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Barbadian is new CTO chairman
Story Inside

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Global Guyanese statesman to be honoured with national funeral on September 14

Remembering Sir Shridath

By Sir Ronald Sanders

In the 1970s, as newly independent nations in the Caribbean, Africa, and the Pacific sought to shape their economic futures, the world they confronted was still very much dominated by their former colonial powers in Europe, and the global reach of the United States. These nations, emerging from centuries of colonial exploitation, faced immense challenges as they tried to secure a fair place in the international economic order. However, they found champions in leaders like Sir Shridath "Sonny" Ramphal, whose recent passing reminds us of a critical chapter in the fight for economic justice, and P.J. Patterson, a stalwart in that same battle.

Ramphal, a man of immense skill, courage, and vision, along with Patterson, boldly took on the powerful countries of the European Union (EU) in an effort to wrestle economic fairness for developing nations. Their efforts culminated in one of the most significant

achievements of that era – the Lome Convention, the first formal agreement between the EU and its former colonies that promised aid, trade, and development. This was no easy task, and the road to Lome required formidable organizing and diplomacy.

Before Ramphal and Patterson could sit at the negotiating table with the EU, they needed a united front, something that had eluded many developing nations up until that point. It was in 1972, on the margins of a meeting of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned countries in Guyana, that Sir Shridath conceived a groundbreaking idea – a coalition of developing countries across Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific that could confront the economic giant of Europe together. His concept was not only ambitious but revolutionary, recognizing that small states negotiating individually with Europe would always be outmatched, but unified, they could become a formidable force.

The result was the creation of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Group – a diplomatic and economic alliance aimed at securing fair trade deals with Europe. Ramphal became the Group's spokesman on sugar, while P.J. Patterson took on the role of



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spokesman on bananas – two vital exports for many of these nations. Supported by a team of sharp-minded technicians like Dr Alister McIntyre, they stood united against the EU, backed by the collective strength of the ACP. The power of this unity was undeniable.


Continued on Page 9

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Barbados Tourism Minister elected new chairman of Caribbean Tourism

The Honorable Ian Gooding-Edghill, Minister of Tourism and International Transport for Barbados, has been elected as the new Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO). The election took place during the CTO's Annual General Meeting, held in the Cayman Islands on September 3, 2024.

Minister Gooding-Edghill's election marks a significant moment for Barbados and the wider Caribbean tourism sector. As Chairman, he will lead the CTO's Council of Ministers and Commissioners of Tourism for the next two years, guiding the organization's strategic efforts to enhance and promote tourism across the region.

In addition to Gooding-Edghill's appointment, CEO of the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc., Andrea Franklin, assumes the role of Chair of the Board of Directors of the CTO. Speaking on the appointment, Franklin stated that "I am looking forward to working with my fellow directors across the region to enhance strategies for marketing the region collectively, and addressing the challenges that the Caribbean faces as it relates to climate resilience, improved airlift capacity, and overall product development."



President Dr. Mohammed Irfaan Ali hosted a dinner in honour of the delegates attending the 46th Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. In the picture is Ms Beverly Gibbons in the black and white dress; Mr. Speaker to her right; President Ali in the center and Senator Charles Morris at the end.

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Guyana advances crucial discussions with U.S. partners

DURING a four-day visit to the United States of America (USA), Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and Public Service Dr. Ashni Singh met and held discussions with several high-level officials, as Guyana and the U.S. continue to strengthen their economic and bilateral ties.

The two countries have been partnering in many areas, such as economic growth, trade and development, including enhanced security. The U.S. EXIM Bank has also been partnering with Guyana on its major gas-to-energy project, which the Government of Guyana has been working aggressively to bring on stream. When completed, this project will improve reliability, and significantly reduce the cost of electricity in the country; something that is in high demand due to business, infrastructure, investment and housing expansion. It will also unlock the potential of the manufacturing sector in one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

During his visit to the U.S., Dr. Singh, accompanied by Guyana's Ambassador to the U.S. Samuel Hinds, met with the Deputy Assistant Secretary, United States (US) Department of Treasury Michael Kaplan, in Washington DC.

While there, he updated Mr. Kaplan on recent economic developments and prospects in Guyana, and explored opportunities for the two countries to collaborate on matters of shared interest. He also reiterated the Government of Guyana's commitment to maintaining a favourable macroeconomic environment and strong institutional framework, which will facilitate increased opportunities for U.S. companies to do business in Guyana.

Later, the Senior Minister met with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Deputy Administrator for Policy and

Programming, Isobel Coleman in Washington DC. At that meeting, Dr. Singh alluded to Guyana's overall economic growth of 49.7 per cent, and the non-oil growth of 12.6 per cent in the first half of 2024, representing the fourth successive year of expansion in the non-oil economy at the half-year.

He further outlined the efforts being made by the government to ensure that this sustained strong economic growth redounds to the benefit of all Guyanese. The two teams also explored several avenues for further collaboration, going forward.

Dr. Singh also met with the United States Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, Mr. Jose W. Fernandez, and Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Energy Resources, Mr. Geoffrey R. Pyatt, at the State Department in Washington DC, where discussions focused on a number of avenues for closer cooperation in advancing the agenda for economic growth, and improving the lives of the Guyanese people, including in the areas of energy security, human capital development, and pandemic preparedness in the context of the Economic and Health Dialogue of the Americas.

Dr. Singh further reiterated that the Government of Guyana places the highest level of importance on the special relationship shared with the U.S., as he used the opportunity to restate appreciation, on behalf of President Dr. Irfaan Ali, and the Government and People of Guyana, of the U.S.'s strong support for the restoration of democracy in 1992, and its preservation during the 2020 General and Regional Elections.

He also thanked the U.S. for unequivocally supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana, in terms of the Guyana/Venezuela border controversy.

The Senior Minister later met with



Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Mr. Jose W. Fernandez with Finance Minister Dr. Ashni Singh

the Assistant United States Trade Representative for the Western Hemisphere, Mr. Daniel Watson, in Washington DC., where discussions centered on enhancing the trade and investment partnership between the U.S. and Guyana, with him emphasising that the U.S. continues to be one of Guyana's most significant trading partners, and reiterated Government commitment to maintaining a strong institutional environment, and a favourable macroeconomic environment conducive to US companies doing business in Guyana.

Then, as Guyana makes further steps into commencing its major gas-to-energy project, Dr. Singh met with the Senior Advisor to the President and Chair, Mr. Larry T. Decker, and other senior and technical officials of the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of the United States in Washington DC. They discussed the bank's support towards the transformational project, which, when completed, is expected to significantly reduce electricity costs, increase the competitiveness of other industries,

and reduce the nation's reliance on heavy fossil fuels. During that high-level meeting, Dr. Singh also expressed appreciation to the Bank for their continued support of Guyana, and reiterated that the government values greatly, its relationship with the Bank.

The meetings between Dr. Singh and U.S. officials also included a meeting with the Executive President of the CAF (Corporacion Andina de Fomento Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean), Mr. Sergio Diaz-Granados. During this meeting, the minister explained that the government is open to partnership with CAF, and would like to see the bank play a role in Guyana's exciting transformation currently underway. The two sides also explored ways in which the financial institution can partner with the government to ensure that the current aggressive infrastructure build-out is financed optimally, and that critical investments are made toward further boosting the economy and diversifying a number of critical sectors in the country.



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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

Remembering Sir Shridath

It is only fitting that the Irfaan Ali government of Guyana has chosen to honour Sir Shridath "Sonny" Ramphal with a state funeral this coming weekend.

Sir Shridath was a former Commonwealth Secretary General, the first and only Guyanese to hold that position which is second only to the King of England in terms of Commonwealth affairs.

Sonny Ramphal died on August 30 after a long, distinguished career in foreign service. Twenty-five of these years (1975 - 1990) were spent as Commonwealth Secretary General, but he also served, before, as Foreign Minister of Guyana as well as the Attorney General of the short-lived West Indies Federation.

Sir Shridath, who put Guyana on the world map, was not always liked by his fellow Guyanese on one side of the political divide. Many believed he was a pawn of former Guyanese dictator

Forbes Burnham, and indeed, accused the top-ranking Guyanese diplomat of not using his wide influence to do more to stop the oppression of Guyanese Indians by the Burnham regime.

Whether these accusations were grounded in truth or not, it does not dim the fact that it was Sir Shridath who put Guyana on the world stage.

That a young man from the countryside in a small Sotuh American nation, whose immediate ancestors were indentured labourers, could rise to the position of Commonwealth Secretary General was testament to the quality of education in the former English colony; that he was able to hold court with the Queen of England and other Heads of State with pomp and ease attested to the reality that Guyana, then virtually unknown in international circles, could produce educated citizens who could hold their own on a world stage.

It is because Sir Shridath cleared

this path that others were able to follow. People like Walter Rodney started to be taken seriously internationally for their intellectual discourse; Martin Carter found international acceptance as a poet; and even the late Dave Martins discovered doors opening for him and his style of music, all because Sir Shridath opened the door to Guyana. It was no longer a place that nobody knew. The world became very aware of the country and its abundance of talent in every sphere.

Indeed, even today, actors like Letitia Wright could find a place on the world's stage in one of the biggest movies ever made, Black Panther, not by hiding her heritage but by embracing it.

Sir Shridath did for Guyana what VS Naipaul and CLR James did for Trinidad and Tobago and what Sir Gary Sobers did for Barbados and Bob Marley for Jamaica. Arguably, he was far more intellectually accomplished than any of

his Caribbean compatriots.

In the end, Sir Shridath will be remembered not only for his contributions to the development of Guyana, but for his outstanding work in other countries, including leading the fight in the Commonwealth against apartheid in South Africa, even going up against the Iron Lady herself, Margaret Thatcher in England, at the time, leaving her in a highly vulnerable position on the issue of economic sanctions against South Africa because of its racist policies.

But Sonny never backed down. And that's why he will be remembered for his achievements in the international sphere.

We applaud the Ali government for looking past the Burnham issue that surrounded Ramphal for much of his career, and acknowledging the wider contributions he made to his homeland, by giving him a national funeral on September 14.

RIP, Sir Shridath.

The Passing of Sir Shridath

By Donald Ramotar

The news of the passing of Sir Shridath Ramphal on August 30, is cause for some reflection. He was an excellent diplomat and led the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with distinction, even though much of the time was to defend and obscure the excesses and the destruction that was caused by the PNC dictatorship in Guyana.

At the pinnacle of this career, he became the Secretary General of the Commonwealth. In that position he did nothing to enhance democracy in Guyana, never a word of condemnation of the massive rigging of elections nor the terrible violation of Human Rights. Not a word of the assassination of Walter Rodney and others.

However, he did play a leading and positive role in the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa. He stood out in that role while serving as the Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

It was this advocacy that contributed greatly to the isolation of the white racist regime in South Africa. Caribbean countries did not ever recog-

nise the racist regime, and we took a leading part internationally in bring about its isolation. The world progressive forces at that time led and supported by the Soviet Union, the Eastern European Socialist countries, especially the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and China managed to have the South African regime suspended from the United Nations. Sir Shridath was shoulder to shoulder with the anti-apartheid forces.

Today the world is facing another similar but worse situation. Reference is being made here to the grave, inhumane situation confronting the Palestinian people in the Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem. The destruction in the Gaza is now being extended to the West Bank, in Jenin where homes are being bulldozed and people are being shot randomly.

Every anti-apartheid fighter from South Africa regard what is taking place in Palestine as far worse than anything that ever happened in apartheid South Africa. What is taking place there is really apartheid on steroids. Thousands of innocent babies, children, young women

and the aged are among the murdered by the Israeli regime.

The Western supporters of Israel are calling this a war, but the Palestinians do not have an army, not a single tank, nor a single armoured vehicle. The Israeli regime, however, has one of the strongest armies in the world. Moreover, it has access to the most powerful country in the world. They can get on demand, all the bombs they need and any modern weapon in existence. The use of the term "war" is used to deliberately cover up what is really happening, a massacre, a genocide.

Since October 7, 2023, the United States has sent five hundred transport planes (500) and one hundred and seven (107) ships full with bombs and other military hardware to Israel. Israel itself has acknowledge this, it said that since October 7, it received more than 50,000 tons of armament and military equipment from the U.S alone. Many European Union countries have supplied considerable military hardware to the Fascist, Apartheid Israeli regime as well. Ironically Germany comes second only to the U.S in the provision of weapons

to kill innocent civilians.

These amounts are apart from the almost four billion dollars per year of military equipment that the U.S gives to Israel.

In remembering Sir Shridath Ramphal's role during the difficult times in South Africa, the Caribbean leaders of today should take up the cause of the Palestinian people and break diplomatic relations with Israel. We must lobby other countries and regions to have Israel expelled from the United Nations. That regime has no right to be amongst civilised countries.

This issue is the worst humanitarian disaster since the last World War. Our Humanity is on trial in Palestine.

Uttering words of condemnation is not enough. Caricom leaders must take a strong position and immediately sever relations with the Israeli Regime!

They must now begin advocating for suspension of Israel from the United Nations as they did when South Africa was ruled by a racist regime!

Save our humanity now.

Donald Ramotar is a former President of Guyana



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Men get 6½-year sentences for roles in border blockade at Coutts

From the CBC:

One of two men sentenced Monday to 6½ years for firearms violations and mischief at the border blockade at Coutts, Alta., says the time he has already spent behind bars has changed him and his "solemn weapon" is now love.

"Stay strong, live free, spread love — not war," Anthony Olienick, reading from a prepared statement, told a Court of King's Bench judge before sentencing.

"I've gained a stronger understanding into what divine destiny awaits me," he added.

"I will continue to help others spreading truth, happiness and joy. Unifying people together by using love as my solemn weapon."

His co-accused, Chris Carbert, declined to speak before Justice David Labrenz delivered his sentencing decision.

Neither man is to serve their full sentence, as the judge gave them nearly four years credit for time they have spent in custody since their arrests in February 2022.

Olienick showed no emotion while Carbert appeared glum and folded his arms as the sentences were handed down.

The blockade tied up traffic at the Canada-U.S. border crossing for two weeks in early 2022. It was among several nationwide protests against COVID-19 rules and vaccine mandates, which had polarized public opinion.

Lawyer for Coutts protester suggests jury rushed to judgment before long weekend

The lingering polarity was evident Monday. A disapproving murmur from supporters of the two protesters could be heard in the courtroom as the sentence was read out. The judge had earlier warned that no outbursts would be tolerated.

"Bye Chris. Bye Tony. Keep your heads up," said one man as Carbert and Olienick were led out of the prisoner's dock.

Last month, a jury found the pair

guilty of mischief over \$5,000 and possession of a weapon dangerous to the public peace. Olienick was also convicted of possessing a pipe bomb.

They were found not guilty of the most serious charge they faced — conspiracy to murder police officers at the blockade.

The men were arrested after RCMP found guns, ammunition and body armour in trailers near the blockade. The remaining protesters then peacefully dispersed.

The trial heard Olienick and Carbert believed they were taking a necessary stand against potential tyranny and injustice.

While the two men believed their cause just, the judge said, they can't be allowed to take the law into their own hands.

"Both armed themselves for the purpose of using those weapons against police," said Labrenz.

"Fortunately, neither man decided the timing was right for a surprise attack."

He added there was a credible threat to police and the public.

Olienick was given six years for possession for the firearms conviction, a concurrent six-month sentence for mischief and an additional six months for possession of a pipe bomb.

Carbert was given 6½ years for the firearms offence and a concurrent six-month term for mischief.

Both were given a lifetime firearms prohibition and ordered to provide DNA.

The Crown had argued the men should serve nine years, citing the potential of violence against police.

Defence lawyers said the time the men had already served in custody was sufficient punishment. Outside court, they said they were disappointed and planned to appeal the sentences and the firearms convictions.

"I think there was a lot of room for the sentence to be lower, and I think it should have been lower," said Carbert's lawyer, Katherin Beyak.

"The hope was he would be going home today, and obviously that's not happening."

Earlier this year, two other protesters charged with conspiracy to commit murder at the blockade pleaded guilty to lesser charges.

Christopher Lysak was sentenced to three years for possession of a restricted firearm in an unauthorized place. Jerry Morin was sentenced to 3 1/2 years for conspiracy to traffic firearms.

Those sentences amounted to time the men had already served.



The border blockage tied up traffic for days



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The Economy & Finance | JB's Insight

Analysis: Is Guyana's non-oil economy shrinking?



Joel Bhagwandin

The non-oil economy has expanded by 34.5% during the period 2012-2023. In nominal terms, the non-oil economy has increased from \$830 billion in 2012, to \$1.267 trillion by the end of 2023. Although the share of the oil economy's GDP has grown larger than the non-oil economy; this does not mean that the non-oil economy is shrinking or contracting in size or output, a notion that the empirical evidence herein has disproven.

One of the minority political parties, namely, ANUG (A New and United Guyana), contends that the non-oil sectors have declined, and that this decline signals the presence of the "Dutch Disease".

Discussion and Analysis

The assertion by ANUG in relation to the "Dutch disease" exposes the party's ineptitude in their ability to comprehend and apply basic economic concepts. What was described as the Dutch disease is not the Dutch disease. The Dutch disease has to do with the change in relative prices, viz-à-viz, any sharp appreciation of the exchange rate, which would cause imports to be far cheaper, and exports more expensive, thus internationally uncompetitive. Effectively, the Dutch disease would destroy the manufacturing / export sectors at the expense of the import sectors.

With respect to the notion that the non-oil economy is shrinking rel-

ative to the oil economy, this outcome cannot be determined by merely looking at a half-year report or the performance of a single year relative to the previous year. In order to properly determine whether such an eventuality has merit or not, one has to always analyze a time series of dataset, spanning a minimum of ten years. Because there is always a time lag between the implementation of economic policies and the outcome or impact thereof. And similarly, there is a time lag between the occurrence of uncontrollable eventualities and externalities (exogenous and endoge-

nous factors) and the impact thereof as well.

Having said that, let's look at a time series of data for the period 2012-2023 (11 years), to ascertain whether the non-oil economy has been shrinking or not.

GDP measures the value of aggregate output (production) in an economy in a specific time frame (usually a fiscal year). In the oil sector, oil production went from 120k barrels per day to over 600k per day in less than four years (reflecting an increase of >400%). This explains why the oil economy accounts for the largest share of GDP at this time. As such, it would be prudent to look at the non-oil economy separately to have a broader perspective and a better appreciation on the structure, size, and growth of the economy across all the sectors, especially the non-oil economy relative to the oil economy.

To this end, the charts below illustrate that all of the non-oil sectors: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; Mining and Quarrying (excluding crude oil); Manufacturing; Construction and the Services sectors have ex-

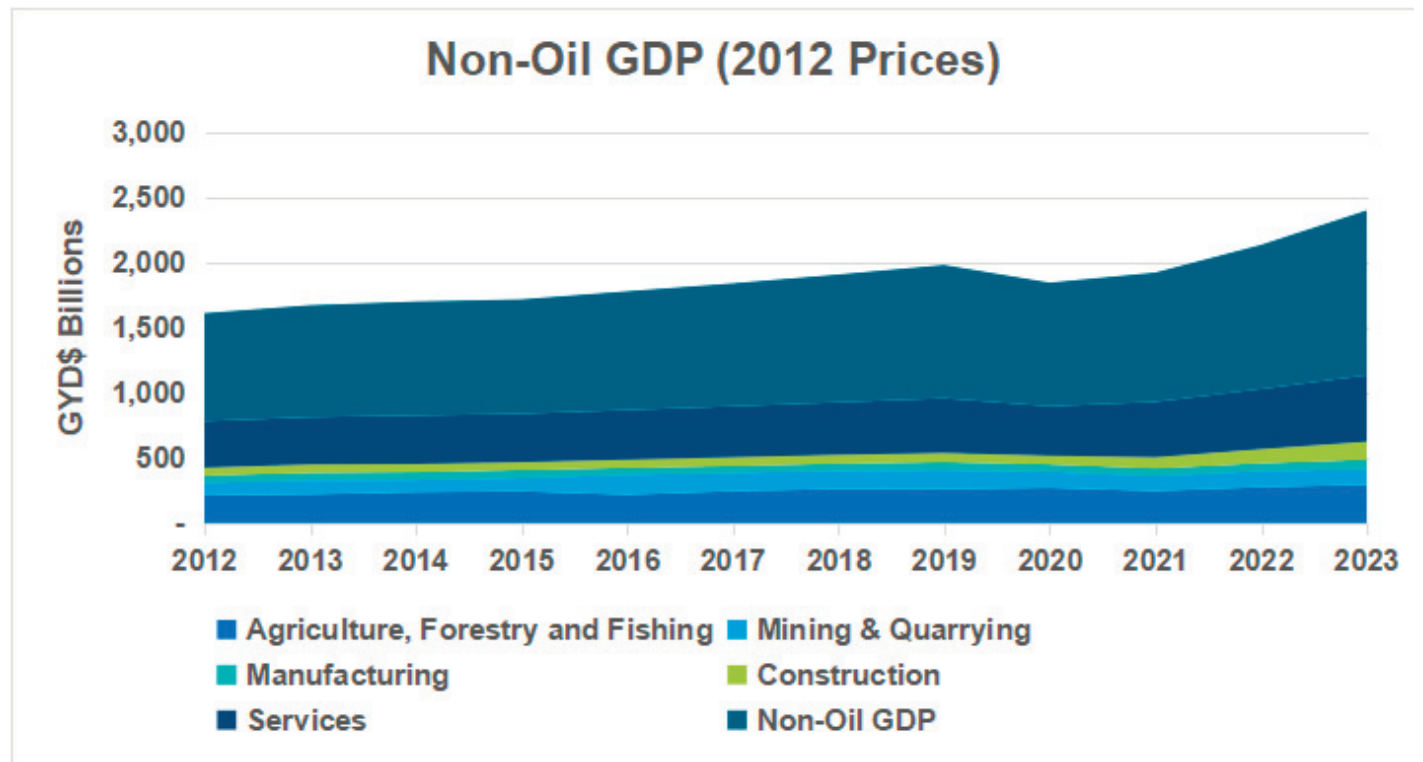
panded by 28%, 16%, 29%, 55%, and 30% respectively.

Overall, the non-oil economy has expanded by 34.5% during the period 2012-2023. In nominal terms, the non-oil economy has increased from \$830 billion in 2012, to \$1.267 trillion by the end of 2023.

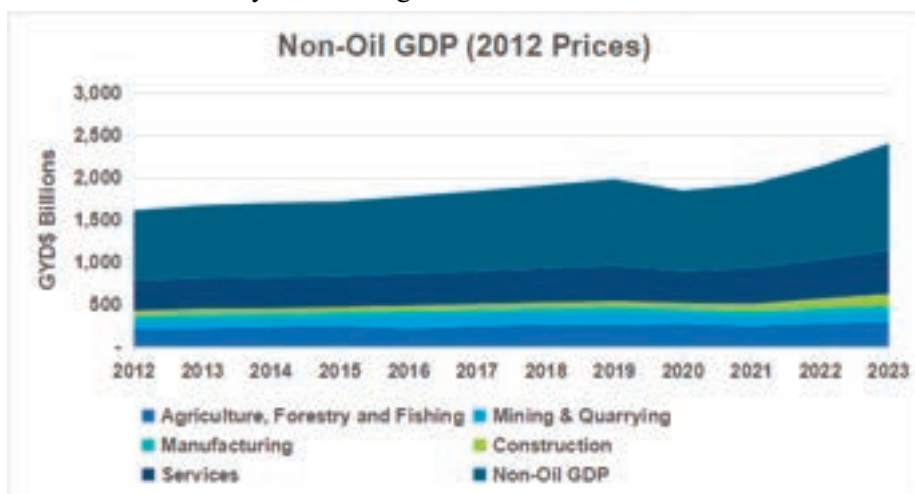
Evidently, it would be incorrect to say that the non-oil economy has been shrinking relative to the oil economy.

One has to also be mindful that oil production will peak by 2027-30. And, thereafter, the GDP growth rate will revert to the lower double- and single-digit growth rates. Cognizant of this reality, the Government is investing in other non-oil sectors, whose share of GDP will eventually increase when oil production will have plateaued.

In the final analysis, although the share of the oil economy's GDP has grown larger than the non-oil economy; this does not mean that the non-oil economy is shrinking or contracting in size or output, a notion that the empirical evidence has disproven.



Source: Author's based on Bank of Guyana Data



Source: Author's based on Bank of Guyana Data



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Queen Elizabeth II in 2009 at Buckingham Palace, with, from left: Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Kamalesh Sharma and Sir Shridath Ramphal

Remembering Sir Shridath Ramphal

Continued from Page 1

For the first time, developing nations, once mere pawns in global economic negotiations, had a seat at the table with the might of a bloc behind them.

But unity, as history so often shows, is as fragile as it could be threatening. While the ACP's efforts led to the landmark Lome Conventions, and later the Cotonou Agreement, they also unsettled the powerful European nations. The solidarity among developing countries threatened the EU's ability to dictate terms, and in the years following the Lome Conventions, the cracks began to show. Europe, returning to one of its oldest strategies, sought to divide the ACP. African nations, the largest group within the ACP, were persuaded to break away from joint negotiations. By the time the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) were on the table in the year 2000, Africa had been splintered into three separate negotiating units, weakening the ACP's collective bargaining power.

This fragmentation was Europe's victory. The unity that once empowered the ACP had been successfully eroded, and as a result, the EPAs – agreements that were supposed to benefit developing nations – left the ACP countries negotiating alone, each country or sub-region

now isolated and outmatched. The “divide and rule” technique, once used to subjugate colonies, had once again found success in a new form of economic imperialism.

The EPAs, which Caribbean countries signed in 2008, were nothing short of a “shotgun arrangement.” Under the guise of partnership, ACP nations found themselves signing agreements that returned them to the conditionalities, and terms dictated by the EU. ACP states gave far more than they got in return, and with no collective voice, they faced the behemoth of the EU alone.

Ramphal's fight for justice did not end with the ACP. In 1975, he assumed the role of secretary-general of the Commonwealth, a position he would hold for 15 years. When he took the helm, the Commonwealth was still very much a “British” institution, serving primarily the interests of the UK government, including the preservation of white minority rule in Southern Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe) and apartheid South Africa. Ramphal brought with him the same determination that had guided his efforts for developing countries – now expanded to the global stage.

Through his leadership, the Commonwealth Secretariat became an engine for advancing equity and justice for developing states. Ramphal harnessed the power of Expert Groups to produce

meticulously researched reports that challenged the policies of global institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and WTO. These reports not only provided developing countries with evidence-based arguments but also positioned Ramphal as an international voice for the poor and underdeveloped.

Ramphal's influence went beyond economic policy. Defying the British government and its Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, Ramphal used his legal and diplomatic acumen to support African leaders in their negotiations for independence of Southern Rhodesia. His insistence on “one man, one vote” became a cornerstone of Southern Rhodesia's eventual independence as Zimbabwe.

In the fight against apartheid, Ramphal once again marshalled his diplomatic skill to build alliances across the Commonwealth. He forged a coalition between leaders of African frontline states, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, with leaders from outside Africa, such as Bob Hawke of Australia, Brian Mulroney of Canada, Rajiv Gandhi of India, and Lynden Pindling of The Bahamas. This alliance helped swing Commonwealth sentiment behind accelerated action to end apartheid in South Africa and to free Nelson Mandela from prison.

At the conclusion of his tenure as Commonwealth Secretary-General, Ramphal's work was far from over. He turned his attention to his beloved Caribbean, spearheading initiatives aimed at strengthening the region through deeper economic interaction and political cooperation. The central theme of his efforts remained the same – unity. For Ramphal, unity was not only the foundation of the Caribbean's strength but also the key to its rightful standing in the world. His work continued to be supported by P.J. Patterson and Alister McIntyre, his longtime collaborators and fellow warriors in the struggle for Caribbean advancement.

Now, as Ramphal and McIntyre have passed on, P.J. Patterson stands as the last surviving member of this illustrious trio. The Caribbean owes these giants an incalculable debt, but more than anything else, it owes itself the obligation to remain faithful to the courage, vision, and diligence that Ramphal, Patterson, and McIntyre exemplified. Their quest to ensure that the region stood tall in the international community, asserting its rights and leadership, is a legacy that demands to be upheld.

The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the US and the OAS. He is also the son-in-law of Sir Shridath Ramphal.

Massive growth, development driving up property values in Guyana

MINISTER within the Ministry of Public Works, Deodat Indar, on Friday said that the massive growth and development taking place across Guyana and investments in infrastructure have led to increased property prices in areas that many persons would have never thought of.

Indar made this pronouncement while delivering the feature address at the Connect Real Estate Mega Summit hosted by Keller Williams Guyana at the Guyana Marriott Hotel in Georgetown.

During his address, the minister emphasised the role of infrastructural development and growing industries in reshaping the current real estate market.

However, he said that to get ahead of this, the government enacted the Real Estate Act in 2023, which was a crucial step in regularising the sector. The Act's main aim was to protect real estate agents, ensuring they are fairly compensated for their efforts in facilitating property transactions, among other things.

"So, when a country is moving at the pace of Guyana, the laws of the country need to be updated to deal with the new realities," he said. He underscored that the new Act mandates payment for agents who help buyers and sellers complete transactions, thus formalising the sector and adding greater transparency.

Speaking on the broader economic growth seen, Minister Indar high-

lighted Guyana's impressive GDP growth, which has been the highest globally in recent years.

"There is no other country in the world that can boast economic growth as high as Guyana," he said. This surge, he explained, reflects the collective output of all sectors, but is heavily influenced by the oil and gas industry, which has acted as a catalyst for development across other industries.

Giving an example, he indicated that this sector has reshaped the country's real estate landscape along the Demerara River.

"If you had to find an inch of property there, well, good luck to you," Minister Indar posited, noting that prime riverfront properties have become exceedingly scarce.

This scarcity, along with infrastructural projects such as shore bases and roads, has led to a rise in property values and areas that were once undeveloped are now in high demand, with infrastructure dramatically improving the quality of and desirability for these areas.

Additionally, he indicated that the demand for housing is also growing rapidly as new developments attract more workers and businesses.

Further, he encouraged those in the real estate sector to familiarise themselves with the Real Estate Act, ensuring that they are well-positioned to capitalise on the opportunities being created by the country's rapid development.



Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Deodat Indar

Diaspora told: We're proud of your achievements

AS Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsible for Finance and the Public Service Dr. Ashni Singh wrapped up his four-day visit to the United States of America (USA) on Saturday, he met thousands of Guyanese in the Diaspora during the Caribbean Day celebration in Schenectady, New York.

During the event, Dr. Singh delivered greetings to the event's attendees from President Dr. Irfaan Ali and his government. While there, he also met and interacted with several legislators and elected representatives for the area, including Congressman Paul Tonko, Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara, Majority Leader John Mootooveren, Deputy Chair Philip Fields and other elected officials.

Addressing attendees at the event, Dr. Singh explained that the time when Guyanese travelled abroad and never returned to Guyana is long gone.

"In today's modern world, we have seen how our Guyanese brothers and sisters have travelled to every corner of the world, and to the United States of America, and especially New York and cities like Schenectady and elsewhere. Those of us in Guyana and in particular this People's Progressive Party/Civic

(PPP/C) Government, of which I am a member, are incredibly proud to see how our Guyanese brothers and sisters have distinguished themselves all across the USA, and all across the world," the Senior Minister told the Diaspora.

He added that the government is proud to see many of those who migrated elected to City Councils, to State assemblies and other elected and legislative positions in their adopted countries.

"It fills us with pride to see our Guyanese brothers and sisters establish businesses and grow their businesses.

It fills us with pride to see our Guyanese brothers and sisters improve their own well-being, build their own prosperity, and, most importantly, it fills us with pride and love to see that no matter what new connections they have developed in their new homes, and no matter how successfully they do in their new homes, their love for Guyana remains strong," Dr. Singh added.

The Senior Minister assured the Diaspora that the government has been continuing aggressively to transform Guyana, noting that many who would have already visited would have witnessed this transformation for themselves.

"You have seen how the face of our



Dr Singh in New York

country is being transformed. You have seen the new opportunities that are being created; you have seen how the faces of your villages are being changed and being improved.

We know that many of you have established very strong roots where you now live, but as Guyana does well, we want to see you visiting that home more often, and returning to Guyana, because no matter how strong roots you have established elsewhere, Guyana will still always be your home, too." Dr. Singh assured the Diaspora.

The Senior Minister explained to the Diaspora that despite the long and difficult journey that the government has had, especially in 2020, the current administration was able to confront the challenges of protecting the country's democracy, and he thanked all the Guyanese Americans who got their Congressman, Senators, Mayors and Councillors to speak out, and to defend their country's democracy.

The Caribbean Day event saw thousands of Guyanese and others from the Caribbean showcasing their culture through dance and song and other displays, while Guyanese performers included Terry Gajraj and Adrian Dutchin. (MoF)

150 new education facilities being constructed, conceptualised

AS the government works on setting a new standard for the delivery of education, close to 150 new facilities are being constructed and conceptualised, President, Dr Irfaan Ali has said.

The Head of State made this revelation on Friday last, while commissioning a brand-new primary school at Zeelugt in Region Three (Essequibo Islands- West Demerara).

“We have close to 150 new education facilities under construction or at project conceptualisation,” the President said while addressing parents, teachers and children.

He further disclosed that a substantial amount of funding has been made available to the Ministry of Education to conduct works on several schools across the country, ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is maintained in these facilities.

“As I speak to you now, we have made a commitment and made the resources available to the Ministry of Education to have every school in our country that needs to be repainted, repainted. Every washroom facility that needs to be fixed, fixed. Every roof that needs to be fixed, fixed. Every drainage system, the guttering system that needs to be fixed, fixed.”

Meanwhile, resources will be expended to ensure that every single school is outfitted with a multi-purpose tarmac to support activities in that school.

“Not only are we building new schools, we are setting new and improved minimum standards for your children, our teachers and parents. It is also



Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali

important for us to understand how we are investing in our teachers, how we are investing in the totality of the system to support this expansion in education,” he said.

Concurrently, the President pointed out that the government is making equal investments in the country’s educators.

“It is also important for us to understand how we are investing in our teachers, how we are investing in the totality of the system to support this expansion in education.”

Pointing to the increases made to teachers’ salaries and incentives, he

noted,

“This is going to continue to get better... look at the rate of increase... look at the totality of the package and the rate of increase the teachers are receiving.

“We are one of the only countries where we train our teachers free of cost. But more importantly, our teachers get a stipend while they receive that training. And when we came into government, that stipend was below \$10,000. Today, that stipend is almost \$100,000 — more than 900 per cent increase in a stipend.”

He stated that the government’s pol-

icy is not just to get more teachers into the profession, but to ensure that all are trained educators.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Priya Manickchand noted that more than 3,000 teachers have been trained countrywide.

She reiterated that the ministry is making significant investments to improve classrooms, the infrastructure at schools and surrounding areas, ensuring that both children and educators have comfortable spaces to thrive.

“These investments are consciously made so that you could be better people, so that your children can have a better life than you, a life of plenty, a life where there’s no struggle,” the education minister said.

Last month an agreement for a pay hike for the country’s educators was solidified between the Ministry of Education and the Guyana Teacher’s Union (GTU). In 2024, teachers will receive a 10 per cent increase, in 2025 they will see an eight per cent increase, and in 2026 they will see a nine per cent increase.

These increases in these years are subject to an adjustable clause to which the President said if there are higher increases announced for the Public Service, teachers will get the difference between what is in the agreement and that higher number.

Additionally, the multi-year agreement covers increases in allowances for specific categories of teachers, including those who have completed higher levels of academic qualification.

The World Guyanese Congress (WGC) is a federally incorporated non-partisan global organisation that represents the interests of citizens of Guyanese heritage around the world. The organisation focuses on the successful development of our communities globally with an emphasis on leadership development and collaborative activities in diaspora communities to strengthen the community worldwide.

The organisation is headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and led by a Chairman and Executive Committee supported by an Advisory Council and various Committees as well as a Board of Governors that acts as ambassadors for the organisation. It has nine national and regional chapters:

Key priorities of the WGC include:

- Build a globally cohesive community with a focus on youth and women in business and civic leadership worldwide.
- Support social entrepreneurship and civic engagement in communities around the world.
- Engage diaspora communities in the social and economic development of Guyana.

World Guyanese Congress

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To find out more about World Guyanese Congress and our goals and priorities. Scan the QR code, or visit www.wgc-org.com

If you have any questions feel free to get in touch:

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Efforts made to eliminate corrupt practices in procurement process

THE Government of Guyana has made significant strides to root out corrupt practices in the procurement process, Vice-President, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo has said.

During a news conference held last Thursday, Dr Jagdeo highlighted the difference in how contracts for projects were being awarded under the previous A Partnership for National Unity+ Alliance For Change (APNU+AFC) government.

“We have had ministers who were giving contracts to themselves in their ministries, several contracts running into millions of dollars to their own companies...that was the situation then. If you look today, despite all the talk about procurement problems under the PPP, it’s transparently done,” the Vice-President said.

He noted too that some senior officials of the now opposition party had bypassed the procurement laws.

“People bid for projects. Now they may not be happy with the evaluation process, but they have a means that is in the Act to protest.”

According to him, the process is now being transparently done, with citizens having access to information issued by the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB).

He noted too that the government has also flagged companies that are linked to public officials.

“We made it clear to them. While they hold those positions that they cannot bid in their own name. However, we can’t take away the right to work from their family too once it has nothing to do with their ministry. We made that clear.

“We recently embarked on a countrywide discussion on this matter. The Minister of Finance and I, we were in Essequibo, Berbice, and in Region Five, in different areas talking to contractors and the regional authorities and laying



Guyana Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo

the rules out that there must be full compliance with the Procurement Act,” he said, before pointing out that training was also conducted in these areas.

Back in May, Dr Jagdeo had revealed plans to conduct ‘sting’ operations to clamp down on officers and other personnel who engage in procurement breaches.

Dr Jagdeo had told local journalists that the government has undertaken a review of the procurement system at every level.

The government, he related, is examining the procurement procedures for compliance, and activities for compliance with the laws.



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Ashni Singh to Washington DC audience: 'Non-oil' growth being driven

GUYANA'S unprecedented economic growth and development were discussed over the weekend at a Guyanese diaspora meeting in Washington D.C., United States of America (USA).

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, Dr. Ashni Singh and ExxonMobil Guyana's President, Alistair Routledge, engaged a number of persons from the Guyanese diaspora for a question-and-answer segment.

During a brief address, Dr. Singh said what persons are witnessing in Guyana today is an unprecedented period of extraordinary real economic growth that is without parallel in history.

He related that while much of this economic expansion is happening as a result of the discovery and introduction of oil and gas, there is also extremely strong growth in the non-oil sector, some of which is driven by positive spinoffs from the oil and gas sector.

Importantly, Dr. Singh highlighted that most of this growth "is driven by deliberate government policies to promote a strong and increasingly competitive non-oil economy."

Further, he noted that the extraordinary growth is allowing the government to face a very real opportunity to improve the lives of every single Guyanese national and families.

The minister told the gathering that it is the deliberate intention of the President, Dr. Irfaan Ali-led Government to translate national prosperity into community, household and individual prosperity.

Minister Singh also assured the Guyanese diaspora and friends of Guyana that the government is under no illusion about the complexities of man-



Dr Ashni Singh with officials at the Guyanese diaspora meeting in Washington D.C., USA

aging rapid economic growth, and is earnestly approaching this task in a very serious and responsible way, while still

striking the appropriate balance between addressing immediate needs and long-term sustainability. The delegation at-

tending the meeting also included Guyana's Ambassador to the US, Samuel Hinds.

Women taking on leadership roles in Amerindian villages

IN recent years, more Amerindian women have increasingly stepped into leadership roles and spearheaded discussions on development within their traditionally male-dominated communities.

Out of the 254 leaders elected at the May-June Village Council (VC) Elections, 35 females emerged as toshaos and senior councillors in Regions One, Two, Seven, Eight, Nine, and 10, representing 14 per cent of the total leaders elected.

Amerindian women assumed leadership roles within their villages and secured executive positions on the National Toshao Council (NTC), which plans and represents the sustainable development of Guyana's indigenous peoples.

A teacher by profession and the re-elected toshao of Bethany Village in Region Two, Sonia Latchman, is the NTC's vice-chairperson.

She is also the newly declared lead expert for the Caribbean on the implementation of the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

During an interaction with the Department of Public Information (DPI), She emphasised the significant role women play in leadership. She highlighted the fresh perspective and resilience they bring to the table.

Latchman believes that the inclusion of women



Sonia Latchman

in leadership is crucial for holistic village development and inspiring future generations to pursue leadership roles.

"Leadership is not confined to gender...It is open to all who are capable and passionate about the progress of their people and this will drive societal growth. I strongly believe that women's leadership leads to more inclusive changes," she further underscored.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs reported that 11 females were elected as toshaos and senior councillors in Region One; three in Region Two, and

five in Region Seven, with additional leaders in Regions Eight, Nine, and Ten.

Importantly, some villages elected female leaders for the first time, while others re-elected accomplished women based on their outstanding performance during their previous terms.

For instance, Sandra Brazao made history as the first female toshao of Kato Village in Region Eight while Amrita Thomas was elected as the first female toshao of Waramadong Village in Region Seven.

The election of female leaders, including Roxanne Beck in Awarewaunau, Deep South Rupununi in Region Nine, demonstrates the increasing recognition of women's leadership capabilities across various communities.

Villages such as Baramita in Region One also elected Sharmain Rambajue, who previously served as toshao of the Carib village.

In Region Two, Mainstay/Whyaka elected Marsha Williams as its leader, succeeding government Member of Parliament (MP) Yvonne Fredericks-Pearson.

These positive developments signify a shift towards greater gender diversity and empowerment in Guyana's indigenous peoples' representation and development. (DPI)

How to take control of your mortgage: Why you should work with a broker

Here is how you can take control:

Lowering Your DTI

If your DTI is on the high side, focus on reducing your existing debt before applying for a mortgage. Pay down credit card balances, settle smaller loans, or consider refinancing high-interest debt. Lowering your DTI not only enhances your appeal as a borrower but also frees up more of your income to manage unexpected expenses or financial challenges. Talk to your mortgage broker.

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A healthy savings account can also bolster your capacity. Lenders like to see you have enough reserves to cover several months of mortgage payments in emergencies like job loss or unexpected expenses. Demonstrating that you have a financial safety net shows responsibility and makes lenders more inclined to approve your mortgage application.

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While capacity focuses on your ability to repay the loan, your credit score reflects how well you have man-

aged debt in the past. Regularly monitoring your credit report, correcting errors, and improving your score can enhance your overall financial profile and boost your chances of securing a favourable mortgage.

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by your side, you can confidently navigate the mortgage process and secure the financial future you deserve.

Conclusion: Capacity is Key

Capacity is more than just a number—it is a comprehensive assessment of your financial health and ability to manage debt while managing a mortgage. Understanding and improving your capacity can unlock better mortgage options, lower interest rates, and more favourable terms.

Do not let high DTI, unstable income, or unmanaged debt hinder your homeownership dreams. Start managing your capacity today, and work with a trusted mortgage broker like Devon Jones to turn those dreams into reality. Remember, when it comes to getting approved for a mortgage, capacity is not just important—it's essential.

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Ali wants regional leaders to discuss poor performances in CSEC math

Guyana President Irfaan Ali says the poor performance of Caribbean students in mathematics is a matter of concern for regional leaders and that the matter needs to be fully ventilated.

The Barbados-based Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) last month reported that only 36 per cent of students across the region received passing grades for mathematics at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), a seven percentage point decrease compared to last year.

CXC's Director of Operations, Dr Nicole Manning emphasized the need for improvement in each territory.

Addressing the commissioning of the new Yarrowkabra Secondary School, President Ali that the matter will be discussed by regional leaders even as he suggested that declining grades in mathematics might be due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"The issue of mathematics has now captured the attention of every single head of state and prime minister in the region, and it is now an agenda for the Heads of Government in CARICOM. That is to tell you the issues and challenges that we face," Ali told the ceremony.

He said Barbados' Prime Minister, Mia Mottley, had recently told him that she intended to take the issue of maths to the next CARICOM summit slated for February 2025 in Bridgetown because she believed that the region was in a crisis in mathematics.

"It is not a Jamaica issue, Barbados issue, Trinidad issue or your Guyana issue. It has now become a collective issue that we must address and here in Guyana, we have to be innovative," Ali said.

According to the CXC results, Guyana recorded a CSEC Mathematics' pass rate of 31 per cent this year compared to 34 per cent last year.

Ali wondered whether the declining rate of success was linked to the more than two-year long COVID-19 pandemic.

"Now also COVID, mathematics required more direct contact, more group, more analytics, more teachers-to-student relationship, more teaching time, whether COVID itself had a greater impact on students' performance in mathematics than other subject area, because you can read and follow in other subject areas, but in mathematics, you need to have more problem-solving approach.

"You have to do formulas, understand formulas, understand analytics. That can be also an offshoot of the problem of COVID," he said, adding that other reasons for Guyana's declining math performance might be the effectiveness of teaching delivery, children

shying away from the problem-solving mode of mathematics, and fear of the subject.

Ali said he has asked Education Minister Priya Manickchand not to await for next year's CARICOM discussion on maths but conduct introspection, and ascertain what globally available tools could be used to improve performance in the subject.

"We're investing in the digitization of education, the digitization of our textbooks, the digitization of our teaching material, the digitization of our learning material, digitization of our delivery," he said.

The Yarrowkabra Secondary School is catering for an estimated 1,019

students from several villages along the Soesdyke/Linden Highway.

The GYD\$790 million learning facility features 11 departments including entrepreneurial, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) and TVET skills, with a dedicated cohort of 65 teachers.

Ali said the infrastructure is only one component of the government's bid to ensure every child has access to world class education.

"We can have the best facilities, but if we also do not invest in human resources that will help this facility to manifest the type of results that you're investing for, then you will have a mismatch," he said.



Irfaan Ali

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ADS IN EQUALITY WORK!

Mocha a 'very productive area'

Farmers from Mocha and other surrounding communities on the East Bank of Demerara are set to benefit from additional inputs to further develop their agricultural activities.

This was disclosed by Agriculture Minister, Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha during a ministerial meeting on Wednesday.

Minister Mustapha along with several other Cabinet Ministers visited the community to follow up on commitments made by Vice President, Dr. Bharat Jagdeo during a meeting earlier in the week.

While engaging farmers and residents during a community walkabout, Minister Mustapha said that the government has been working assiduously to improve agriculture in Mocha. He also said that the ministry has several on-going programmes to boost production in the cultivation areas.

"This is one of the areas receiving a fair share of assistance from the Ministry and the government and we will continue to work with you to develop the agriculture sector here. Since our first visit, farmers have benefited from better breeds of swine, black giant birds, and improvements to the drainage and irrigation systems in their farms. Currently, two excavators are working in the area to clear internal drains. To date, twenty-seven internal drains have been cleared and that programme will continue."

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No Frills® and MaxiMD Join the Cricket Canada Family as Official Grocery Partner

No Frills® and MaxiMD, Canada’s popular hard discount grocery retailers, are thrilled to announce an exciting new partnership with Cricket Canada as its Official Grocery Partner.

“As Canada’s fastest-growing sport, cricket has captured the hearts of many and brings communities together through the power of teamwork, passion and a shared love for the game,” said Melanie Singh, President of Hard Discount, Loblaw Companies. “We look forward to working closely with Cricket Canada to bring customers and fans closer to the sport they love and ensuring our contributions make a meaningful and lasting impact.”

This partnership establishes No Frills® as a key sponsor for select international matches organized by Cricket Canada on Canadian soil. The inaugural event under this new partnership will be the No Frills® T20 Cup, an international tri-nation T20 cricket series featuring Canada, Nepal, and Oman. Set to take place later this month at the Maple Leaf Cricket Ground in King City, Ontario; this series promises to deliver thrilling cricket action to fans across Canada and further elevate the sport’s profile in North America.



Amjad Bajwa, President of Cricket Canada

Through this partnership, No Frills® and MaxiMD will support and invest in the growth of cricket in Canada. This includes a range of experiential activations in-store and at Cricket Canada events, as well as National Team matches.

Amjad Bajwa, President of Cricket Canada, expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership: “Cricket Canada is thrilled to partner with iconic Canadian grocery brands that are so entrenched in the daily life of so

many Canadians. No Frills® and MaxiMD share our commitment to community and accessibility. This exciting new partnership represents a significant step in our mission to not only enhance our National Teams and programs but also to grow the sport and help make cricket more accessible to Canadians from all walks of life.”

For more information on the No Frills® T20 Cup, including match schedules, visit Cricket Canada’s official digital channels or buy tickets di-

rectly here.

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Cricket Canada is the official governing body for the sport of cricket in Canada, overseeing and promoting the development of the game at all levels. With a focus on inclusivity and excellence, Cricket Canada is dedicated to fostering a vibrant cricketing community and achieving success on the international stage. Cricket Canada is recognized by the International Cricket Council, the Government of Canada and the Canadian Olympic Committee.



President Dr. Mohammed Irfaan Ali hosted a dinner in honour of the delegates attending the 46th Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Here, a dance group from one of Guyana’s indigenous peoples entertain Ali and some guests during the dinner function.

National funeral for Sir Shridath Ramphal in Guyana on Sept. 14

The government of Guyana has announced plans for a national funeral in honor of Sir Shridath Surendranath “Sonny” Ramphal, recognizing his impactful life and legacy.

President Irfaan Ali announced on Saturday that the service will take place on September 14 at the Promenade Gardens in Georgetown, starting at 3:00 PM (local time).

“Sir Shridath, a cherished son of Guyana and former Commonwealth Secretary-General, is celebrated as a giant in global diplomacy. His lifelong service to Guyana, the Caribbean, the Commonwealth, and the wider world will be remembered,” President Ali said.

Following the ceremony, Sir Shridath will be laid to rest at The Place of the Seven Ponds in the Botanical Gardens.

The funeral will feature full ceremonial honors to acknowledge Sir Shridath’s significant contributions, including his efforts to protect Guyana’s sovereignty and his influence on international affairs.



The government has invited all Guyanese to attend and pay their respects to “a man whose visionary leadership and unwavering commitment

have left an indelible mark both nationally and internationally.”

Sir Shridath, a former minister of justice and foreign affairs for Guyana,

passed away on August 30 at the age of 95. He once wrote that his life was guided more by instinct than by cultivated ambitions.

Guyana cops suspected of involvement in drug smuggling

As investigations into the discovery of 4.4 tons of cocaine buried near an illegal airstrip in Guyana widens, investigators from the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit are examining the alleged involvement of police officers who may be stationed in communities in the area.

When it launched its probe of illegal airstrips and the movement of drugs in the region, the police in the area were left in the dark.

The unit turned to the Guyana Defence Force and the US Drug Enforcement Agency for support.

According to a report published by NewsSource Guyana, the move by the unit may have been triggered by allegations of police collusion in the movement of illegal aircraft and drugs in the Region One area.

Questioned about those reports, the unit’s director James Singh said the acting police commissioner and the Crime Chief have both been briefed on the reports.

“From all indications, most of the persons involved in this are foreign nationals. There is some speculation that there was some local assistance and that is still being investigated. As you alluded to just now, about the involvement of police and other law enforcement persons,

the Commissioner of Police and I had a meeting last evening along with the Crime Chief and we are working on that together,” Singh said.

Meanwhile, Acting Police Commissioner Clifton Hicken said he is unaware of the reports of the possible involvement of police officers.

Hicken said he first learnt of the allegations through the media.

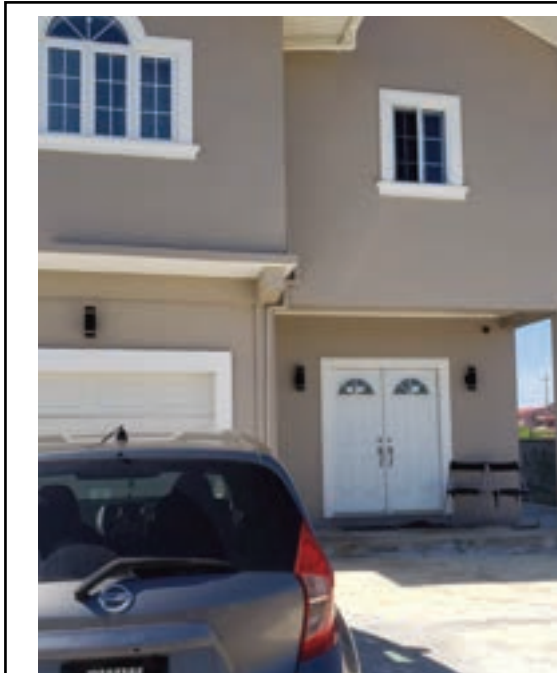
“I don’t know about that. I saw something published in the papers, and

we don’t do it like that. If there is an involvement, there will be an investigation. CANU is dealing with it in this regard,” Hicken said.

Singh said it is clear from the terrain of the area where the illegal airstrip and the drugs were discovered that there must have been some local support.

“This could not have gone without some assistance. And that is why we are working with various agencies, as well as engaging persons in the community to

find out who might have assisted and did they know what they were doing. Were they duped into thinking they were building an airstrip for mining concessions or did they know exactly that, because something of that magnitude, if you are having a plane there, they had to build an airstrip and supply the plane with fuel and so all of these things show that there was some connection here in Guyana, we just have to know how far,” he stated.



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Bollywood stars Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan on the set of Bigg Boss

Bollywood meets Disney: mega merger brings entertainment bonanza

Imagine binge-watching *The Bear*, *Succession*, *Deadpool* and reality show *Bigg Boss* all on one platform - an entertainment bonanza could be just around the corner for Indians if a blockbuster streaming merger goes through as expected.

The deal, which brings together the media assets of India's largest conglomerate Reliance Industries and entertainment giant Walt Disney, has sparked both excitement and concerns over potential monopolistic dominance in the Indian entertainment and advertising industries.

The \$8.5bn (£6.5bn) merger aims to create India's largest entertainment company, potentially capturing 40% of the TV market, reaching 750 million viewers across 120 channels, and dominating the advertising sector.

This gives Disney a stronger foothold in the challenging Indian market while supporting Reliance's expansion efforts. It also pits the new entertainment behemoth against popular rivals such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Sony and 50-odd other streaming platforms.

Consider the reach of this new entertainment giant: Disney's Star India operates more than 70 TV channels in eight languages, while Reliance's Viacom18 runs 38 channels in eight languages. Both own major streaming platforms - Jio Cinema and Hotstar - and film studios.

India approves \$8.5bn Reliance-Disney entertainment mega-merger

Their influence is further amplified by owning the broadcasting rights to a significant number of India's sports events, including the hugely popular Indian Premier League cricket tournament.

In a cricket-obsessed nation, this is a prime business position. The merged entity is estimated to control 75-80% of the Indian sports streaming market across both linear TV and digital platforms, according to Elara Capital, a global investment and advisory firm.

Their dominance in this sector, especially cricket, means that Reliance and Disney will command a substantial share of the overall advertisement market. It showcases "strong growth in an industry where sports is a key driver of viewership on both TV and digital platforms", says Karan Taurani, an analyst at Elara Capital, who calls it a

"large media juggernaut".

Though the merger promises to offer consumers diverse content, critics wonder if it puts too much power in the hands of one player.

"The emergence of a giant in the market... with the next competitor struggling with market share in a single digit, would make any competition agency sit up and take notice," says KK Sharma, who formerly headed the merger control division of the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

This is why, analysts say, India's competition watchdog scrutinised the agreement before approving the deal with a caveat that makes it "subject to the compliance of voluntary modifications".

The companies have not made these "voluntary modifications" public yet, but reports say that the two companies have pledged to not raise advertising rates excessively while streaming cricket matches.

The deal hinges on these assurances, Mr Sharma adds, because the CCI "retains its authority to even divide the enterprise - if the dominant enterprise becomes a threat to competition in the market".

In an increasingly competitive but expanding Indian streaming market, both Disney and Reliance have a lot to gain from the deal, which allows them a chance to consolidate their pole position.

But experts warn that it may also mean a potential drop in the business earnings of smaller players.

"The Indian market values bundling and is price-sensitive. [Subscribing to] this combined entity can offer a comprehensive package including [access to] web series, movies, sports, original content, and a global catalogue," says Mr Taurani.

And if the combined company can also leverage the large telecom subscriber base of Reliance Jio, other streaming companies may find it hard to raise prices, he adds. The Reliance Group has a tried-and-tested business strategy that has allowed it to thrive in the price-sensitive Indian market: it offered cheap mobile data when it launched Jio in 2016, and its JioCinema streaming subscription is available for as little as 29 rupees.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): Your attempts to resolve a domestic dispute could backfire today, for the simple reason that loved ones are not in the mood to meet you halfway. With that fact in mind, keep a low profile and let the situation cool down in its own time.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): The Sun in the most dynamic area of your chart means you want the best and you want it now, but other aspects warn you could over-extend yourself today, so be careful. It may feel as if you possess unlimited reserves of energy but you don't.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): You won't reach an important objective just by working harder - you will also need to plan ahead and have a clear idea of how you are going to get from where you are now to where you most want to be. Get that big brain of yours working.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): Your ambitions may seem a bit vague at the moment but that's okay - in fact it may even be good in that you are less likely to limit yourself to one specific aim while ignoring the rest. The most important thing now is that you are adaptable.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): No matter how hard you try to wriggle out of an obligation of some kind you won't succeed, so you might as well face it head on and do what is expected of you - and what you promised. Don't get a reputation for letting people down.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): New faces will be coming into your social sphere and new relationships will be formed and so long as you don't take any of them too seriously you will have a lot of fun. It seems like everyone wants to be your special friend at the moment.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): The Sun in the most sensitive area of your chart may be a disruptive influence but it does not have the power to stop you from following your dreams. And if your dreams and other people's dreams happen to coincide it could be magic.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): By all means get more involved in a social movement of some kind but don't take it so seriously that other areas of your life are neglected. A sense of balance is needed in all things, even when it comes to making the world a better place.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): You need to take extra care when dealing with people in positions of power. Don't just assume that because your aims and their aims are similar that they will be on your side. It could be that one of your rivals has made them a better offer.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): Not everyone is as robust as you, so if a loved one seems to be hurt by something you have said or done you must take their concerns seriously. Yes, they may be dramatizing the situation but could you have been more sensitive of their feelings?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): No matter how eager you may be to get started on a new project you must first make time for something of a more routine nature. It may be boring but if you leave it undone it could come back to haunt you later on. Don't risk it.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): What happens over the next 24 hours will force you to reassess your current situation. The fact is that things are neither as bad as you fear they are nor as good as you dream they might be but somewhere in the middle, so don't overreact.

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Former Trinidadian Olympian jailed in USA for gun smuggling

Former Trinidad cyclist Varun Maharajh has been sentenced to seven years in a US prison for smuggling firearms overseas and possessing firearms as an unlawful alien.

The US Department of Justice said Maharajh pleaded guilty to the charges on March 21, 2024.

The court also ordered Maharajh to forfeit the firearms and ammunition seized in the case.

According to court documents, on June 28, 2022, Maharajh shipped a parcel to London containing a microwave with five concealed pistols inside. The package contained a Taurus G2C pistol, a Glock 17 Gen 5 pistol, two Glock 19 Gen 5 pistols, and 59 rounds of 9 mm ammunition. The serial numbers were obliterated on the firearms and Maharajh used a fake name, "Kelvin Singh," to ship the package.

On July 18, 2022, Maharajh dropped off a package at a freight forwarding company in Miami. The package was addressed to Trinidad and Tobago and Maharajh worked with an intermediary who filled out the paperwork. According to the release, the package contained a tent with two AK-47 style firearms concealed within its folds along with a microwave containing pistols.

US officials said while Maharajh worked with another individual, he did show a fake ID with the name "Kelvin Singh" to the freight forwarding company when he dropped off the package.

Maharajh was arrested in Indian River County on November 19, 2023, and engaged in a high-speed chase on I-95 before totaling his vehicle and attempting to flee on foot.

Maharajh is believed to have entered the United States in 2020 and stayed without legal status. Maharajh was pre-



Varun Maharajh pictured here during his Olympic qualifier

viously a World Cup cyclist for Trinidad and Tobago and qualified for the Olympics in 2016.

United States Ambassador Candace

Bond said: "This latest conviction represents the commitment of United States law enforcement agencies to collaborate with their Trinidad and Tobago counter-

parts... to arrest, prosecute, and disrupt illicit weapons trafficking networks from the United States."

Women deported after attack on A&B official

Two Jamaican women are facing legal repercussions and deportation following an altercation with an immigration officer at VC Bird International Airport on September 1.

Alicia Ricketts, who, along with her friend, was being denied re-entry into Antigua, assaulted the officer by kicking her in the chest. Ricketts was also charged with malicious damage for tearing the officer's uniform and for resisting arrest.

Appearing in All Saints Court before Magistrate Ngaio Emanuel on Wednesday, Ricketts pleaded guilty to all charges. She was fined \$400 for battery, with the alternative of seven days in prison if unpaid, and was reprimanded and discharged for the malicious damage. Additionally, she received a \$500 fine for resisting arrest, with another seven-day prison sentence if the fine is not paid.

Her companion, Renea Nelson,

was fined \$250 for disorderly conduct due to excessive noise, with a three-day imprisonment term if the fine goes unpaid.

Following the court hearing, immigration officials ordered the deportation of both women, who are scheduled to return to Jamaica on Sunday.

In a separate incident, 62-year-old Jamaican Corrol Lee Gayle was also deported from Antigua. Gayle, who arrived by boat without authorization, was charged with unlawful entry, entering through an undesignated port, and failure to present himself to immigration authorities. He had overstayed his permit, which expired in December 2018.

Gayle pleaded guilty to all charges, was reprimanded and discharged, but was ordered deported at the request of immigration officials. He was detained overnight and left Antigua the next day.



Alicia Ricketts and Renea Nelson

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PM Holness responds to criticisms of continued use of SOEs in Jamaica

Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness did not mince words when responding to criticisms of his government's ongoing use of States of Emergencies (SOEs) in Jamaica as a method of tackling crime.

Last week, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) expressed "concern over Jamaica's continued use of states of public emergency (SOEs)."

In a statement, IACHR called on the Jamaican government "to ensure that measures used to prevent and combat crime are implemented in accordance with international human rights standards."

The commission said it took note that the Jamaican government imposed an SOE for the parish of Clarendon on August 14 after a mass shooting in Cherry Tree Lane in the parish, which resulted in the deaths of eight persons.

IACHR said under the Jamaican Constitution, during an SOE, "the Government temporarily grants security forces additional powers, including warrantless searches, arrest and detention."

The commission added that under the organs of the Inter-American System of Human Rights, "the suspension of guarantees is a provision that can be implemented in the extraordinary circumstances indicated in Article 27 of the American Convention, such as war, public danger, or another emergency that threatens a state's independence or security."

On that score, the IACHR said: "The state of Jamaica must abide by the international obligations it has assumed, which establish requirements

and limits for adopting such exceptional mechanisms for suspending the rights and guarantees protected by the convention.

"The IACHR urges that these measures should not be made part of the country's permanent security policy," it advised.

But in firing back at such statements on the government's crime-fighting methods, Holness said what is missing in the conversation is "the respect for the rights of the victims."

"No one speaks about the rights of the victims, (and) those families who have lost loved ones. ... No international agency is coming to say, 'Protect the innocent!'" Holness stated.

Holness also said that Jamaica does not need to be told to respect the human rights of its citizens, as this is paramount to members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF).

"In the transformation of the JCF, every officer here will tell you that in their training, in all their development courses, respect for citizens' rights, respect for human rights, is paramount, including in our operations, including in our equipping of the force, in the use of force, in every aspect of it, and I urge the JCF to continue on this path to show the world that we don't need to be told to respect human rights; that is something that is ingrained in us," said Holness.

The prime minister said when crime rates or any other issues surpass manageable levels in developed nations, their governments often invoke extraordinary measures to address the issues, without facing criticism from the international community.



Prime Minister of Jamaica Andrew Holness

Holness also pointed out that major crimes are now down by 20% so far this year because of SOEs and other measures.

"We don't rely on SOEs anymore, because we are building capacity, and you would have seen that in the last three years, the number of gang cases that we would have brought to courts, and the number of gangs that we have disrupted and dismantled, were more than in the last 30 years," Holness as-

serted.

"So, I want Jamaicans to understand that your Government is acting in your best interest, and that those who don't understand what is happening in Jamaica should get the right information before they speak, and support the Government of Jamaica in ensuring that our citizens are safe, and we will not relent against the criminals," Holness stated.

Sandals offers free vacations to Caribbean Olympic medallists

Caribbean athletes who medaled at the Paris Olympic Games and who are from islands where Sandals Resorts International operates have been offered complimentary vacations by the award-winning resort brand.

"The Olympic Games are always a special time for us here in the Caribbean. Our athletes are incredibly talented and we are thrilled to witness their wins and record-making performances. On behalf of our entire Sandals family, we excitedly celebrate with our Olympic medalists and we look forward to hosting them for a relaxing vacation at Sandals," Sandals Executive Chairman Adam Stewart said in a press release.

Jamaicans Rojé Stona, Kishane Thompson, Shanieka Ricketts, Rajindra Campbell, Wayne Pinnock and Rasheed Broadbell, as well as St Lucia's Julien Alfred, Grenada's Lindon Victor and Anderson Peters will re-



Sandals St Lucia is part of the hotel resort chain in the Caribbean which will be offering the free vacations

ceive complimentary one-week vacations at any Sandals or Beaches resort across the region, the resort chain stated. This latest show of support for Caribbean athletes has become a hallmark of Sandals Resorts almost 100

Olympians from the Caribbean islands where Sandals Resorts International operates were gifted complimentary vacation stays by the company's Executive Chairman Adam Stewart in recognition of their valiant efforts at the

2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The resort chain has also been a major sponsor of regional sports such as the West Indies Cricket team and multiple motorsport athletes among many others.

CARICOM committed to building links with African continent

Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, says the regional body remains committed to building stronger ties between the Caribbean Community and the African continent.

In a message to mark CARICOM-Africa Day, he said this day, observed annually on September 7, serves to “concretize our joint dedication to ever-increasing cooperation and partnership. Since then, we have worked together to deepen this special relationship founded on our ancestral bonds and common aspirations.”

“Our joint efforts have focused on cooperation on health, climate change mitigation and adaptation, financing for development, and reparatory justice for the crimes of the transatlantic slave trade that impacted our Regions. We recognize that with even greater collaboration, much more can be done to address the significant challenges that remain, including on the impact of climate change.”

He noted that the economic partnership between CARICOM and Africa continues to grow, as demonstrated by the hosting of the Thirty-First Annual Afreximbank Meetings and the Third AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum in Nassau, The Bahamas in June 2024.



Caricom chairman Dickon Mitchell

This marked the first time that the Annual Afreximbank Meetings have been held in the Caribbean, underscoring the significant growth of economic opportunities fueled by this valued partnership.

“This collaboration has begun to provide crucial financing to the Com-

munity and play a pivotal role in enhancing trade and investment between CARICOM and Africa,” he noted.

The CARICOM chairman pointed to the Health Development Partnership for Africa and the Caribbean (HeDPAC), saying this demonstrates “the remarkable potential and is a highlight of

CARICOM-Africa cooperation. As we continue to navigate the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and seek to build on the critical lessons learned, strengthened cooperation between CARICOM and HeDPAC will be instrumental in bolstering our Region’s health capacities. It will enhance primary health care and improve pharmaceutical equity through local production of medical products, thus contributing to improved health outcomes for the people of CARICOM and Africa.”

He noted that CARICOM remains committed to continued engagement and strengthened relations with Africa, including at the Ministerial level, building on the foundation laid during the 2021 CARICOM-Africa Summit.

“Our partnership is set to become a beacon of South-South cooperation, benefiting both our societies amid an increasingly complex and challenging global environment. Building on the notable progress made in recent years, let us continue to work together towards a future of even greater inter-regional collaboration between CARICOM and Africa.”

“I extend warmest regards and best wishes for increased prosperity to the People and Governments of Africa, as we partner to fortify the fraternal ties that bind our Regions.”

Barbados elected chair of Caribbean Tourism

Barbados has taken over chairmanship of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO).

Barbados was elected chair last week at the CTO’s Ministerial Council meeting held in the Cayman Islands during the organization’s annual State of the Tourism Industry Conference (SOTIC).

Minister of Tourism and International Transport for Barbados, Ian Gooding-Edghill, will chair the Council of Ministers and Commissioners of Tourism, while Andrea Franklin, CEO of Barbados Tourism Marketing, will serve as chairman of the Board of Directors.

Barbados is succeeding outgoing chair Cayman Islands, which was led by Minister of Tourism and Ports, Kenneth Bryan, and Director of Tourism, Rosa Harris.

The CTO highlighted that under Cayman leadership, several successes were achieved, including the re-engagement of members and the return of the US Virgin Islands and Bermuda.

In a comment, the outgoing chairman said: “I hope that I’m leaving this organization in a stronger position and well placed to meet the opportunities and the challenges ahead.”

Gooding-Edghill expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to lead the CTO.

“We are all in this together. We have a lot of work to do,” he stated. “I also want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, Minister Bryan...for all that you’ve contributed over the last two years. Under my leadership, with the help of all of my colleagues, we will certainly continue to advance the cause of the Caribbean Tourism Organization.”

Barbados will lead the CTO for a two year term. The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), is the region’s tourism development agency, with 25 Dutch, English and French country members and a myriad of private sector allied members. The CTO’s



New CTO Chairman Ian Gooding-Edghill of Barbados (left) with predecessor Kenneth Bryan

vision is to position the Caribbean as the most desirable, year-round, warm weather destination. Its purpose is Leading Sustainable Tourism – One Sea, One Voice, One Caribbean. The primary objective of the

CTO is to provide to and through its members the services and information necessary for the development of sustainable tourism for the economic and social benefit of the Caribbean people.

Canadian blogger facing more legal problems in Trinidad

T&T NATIONAL Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds has agreed not to deport Canadian YouTuber Christopher “Chris Must List” Hughes and to release him as soon as possible.

Justice Robin Mohammed was told of this agreed position at a late-afternoon hearing on September 9.

Senior Counsel Gregory Delzin, lead attorney for the Chief Immigration Officer and the Attorney General, said Hughes would be released as soon as possible, pending the hearing and determination of his legal challenge.

“We will try to do it today, or tomorrow first thing.”

Hughes's legal team of Jagdeo Singh, Gerald Ramdeen, Karina Singh, Dayadai Harripaul and Vashiast Seepersad confirmed the agreement.

Assurances were also given that the terms of the deportation order for Hughes' return to Trinidad and Tobago (TT), if he is successful in having his bail varied so he can return to Canada, would not be effected until the matter is determined.

At the hearing before Mohammed, Ramdeen had raised concern that the deportation ordered Hughes, upon deportation, to remain outside TT. But Delzin said if Hughes leaves the country, he would be able to return.

Delzin said he could not give an undertaking to suspend the deportation order, since he was not the minister, but told the court

National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds would not frustrate its jurisdiction.

Hughes is seeking to have his bail conditions varied so as to be allowed to return to Canada, as he has previously done. A hearing was set for September 9, but this has been pushed to September 13.

On Monday, Mohammed set time-



Christopher Hughes

lines for filing evidence, and a case-management hearing has been fixed for October 23.

Early on Monday, Hughes's attorneys approached the High Court to challenge his deportation and continued detention by immigration.

A new application was filed seeking Hughes' immediate release and an in-

junction to prevent the State from taking steps to remove him from the jurisdiction pending the hearing and determination of the matter.

Hughes, 46, who is before the court on a sedition charge, was arrested for a third time on September 7 at the house in Diego Martin where he had been ordered to stay as part of his bail condi-

tions.

Since his arrest, Hughes has been detained at the Immigration Detention Centre in Aripo. Justice Kevin Ramcharan granted an emergency injunction on September 8 to allow his attorneys to get access to him for instructions.

The Minister of National Security also signed a deportation order on Saturday. Hughes was served with it when he was arrested.

The vlogger's legal team sought the injunction after receiving no response to a September 7 pre-action letter which challenged Hughes' latest arrest and detention.

The letter said Hughes arrived in Trinidad on August 18, as part of his reporting requirements for the sedition matter in the magistrates' court. The letter said immigration officials permitted Hughes entry at the Piarco International Airport and at no time told him his status was being revoked.

After the injunction was granted, his attorneys were able to meet with him at the IDC to get his instructions.

The newest application seeks a declaration that the minister's decision to issue the deportation order was irrational, unreasonable and illegal.

Hughes's attorneys are seeking a declaration that the decision to arrest and detain Hughes on September 7, pending deportation was in breach of his rights and is unlawful.

They are also seeking to have the deportation order quashed and an injunction to prevent the State from deporting him at this time as well as damages.

The application said Hughes was not given a right to be heard. It also said he was being deprived of his right of access to the court because of his detention to have his bail condition varied so he can travel before his next court appearance in the magistrates' court.

St. Lucia to introduce Kwéyòl in schools

The government of St. Lucia has announced the launch of a pilot program to introduce the Indigenous Kwéyòl language, also known as Creole, into schools.

The program will be implemented in 15 institutions during the 2024/25 academic year, marking a historic step towards preserving the island's cultural heritage.

According to a statement from the Office of the Prime Minister, efforts to include Kwéyòl in the school curriculum have been ongoing for over four decades. Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre reaffirmed this commitment on Emancipation Day in August 2022, when he announced the government's intention to make Kwéyòl part of the formal curriculum.

Education Minister Shawn Edward

has now confirmed that the groundbreaking St. Lucia Kwéyòl Curriculum Pilot Programme will officially begin, a milestone that has been eagerly anticipated.

“For the first time, our students will receive Kwéyòl instructions in schools. By including Kwéyòl instructions in the national school curriculum, the government is demonstrating its commitment to preserving our heritage for future generations,” the statement read.

Kwéyòl, a variety of Antillean Creole, is deeply rooted in St. Lucian culture. Like other Creole languages spoken across the Caribbean, it evolved from the interactions between enslaved Africans and European colonizers, primarily the French. It combines African syntax with a Latin-based vocabulary, mostly French, though some words are



PM Philip St Pierre

also derived from English and African languages. Despite not having official status, Kwéyòl remains widely spoken across St. Lucia and plays a vital role in

the island's identity.

The language is especially prominent in rural areas and continues to thrive through oral tradition, festivals, and cultural events such as Jounen Kwéyòl, celebrated annually in October. In recent years, there has been a growing movement to preserve Kwéyòl as younger generations become more reliant on English, which is the island's official language. Many government communications and media outlets already present information in both Kwéyòl and English.

With this pilot program, the St. Lucian government hopes to strengthen the role of the language in everyday life, ensuring that future generations are equipped with the linguistic tools to maintain this vital aspect of their heritage.

T&T Auditor General: no accounting yet for missing \$2.6 billion

The Special Report of the T&T Auditor General on the Public Accounts for the Financial Year 2023 says that, to date, there has been no internal audit into the understatement of revenue for the financial year 2023 by the Ministry of Finance.

The report was prepared by Auditor General Jaiwantie Ramdass and laid in Parliament on September 9. It was prepared after an overstatement of tax refunds and a subsequent under-reporting of net revenue led to a \$2.6 billion discrepancy in the revenue figures for 2023.

The report said adjusted financial statements received on May 29 showed total receipts deposited into the Exchequer Account for September 2023 were adjusted to \$11,588,720,312.10, a difference of \$2,598,130,761.72 when compared to \$8,990,589,550.38, as shown on the Exchequer Account Statements dated January 31, 2024, and April 16, 2024.

It noted there were several discrepancies in authorisation, segregation of duties, reconciliations and monitoring and reviewing related to these transactions.

In terms of authorisation, the report said there was no evidence that adjustment vouchers IDAs (inter-departmental) were signed by the Comptroller of Accounts to authorise changes to the General Ledger Accounts. It said all adjustment vouchers to adjust refunds totalling \$2,599,278,188.73 for financial year 2023 were reviewed.

But it was also noted that none was signed by the Comptroller of Accounts as required.

The report said no evidence was seen that debit advice slips, prepared by the Comptroller of Accounts and sent to the chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, were examined for unusual or material transactions.

"Signatures of preparation, checking, reviewing and approving debit ad-



T&T Auditor General Jaiwantie Ramdass

vice slips were not seen on the documents examined. As a result, Audit (Auditor General) could not determine who prepared, checked and reviewed the debit advice slips."

It said monthly reconciliation statements on the Exchequer Account were not prepared on a timely basis, with an approximate average period of five months before its preparation.

Regulation 13(4) of the Exchequer and Audit Act Chapter 69:01 states, "Each accounting unit shall have a check staff and an independent internal audit section."

The report said evidence of internal audit checks was not seen on any documents examined at the Inland Revenue and Treasury Divisions.

"Documents such as vote books, credit advices, debit advices, debit advice slips, adjustment vouchers, Central Bank statements of account, other

charges vouchers and cheque listings bore no signs of examination by internal audit.

"There was a reported material misstatement of \$2.599 billion in the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements certified by the then chairman, Board of Inland Revenue and the Statement of Revenue from the Treasury Division. To date, there is no Internal Audit Report on this matter."

The report noted the accounting books and records of the Ministry of Finance were finalised on or after May 14, 2024. It said with the financial statements being reconciled with the records of the Treasury on May 14, 2024, onwards, the Statement of Declaration and Certification, which were previously included with the versions of financial statements received on January 31, 2024, April 15, 2024, and April 16, 2024, were "wholly inaccurate."

The report said the Finance Ministry stated the problem with the Central Bank's electronic cheque-clearing system (ECCS) was that it "experienced a system malfunction which resulted in erroneously overstated debit advices generated. Subsequently, the CBTT corrected the inaccuracies by issuing reversal credit advices. However, the Treasury Division does not have a record of the receipt.

"As a result, the error was unknown to the Inland Revenue Division and the debit advices were processed to replenish the sum initially debited from the IRD Refund bank accounts."

The Finance Ministry's team, in response to a letter on July 24, 2024, said the internal audit reports on the operation and implementation of the ECCS are currently unavailable, but the Internal Audit team is doing an audit of the General Ledger Services Unit and will provide a report on this area of concern.

The report further noted when asked why the variance had occurred in the financial statement for revenue for 2023, the Finance Ministry said it was due to "posting errors, including double booking of transactions and decimal-point transposition errors which arose as a result of the implementation of the new ECCS at the Central Bank as well as the Go Anywhere Platform...".

The Auditor General said a meeting was requested of the Central Bank to examine the system on June 25. On June 26, the bank asked for a scope of works for the examination. Details were given in a letter on June 28. It said on July 2, the governor indicated: "The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago is unable to accommodate your request."

It said requests were made to the ministry's permanent secretary as contracts, Cabinet minutes and related information linked to the ECCS. None of these documents were received.

T&T Energy Company making 'progress' in Guyana, Suriname

T&T ENERGY Minister Stuart Young has said the National Energy Corporation is making good progress with initiatives it is pursuing in Guyana and Suriname.

That progress is demonstrated by \$36.3 million in revenue National Energy received as a result of these initiatives over the last five years.

Young, who is currently acting prime minister, was answering a question from Opposition Senator Wade Mark in the Senate on September 9.

He said National Energy has spent \$3,693,765 "from January 2017-May 2024, on efforts related to establishing business in Guyana."

Over this period, he said, National Energy had participated in several events.

He said it had co-ordinated "the submission to the pre-qualification proposal for gas-to-energy project issued

by the government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana."

The NGC (National Gas Company) group, Young continued, was subsequently shortlisted for the request for bids.

"Upon issuance of the RFP (request for proposals) bids packages, the NGC group declined to participate further."

Young said National Energy was also contracted by a Guyanese company to provide technical assistance and jointly explore "potential for partnership in the area of port infrastructure, development and operation."

The company, he said, has also entered into strategic partnerships for providing marine support services for operations in Guyana and Suriname.

Young said National Energy's achievements over the last five years in these initiatives included a revenue of



Stuart Young

\$36,262,827, ten times the value of the company's initial expenditure on establishing business in Guyana.

The \$36,262,827 he quoted included revenues of \$350,000 for providing technical services, and \$35,912,363 for marine vessel services in Guyana and Suriname.

Young congratulated National Energy on "this outstanding revenue earned."

He told senators a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Suriname energy company Staatsolie and National Energy in 2021 "explored opportunities for greater co-operation."

Young said National Energy worked with Staatsolie to prepare a gas monetisation study for Suriname.

National Energy's Guyana office, meanwhile, is used, he said, "as a base for engagement with senior officials from both Guyana and Suriname."

Barbados Royals hand St Kitts Patriots 4th straight CPL loss

HOME team St Kitts and Nevis Patriots (SKNP) staged a miraculous recovery after losing three wickets before putting a run on the board versus Barbados Royals in their 2024 Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League (CPL) match on September 6, but they eventually succumbed to a two-wicket loss – suffering a fourth straight defeat in the process.

Sri Lankan spinners Dunith Wellalage (three for 35) and Maheesh Theekshana (two for 26) spun SKNP into their web early at Warner Park, Basseterre, St Kitts as they accounted for the scalps of the dangerous Evin Lewis, Kyle Mayers and opposing captain Andre Fletcher just eight balls into the contest.

The SKNP innings needed rescuing, and it was another Sri Lankan who spearheaded the fightback as allrounder Wanindu Hasaranga top-scored with 40 off 27 balls and shared in a key 82-run partnership with Mikyle Louis (30 off 20 balls).

Man of the Match Wellalage worked his magic in the ninth over, though, as he took the wickets of Hasaranga and new batsman Sherfane Rutherford (duck) as SKNP slipped to 84 for five. In the next over, Hasaranga was bowled by Obed McCoy (two for 23) as SKNP slipped further into trouble at 84 for six.

An eighth-wicket partnership of 49 between Josh Clarkson (24 not out) and Ryan John (29 off 14 balls) gave respectability to the SKNP total as they ended their innings on 153 for eight.

Despite posting the lowest score at the Warner Park venue so far this season, the SKNP bowlers kept their team in the contest with timely wickets. At the ten-over mark, the Royals were placed on 72 for four, with Mayers (two for 17) making amends with the ball by removing the opening pair of Rahkeem Cornwall (duck) and Quinton de Kock (19).

Royals debutant Kadeem Alleyne (30 off 18 balls) made a solid contribution and he helped his team finish the power play in rollicking fashion as he hit Hasaranga for a four and two sixes off consecutive balls in the sixth over.

With the Royals in a spot of bother, Hasaranga's countryman Wellalage (39 off 32 balls) played a telling hand as he shared in a 49-run partnership with West Indies captain Rovman Powell (19) before a brilliant Rutherford throw saw him being dismissed via the run out route.

Powell was bowled by speedster Anrich Nortje (one for 32) shortly after Wellalage's dismissal as the Royals slid to 126 for 16 at the end of 17 overs.

The Royals needed 28 runs off the last three overs, but their chase looked to be in jeopardy at the start of the last over when the experienced Jason Holder (17) was dismissed by John (one for 21).

More drama followed as Theekshana was run out off the fourth ball of



Royals spinner Maheesh Theekshana (R) celebrates the dismissal of Evin Lewis

the final over, with the Royals still needing three runs for victory.

Former West Indies under-19 player Nyeem Young (17 not out off seven balls) calmed the Royals nerves and put a dagger through the hearts of the SKNP fans when he clouted John over long-off for six to seal the win with a ball to spare.

With the win, the Royals joined St Lucia Kings and defending champions Guyana Amazon Warriors on four points and maintained their unbeaten record to start the season. On September 8, the Patriots will aim to snap a four-game losing skid when they host new CPL franchise Antigua and Barbuda Falcons.

Summarised Scores:

ST KITTs & NEVIS PATRIOTS – 153/8 from 20 overs (Wanindu Hasaranga 40, Mikyle Louis 30; Dunith Wellalage 3/35, Maheesh Theekshana 2/16) vs BARBADOS ROYALS – 157/8 from 19.5 overs (D Wellalage 39, Kadeem Alleyne 30; Kyle Mayers 2/17). Royals won by two wickets.

Paralympian earns Silver medal for Trinidad & Tobago

PARA-ATHLETE Akeem Stewart became Trinidad and Tobago's joint-top Paralympic Games medallist when he captured silver in the men's discus throw F64 final at the Stade de France in Paris on September 5.

Stewart, 32, threw a season's best distance of 59.66 metres to earn his third Paralympic Games medal and finished behind the eventual gold medallist, American Jeremy Campbell, who set a new Paralympic record with his blistering 61.14m throw.

Stewart achieved his runner-up distance on the first of six attempts. Campbell also had the edge over Stewart from his first attempt and landed the discus on 60.46m.

Stewart fouled his second and third throws and recorded 56.55m, 58.89m and 57.09m in his final three throws.

Campbell, however, held his best throw for last as he affirmed gold with 61.14m on the sixth throw.

At the 2016 Paralympic Games in Brazil, Stewart captured javelin (F22-44) gold and discus (F43-44) silver.

Claiming bronze was American David Blair (F44) with 57.76m.

He joins compatriot Rachael Marshall, who won double gold (javelin L5/shot put L5) and bronze (100m freestyle L6) at the 1984 Games in New York as the most decorated TT Paralympians.

TT's Paralympic chef de mission Micky Ruben said Stewart is "very happy" with his performance and was elated to seal a podium place in France.

"Akeem said it couldn't have gone better given the obstacles he had to overcome to get this one (medal). Right now, the whole Caribbean community in the Paralympic



Akeem Stewart shows off his Silver medal

Village are over the moon with his performance."

Ruben said they received support from chefs and athletes from other Caribbean nations, who came to the Stade de France to view Stewart's performance. The finish was extra special, he added, since none of TT's 17-member contingent at the Paris Olympics was able to earn a top-three placing at the earlier Games.



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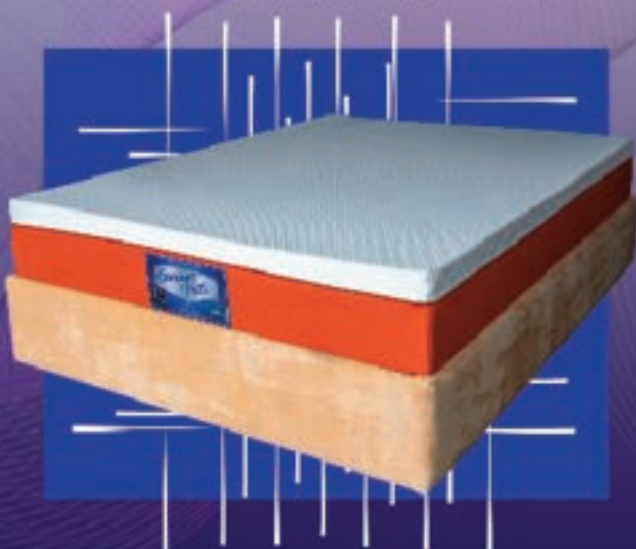
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