percent global tax, leaving both Canadian officials and Trump's allies uncertain about its implications. While Trump has not specified which countries or products would be affected, Canadian authorities are steadfast in their stance that any punitive measures should not apply to a country that recently inked a praised free-trade agreement with him.

Kirsten Hillman, Canada's ambas-



**Donald Trump and Justin Trudeau** 

sador, emphasized this point, highlighting the recently concluded deal that significantly reduces tariffs, echoing sentiments of other Canadian officials. However, amidst the uncertainty, Canadian diplomats remain vigilant, recognizing the possibility of Trump's return to office based on current polls.

Opinions among American lawmakers regarding the potential tariffs vary. Some, like Michigan Republican congressman Bill Huizenga, express skepticism, citing the trade agreement negotiated under Trump's leadership. Others, such as North Dakota Sen. Kevin Cramer, advocate for a broader North American strategy rather than a unilateral approach.

Experts weigh in on the legal and practical implications of Trump's proposed tariffs, with divergent opinions on their potential effects. Charles Benoit, a trade lawyer, suggests Trump may invoke existing legislation to impose tariffs, anticipating legal challenges and international backlash.

Gary Hufbauer, a seasoned tradepolicy expert, predicts that while Canada may secure exemptions, Trump could leverage the threat of tariffs as a bargaining tool in future negotiations. He anticipates contentious discussions centered on issues such as dairy and automotive trade.

Trump's former trade minister, Robert Lighthizer, continues to influence policy discussions, advocating for a departure from traditional trade norms and emphasizing the need to address perceived economic vulnerabilities. His viewpoints resonate with Trump's broader narrative on trade, which has shifted the political consensus in the United States.

As the election approaches, the potential ramifications of Trump's trade policies remain a focal point for both Canadian and American stakeholders, underscoring the complexities of international trade relations in an era of uncertainty.

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**BUSINESS SERVICES** 

## Guyana, India can deepen collaboration on existing, new ventures

OVER the years, Guyana and India have cultivated strategic ties both bilaterally and within the multilateral framework across various areas.

With both countries' economies growing exponentially, there is ample opportunity for them to collaborate in emerging and established areas, thereby fostering socioeconomic transformation.

This was underscored by Foreign Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Robert Persaud during a panel discussion at the India-Guyana Business Forum at Marriott Hotel, Kingston, Georgetown, Thursday evening.

He elaborated that there was a time when India and Guyana were often overlooked. However, this perception, the foreign secretary said, has evolved significantly.

Presently, both nations are regarded with seriousness and are actively engaged in substantive dialogues encompassing energy, climate, environment, food security, and geopolitical dynamics.

"The growth of our economy offers us that grand occasion for us to move forward in taking the relationship between Guyana and India to another level. This has to be led by the private sector," he highlighted.

The foreign secretary stressed the crucial role of the private sector in seizing and maximising these opportunities. Persaud noted that while governments can facilitate discussions and highlight opportunities, it is ultimately up to private enterprises to push the effort.

India's contributions to Guyana's oil sector have been notable, and making waves on the international stage.

Transactions between the two nations have already commenced, with India initially purchasing crude oil from Guyana for refining purposes,

Persaud stated

He highlighted an expanding partnership opportunity in the petrochemical sector, as Guyana progresses towards cheap energy solutions while tapping into its gas resources.

Meanwhile, India's High Commissioner to Guyana, Dr Amit Telang, emphasised that both nations are actively working to translate the ideas and projects discussed during the visits by President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali and Vice-President Dr Bharrat Jagdeo to India into tangible outcomes.

Additionally, the Chairman of ActionINVEST Caribbean Inc, Dr Vishnu Doerga, said another crucial area of collaboration between the two countries is agriculture, which seeks to advance food security.



India's High Commissioner to Guyana, Dr. Amit Telang

India's expertise in climate-smart technology can be incorporated into Guyana's agriculture and food systems. Guyana is already strategically located globally, boasting favourable climate conditions, fertile soils, and a wealth of expertise in agriculture.

India is globally recognised for its thriving service sector, including finance, information technology, and communication.

India has financed significant projects in Guyana, including the Solar Home Electrification System and the MV MA Lisha. Other specialists in the panel discussion were Treasurer of the Private Sector Commission and Vice President of Region Three's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Haimwant Persaud; Chief Education Officer of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, Renata Chuck-A-Sang, and



## Guyana wants to lead the world in energy, climate security

PRIME Minister, Brigadier (retired) Mark Phillips, has boldly declared that Guyana wants to lead the world in energy and climate security.

As he addressed the Guyana Energy Agency's (GEA) maiden EV [Electric Vehicle] Show and Tell exhibition on Saturday at Amazonia Mall, Providence, East Bank Demerara (EBD) he emphasised the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainable development in the face of global issues. He asserted that although fossil fuels will be available for another 30 years or so, Guyana needs to keep up with the global shift towards a greater usage of renewable energy sources.

Guyana now has 200 electric vehicles (EVs) with six charging stations, and the Prime Minister anticipates that number would rise to over 1,000 by 2025.

Furthermore, there are currently 50 persons trained to service these vehicles.

In an attempt to support national green energy initiatives, the Government of Guyana has made all imports of electric vehicles tax-free and duty free. There is also a 50 per cent annual write-down allowance for businesses investing in environmentally friendly vehicles.

These measures are consistent with



Prime Minister, Brigadier (retired) Mark Phillips inspecting an electric vehicle

the government's pledge to advance growth along a low-carbon route, the Prime Minister noted.

"Government is here to continue facilitating the move towards greater use of renewable energy with the use of electric vehicles in Guyana. It is my hope that by the end of 2025, we will pass 1,000 vehicles and I would like to contribute by purchasing an electric vehicle," said Phillips, who has oversight

over the country's energy sector.

The increased use of electric vehicles will, in the opinion of Phillips, also help Guyana to gain more recognition as a global leader in climate and energy security.

"We want to be seen as the leader in energy security. And embracing renewable energy will not only see us as a leader in energy security, but [we] will also be seen as a leader in climate security..."

PM Phillips used the fact that there are more than 5,000 electric automobiles in the Dominican Republic to support his argument that these vehicles are getting more and more popular.

He added that Uganda has a comparable situation with regard to the adoption of electric vehicles for both private and public transportation.





## 'Guyana has possibility to become model for the world': DR Envoy

WITH President Dr Irfaan Ali preparing Guyana to embrace a massive economic transformation, Dominican Republic (DR) Ambassador to Guyana, Ernesto Torres-Pereyra, has said that the country has the possibility to serve as a model for the entire world.

He made those remarks during an interview at the DR Embassy, located at Pegasus Hotel, Seawall Kingston, on Saturday.

Noting that Guyana has all the conditions to become a global leader, Torres-Pereyra said: "You have the possibility here in Guyana of serving as a paradigm for the entire world."

He also pointed out that in terms of building a society with sound values, institutions, respect for the environment and the promotion of transparency, Guyana is already checking the boxes in these areas.

The Ambassador then went on to say: "...As I mentioned before, that type of leadership that you have now serves as inspiration. President Ali has been preparing this country to embrace this economic transition while setting the foundations to face the imminent challenges that come together with this process."

Torres-Pereyra elaborated on how Guyana and the DR relations have deepened, highlighting important landmarks that have been attained so far.

Putting things into perspective, he referenced how Sky High Dominicana is playing a key role in bridging the gap and aiding in building a direct connection between the two nations.

He said that this airline will not only facilitate the exchange of people but also provide business opportunities.

Just a few days ago, Sky High Dominicana Airlines officially opened its new office in Georgetown at Lot 58 David Street, Kitty, Georgetown, just weeks after its inaugural flight at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (СЛА).

Continuing to list the ways in which the relationship between the two nations has become stronger, the Ambassador said that trade balance has increased significantly since the Embassy opened its doors.

Torres-Pereyra further told reporters: "Our trade balance has increased significantly after the opening



President Dr Irfaan Ali (second, left) with Dominican Republic Ambassador to Guyana, Ernesto Torres-Pereyra (third, left); and Foreign Affairs Minister Hugh Todd (extreme left)

of the embassy. People are getting to magnitude of the project. know more about what you offer here in Guyana and what the Dominican Republic has to offer as a solid partner to supply some of the growing needs during this incredible massive process of transformation of the country."

He added: "...There's basically no limit to what we can do together."

Shifting his attention to the six memoranda of understanding (MoU) signed last year between the two nations, the Ambassador said that many of them have undergone advances.

"And in both of our countries because of the type of leadership that we have, the advances have been unbelievable," he said, noting that both President Ali and the DR's President, Luis Abinader have done "unbelievable things in a very short period of time."

However, he emphasised that patience is key, as Caribbean people often adopt the mentality of wanting to see immediate results regardless of the

For context, at the DR's National Palace, in August of last year, the agreements for the oil and gas industry, the establishment of an oil refinery, a petrochemical plant, and a study for participation in Guyana's Oil Exploration Block were signed by the countries' re-tions' private sectors are actively col spective representatives.

Agreements were also signed to enhance the two nations' agriculture, tourism and trade industries.

"The agreements were signed in August and these type of projects, they not only [are] massive in terms of the amount of investment that they [require], but also in terms of planning, you need planning that goes beyond architecture, engineering, you have to go through environmental impact and also everybody who invest has an expectation. So the negotiation process is ongoing. The discussions are ongoing," he

The Ambassador added: "Your

government has been very diligent and both private sectors...Guyanese and Dominican have been very diligent... It's just that because of the magnitude of the projects, it will take time to reach an agreement to say 'okay, let's go."

He also said that both of the nalaborating.

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## Caribbean Investment Forum set for July in Georgetown

PREPARATIONS are underway for Guyana to host this year's Caribbean Investment Forum which is expected to be held from July 10 to July 12 at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre.

According to the official website, this year's forum is set to focus on sustainable agriculture, green economy transition and the digitalisation of business. As such the forum has put out an official call for large projects with national or regional impact that requires large capital investments in these areas.

The forum is said to be one of the largest gatherings of business people in the Caribbean region and is focused on promoting investments across the region in various sectors.

Recently, several members of the Caribbean Export Development Agency which spearheads the forum, visited Guyana and met with government officials and members of the private sector

In February, the Executive Director, Deodat Maharaj met with President Dr Irfaan Ali who confirmed the government's partnership in hosting the premier regional forum which



President Dr Irfaan Ali (left) and Executive Director of CEDA, Deodat Maharaj

brings investors and businesses together to broker deals to foster regional transformation.

Further to this, Maharaj after that high-level meeting, indicated that the agency is excited to showcase sustainable agriculture investment opportunities and innovation in the heart of the Caribbean's breadbasket.

During that time, they also met with Guyana's Chief Investment Officer, Dr Peter Ramsaroop who also expressed support for the advancement of the initiative in the region.

Late last week, senior officials from CEDA also met with executives of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) and discussed participation and collaboration.

According to the GCCI, during this engagement Manager for Competitiveness and Export Promotion at CEDA, Dr Damie Sinanan indicated that as the chamber represents the

largest cross-section of private sector businesses in the country, it will be a pivotal stakeholder in the event.

Thus far, pre-registrations have opened through the Caribbean Investment Forum's official website. As part of activities for the forum, there are expected to be presentations on investment projects to investors from around the globe and panel discussions along with investment villages.

Following the conclusion of the



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## Guyana, Suriname to further discuss Corentyne River Bridge

THE governments of Guyana and Suriname will soon engage in further discussions regarding the financing, technical aspects and operational modalities of the bridge that will be built across the Corentyne River to link the two countries.

According to a joint statement from Guyana's Head of State, Dr. Irfaan Ali and his Surinamese counterpart Chandrikapersad Santokhi, the two met on Saturday at Soesdyke and reaffirmed the importance of a fixed connection between the two nations to create greater South American connectivity.

This, the statement explained, is part of the overall objective of regional integration and trilateral co-operation between Suriname, Guyana and Brazil.

"Following this process of internal and bilateral consultations between Guyana and Suriname and the recommendations received, careful consideration was given to the proposed way forward, taking into account political, domestic and international elements as well," the joint statement read.

Their respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance and Public Works, who over the past months have been engaged in intensive consultations regarding the technical and financial aspects of the project, accompanied both Head of



Officials dicsuss the buliding of the Corentyne River Bridge

States.

During discussions, President Ali and Santokhi acknowledged the importance of the historical and friendly relations between the peoples and governments of both countries.

It was further recognised that at the current time, both countries stand on the verge of becoming major players in terms of energy and food security in this egion.

"The building of the fixed connection between the two neighboring nations will undoubtedly enhance the flow of people, strengthen agricultural co-operation, facilitate trade and investment and promote tourism, thereby adding in a diversified way to the economic growth that is expected to provide sustainable prosperity to both the Suri-

namese and Guyanese populations," the statement said.

It added that the respective teams where instructed to enter the next stage of the project by engaging in discussions in relation to terms of pricing, technical aspects, financing and operational modalities with the shared objective of optimising on affordability and concessionality.

It was outlined that experts of both countries will jointly work towards a political and legal framework, starting with the supervisory tendering process, and the drafting of an agreement regarding the ultimate board that will jointly manage the bridge.

Further, clear timelines for the finalisation of these recommendations have been set. The ministerial teams of three on each side will continue their work to lead these negotiations and data gathering, as well as monitor the progress and report regularly to the Heads of State of both countries.

Meanwhile the Heads of State have agreed to convene the Strategic Dialogue and Co-operation Platform (SDCP) in early May 2024 to broaden the consultations to include other pending relevant areas of strategic importance on the agenda between the two countries.



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## Government, stakeholders discuss child labour issues in Region Two

RESIDENTS of Karawab and St. Monica in the Upper Pomeroon River, Region Two, were on Saturday engaged by Ministry of Labour officials on the issue of child labour and the detrimental emotional and physical effects it can have on children.

The Labour Ministry in continuing its outreach efforts in the region, conducted an awareness session at Karawab Primary School and St. Monica.

The significant session saw attendance from teachers, Toshaos, village councillors, and residents alike.

According to the ministry, its Chief Labour Officer, Dhaneshwar Deonarine, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the definition, causes, and consequences of child labour.

He delved into the legislative framework and Ministry initiatives aimed at combatting this issue, and emphasised the importance of community collaboration, and highlighted the key roles that community leaders, members, and stakeholders play in effectively tackling child labour.

The Chief Labour Officer encouraged parents to prioritise their children's education to unlock the abundant opportunities available to them in the country. The residents were further urged to take advantage of the Guyana Online Academy Learning (GOAL) platform to further their academic pursuits.

Meanwhile, the ministry reiterated its steadfast commitment to partnering with stakeholders to eliminate all forms of child labour, while the head teacher of Karawab Primary School expressed appreciation for the Ministry's visit.

According to the ministry, the head teacher underscored its significance as the first-of-its-kind in the community, and expressed hope that it would serve as a catalyst to encourage parents to ensure their children attend school regularly.

The Chief Labour Officer also affirmed that this visit marked only the beginning of continuous engagement by the Ministry.

Regional officers provided stakeholders with their contact information, fostering avenues for future collaboration in combatting child labour, the ministry added.





The residents and other stakeholders of Karawab and St. Monica

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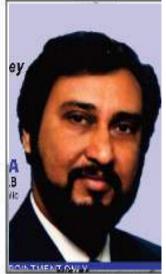
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## Gov't, IICA partnering to convert GSA into regional institution

THE Guyana School of Agriculture will soon be converted into a regional institution offering more innovate training programmes and newer technologies.

The country's Head of State Dr. Irfaan Ali made this disclosure during his address at the opening of the 38th Session of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)'s Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC) held in Georgetown, Guyana last Monday.

The country, he said, is investing in a 'centre of excellence' in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, which will be equipped with a situational room and state-of-the-art data analytic platform to support regional food security and food production.

Dr. Ali, who currently chairs the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and holds the responsibly for agriculture within the 15 bloc intergovernmental organisation, explained that this initiative will see data-driven decision-making being made within the region's agricultural sector.

"All our people in the region [will be] studying right here with the best technology on the best platform. We are converting the Guyana School of Agriculture into a regional, international institution with a branding of IICA with us, so that's another area that we are working on," President Ali said.

Meanwhile, Guyana's Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha, in an invited comment to this newspaper said money has already been budgeted to expand the institution.

"The design has already been completed. The technical officers were in Guyana [and] they looked at the design, they looked at the Guyana School of Agriculture and very shortly we will be going out to tender, to start the construction of that school; it's not a new construction but we will modify the Guyana School of Agriculture," he said.

According to Mustapha, who also chair's CARICOM's food security ministerial taskforce, the modified school will feature a laboratory and farm for differently-abled persons.



President Ali in discussion with IICA's Director-General, Manuel Otero, in Costa Rica last year

In a sit-down interview on the sidelines of the regional summit, Director of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Dr. Manuel Otero, said the collaboration between the Government of Guyana and IICA will embrace newer technologies to target food-security goals, such as addressing malnutrition and hunger in the

acquainted with the new technologies. Farmers are becoming professionals, farmers have to read and understand the technologies," Dr. Otero said, adding:

"Our continent and some key countries like Guyana have a special responsibility Guyana has land, Guyana has a tropical ecosystem, Guyana has farmers and new options."

In fact, Guyana he said has been playing a 'proactive role' and has "[We] are taking in to account that crafted a model to transform its agriculthe young people are the future of agri- ture and food-production systems, seek- sistent and to have a long-term vision, culture and we need a new generation ing out newer technologies and Dr. Otero said. of farmers. Farmers that are much more innovative programmes to meet the nu-

tritional needs of the region.

Dr. Otero noted that every country is unique, and their approach to address the challenges faced within the production sector may vary, but in Guyana's case, what has been notable is the government's persistent and public-private partnerships to not only increase food production, but also the investments being made in innovation.

"Each country has a model to be followed, and it's necessary to be per-

#### 800 Moruca residents get access to potable water

EIGHT hundred residents of Moruca, Region One, now have access to potable water, following the commissioning of the Five Miles and Seven Miles Water Supply Systems and the upgrading of the water-supply system at Karaburi.

Some \$30 million was used for the two new water systems and the upgrading of the Karaburi Water Supply Sys-

Notably, this is the first time that residents of Five and Seven Miles are receiving access to clear water, marking this as a crucial step towards improved living standards in the region.

According to the ministry, the systems were commissioned on Saturday afternoon by Minister of Housing and Water Collin Croal, who was accompanied by the Regional Chairman, Brent-Ashley; Vice-Chairperson, Annansha Peters; Regional Executive Officer (REO), Mr. Sewchand; Deputy REO Shem Cuffy; Hinterland Services Director at the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI), Ramchand Jailal and

Minister Croal in his remarks emphasised the significance of this

achievement, highlighting it as a tangible fulfilment of the government's promise to enhance water supply, a commitment made during the 2020 election campaign.

"You have a government that is working hard to ensure everyone has a better life and an equal level of service," said the minister.

Minister Croal highlighted that potable water coverage in Region One stood at 38 per cent in 2020, rising to 79 per cent by the end of 2023 through heavy investments from the government. The coverage is projected to surpass 90 per cent by the end of 2024.

In 2024, a total of \$1.5 billion has been budgeted for the drilling of at least 40 wells in the hinterland.

Minister Croal stated that around 25 of these wells will be drilled in Region One with an investment exceeding \$700 million. Meanwhile, the Regional Vice-Chairperson, in her remarks, emphasised the significance of water conservation and responsible usage to the residents, urging them to utilise the newly established water systems with care to ensure their long-term sustainability.

## Opposition lacking 'coherence' on matters of national interest

PEOPLE'S Progressive Party (PPP) General Secretary, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, has blasted the opposition for changing its tune and contradicting itself on matters of national interest.

During a recent press conference at the party's Robb Street headquarters, Dr Jagdeo highlighted two news articles which showed the opposition holding different positions.

The articles referenced a press statement issued on March 16 by the Office of the Leader of the Opposition (OLO).

The press statement read: "We, in the opposition, support the call for the nation to be updated on the amount of discovered oil reserves," and also put forth the accusation that the Guyanese people are being left in the "dark."

However, although the opposition called for the publishing of an updated report of the reserves, this stance was abandoned as the statement then gave reasons as to why the government should not "rush" to approve oil projects.

As they reaffirmed their previous position held in their press conference on February 12, the statement posited: "The Guyanese public should take note of recent statements by VP Jagdeo and President of Exxon Guyana Alistair Routledge, to the effect that Guyana's share of oil revenues is projected to increase substantially in the next few years as the company recoups more and more of its investments... It [gov't] must therefore not rush to approve new oil projects in the Stabroek Block..."

In a scathing response, the PPP General Secretary used this example to show how the opposition lacks coherence.

"On one hand you're [opposition] complaining about being kept in the dark so we prove more resources now, but you don't want to approve the projects," Dr Jagdeo said.

Taking a step further to poke holes in their logic, he stated: "So we know about all the reserves we have now, but the only way this country could make money is if we actually convert the resources into reserves and then into production."

He added: "Knowing reserves without converting it into production is nonsense, because we already know we have 11 billion barrels of reserves and it will keep growing."

He said that the focus is not to push the oil companies to do more appraisal wells, but instead converting the reserves into production.



**Guyana Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo** 

The PPP General Secretary also quarterly report on the nation's oil restated that the government receives a serves.

As he continued to point out, the opposition's lack of coherence, he said: "This is what I'm telling you about, no coherence in thinking, in strategy, in policy. They go on a weekly basis to the press conference and they wing it."

Unlike the opposition, Dr Jagdeo said he is buttressed by policy-making experience as he held the positions of former Minister of Finance and ormer President of Guyana.

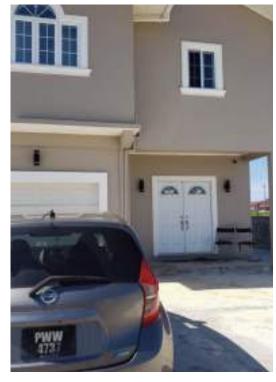
Adding to this, he highlighted the several documents outlining the PPP government's policies.

Recently, opposition operatives have been pushing the narrative that the estimated 11 billion barrels of oil that Guyana has is not true and have been hastily calling for an update.

It should be noted that exploration activities pursuant to the Stabroek Block's 1999 Agreement, actually commenced 15 years prior to the "announcement" of a commercial discovery in 2015.

Similarly, CGX Guyana had announced the discovery of hydrocarbons at the Wei-1well in the Corentyne block in November 2023. However, the company is still appraising that discovery for commercial viability, while bearing in mind that exploration was ongoing years prior to that announcement.

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



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Pop star Rihanna (third from left) with members of the Ambani family

### Rihanna, Gates and Zuckerberg at India tycoon's pre-wedding gala

Five hundred dishes, more than a thousand Mark Zuckerberg to the region. guests and a multi-million dollar budget - this is how the son of Asia's richest man has reportedly celebrated his upcoming nuptials.

Anant Ambani and his wife-to-be Radhika Merchant's three day extravaganza saw Bollywood royalty rubbing shoulders with tech billionaires, sports superstars and even Donald Trump's daughter, Ivanka.

The event has captivated audiences in India and abroad, who have been lapping up every detail emerging from the party held by his father Mukesh Ambani in the city of Jamnagar, in Gujarat, over the weekend.

It was so big that the local airport was temporarily granted international status as it received visitors from across the country and the world. Airport authorities said nearly 130 flights had arrived for the event, ferrying the likes of Bill Gates and

Most of the guests stayed in luxury "glamping" tents near the venue that offered a level of opulence most would struggle to imagine, let alone afford and could reportedly choose from more than 500 dishes created by dozens of chefs from around the

There were also hair and makeup artists, laundry services and stylists on hand to help any guests prepare for the themed gatherings taking place said to have been carefully laid out in a nine page

The highlight was pop star Rihanna's first ever performance in India, for which she was rumoured to have been paid somewhere in the range of \$7m (£5.5m). Some of India's biggest film stars also danced to her hit songs on stage.

All eyes are now likely to be on the wedding, which is due to be held in Mumbai in July.



your sign will boost your imaginative powers and encourage you to look for unusual solutions to long-standing problems. Steer clear of people who are frivolous and only care about having fun. These are serious times, at least for you.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): It may not be easy to look on the bright side when so many things are going wrong in the world but it needs to be done if you want to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. An optimistic outlook is an absolute must.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): You need to put aside any bad feelings that were sparked by yesterday's lunar eclipse and make an effort to work with people whose interests coincide with your own. Any differences you may have are largely superficial, so feel free to ignore them.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): If you get your act together on the work front today you will make considerable inroads on the backlog of jobs you have allowed to build up. Don't trust other people to help you though – this is one of those occasions when your own efforts must be enough.

**LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23):** You may not be feeling your best at the moment as a result of yesterday's eclipse but you can still make considerable progress when dealing with people on a one-to-one basis. A sympathetic ear on your part will work wonders over the next 24 hours.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): You have been living beyond your means and what has occurred over the past few days has woken you up to that fact. Now you must do something about it. Start by reducing your commitments both at home and at work. Cut them back to the bone.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): The Sun and Mercury in your opposite sign makes it easy to find new friends but if you say the wrong thing to the wrong person at the wrong time you could make an enemy as well. Praise everyone to the skies, even when they don't deserve it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): The most important thing now is that you draw up a detailed plan and stick to it come what may. The moment your mind starts to stray you must forcefully bring it back to what you are working on. Focus is essential if you yearn for success.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): You need to believe that you really can reach a goal that has eluded you for so long. The Sun's journey through the most dynamic area of your chart will give you every chance you need to make your mark on the world, so get started today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): As the effects of yesterday's eclipse are likely to linger for a day or two you still need to tread carefully when dealing with partners, loved ones, relatives and colleagues. Try not to say or do anything that might set them off on another rant.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): You don't have to treat some kind of dispute as a fight to the death. You can be a bit extreme in the ways you react to people who disagree with you, so count to ten, bring your pulse rate down, then talk reasonably about finding a solution.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): Events are moving so quickly now that there will be times when you fear being left behind, but that is unlikely to happen either in your personal affairs or at work, so stop worrying. New challenges will bring new opportunities, if you stay alert.



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## Probe into alleged corruption involving Suriname's President Santokhi

The Office of the Attorney General has requested a preliminary investigation into potential corruption allegations involving Suriname's President Chandrikapersad Santokhi and two of his ministers, including Finance Minister Stanley Raghoebarsing.

The probe was triggered by reports suggesting that the government disbursed around US\$7.5 million to Pan-American Real Estate, a local company, based on falsified documents.

"It is important to emphasize that no one has yet been identified as a suspect," the Public Prosecution Service said on Wednesday.

The case came to light last November when an anonymous whistle-blower, armed with a trove of documents, filed a criminal complaint with the attorney general's office.

Subsequently, in January, additional potentially incriminating evidence was handed over to the Office of the Attorney General, prompting the Police Anti-Corruption Unit to delve into the matter.

Reports are that during the investigation, several individuals were questioned by the police, including Vice President Ronnie Brunswijk and the two ministers.

The Public Prosecution Service revealed that it had received a comprehensive police file on the case, leading to the request for a preliminary judicial investigation from the examining magistrate.

President Santokhi and the two cabinet ministers have denied any wrongdoing, asserting that all actions were conducted in compliance with existing legal accounting regulations.

According to the whistleblower, Public Works Minister Riad Nurmohamed allegedly presented fraudulent documents during a Council of Ministers meeting to facilitate the payment to



Suriname President Chandrikapersad Santokhi

Pan-American Real Estate.

Although Vice President
Brunswijk purportedly halted the payment on two occasions, the whistleblower alleges that the minister
circumvented the ministerial meeting
and directly submitted the questionable
documents to the government council
and a cabinet meeting chaired by the
president.

It is purported that during this session, President Santokhi sanctioned the disbursement of approximately US\$7.5 million.

Initially, Finance Minister Raghoebarsing opposed the payment,

contending that the services provided by Pan-American Real Estate did not meet the criteria for a public-private partnership project as initially suggested.

According to Public Works Minister Nurmohamed, the previous administration under Desi Bouterse had engaged Pan-American Real Estate in a housing construction venture for lowincome groups in 2019.

Allegedly, the agreement stipulated that the government would undertake road paving at a real estate development project by the company.

However, Nurmohamed claims

that these obligations were not fulfilled, leading the company to undertake the road paving itself and subsequently seeking reimbursement from the current government.

Observers are closely monitoring the developments, pondering whether this case will culminate in the prosecution of the president and his two ministers

Notably, government and former political office holders can only face prosecution if charged by Parliament at the behest of the Attorney General, a process where President Santokhi's coalition holds a majority stake.

### Jamaica now offers civil documents in Braille

On April 2, Jamaica's Registrar General's Department (RGD) will introduce the first batch of Braille certificates, becoming the first Caribbean nation to provide equal access to essential documents for individuals with visual impairments.

The announcement was made by RGD's CEO Charlton McFarlane at a recent JIS Think Tank.

He shared that the move to provide documents, such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, and death certificates, in Braille is part of the RGD's ongoing commitment to foster inclusivity and accessibility by undertaking extensive efforts to enhance its services and accommodate the needs of all citizens.

Braille is a tactile writing system used by individuals with visual impairments.

"It will enable members from the



Birth certificates will be among documents now being offered in Braille in a first for the Caribbean

visually impaired community to be able to access and actually read and interpret and know directly, the information that is contained on their vital [documents]," he said.

McFarlane, who also serves as the

Deputy Keeper of Records, said that while "we do get requests, from time to time, to translate birth certificates, this is the first time that our certificates will be systematically produced in another written language."

He noted that the initiative involves collaboration with the Jamaica Society for the Blind, which is assisting with the language and the printing of the certificates.

## Jamaica Opposition pushes to name Bob Marley a National Hero

Jamaica's leader of the opposition Mark Golding has committed to making Bob Marley a national hero if the People's National Party (PNP) forms the next Government.

During his budget presentation on Tuesday, Golding said that Marley, a global icon, deserves to be Jamaica's eighth national hero.

"One commitment that I have, which is in keeping with our seriousness about culture and the creative industries, when we form the next government, I commit to conferring the Order of National Hero on the Honourable Robert Nesta Marley for his service of a most distinguished nature in advancing Jamaican culture and his global impact as a liberating inspirational force for oppressed people across the world," Golding said.

"I say time come to recognize the 'Gong' as a true national hero and confer the honor on him accordingly," he added.

While promising that a future PNP government would focus on the creative industries, including increasing funding, Mark Golding commented on the Bob Marley 'One Love' biopic now in theatres worldwide.

"Speaking of the 'One Love' phenomenon now blowing like a natural mystic across the globe shows us what cultural and creative practitioners have been telling us for years. Nurturing and growing the cultural and creative industries, sports and their diverse ecosystems are extremely important for the economic development and cultural identity of Jamaica," he said.



A monument to Bob Marley in Kingston

During the premiere of 'Bob Marley: One Love' in Jamaica in January, the question of whether Bob Marley would ever be made a national hero was posed to Prime Minister Andrew Holness.

Holness said that recognition for iconic personalities is something being considered.

"We did put together a committee

to look at it [naming Bob Marley as a national hero], and believe me, there were commissions before that established a criteria for national hero. I think the conversation has so far evolved to having a category that identifies iconic personalities, people who have added great value to our countries. So there may be a designation. But, who knows, the conversation contin-

ues," Holness said.

Jamaica currently has seven national heroes — Nanny of the Maroons, George William Gordon, Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle, Marcus Garvey, Sir Alexander Bustamante, and Norman Manley.

The list has not been updated since 1982.

### B'dos tax on sugary drinks causes sales decline

In a bid to address the rising tide of diet-related illnesses, Barbados implemented a tax on sugary beverages, a move that has yielded notable shifts in consumption patterns, according to Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Arthur Phillips.

Since the tax's inception at 10 per cent in 2015, followed by an increase to 20 per cent in April 2022, there has been a discernible decrease in the sale of carbonated sugar-sweetened beverages.

Dr. Phillips highlighted a 4.3 per cent drop in weekly sales of sugar-sweetened beverages and a 3.6 per cent decrease specifically in carbonated variants

Conversely, the imposition of the tax has spurred an uptick in the sale of healthier alternatives.

Bottled water sales surged by just over 7.5 per cent, while non-sugar-sweetened beverage sales saw a commendable rise of 5.2 per cent.

Dr. Phillips underscores ongoing assessments regarding the impact of the increased tax rate.



Sales of sugary drinks in Barbados have slowed after the imposition of a tax increase

Deliberations are underway to potentially introduce a tiered taxation system, correlating tax rates with sugar content levels.

Additionally, there is discussion about allocating a portion of the tax revenue towards social programming, aimed at enhancing public awareness and understanding of the tax's purpose.

The tax initiative aligns with Barbados' broader efforts to combat the

prevalence of non-communicable diseases attributed to excessive sugar consumption.

Dr. Phillips emphasizes the adverse health effects associated with sugary drinks, including heightened risks of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular ailments, and certain cancers.

The World Health Organization's recommendation for a 20 per cent tax on sugar-sweetened beverages under-

scores a global consensus on the efficacy of fiscal policies in curbing harmful dietary practices.

According to the Pan American Health Organization, such taxation strategies are anticipated to yield substantial reductions in sugary drink consumption, offering a promising avenue for public health intervention.

## Public outcry follows purchase of US\$192K BMW for Prime Minister

Amidst mounting public scrutiny over the timing of a US\$192,000 purchase of a BMW for Prime Minister Phillip "Brave" Davis, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) has stepped forward to defend the decision.

The move comes as living expenses surge, stirring debates across various sectors.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the OPM underscored that the acquisition of the BMW serves as a replacement for a US\$300,000 Mercedes procured during the Ingraham administration in 2011.

Notably, the Mercedes had been utilized by four prime ministers over its tenure.

The statement emphasized a pivotal shift in government policy towards sustainability, with the selection of an electric vehicle for the Prime Minister's Office.

It outlined the advantages of electric vehicles in terms of environmental impact and long-term cost efficiency.

Acknowledging concerns raised following leaked documents regarding the transaction, the OPM clarified that the chosen BMW is currently undergoing customization to meet stringent security and operational requisites necessary for transporting a prime minister. Additionally, it was revealed that a Lexus, slated for use, is undergoing repairs, rendering it temporarily un-



The Bahamas Prime Minister will be driven around in a US\$192,000 BMW

available. To ensure uninterrupted official duties, a temporary loaned BMW has been deployed.

The OPM further elaborated on plans for vehicle rotation, highlighting

the repaired Lexus and the newly acquired BMW as the primary vehicles in the rotation cycle.

Acting Press Secretary Keishla Adderley emphasized the demanding

nature of the prime minister's schedule, asserting the necessity for vehicles capable of coping with such rigor.

She said the new car is also expected to last at least ten years.

### Court of Justice rejects Bouterse appeal

The Court of Justice delivered a blow to ex-president Desi Bouterse and his four co-convicts, rejecting their appeal to suspend their lengthy jail terms following their conviction on murder charges.

The Court declared the appeal of the five individuals inadmissible, signaling that it would not be addressed substantively.

The judgment cited the limitations within the legal framework governing appeals, indicating that while citizens have the right to challenge the Public Prosecution Service, the scope of such challenges is too restricted to address the substantive issues raised in this case.

The Court highlighted a pertinent legal issue, noting that the article of law invoked by the appellants served as a supra-appeal remedy.

However, the Court deemed its application in this context as untenable, leading to the rejection of the appeal.

Desi Bouterse, aged 78, continues to evade authorities, with his current whereabouts shrouded in mystery.

Following his failure to report to Santo Boma prison as scheduled, a search has been initiated to locate both Bouterse and his associate, Iwan Dijksteel. While three of the co-convicted individuals have complied with their



Desi Bourterse - lost appeal against lengthy sentence

sentences, Bouterse's evasion persists.

The convictions stem from the December 8, 1982, murders of 15 individuals, including journalists, military officers, union leaders, lawyers, busi-

nessmen, and university lecturers.

The prosecution alleged that the victims were subjected to torture and summarily executed under Bouterse's military regime.

Despite assertions by the National Democratic Party (NDC), led by Bouterse, that the trial was politically motivated and influenced by the Netherlands, the legal proceedings have culminated in significant ramifications.

The Court's ruling marks the conclusion of a protracted legal battle spanning 16 years.

However, the convicted individuals' legal counsel has affirmed their intent to analyze the verdict meticulously before determining their next course of action, underscoring the ongoing complexity of the case.

International law enforcement agencies, including INTERPOL, have escalated efforts to apprehend Bouterse, issuing a Red Notice for his arrest.

This notice, accompanied by Bouterse's identifying details, serves as a global alert urging law enforcement authorities to locate and detain him pending extradition or similar legal measures.

In January, the Public Prosecution Service (OM) said that it was in the process of issuing an international arrest warrant for the former president after he failed for a second time to report to a local prison.

## Antigua and Barbuda set to broaden horizons in cruise and yachting sector

In a bid to bolster its prominence in the cruise and yachting sector, Antigua and Barbuda have set their sights on expanding their capacity.

The decision, endorsed by the government on Wednesday, entails the development of the northern precinct of Rat Island, earmarked as an extension of the existing cruise port.

Although the precise financial outlay for this endeavor remains undisclosed, a note emanating from the cabinet meeting underscored the anticipation of a substantial return on investment, likely to substantiate the expenditure.

Once realized, the extended port is poised to accommodate the berthing needs of yachts and petite cruise vessels, augmenting the region's allure for maritime enthusiasts.

Speaking at a post-cabinet media briefing, Information Minister Melford Nicholas expounded on the multifaceted benefits of the project.

He elucidated that beyond fortifying the maritime infrastructure, the envisaged extension is poised to catalyze economic spin-offs.

Nicholas emphasized the symbiotic relationship between infrastructure development and economic prosperity, envisioning a surge in entrepreneurial endeavors catering to both residents and tourists.

In response to inquiries concerning the funding mechanism, Minister Nicholas remained circumspect, refraining from direct response.

However, he delineated the government's overarching strategy of stim-



#### Cruise ships at the port of St John's

ulating economic vibrancy through the impending scramble for land acquisition.

Additionally, he shed light on the status of the Fort James project, indicating a forthcoming review to ascertain its viability.

Regardless of the project's fate, Nicholas underscored the pivotal role of Fort James as a linchpin for maximizing the dividends of cruise tourism.

Looking beyond the maritime domain, the government unveiled plans to undertake dredging operations in Crabbs and the northern corridor.

This strategic initiative aims to accommodate larger vessels ferrying essential construction materials, particularly cement, to satiate the burgeoning demands of the construction

## JA jumps minimum wage to \$15,000/week

In a significant move, Jamaica's national minimum wage is set to see a 15 per cent increase, escalating from \$13,000 to \$15,000 for a standard 40hour work week.

This change, scheduled to take effect on June 1, 2024, marks an uplift in the earnings of the lowest-paid work-

The announcement came from Prime Minister Andrew Holness, culminating his extensive Budget Debate presentation in the House of Represen-

Holness shared the news, emphasizing the government's commitment to enhancing the financial well-being of its citizens.

In addition to the general wage increase, industrial security guards are set to receive a wage adjustment, with their minimum earnings also rising to \$15,000 per week starting June 1.

This adjustment is part of the government's initiative to standardize the national minimum wage, eliminating disparities between different sectors.

A reflection on past improvements



The forthcoming increase builds on a substantial adjustment made the previous year when the National Minimum Wage jumped by 44 per cent from \$9,000 to \$13,000 per week—the most significant hike in two decades.

proactive interventions.

Asserting the government's proac-

tive role in fostering investment oppor-

tunities, Nicholas underscored the

imperative of leveraging idle land as-

sets to invigorate economic activities.

commercial space following the port

expansion, Minister Nicholas hinted at

Foreseeing a surge in demand for

Similarly, wages for industrial security guards were increased from

\$10,500 to \$14,000.

These adjustments align with the government's strategy to support its workforce amid rising living costs.

Prime Minister Holness acknowledged the thoughtful consideration given to this decision, highlighting the government's intention to support the

working class and the economically vulnerable in keeping pace with inflation. This move comes in response to feedback received during the Local Government Election campaign, where the struggles of the working poor were brought to the forefront, indicating a pressing need for financial relief.

## UK public calls for formal apology over transatlantic slavery- research

In a recent research conducted by The Repair Campaign, findings reveal a substantial demand among UK citizens for formal apologies and reparations for the Caribbean nations and descendants of enslaved people affected by transatlantic chattel slavery.

The survey, conducted across England, Scotland, and Wales in February 2024, sheds light on the growing awareness and support for reparatory justice initiatives.

According to The Repair Campaign's research, three in five individuals in the UK advocate for a formal apology, with more than half asserting that it should originate from either the UK Government or organizations historically linked to profiting from Caribbean slavery.

Moreover, the survey indicates that a significant portion—four in ten respondents—believe that financial compensation should be provided to Caribbean nations as a means of redressing the enduring impacts of slavery and colonialism.

Denis O'Brien, the driving force behind The Repair Campaign, emphasizes the pivotal role of an apology in addressing historical injustices.

O'Brien underscores the culmination of years of advocacy efforts, heralding the current debates surrounding reparations as a triumph. He stresses the necessity for acknowledgment from the Government and Monarchy, highlighting the economic foundations of the UK's wealth rooted in centuries of slavery.

Laura Trevelyan, trustee of the



BBC anchor Laura Trevelyan is commending the findings on repatriations

Trevelyan Grenada Reparations Fund and Honorary Associate Fellow at the PJ Patterson Institute, commends the survey's findings as a significant step forward in the reparatory justice movement.

She underscores the urgency of the next decade in securing justice for descendants of enslaved Africans, urging intensified efforts to confront the legacies of slavery.

Professor Verene Shepherd, director of the Centre for Reparation Research (CRR) at The University of the West Indies, echoes the sentiments of

the survey findings, emphasizing the imperative for accountability from former colonial powers.

She urges unambiguous apologies and the implementation of comprehensive reparations plans, citing the Caricom Ten Point Plan as a framework for addressing historical wrongs.

March 25, 2024, observed as the UN International Day to commemorate victims of transatlantic trafficking and chattel enslavement, the CRR underscores the urgency for substantive action.

Professor Shepherd implores

Britain and other colonial powers to confront their historical roles, issuing unequivocal apologies and committing to restitution as outlined in the Caricom Ten Point Plan.

The survey, commissioned by The Repair Campaign and conducted by Walnut Omnibus, encompassed a nationally representative sample of 2016 adults across Great Britain between February 16-19, 2024.

Meanwhile, Barbados echoes loudly, championing compensation for the haunting legacy of slavery. An ABC article has noted that the past decade has witnessed a shift from sidelined discussions to central dialogue, with Barbados emerging as a pivotal force in this narrative.

In the neon days of the early 90s, young lawyer David Comissiong championed the cause for reparations. Then labeled a "dreamer", today he sits as the deputy chair of Barbados' national task force on reparations.

Established in 2012, this task force strives to shape the government's stance on reparations and rally public momentum. It operates under the keen eye of Prime Minister Mia Mottley, herself an avid proponent of the cause on a global scale.

Barbados is not alone. Nations like Jamaica, Haiti, Belize, Guyana, and the Bahamas have followed suit, establishing their respective task forces.

In a collaborative effort in 2013, these Caribbean nations unveiled a regional commission to engage European countries in a reparations dialogue.

### New JA Highway to be named for Bogle

Jamaica's Prime Minister, Andrew Holness, has announced that upon the completion of the section of the Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project (SCHIP) leading to Morant Bay, the roadway will be officially named 'The Right Excellent Paul Bogle Highway'.

Holness said the decision is "in honor of our National Hero who gave his life in the struggle against oppression and injustice in Jamaica".

In 1865, Paul Bogle led a group of hundreds of Black men and women armed with sticks and machetes on a march to the Morant Bay Court House. Their grievances included poverty, lack of voting rights, and high poll taxes. The tension had escalated following a clash between civilians and policemen at the court house days earlier, sparking what became known as the Morant Bay Rebellion.

Last year, the government designated October 11, the day the rebellion commenced, as Paul Bogle Day.

Prime Minister Holness expressed his vision for St. Thomas to be recog-



Paul Bogle is a Jamaican National Hero

nized as the "Renaissance Parish."

"When the chapter in our history

is written about St Thomas, it will show that this Administration has done the most for the people of St. Thomas. We have brought roads, water, jobs, industries, and development to what is now the 'Renaissance Parish'," he said.

The Harbour View to Yallahs Bridge leg of the SCHIP was officially opened in February.

The Harbour View to Yallahs Bridge segment of the SCHIP was inaugurated in February, reducing travel time between Kingston and St. Thomas from 45 to 15 minutes over its 17.4kilometer stretch.

Additionally, the project included the installation of approximately 28 kilometers of water lines, 350 meters of sewer lines, and 17.8 meters of fiberoptic ducts, benefiting 348 properties.

"The government is now focused on completing the Yallahs Bridge to Port Antonio and the Morant Bay to Cedar Valley legs of the highway, which will open up the corridor with water, broadband, and sewer lines in some areas," Prime Minister Holness said.

## **Guyana crushes Windwards in St** Kitts as women clash in T20 Blaze

Mandy Mangru struck an unbeaten fifty while West Indies teammate Kaysia Schultz snatched a five-wicket haul as Guyana crushed Windward Islands by 69 runs to wrap up their Women's T20 Blaze campaign in style in St Kitts on

Choosing to bat first at Warner Park, Guyana gathered 131 for four off 20 overs with the 24-year-old Mangru top-scoring with 51 not out off 50 balls with five fours, and captain Shemaine Campbelle stroking 47 from 43 balls with seven fours.

The pair posted 86 for the third wicket, a stand which pulled Guyana around from 30 for two at the start of the sixth over, after Shabika Gajnabi (5) and Cherry-Ann Fraser (14) perished

Seamer Pearl Etienne, 41, returned to the attack to break the stand when she trapped Campbelle lbw on the back foot at the start or the penultimate over.

In reply, Windwards were wrecked by left-arm spinner Shultz, the 26-yearold claiming five for 14 from her four overs to send the run chase crashing to 62 all out in the 16th over.

She was supported by off-spinner Plaffianna Millington (2-7) and leg-spinner Nyia Latchman (2-12) who both claimed two wickets apiece.

Zaida James top-scored with 21 from 27 balls but she was the only Windward Islands batsman to pass 20 and only one of two to pass double figures.

The 19-year-old left-hander staged the best stand of the innings -20 for the fourth wicket with Kimone Homer (11).

The defeat was Windwards' fourth of the competition.

Meanwhile, Jamaica remained unbeaten after two rounds of the T20 Blaze tournament, defeating Guyana by 5 wickets in their second match.

Batting first, Guyana were limited to 107/7 from their 20 overs, thanks to very economical bowling from the Jamaicans. Mandy Mangru who found form in their final CG United Women's Super50 Cup match, carried it forward in this game, top scoring with 36. Captain Shemaine Campbelle added 33. Jamaica's captain Stafanie Taylor picked up 2/12 and Chinelle Henry 2/22.

Rashada Williams once again led the run-chase for Jamaica, knocking 42 from 55 deliveries while Taylor returned with the bat to add 33 from 21, as Jamaica reached their target to finish on 108/5 from 18.1 overs.





The Co-operative Republic of Guyana

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- 3. A complete set of the bidding documents (soft copy), in English, may be purchased by interested bidders at address (1) below upon payment of a non-refundable fee of \$3,000.00. The method of payment will be cash, or by cheque payable to the Deeds & Commercial Registries Authority. All bidders should submit I (one) original hardcopy and two electronic copies (flash drive only) with an exact PDF version of the hardcopy to Address
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Guyana.

Address (1) - Purchase and Inspection of Address (2) - Submission and Opening of Bids:

The Chairman,

National Procurement and Tender

Administration Board,

Ministry of Finance,

Main & Urquhart Streets, Georgetown,



#### The Co-operative Republic of Guyana DEEDS AND COMMERCIAL REGISTRIES AUTHORITY

#### INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

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### Canada boots T&T out of Copa America

SOCA Warriors star striker Levi Garcia took responsibility for the team's disappointing 2-0 loss against Canada in the Copa America play-in game in Frisco, Texas, on Saturday.

TT conceded two second-half goals (61st and 90th+1) as they failed in their final chance to qualify for the 2024 Copa America. Garcia has been in prolific form with his club, AEK Athens, in Greece, bagging 13 goals to put his team top of the playoff standings. However, he was unable to replicate his club form on Saturday.

TT coach Angus Eve employed a defensive strategy to start, with Garcia leading the line with some support from midfielder Ajani Fortune. Garcia had two quality chances to score, one in each half, but failed to ripple the net.

The chance in the first half was a golden opportunity to give TT the lead from a counter in the 18th.

After a neat give-and-go, Garcia was played through on goal, but he struck his left-footed shot just wide of the target with just the goalie to beat.

The second chance, with TT trailing 1-0 in the 85th, came when Garcia combined with substitute Real Gill and was slipped through on goal, but he failed to get power or direction on the shot, which was easily saved by



Levi Garcia, centre, makes a play with Canada's Joel Waterman

Canada goalie Maxime Crepeau.

TT had another good chance to take the lead in the first half when left back Andre Raymond pinched the ball off a Canada player and raced into the box, but his left footer also flashed wide. Garcia acknowledged that he was not clinical in front of goal.

Speaking to TT Football Association media, he said, "I came here to deliver and unfortunately, I was not that sharp today. I took responsibility for those chances and I took responsibility for lots of things because I know what the team expects from me. Hopefully, I

can also learn from these mistakes and move forward."

Any criticism he receives, Garcia said he is willing to accept. "I will take any amount of pressure that I will receive after this game, but what I can say is that I will learn from it and continue to move forward."

The striker thanked his teammates for their spirit. "Before the game all I asked the guys was to compete and fight. I am really proud of the guys. Unfortunately, the game did not go our way and we have a lot to learn and hopefully in the future we will learn

from our mistakes."

Garcia said the loss will be on his mind for a long time. "This one is going to hurt for a while. I came here just recovering from injury and I made a lot of sacrifices and I came here and I tried my best. I gave everything for the team, but my best was not enough today. The boys' best was not enough today, but for sure we are going to learn from this and move forward, but this one is going to hurt for a while."

He asked the fans to not give up on the Soca Warriors. "We are really working hard and we really want them to stay behind us. That 12th man is so important. We have been longing for this type of support for years and what we have been receiving is amazing, and hopefully it could continue and that type of energy could stay positive."

Soca Warriors head coach Angus Eve said the plan to sit back and counter worked. He was happy with the effort his players showed. "I thought for the most part the game plan went well," Eve said. "We created some really good chances...I think we acquitted ourselves well and we had some really good chances, we could have scored first. It maybe would have settled us down, but I thought all in all it was a great performance."



