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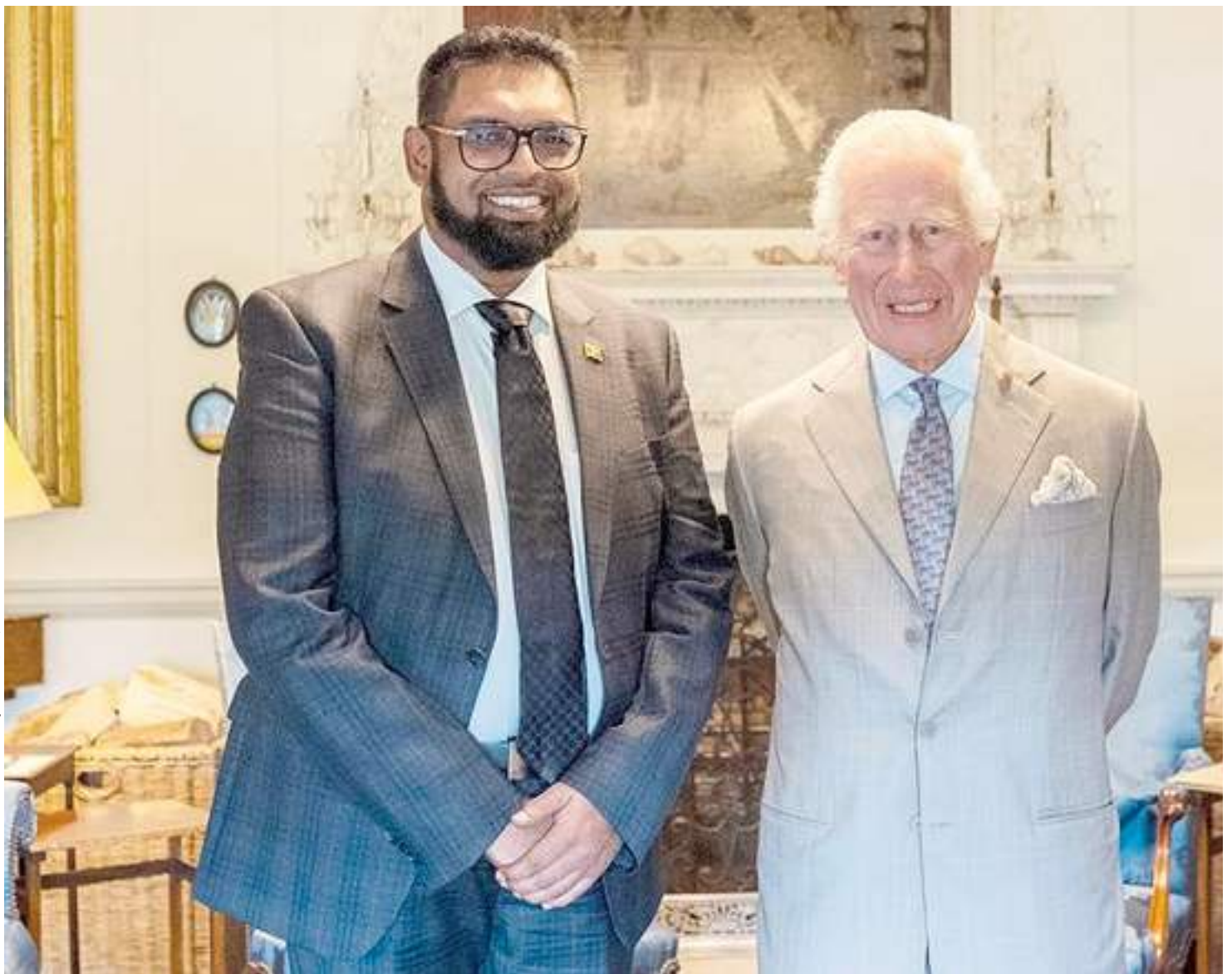


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President Ali Advances LCDS Vision in Scotland with Royal Support

In a series of high-level engagements facilitated by the King's Foundation, His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, visited Scotland this week to advance Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030. The visit follows the King's Foundation's recent engagements in Guyana and the President's announcement that the Foundation would support the next phase of the LCDS, with a particular focus on sustainable urban development. This announcement was made during the President's speech on the LCDS last week, during which he set out how Georgetown could once more be the Garden City of the Caribbean.

His Excellency held a private, one-on-one meeting with His Majesty King Charles III, where they discussed their shared commitment to climate resilience, sustainable development, agriculture, and community-driven initiatives supporting vulnerable populations. Following the meeting, the



King Charles III and President Ali

President said, "We spoke at length about our shared view for the world on the importance of cutting-edge sustainable development solutions. The King has been a long-term supporter of Guyana's LCDS..."

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Guyana, US reaffirm commitment to strengthening bilateral relations

President, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali on Monday met with United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken in New York, where they reaffirmed their shared commitment to fortifying bilateral relations between the two countries.

The discussions centred on Venezuela's political situation and ongoing efforts to address Haiti's security and humanitarian crisis, among other issues.

In a transcript released by the US Department of State, President Ali reiterated Guyana's dedication in upholding the rule of law, democracy, supporting the people of Haiti and facilitating a return to normalcy in the war-torn nation.

"The humanitarian effort that is required here is of utmost importance to us and on a bilateral basis, a strong partnership continues to be built between Guyana and the United States – expanded trade, great collaboration and cooperation in terms of security," the president said.

Amid tensions between Guyana and Venezuela in 2023 due to President Nicolás Maduro

illegitimate claims to the Essequibo region, the United States was one of many international partners that expressed their support for Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

President Ali thanked the US for its formidable show of support, adding that Guyana looks forward to expanding and strengthening a mutual partnership between the two nations.

Secretary Blinken pledged that the US will continue to defend Guyana's territorial integrity as provide support on pressing regional issues.

"We see this partnership in what we're doing together. We see it in the



President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali met with United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken in New York on Monday while the President was in the city for the United Nations Summit

work that we're doing together not only between us but also, for example, in Haiti. Guyana's leadership in CARICOM has been critical.

"And together, I hope we'll continue to support the Multinational Security

Support mission for Haiti ... and we're grateful for the partnership between Guyana and the United States in supporting those efforts," Secretary Blinken affirmed.

The bilateral relationship between

Guyana and the United States is multifaceted, encompassing a range of areas including economic relations, defence, law enforcement, cybersecurity, education and health.

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Contract for e-health record system to be signed soon: Dr Anthony

The government will soon sign a contract for the development of the Electronic Health Record (EHR) system aimed at digitising medical records, thereby revolutionising the health sector.

Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony made this announcement Saturday evening, at the graduation ceremony for the Masters Certificate in Healthcare and Physician Leadership programme at Pegasus Hotel in Kingston, Georgetown.

He explained that the initiative is part of the ministry's broader digital health strategy, which will be rolled out over the coming years.

"At some point, you will have an app on your phone, and you'll be able to see all your health information on the app. Right now, we are working on that. And maybe in another month, we will be signing a contract with a company that would allow us to do that," the health minister further stated.

The EHR will be an integrated and efficient system, containing a patient's medical history, diagnoses, medications, treatments, and test results.

This will enable healthcare

providers to make optimal decisions regarding patient care, improving the overall experience at health institutions across the country.

An evaluation team, which includes the Mount Sinai Health System, has been tasked with ensuring that the best system is selected. Sixteen companies have submitted bids to design, supply, and install the electronic system.

The project is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), with approximately \$1 billion allocated this year to advance the development of the EHR and upgrade software in numerous areas.

"While we are working on that part of it, we're also doing telemedicine and telehealth, and that too, has been transformational. We are seeing how these changes are impacting the lives of people in very remote communities," Minister Anthony underscored.

With the rapid expansion of the health sector, the minister also highlighted that contracts will be signed by the end of 2024 for the construction of five more hospitals, providing quality healthcare to the populace.



Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony addressing the gathering at the Masters Certificate in Healthcare and Physician Leadership programme

While the government is ensuring that the necessary infrastructure and equipment are in place, the human resource capacity is also being strengthened with approximately 1,500 persons currently being trained as registered nurses.

"This, perhaps, is the first wave of changes that we are going to see ... But, as we advance in these directions, we are also going to be changing the things around healthcare... And that

would be part of the next phase of what we will be doing because we want to create a biomedical hub that can contribute to the innovations that we will be seeing in the healthcare sector," Dr Anthony pointed out.

These innovative interventions are part of the government's broader efforts to have a world-class healthcare system.

(DPI)

Guyana's first urban eco-lodge now ready for visitors

Guyana's first state-of-the-art urban eco-lodges are now fully furnished and prepared to openly welcome and house visitors.

President, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali announced the readiness of the 30 accommodations located at Great Diamond, East Bank Demerara on his social media this weekend.

Designed and engineered by DuraVilla Homes under the Ministry of Housing, the eco-lodges are made entirely of sustainably harvested building material from Guyana's rich forestry.

The building material ensures a durable, well-insulated, appealing and environment-friendly oasis getaway for all those staying there.

The ministry saw approximately 120 Guyanese women managing the execution of this revolutionary housing project.

Exemplifying modern hospitality, the eco-lodges feature comfortable amenities including a full-functioning air-conditioning system and spacious patios.

Inside, the naturally varnished interior is lined with stunning Guyanese paintings, truly immersing visitors in the vibrant beauty that is Guyanese culture.

When outside, visitors will be able to gaze at a glamorous sunset as they traverse expansive walkways lined with various species of vibrantly coloured plants.

The eco-lodges are strategically placed only a short distance away from the Guyana National Stadium in Providence.

Photo shows one of the lodges located at Great Diamond, EBD



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From Ambition to Action

Editorial from the Guyana Chronicle, September 25 2024

PRESIDENT Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, in his recent address to the 79th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), has issued a call for the world community to move 'from ambition to action'.

According to the Guyanese President, the task for us is to move from ambition to action in order to effectively deal with a number of global challenges, such as food security, climate change and energy security.

The UN General Assembly is meeting at a time of unprecedented threats to Mankind's survival due to climate change, conflicts and war, notably in the Middle East and Ukraine. The conflict in Palestine, which was initially confined to the Gaza, has now spread to the wider Middle East, engulfing countries such as Lebanon and Iran.

The most recent shellings by the

Israeli military have left hundreds dead in Lebanon. Over 35,000 people, including women and children, were killed in Palestine by the Israeli military.

The call by President Ali for structural reforms at the United Nations cannot be more timely and relevant. He urged world leaders to channel their efforts towards creating an ecosystem of harmony among the environment, people and technology, and promoting human dignity.

These are, indeed, laudable and forward-looking ideas by President Ali, which touch at the root of the problems facing humanity at this time.

It is no secret that humanity is now, more than ever, faced with existential threats caused by climate change, which has impacted adversely on the cost and availability of food supply on the global market. The technological gap between the developed and the developing nations only serve to exacerbate existing disparities.

According to President Ali, "Let us not rehash the climate story; we know it. Climate finance commitments can no longer be postponed. Forests are an integral part of the climate solution, and it is time that a global market-based mechanism for carbon credit be put in place."

These are not statements to be taken lightly. In fact, the position taken by Guyana on a number of global issues are not only exemplary but also evidence-based. Guyana, for instance, is one of the few countries in the world that has committed itself to end deforestation by the end of this decade.

It is the only country in the world that has been the beneficiary of carbon credits, and one of the few that has net zero carbon emissions, thanks to prudent deforestation measures and a low-carbon development trajectory, widely acclaimed as a model for both the developed and developing world.

It speaks to the stature and statesmanship of President Ali that Guyana

is now recognised as a significant player on the global stage, especially in the critical areas of climate change, food and energy security.

It is not surprising that Guyana's leading role in the region, and its firm commitment to regional security, democracy and territorial integrity has been hailed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at a recent meeting in the United States.

President Ali has also recently met with His Majesty King Charles III in Scotland, where the two held discussions regarding Guyana's Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 vision. These high-profile engagements are testimony to Guyana's continuing leadership role on a number of key and critical areas, with a focus on sustainable development, and a fair and just international community.

President Ali must be commended for his proactive and visionary leadership role, not only in the region but at the wider international level.

Behaviour change important in fight against dengue

Dear Editor,

THERE is deep concern over the outbreak of the dengue disease in Guyana. The reported cases for January and February, 2024 of over one million in neighboring Brazil (with which Guyana shares the south-western border) and where there exists cross border travel and trade, heightens the people's anxiety.

Guyana has gone through the trauma of COVID-19 and did exceptionally well to control that disease, but she does not want to walk again on a similar track. Naturally, Guyanese are also worried about the outbreak of the dengue disease for which there is no specific treatment in Guyana, other than infected persons taking tablets for pain and fever.

Dengue is spread by the aedes aegypti and the aedes albopictus mosquitoes. The aedes mosquito also spreads malaria and Zika. Symptoms of dengue are usually high fever, headache, vomiting, and rash. It is estimated by World Health Organisation (WHO) that between 100 million to 400 million peo-

ple are infected per year.

Guyana as of August 24, 2024 had 17,042 cases (8,389 new cases and 8,653 old cases in 2024). The Ministry conducted RDT tests on 31,669 persons and a positive rate of 26 per cent was recorded. The number of infected persons hospitalised as of August 24, 2024 was 909 (or 5.3 per cent of reported infected cases), while five persons died.

I need to give context to this health challenge. The PPP/C government recognises that physical infrastructural growth (roads, bridges, hotels, etc) must be accompanied by significant changes in the social sector like education, health, legal and social welfare.

The way how people view these sectors is how they would embrace the changes taking place. It is vital, therefore, that they are prepared to change old attitudes that would not be compatible with the new ones emerging out of modernisation.

Changes in attitudes are fundamental. With respect to the legal sys-

tem, for example, I paraphrase Marx's famous dictum: "You cannot make old laws [and attitudes] the foundation of a new social development any more than these old laws [and attitudes] created the old social conditions."

The weekly grassroots mobilisation, combined with modernising of the education sector, and the thrust to make Guyana a world class provider of healthcare services (producing healthier workers and families) are part of the process to get people to accept attitudinal changes.

It is for this reason that the government is creating a modern healthcare system and has allocated in 2024 the second biggest budget amount (G\$129.8 billion). Given that there is no specific medication to treat dengue, the question is: "How would the government control the spread of dengue and allay the public's concern?"

Health minister, Dr. Frank Anthony says that much work, therefore, has to focus on prevention. The ministry has distributed 50,000 medicated mosquito nettings that last for

three years to people who live in the high-risk areas of Regions One, Two, Four, Six, Nine, and 10. They also would spray and disinfect the surrounding neighborhoods (a process called fogging) where pools of water or open receptacles exist that favour the breeding of mosquitoes. One mosquito could lay as much as 200 eggs per day.

At the institutional level, Dr Anthony says that responsibility for mosquito control is being devolved unto the NDCs, which are better positioned to monitor and to implement preventive measures.

The ministry is providing the tools and supplies (fogging machines, mosquito nettings, insecticides, etc) and training. The ministry will continue to monitor the overall situation and offer technical assistance.

To control any infectious disease also requires citizens' behavioural change. In this way, Guyana will control dengue as it did with COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Dr. Tara Singh



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More and more people falling for online apartment rental scams

By Suruj Singh
LJI REPORTER

Suraj Thomas from Kitchener, Ont., thought he was cautious about online rental scams, but he was shocked to find himself a victim.

Police in the Waterloo region have identified at least 35 individuals affected by a recent rental scam that has resulted in a collective loss of \$40,000.

In early August, with his lease ending, Thomas spotted a Facebook Marketplace ad for a two-bedroom apartment in Laurentian Hills priced at \$1,900 a month.

After reaching out via the provided contact number, he was connected with someone claiming to be the current tenant.

Thomas visited the apartment twice and was told the tenant needed to vacate due to a job move to Nova Scotia.

Excited to secure the place with a friend, Thomas submitted various documents, including ID and pay stubs, and transferred \$4,100 for the first and last month's rent deposit.

However, on the day they were supposed to meet the alleged owner for the keys, they received no response to their calls or messages.

"That's when we realized something was off," Thomas recalled.

Their concern deepened when they spoke to a building representative, who informed them that many others had also been scammed trying to rent the same apartment.

"It was shocking and devastating," Thomas said. "We lost our money, and now we have no place to go."

Attempts to reach both the alleged tenant and owner received no replies.

The apartment is owned by Greenwin Corp., which issued a statement acknowl-

edging the scam and confirming that it had no connection to their operations. They emphasized that prospective tenants must apply through the building, not individual owners.

Unfortunately, scams like this are not limited to Kitchener; similar reports have emerged across Canada.

Jason Van Kalsbeek from the Waterloo Regional Police Service confirmed the 35 victims involved in Thomas's case have filed reports, but no charges have been made yet.

Another recent scam in the University District of Waterloo also affected multiple victims.

While both scams share similarities, Van Kalsbeek noted they are not linked. He attributed the rise of such incidents to advances in technology, stating, "Scammers are emotionally manipulative and technically savvy.

Often, the money is sent overseas, making recovery difficult.

In 2023, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre reported 508 cases of rental fraud, totaling over \$820,000 in losses.

Detective Sergeant John Armit, who works with the CAFC, explained the challenges law enforcement faces in these cases, including the time it takes to secure financial records and the complexity of tracking funds that are often moved through various channels, including cryptocurrencies.

Thomas pointed out that the same Kitchener scam listing has reappeared on Facebook Marketplace, raising his concerns that more people might fall victim.

As the investigation continues, police are determined to apprehend those involved, suspecting the person showing the apartment had some connection to the perpetrator.



Shocking and devastating is how victims describe the apartment scam

Alleged Porsche thief facing more charges in GTA

An 18-year-old woman who allegedly stole a Porsche and then ran over its owner in a caught-on-video incident in Mississauga earlier this month is now facing auto theft charges in Toronto.

Toronto police say that the suspect was charged on Monday while still in the custody of Peel Regional Police.

She is accused of being involved in two incidents that took place in Toronto's west end over the span of five days earlier this month.

In the first incident on Sept. 11, a male and female attended a residence near Kipling Avenue and Rathburn Road for a pre-arranged meeting to purchase the victim's vehicle.

Police say that the victim allowed the pair to enter the vehicle to view its interior and test out the engine, at which point they immediately drove away from the area.

The vehicle, a black 2021 BMW X6 with Ontario licence plate CPXC183, has not been recovered.

The second incident happened on Sept. 16 in the Dufferin Street and Yorkdale Road area.

This time police say that the same suspects attended a parking lot for a pre-arranged meeting to purchase the victim's vehicle.

However, police say that the female suspect was "acting very nervous," which prompted the victim to end the interaction and leave the area.

News of the charges against the suspect come after she turned herself in to Peel police on Sept. 19 following the release of a video that showed the shocking theft of a Porsche from a driveway near Winston Churchill Boulevard and Eglinton Avenue in Mississauga on the afternoon of Sept. 6

In that video, a young woman is seen knocking on the home's door and telling the victim that she is waiting for her father and is interested in "taking a look" at the Porsche after responding to an Auto Trader advertisement.

The video then cuts to the driveway, where the suspect can be seen in the driver's seat of the Porsche. As the vehicle turns on and moves slightly, the victim tries to get inside before making his way to the rear of the vehicle.



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A Petroleum Commission would not magically prevent corruption



Joel Bhagwandin

REFERENCE is made to a Kaieteur News (KN) article published in its September 15, 2024, edition, with the caption "For Guyana to prosper with its oil politicians must be replaced with a competent Petroleum Commission—TT specialist".

I don't know where KN finds these "specialists" from, but this latest specialist dug up by KN, is a known Trinidadian "talker", Mr. Kuarla Rampersad.

That aside, his reasoning is quite illogical because he thinks that experts are incorruptible. Politicians are not the only ones who are corrupt, experts are perhaps more corrupt than politicians.

What is interesting though is that this so-called specialist has the audacity

to lecture Guyana on what is good for its prosperity, but the same thing he wants for Guyana, is absent in his own country.

I confirmed that Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) has no such petroleum commission, a country that has been in the oil and gas business for more than a century. Is he suggesting, therefore, that the Trinidadian politicians are corrupt and therefore there is/was no prosperity in T&T?

I would argue that a petroleum commission is not necessary. Those same experts should be recruited within the ministry and other regulatory agencies.

The disadvantage with a petroleum commission of sorts is that it

could move in the opposite direction that the country intends to go as a matter of its public policy. In our case, the policy is to ramp up production as fast as possible and to extract maximum resources as fast as possible, considering that there is a relatively short window to do so.

We are in an era where we cannot afford to move at snail's pace in an industry that is increasingly evolving.

On the issue of corruption, this is why it is important to have a robust legal framework, parliamentary oversight, and strong institutions. As such, strengthening of the overarching governance and legislative framework for the sector is paramount. Are we doing this as a country? The answer is yes.

It is foolish to think that experts are not corrupt, and that a petroleum commission will magically prevent corruption. There is no such guarantee.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to note that the existing institutions, such as the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) and the auditors have been doing a commendable job in terms of uncovering financial and other irregularities through the cost recovery audits.

There are at least three cases in the sector that are the subject of arbitration, of which one landed in the local court (the inflated invoice by a Trinidadian firm). These examples are good indicators that the existing institutions are working effectively.

Jagdeo highlights plans for Budget 2025

The significance of the upcoming year for the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) administration, was underscored by Vice President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, who emphasised the Administration's commitment to fulfilling the promises made during the 2020 elections.

Speaking during a high-level meeting with government officials and senior public servants, on Tuesday (September 24, 2024), Jagdeo stated that 2025 would be pivotal for the government to complete its electoral commitments. "This is a very important year for us because we expect to complete the list of promises we made to the electorate when we were contesting the elections," he remarked.

The Vice President highlighted the PPP/C's belief in the delivery of commitments, noting that "the promises you make to people have to be fulfilled." While the administration has made significant progress, particularly in the areas of tax relief and social measures, he acknowledged that some tasks remain outstanding. However, he expressed confidence that these remaining objectives would be achieved

soon.

Addressing agency heads, responsible for managing 95 per cent of the country's public spending, he stressed the importance of remaining focused on serving the people and managing resources efficiently.

He referenced a recent government circular outlining expectations for improved efficiency and cautioned against expecting substantial increases in the recurrent budget annually. Jagdeo emphasised that while wages and salaries have already seen a substantial boost, with the wage bill having been increased by \$90 billion, further expansion of recurrent expenditures should be monitored closely. "We are going to pay careful attention to any significant growth in the recurrent expenditures, outside of wages and salaries," he said.

Jagdeo explained that the PPP/C's election promises were crafted conservatively to ensure they were financially feasible. "Our promises, although they seemed a lot, were very conservative... we did not make promises we could not fund," he noted. He contrasted this approach with that of the previous admin-

istration, which, according to Jagdeo, made numerous promises that could not be realized.

Despite the conservative nature of the manifesto, Jagdeo revealed that the government has already gone beyond those promises, implementing additional measures aligned with a broader, long-term strategic vision for Guyana. "All the measures we have implemented beyond the promises were guided by a strategic vision... they are all leading to the completion of the end goal for Guyana," he said.

He pointed to key government strategies such as the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and the National Development Strategy, which serve as blueprints for the nation's future.

While the country is set to benefit significantly from oil revenues, he urged caution, noting the volatility of global oil prices. "The best days for oil revenues are ahead of us, particularly if the current prices hold globally... but there is a real risk of a price collapse," he warned. Jagdeo emphasised the need for fiscal prudence in the recurrent budget to avoid locking the govern-

ment into unsustainable spending commitments in the face of unpredictable oil markets.

Budget 2025, expected to be presented early in the new year, is already in the preparation stages.

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, echoed Vice President Jagdeo's remarks on the budget's importance, indicating that it would continue building on the progress outlined in the 2024 budget.

The 2024 budget, which amounted to \$1.146 trillion, set out a comprehensive plan for improving the livelihoods of Guyanese citizens.

The meeting was attended by Permanent Secretaries, Regional Executive Officers (REOs) from all ten regions, and Chief Executive Officers from key public sector entities such as the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and Guyana Power and Light (GPL). The continued focus on fiscal responsibility and strategic growth was emphasized throughout the discussion, signaling the government's commitment to sustainable development as preparations for Budget 2025 advance.



Brian Tiwarie, OMC, AA - CEO



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Farm workers in Niger carry their produce on their heads through rough jungle areas

FAO urges swift action as La Niña threatens global food security

THE Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has called for immediate global action to address the impending impacts of La Niña.

It follows one of the strongest 2023-2024 El Niño climate events on record that affected more than 60 million people worldwide, including severe droughts in Southern Africa.

FAO's La Niña Anticipatory Action and Response Plan details essential anticipatory actions and early responses to act ahead of threats, safeguard the livelihoods of rural communities at high risk, and help vulnerable farming communities to mitigate negative effects on agriculture and food production.

Anticipated between September and November 2024 and expected to persist through January to March 2025, La Niña is expected to bring weather extremes with severe consequences for food security, particularly as around 282 million people already face acute food insecurity and urgently need assistance.

La Niña, a climate phenomenon characterised by the cooling of central and eastern Pacific waters, disrupts global weather patterns. It occurs every two to seven years and lasts between

nine to 12 months. Climate change is driving an intensification in the frequency and impact of climate extremes such as those induced by El Niño and La Niña.

FAO's plan to protect the at-risk communities has a two-pronged approach – to act ahead of forecasted shocks to prevent their impacts and to deliver immediate assistance, where devastation from La Niña could not be avoided.

The plan is proactive and risk-based, designed to ensure that vulnerable families receive support ahead of forecasted hazards, while simultaneously taking an adaptive approach to ensure that resources are re-allocated to where they are most needed, as conditions evolve.

It has three key objectives:

Protect people ahead of La Niña-induced disaster impacts through anticipatory actions, such as helping fishers protect their boats ahead of storms, reinforcing river embankments ahead of floods, distributing drought-tolerant seeds to small-scale farmers and protecting livestock health.

Capitalise on the positive spillover effects of La Niña and offset losses, for example by supplying seeds to flood-affected farmers so they can plant and

regain a harvest as flood waters recede.

Deliver early response where La Niña causes devastation, including through prepositioning the most time-sensitive supplies such as veterinary medicines, seeds and water bladders, while providing cash to severely affected families to meet their most immediate needs.

FAO is urgently seeking donor support for its plan and requires \$318 million to provide critical support to 10.5 million people across 39 high-risk countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Funds are needed most urgently to implement anticipatory actions, as triggers for these actions have already been reached in parts of the Greater Horn of Africa and Latin America.

According to FAO assessments, for every \$1 invested in anticipatory action, there is a return for farming families of more than \$7 in avoided losses and added benefits. With 282 million people already facing acute food insecurity globally, the stakes are high, and immediate action is required to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

As La Niña approaches, the expected impacts on global food security include altered rainfall patterns, with

increased risks of heavy rains and flooding in some regions and drought in others. Countries in Southern Africa, East Africa, Latin America, and parts of Southeast Asia face significant threats to agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods.

Over 60 million people were affected globally by the 2023-2024 El Niño, which brought extreme weather events such as droughts, heatwaves and floods. Vulnerable regions like Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa were hit hardest, worsening food insecurity in areas already under strain.

FAO, in collaboration with governments and partners, responded to the El Niño crisis through anticipatory actions and emergency interventions in 24 at-risk countries in Asia, East and Southern Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The organisation supported 1.7 million vulnerable farmers, helping safeguard livelihoods and food security.

However, the upcoming La Niña event, anticipated between September and November 2024, poses new threats, including droughts, floods, and cyclones, which could further exacerbate food insecurity in already struggling regions. (FAO)

Significant decline in suicide —Gov't clinical psychologist

A SUBSTANTIAL reduction in suicide attempts and actual suicides has been observed in recent times, according to Dr. Mark Constantine, Clinical psychologist, and Head of Psychology Services, Training, and Education at the Mental Health Unit. Speaking on a recent episode of the Health Ministry's 'Health Matters' programme, Dr. Constantine credited the Ministry of Health and its Mental Health Unit for their aggressive efforts in suicide prevention.

"This is largely due to the aggressive work that has been carried out by the Ministry of Health and, by extension, the Mental Health Unit," said Dr. Constantine, emphasising that awareness and intervention have been pivotal in addressing the country's mental health crisis.

The psychologist highlighted several contributing factors to suicide, including depression, schizophrenia, chronic anxiety, and social factors like drug or alcohol addiction and relationship issues.

He also sought to clarify common misconceptions about suicide. He noted that one of the biggest misunderstandings is the belief that individuals who commit suicide do so because they want to die. "That, of course, is a myth. That is not a fact. Persons commit suicide because they wanted to end the pain, they wanted to end the struggle. They wanted a solution to whatever challenges they were dealing with." He went on to explain that for a person suffering from clinical depression, life can feel like standing in a tunnel with no light at either end.

"When they look left or in front of them, there's no light. They look behind, and there's no light either. What we have to do is show them the light."

Dr Constantine highlighted the dual-edged nature of social media when it comes to suicide. He points out that while social media can be influential, it can also be dangerous.

Specifically, he pointed out that

there are websites and online communities that provide harmful content, including detailed instructions or methods for suicide.

According to him, this accessibility to harmful information can increase the likelihood of someone who is already vulnerable or struggling with mental health issues to attempt suicide.

By acknowledging this, Dr. Constantine highlighted the need for responsible use of social media and the importance of monitoring harmful content that could negatively impact those at risk.

However, he also pointed out that social media can serve as a platform for spreading positive messages and offering support to those struggling with mental health challenges.

The Mental Health Unit, according to Dr. Constantine, provides free therapy and counselling services to individuals in need. These services are confidential, allowing people to seek help without fear of judgement or exposure. "Here, we practise confidentiality," he said, encouraging more individuals to take advantage of the support available to them.

Dr. Constantine stressed that suicide prevention has evolved over the years, largely due to increased awareness. He emphasised that combating suicide requires a collective effort, stating, "The prevention of suicide comes with a lot of awareness. We spread a lot of awareness. It is very important for me to say that trying to alleviate the scourge of suicide is not a one-man show. And we are not going to be successful if we approach it from that angle. It is basically everybody's business to try to prevent suicide.

"As a result of that, the Ministry of Health and the Mental Health Unit... we have been partnering with different agencies and NGOs [non-governmental organisations] in trying to prevent this problem that we have. And we do so through training sessions,



Clinical psychologist, Dr. Mark Constantine

printing of educational materials, awareness in schools. At the community level, we have partnered with NGOs that are doing a lot of work in this area. They have done so by going into communities across all 10 administrative regions and spread the message of suicide prevention and awareness," he added.

The clinical psychologist shared about the positive public response to suicide awareness campaigns, stating that there has been widespread accept-

ance of the information and resources provided. He said that this suggests that people recognise the seriousness of the issue and understand that suicide prevention is a shared responsibility.

He then stressed the importance of family and friends in identifying warning signs of someone at risk of suicide. These signs can include isolation, discussing death, giving away possessions, saying goodbye to loved ones, or increased substance use.

'Irrefutable' need for global regulation of AI

THE imperative for global regulation of the booming artificial intelligence field, or AI, is "irrefutable", a new report from a UN expert group said on Thursday, adding that development and use of such a technology "cannot be left to the whims of markets alone".

"The very nature of the technology itself – transboundary in structure and application – necessitates a global approach," the final report from the UN Secretary-General appointed panel concludes.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming our world, from opening new areas of scientific inquiry and optimising energy grids, to improving public health and agriculture and promoting progress on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, while there is tremendous potential for good, left unregulated, the benefits of AI could be limited to only a handful of pioneering States, companies and individuals, widening the digital divide and inequality.

In an effort to mitigate these risks, the report proposes several recommendations to establish a framework for AI global governance.

There is also utmost concern expressed in the report about the ways in which AI may be used to infringe on human rights.

The very raw materials needed for AI technologies – including critical minerals – are globally sourced, leading to a battle for power and wealth over these rare commodities on a global scale.

Further, autonomous weapons sys-

tems could make decisions without human intervention, raising ethical and legal questions about accountability and the protection of civilians during conflicts. Increasing potential for an arms race driven by advancements in AI technology could also endanger human security.

AI bias and surveillance is yet another area of concern, with the creation and dissemination of disinformation potentially harming civilians.

Disparities are already beginning to appear. In terms of representation, whole parts of the world have been left out of international AI governance conversations. For instance, just seven countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and US) are parties to seven prominent non-UN AI initiatives, whereas 118

countries, primarily in the Global South, are parties to none.

"Equity demands that more voices play meaningful roles in decisions about how to govern technology that affects us," the report states.

"The concentration of decision-making in the AI technology sector cannot be justified; we must also recognize that historically many communities have been entirely excluded from AI governance conversations that impact them," it added.

To address these concerns, the UN expert group is proposing several recommendations for regulating the use of AI.

The group also stressed that any deployment of AI in military settings must comply with international humanitarian law

Guyana takes centre stage at WTO public forum in Geneva

GUYANA has once again taken new steps and continues to gain recognition on the world stage. In a week-long series of public forums at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) headquarters, Guyana emerged as a prominent voice advocating for more equitable global trade policies and highlighting the unique challenges faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

From September 9 to 14, 2024, ministers, government officials, and experts from around the world convened in Geneva to discuss leveraging trade for development as part of the WTO's 30th-anniversary celebrations. The forum, themed "Re-globalisation for Inclusive Trade," aimed to address the uneven distribution of trade benefits and explore strategies for a more inclusive future.

Guyana's delegation, led by Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Oneidge Walrond and Ambassador Dr Leslie Ramsammy, played a pivotal role in multiple high-profile panel discussions.

Minister Walrond, speaking at a panel on "Inclusive Policies, Global Impact: Ensuring the Best Use of Special and Differential Treatment," emphasised Guyana's commitment to trade liberalisation and market access, particularly in developing its agricultural sector.

"Guyana pursues an open trade policy and, in the context of CARICOM, fully embraces free trade," Walrond stated. She called for improvements in the global approach to Special and Differential Treatment



Dr Leslie Ramsammy

(SDT) to ensure better market access for key food staples from Guyana and other SIDS countries, especially in light of the disproportionate impact of climate change on these nations.

In a separate panel titled "The Big Blue Agenda: Can SIDS Thrive in a Re-globalised World?", Walrond addressed the challenges SIDS face in pursuing the Blue Economy. She highlighted Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and its potential for diversifying the economy through Green and Blue Economy initiatives.

Ambassador Ramsammy participated in a panel discussion on "Global

Trade and Food Security: The Contribution of Latin America and the Caribbean." He presented a stark picture of global hunger, noting that despite progress between 1990 and 2010, more than 735 million people worldwide experienced hunger in 2022, an increase of 120 million since 2019.

Ambassador Ramsammy boldly questioned why 250 million people in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region experience hunger when the area produces more than 17 per cent of the world's food and accounts for over 45 per cent of global agri-food exports. He attributed part of the problem

to an inequitable trade system, highlighting low intraregional trade and unbalanced foreign direct investment flows.

The ambassador showcased Guyana's unique proactive approach to addressing food security and trade imbalances. Among them, President Irfaan Ali's "25 by 25" Food Security Initiative, aiming to reduce CARICOM's \$6 billion food import bill by 25 per cent by the end of 2025.

Ambassador Ramsammy addressed the significant increases in Guyana's agricultural budget, rising from about \$65 million in 2019 to approximately \$600 million in 2024. He also cited the highly anticipated projected increases in rice production to over 700,000 tons in 2024.

Still on the matter of agriculture, Ambassador Ramsammy outlined plans for Guyana to meet 100 per cent of its soya and corn needs by 2026/2027 and become an exporter by 2028. Moreover, he discussed the introduction of new crops to reduce imports and boost exports, including millet, beans, potatoes, onions, garlic, grapes, wheat, and quinoa.

Ambassador Ramsammy also highlighted Guyana's achievements in climate action and the Blue Economy. He addressed Guyana's immense success in selling certified carbon credits, earning \$750 million. Topics such as mangrove restoration efforts and promotion of small enterprises in the Blue Economy sector were discussed. Moreover, he mentioned the 755 per cent increase in brackish shrimp production between 2021 and 2023.

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

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\$15.8B Govt Office Complex progressing smoothly – Edghill

Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, has firmly rebutted the unfounded claims made by Opposition Member Annette Ferguson regarding the \$15.8 billion Government Office Complex. He emphasised that this project has been transparently discussed and is a crucial initiative aimed at modernising government infrastructure and consolidating services for all Guyanese.

In his address, the minister provided a comprehensive update on the project, confirming that as of September 2024, it is 6% complete.

Key milestones achieved include:

- 99% completion of all legal work and preliminary processes
- 100% completion of geotechnical investigation stage one
- 100% completion of land clearing for 20 acres
- 100% mobilisation of site offices
- 100% confirmation of the actual site location by the Ministry of Public Works
- 99% completion of sand filling for both temporary and permanent works on 13 acres
- 100% completion of conceptual design
- 95% completion of geotechnical investigation stage two
- 25% completion of detailed design

The work completed thus far includes extensive offsite preparations, such as steel fabrication, which are essential for the timely construction of this modern facility. Minister Edghill emphasised that the current lack of visible activity on-site does not indicate a slowdown, rather much of the work is currently offsite, with steel being fabricated in factories before being assembled on the location.

The minister noted that this reflects the meticulous planning required for a project of this scale.

When the contract was signed, a



An artist's impression of what the new government complex will look like

total of \$2.6 billion was paid as the mobilisation advance. All other payments will be, or are made, based on measured deliverables. Assuring the public that everything will be done to ensure that the project remains on track for completion by August 23, 2026, the minister called for an end to the “recklessness” of the opposition’s rhetoric.

This transformative project is expected to significantly alleviate traffic congestion and parking challenges for citizens seeking access to government services. Strategically located in Eccles, the complex features three entry points accessible from major roadways, including the Demerara Harbour Bridge, the Ogle East Bank bypass, and Heroes Highway.



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‘Time to move from ambition to action’, Ali tells world leaders at UN Summit

CRUCIAL reforms are required at the level of the United Nations (UN) to ensure global issues are addressed urgently and effectively, President, Dr Irfaan Ali said during his firm presentation at the “Summit of the Future”- sixth plenary session, on Monday.

Guyana’s Head of State urged world leaders to channel their efforts towards creating an ecosystem of harmony among the environment, people, and technology, and promoting human dignity.

“The task for us now is to move from ambition to action,” Dr Ali said, pointing to the key issues which include climate security, food security and energy security.

“Let us not rehash the climate story. We know it. We must act now. Climate finance commitments can no longer be postponed. Forests are an integral part of the climate solution, and it is time that a global market-based mechanism for carbon credit be put in place.

“Our global food security continues to deteriorate, and the projections are alarming. It is estimated that \$90 billion in annual Global Financing will be needed between now and 2030 to provide a basic social safety net; if you’re not able to meet the basic need of feeding our people the entire agenda 2030 is in peril,” President Ali said.

He further pointed out that the digital divide must be bridged to ensure artificial intelligence (AI) benefits everyone.

The Head of State reiterated that reforms are needed in global institutions, including the Security Council, to ensure inclusivity and peace.

He reasoned: “You must not be divided on addressing the digital divide. Too many, too many still lack the basic [ability] of connectivity. AI can be a positive game changer for humanity, but also has the potential to widen the gap between countries and people if we do not bridge the digital divide. Our global community has a responsibility to ensure that AI is, of course, for good that benefits everyone.”

President Ali further pointed out that leaders must define an implementation plan for the future to address the challenges in building a life of dignity for every global citizen.

He alluded to the deteriorating global food security and the alarming projections for the next decade.

“We must reform international financial architecture and make it more inclusive and conducive to sustainable development for all, but sustainable development cannot flourish without peace and security. We must end and prevent wars. The Security Council must also be reformed to be more representative, responsive and democratic, if not, it will lose both its credibility and relevance,” Dr Ali said.

The Head of State also highlighted the importance of addressing gender-based violence, poverty, and education



President Irfaan Ali as he addressed the UN Summit earlier this week

for women and youth, aiming for a sustainable future that meets the needs of all global citizens.

He emphasised: “The future we envision must target, directly, the more than 340 million women and girls projected to live in poverty by 2030. It must also address the 110 million young women and girls projected to remain out of school by 2030; the 24 per cent of women and girls projected to be food insecure; and the 245 million women and girls that [sic] would experience sexual or gender-based violence by 2030.”

A sustainable future, Dr Ali said, must be built in mind of the aspirations of the 1.3 million additional youths the

world will have by 2030.

The Head of State is currently leading a delegation in New York. On Wednesday, he will address the General Debate and participate in several bilateral meetings with other Heads of State, such as Santiago Pena, President of Paraguay and Daniel Noboa, President of Ecuador.

According to the UN, the General Debate is the annual meeting of Heads of State and Government of the 193 UN member states. It takes place at the beginning of the General Assembly session, often known as UNGA.

It is usually the first debate of the session and, with the exception of the

concurrent high-level meetings, the only one in which Heads of State and Heads of Government regularly participate.

From the UNGA, President Ali is expected to travel to the United Kingdom on the invitation of Concordia and Oxford University to address climate-studies students on the Guyana case study and its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) model.

While in the United Kingdom, President Ali is scheduled to meet with newly appointed Foreign Secretary David Lammy and receive the People’s Choice Award as the Caribbean’s Global Leader 2024.

Housing Ministry advances development in Experiment Village, WCB

THE Ministry of Housing and Water is making significant strides in the establishment of a housing development in Experiment Village, West Coast Berbice (WCB), Region Five. This initiative is part of the government's broader effort to provide affordable housing and improve living standards for citizens.

In 2023, the ministry allocated several house lots in the area and constructed 20 low-income homes. During a recent visit to the village, the story of 61-year-old Hansrane Salick highlighted the impact of the housing initiative. Salick, who now resides in one of the newly constructed homes with her two daughters, aged 24 and 18, shared that prior to moving into their new home in May, they had been living in a rented property. While her home still requires some improvements, she expressed a sense of pride in owning her own house, stating that it has brought stability and security to her family.

Salick's story is just one example of the transformative power of the housing programme, which is central to the ministry's goal of distributing 50,000 house lots by the end of next year. The ministry's housing development programme is designed to implement national housing and settlement policies through a well-planned, coordinated framework aimed at developing sustainable, affordable and modern communities.

Over the past four years, the Ministry of Housing and Water has launched several initiatives to meet these goals. These include the Single Window System, an online permit application system for land use and development; the Home Construction Assistance programme; and the Home



Some of the completed homes in Experiment, WCB

Subsidy Programme. As of this year, the ministry has distributed over 30,000 land titles and transports, allocated more than 30,468 residential and commercial lots, and constructed over 1,121 homes for citizens across the country.

One of the ministry's latest projects, the Homestead Programme, was recently launched on the Soesdyke-

Linden Highway. This ambitious initiative will see the construction of 500 houses for single mothers over the next six months. Each house will come equipped with agricultural facilities and solar power, creating a self-sustaining ecosystem for residents. This innovative approach is aimed not only at addressing immediate housing needs, but also at providing long-term financial stability and self-sufficiency for single mothers.

During the International Building Expo in August, President, Dr Irfaan Ali spoke about the potential of this housing model, which integrates agriculture, solar energy, and economic activities within each household plot. "We are creating an economic model that offers single mothers the opportu-

nity to earn and repay their loans while improving their living conditions," Dr Ali said. The inclusion of agricultural activities and solar energy is designed to reduce energy costs while providing residents with an opportunity to generate incomes.

This holistic approach to housing and community development reflects the government's commitment to improving the lives of Guyanese citizens.

By combining major sectors such as housing, agriculture, and renewable energy, the ministry is working to create a model of self-sufficiency that could be replicated across the country, ultimately contributing to the development of vibrant and economically sustainable communities.



Hansrane Salick in front of her new home

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Digitisation push to increase comfort, security, economic growth

GUYANA is making significant strides in its national digitisation efforts, which promise to improve comfort, security, and business expansion across the country, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, General Secretary of the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) has said.

Dr. Jagdeo, at his weekly news conference last Thursday, highlighted that the government was moving closer to implementing its digitisation strategy, which will see the streamlining of several processes to be more efficient and enhance security.

With the highest level of biometrics and technology, the government, he noted, was in the first phase of rolling out its ‘Safe Guyana’ project, which will see 24-hour monitoring through smart cameras. These are intended to provide the authorities with the relevant intelligence needed to track criminal activities.

“There is a third project we have. It’s called a Safe Guyana project. That’s where we have now the first phase. There is a monitoring centre now with the high-resolution smart cameras in Region Four. Those have now been deployed to Regions Three and Six, the most populous regions outside of four.”

“These cameras that would give us valuable intelligence and allow us to intercept criminals should we need to do that,” he explained further, pointing out that these cameras will also have running predictive software to anticipate high crime areas so that security personnel can be deployed where necessary.

“We’re expanding this around the country.

“These would be able to do electronically tracking [for example] vehicles to assist with giving, say, e-tickets without even having a policeman to stop someone for speeding,” he said.

A digital database will also be established and would be linked to information such as births, deaths, marriage records, criminal data on the databases where authorities have fingerprints.

“For example, a camera has facial recognition software on it, and we have now the biometrics of everyone in a database, you can find people easily... they could be recognised easily if there is any criminal activity.”

Dr. Jagdeo also noted that the government was also working to establish its electronic patient record system.

“Once you have your record in this system, even in the public hospital you would be able to take that to a private hospital should you go there. The doctors from the private hospital if you do an X-ray, your entire history will be here.”

In this year’s fiscal package, funds were put aside to develop the electronic medical health record system.

Late last year, Health Minister, Dr. Frank Anthony, had revealed that the government was evaluating bids that were submitted for the provision of a comprehensive electronic health records system here.

At that time, he noted that they have been working assiduously on digital health and added that in 2024 they would set up a new department regarding digital health in the ministry.

Dr. Jagdeo also noted that fully automated and paperless processes will be implemented at Guyana’s airports by the end of this year. The new upgrade, Dr. Jagdeo said, will allow for pre-screening of passengers, and the use of automated gates, where travellers can simply swipe

their identification documents for expedited entry.

He, however, noted that this system would also easily flag discrepancies.

The General Secretary pointed out that upon entry and screening, all necessary information will be recorded by the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA).

“When you enter into the country, immediately that record goes to a government central database that will be able to track you if you come in on a short-term visa. So, if you overstay, you get flagged; if you come in on a particular visa, you can’t get a work permit,” Dr. Jagdeo said. “We can know who is coming into our country. We can keep our people secure...:



Bharrat Jagdeo

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Gov't boosts private sector growth

Despite global challenges, Dr Singh stated that the government remains committed to a sustainable and resilient development. A key element of economic growth is the cultivation and support of a conducive environment for Guyana's private sector to flourish.

Guyana's GDP surged by an impressive 49.7 per cent in the first half of 2024, with the non-oil economic sector expanding by 12.6 per cent.

According to Dr Singh, this remarkable growth has stimulated a dynamic private sector, which continues to innovate and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

"Given the rate of growth and given the rapid emergence of new opportunities, including and in particular in the oil and gas sector, what you are seeing is several Guyanese companies entering or engaging in lines of activities that perhaps previously they might not have been engaged in," Dr. Singh said.

Recognising that Guyana may lack the experience to take advantage of opportunities within the oil and gas sector, the local private sector has been engaging in joint ventures and strategic partnerships.

Government support is also evident through the enactment and enforcement of the local content framework, which incentivises partnerships between Guyanese and international companies.

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Ali meets with King Charles to discuss Low Carbon Development Strategies

President Irfaan Ali met with King Charles in Scotland to discuss Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030. The visit follows the King’s Foundation’s recent engagements in Guyana and the President’s announcement that the Foundation would support the next phase of the LCDS, with a particular focus on sustainable urban development. This announcement was made during the Ali’s speech on the LCDS last week, during which he set out how Georgetown could once more be the Garden City of the Caribbean.

Ali held a one-on-one meeting with His Majesty King Charles III, where they discussed their shared commitment to climate resilience, sustainable development, agriculture, and community-driven initiatives supporting vulnerable populations. Following the meeting, the President said, “We spoke at length about our shared view for the world on the importance of cutting-edge sustainable development solutions. The King has been a long-term supporter of Guyana’s LCDS, which he has highlighted as a global example since it was launched in 2009. I am optimistic that we will work together as partners in the years ahead, especially with the new LCDS priorities—



President Irfaan Ali met with King Charles in Scotland

including sustainable urban development, biodiversity, and water management.”

Reflecting on his visit, the President added, “Before I came, I was aware of the admirable work of the King’s Foundation — but seeing it first-hand here in Scotland has been inspiring. I believe that there is a lot

we can learn from each other, and that Guyana can be an example for the Commonwealth on our new priorities, just as we have been an example on forests for the past 15 years.”

During his visit, the President toured several facilities that provide critical support to local and vulnerable populations across Scotland, including

programs for unemployed youth, students, and individuals facing health challenges. His Excellency’s engagements focused on areas of education, innovation, and sustainability, reflecting Guyana’s commitment to an inclusive and low-carbon future.

New hotel’s workforce will be 90% Guyanese

LOCATED at Track JW, Mandela Avenue, Georgetown, the Royal International Hotel is expected to offer luxury that is incomparable anywhere in Guyana.

One of the many misconceptions about this lavish establishment is that it is an Asian entity.

According to Chartered Accountant Terrence Jaskaran, just around 85 to 90 per cent of the persons that will be employed by the hotel will be Guyanese.

Speaking on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Royal International Jason Wang, Jaskaran explained to the Guyana Chronicle that contrary to what is being perceived, most of the businesses there are Guyanese-owned.

The 254-room hotel is slated for an early 2025 opening. Some of its offerings are already in place and is being well received by the public. It will have four restaurants: the Royal Restaurant, the Royal Lounge Restaurant and poolside, the Love and Latte Cafe which is slated for opening soon, and a hot pot, along with the Space Gym and a Gaming Lounge.

Jaskaran mentioned that while the hotel is geared for this official opening, there have been some ‘staged’ openings as more stores and businesses open at the establishment.

He remarked that it is, “An all-in-



The Royal International Hotel on Mandela Avenue, Georgetown

one experience. So, when people come into the country, it’s not just giving them a place to stay. It’s giving them a place to stay with options as well; things to do in an environment that is safe, and that they don’t have to travel far.

“They can come for entertainment. They can come for food. They can bring their kids. There is also a gaming facility, a kid-friendly gaming facility, a kid zone as well.”

Jaskaran noted that the concept of the hotel was birthed by Wang, and he reminded that in a few interviews, the CEO had stated that on his arrival in Guyana, something he recognised that was missing was a world-class hotel that encompassed an all-in-one experience (places to shop, eat and gym facility) under one roof.

Although construction for this hotel commenced in 2011, there were some setbacks in terms of workers and

getting materials, among other difficulties. It was stated that the project kicked off just after COVID-19 emerged in 2020.

The Royal International Hotel, in addition to providing Guyanese with employment across all sectors, is focused on providing quality accommodation to all who pass through their doors.

With Guyana’s rising tourism and hospitality sector, the need for facilities with adequate accommodation grows daily.

Jaskaran underscored that there is not just a need for accommodation, but rather it must be world-class accommodation.

Working hand in hand with accommodation, is the hotel’s location, to which he pointed out, “we’re in the heart of Georgetown — Sheriff Street. We have access to the East Coast, the East Bank, Georgetown. So, it’s one of the few places that is [sic] located centrally in Georgetown where you can access [the] East Bank, [the] East Coast, and Georgetown.”

Additionally, he said: “We don’t have this concept in Guyana. We don’t have a boutique hotel. We have places where you stay and sleep, and then generally you go out, you go somewhere. But the difference is it’s a new concept. You’re coming here and you have an all-in-one experience.”

2900 students benefit as Guyana cancels \$207M in student loans

AS part of its efforts to gradually make tertiary education free, the government, through the Ministry of Finance, has written off approximately \$203.7 million in student debt owed to the University of Guyana (UG).

This was highlighted by the Ministry of Finance's 2024 mid-year report, which revealed that this latest development has benefitted around 346 persons to date. An additional, 2,900 persons, will benefit from this initiative in the second half of the year.

Free tertiary education by 2025 is an essential element of the PPP/C 2020-2025 manifesto plans. To achieve this, President, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali said the government will implement a phased approach, first targeting individuals who hold university loans.

In 2024, during the reading of the national 2024 budget, the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance and Public Service, Dr Ashni Singh, announced phase one of the initiative, benefitting some 13,000 Guyanese.

A whopping \$11 billion in loans are expected to be written off by the government in the initial phase.

Additionally, Vice President, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, noted that a mechanism to assist students who would have



The Ministry of Finance, has written off some \$203.7 million in student debt owed to the University of Guyana

already paid their dues to the university but are repaying loans to commercial banks will be examined.

Another major initiative implemented by the government includes the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL), granting individuals an opportunity to earn a higher education free of cost. A total of 1.6 billion, has

been spent on scholarships through this programme to date.

According to the mid-year report, over 4,000 persons graduated in May 2024 with bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, postgraduate diplomas, and other certificate programmes.

Additionally, in the first half of the year, 8,023 GOAL scholarships

were also awarded to persons expected to commence studies in September 2024.

These initiatives reinforce the government's commitment to expanding tertiary education and lifting the heavy financial burdens off of Guyanese students. (DPI)

Inquiry into extra-judicial killings to start soon: Jagdeo

The Guyana government will soon announce the date for the Commission of Inquiry (COI) expected to investigate claims of extrajudicial killings and other crimes during the early 2000s.

Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo said that President Dr Irfaan Ali will soon announce the establishment of the COI in response to statements made by the People's National Congress Reform (PNCR) and the Alliance For Change (AFC) during International Day of Democracy celebrations on September 15.

Jagdeo said that the decision to move forward with the COI is in line with a recommendation from the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC).

In its March 2024 review of Guyana's report on the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the HRC urged the government to prioritize the investigation of alleged extrajudicial killings during the 2002-2006 crime wave.

The opposition parties had ex-

pressed concerns over the alleged extra-judicial killings of hundreds of young Guyanese men of African descent, linking the incidents to the previous ruling People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) government.

Jagdeo described these claims as hypocritical and filled with race-baiting rhetoric.

He told reporters that the government is moving forward with the COI to address the truth behind these allega-

tions which have resurfaced in recent years. There are claims of up to 2,000 killings.

He said: "They continue to perpetuate the lies...it is an old racist thing."



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Actress Tanushree Dutta's allegations against an actor in 2018 had kicked off India's #MeToo movement

Hema committee report: Why are India's biggest film stars silent?

A recent report, which details poor working conditions and rampant sexual harassment faced by women in Malayalam-language cinema, is causing seismic upheavals in the entertainment industry in India.

But the messages of solidarity and support have come largely from women - and critics say the silence of powerful men, including India's biggest and most loved stars, is deafening.

Based on testimonies from 51 people from the Kerala-based film industry, the Hema Committee report lays bare decades of exploitation and says that "women have been asked to make themselves available for sex on demand" and that they were constantly told to make "compromise and adjustments" if they wanted work.

The panel was set up in 2017 after Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), formed by a group of women working in the Malayalam cinema, petitioned the government after a top actress was sexually assaulted by a group of men allegedly at the behest of a top male actor.

Their 290-page report was released last month, with chunks redacted to hide the identities of the survivors and those accused of harassment.

But since its release on 19 August, several women have publicly spoken up about their ordeal and more than a dozen police complaints have been lodged against male stars, producers, directors and other influential men.

The state government has set up a special investigation team (SIT) to look into the allegations and the Kerala high court has asked the SIT to investigate the instances mentioned in the report, raising hopes that the survivors may after all get justice.

Women in all Indian film industries, including in the biggest and hugely popular Bollywood, have repeatedly spoken about the casting couch - the practice of men asking for sexual favours in return for roles - and rampant sexual harassment they face.

"The rot is as deep as the ocean across all Indian film industries," film critic and author Shubhra Gupta told the BBC. "We won't find a single female performer anywhere in the country who has not suffered. If everyone came out to

complain, it will take us many decades to deal with all those complaints."

The sordid revelations about the extent of the rot in Malayalam cinema have made headlines and the findings have been debated on primetime TV. Deedi Damodaran, a WCC member, told the BBC that the response has been "overwhelming".

"Some women have now talked about how they had to flee the industry because of the terrible things that happened to them. They have no evidence, but they've got some sort of closure by talking about their experiences."

Many of them, she says, have spoken out despite being trolled and abused on social media.

The report has also created ripples in other film industries, with calls for reform being heard in regional industries based in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka.

In Telangana, pressure has grown on the government to publish a report on the Telugu film industry that's been waiting to see the light of the day for two years. An inquiry was instituted after an upcoming actress, Sri Reddy, protested by stripping down to her undergarments in public in 2018 "to draw attention to the sexual exploitation of women in the industry".

West Bengal has set up a committee to investigate allegations of sexual abuse in the Bengali film industry, actress Ritabhari Chakraborty has said. This, she added, would "cleanse the industry from predators".

A report that exposed the Kerala film industry

Women in Tamil and Kannada cinema have also petitioned their state governments to improve working conditions for them.

Veteran Tamil actress Radhika Sarathkumar told the BBC that the Hema committee report has created a lot of awareness and that "men will be scared now".

"It's time women in cinema get together and speak up and stop this nonsense," she said.

But the lack of support from the men in the industry, says Damodaran, has been disappointing.

Malayalam superstars Mohanlal and Mammootty have welcomed the report but said that nothing should be done to hurt the industry.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): Someone will make life difficult for you this week but you are in no mood to turn the other cheek. Let them know in no uncertain terms that you do not approve of their attitude or their actions - and, if necessary, follow up with action of your own.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): You may not be able to prove, to yourself or to others, that you are making the correct decision, but get on with it anyway and hope for the best. It may not precisely be the right thing to do but it will be close enough, so don't hesitate.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): If a loved one tells you they want to go their own way and do their own thing for a while you must let them. This is one of those situations where they must be allowed to make a success of an enterprise - or learn from its failure.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): Stand back from your life a bit and try to see where you have been going wrong. Whatever your current problems may be it is not too late to fix them, but you must be honest with yourself. Self-delusion is a luxury you cannot afford.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): It's good that your expectations are growing fast but you still need to be aware of what is and is not possible, both in your personal life and in your work. A sense of perspective is a must for everyone who wants to be a high-flyer.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): Money matters will become increasingly important now that the Sun is moving through the financial area of your chart. By all means make it a priority to get your hands on new sources of cash but make sure you play by the rules.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): At some point over the next few days you will recognize that although you've come a very long way there is still quite a distance to go. Don't be too hard on yourself if you have yet to reach the heights you expect of yourself. There's still time.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): What happens this week may catch you by surprise but it will also provoke you into taking the kind of action you should have taken a while back. The important thing is you are the first to react, because that gives you an advantage over your rivals.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): You may be tempted to tell other people what they want to hear this week but while it may save you some grief in the short-term it could create huge problems in the future. People expect you to be honest, even blunt, so why disappoint them?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): Try not to get too caught up in the idea of winning and losing. As a cardinal sign you expect to be one of life's top dogs but others things matter just as much, if not more, and one of those is your willingness to give love a chance.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): By all means expand your horizons and attempt things you've never done before, but don't lose sight of the fact that taking foolish risks is likely to result in painful consequences. Maximize your potential this week, but minimize what might hurt you too.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): The planets urge you to be cautious this week when dealing with money and possessions you share with other people. It's one thing to risk your own resources on crazy schemes, but quite another to put other people's assets in the mix as well.

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Dominica and Saudi Arabia sign US\$41m loan to enhance Roseau

Roseau, Dominica will receive much needed improvements following a loan agreement of US\$41 million signed between Dominica and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The signing ceremony took place in Roseau on Saturday.

Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit says he is happy about the project which he describes as ‘a major investment in the future’ of Roseau and of Dominica.

“We have long recognized that for our nation to flourish we must build modern, resilient and sustainable infrastructure,” he said.

The project will see the reconstruction of seven main streets in the capital city.

Among other improvements it will help with road connectivity, ease traffic and enhance access to basic services in the city.

“Improvements to streets, sidewalks and public spaces will make daily activities safer and more convenient for all. This initiative is not only about aesthetics but about creating a space where people want to live, work and invest in the future,” Skerit remarked.

The prime minister noted that in addition to this improvement, the project will also stimulate economic growth directly benefitting locals.

“Our efforts in the capital will stimulate local businesses and open doors for new enterprises creating more jobs and opportunities for everyone. Equally im-



Dominica signs loan agreement with Saudi Arabia to enhance Roseau

portant is the challenge to enhance the quality of life of our residents.”

The Dominica leader highlighted this project is a key component of his government’s long-term vision of sustainable development for the country and forms part of several other large-scale initiatives that are either underway or about to commence.

Chief executive officer of the Saudi Fund for Development, Sultan Almarshad says his country is elated to collaborate with Dominica for the important project.

In her remarks as the Member of Parliament for Roseau, Melissa Skerit lauded the favorable terms of the loan which comes at a 2.5 per cent interest

rate, an eight-year grace period and 28-year repayment term.

“These conditions provide us with the financial flexibility to embark on a transformative journey for Roseau’s urban development and it is an opportunity our government has seized with both hands,” she said.

Golding calls for early elections in Jamaica

At the People’s National Party’s (PNP) 86th annual conference on Sunday, party leader Mark Golding called the current Jamaican government defective and urged Prime Minister Andrew Holness to call the next general election, which is constitutionally due by next September.

The conference took place in Kingston, with guest appearances by several public figures including dance-hall entertainers Vybz Kartel and Popcaan, attorney Isat Buchanan, LA Lewis, and Maroon chief Richard Currie.

“The prime minister just needs to fly the gate! Call it, Andrew, call it... and I will sound the trumpet,” Golding declared.

“This Government is failing the people, but help is on the way, my fellow Jamaicans. Better is possible, and better must come,” he added.

Golding used a portion of his address to highlight the government’s perceived lack of accountability and underperformance in several areas.

“Jamaicans are tired of the impunity of those who hold political power. Public officials must be held accountable. There must be transparency and openness in the conduct of national

affairs, and reasonable protection of privacy in personal life,” he said.

“Every Jamaican must feel well-cared-for and enabled by their Government. We must invest and build an efficient and caring public service with shorter wait times, giving value for the taxes you pay,” Golding argued.

Golding also addressed the quality of life Jamaicans deserve, saying, “People deserve much more than what is happening now. We want garbage moved from our gates; street lights that work; sewage in pipes underground and not running in the streets; clean piped water in our homes; roads that don’t mash up our vehicles’ front-end; public health facilities that treat people with dignity and provide good and affordable health care; schools that give every child a strong basic education so they can go on to pursue whatever career they choose; and we want to feel safe in our homes and communities.”

He laid out the PNP’s vision to transform Jamaica, focusing on creating a global maritime and aviation logistics hub, advancing agriculture and the blue economy for rural development, and establishing 24-hour entertainment zones. Golding also highlighted the need to develop clear



PNP Leader Mark Golding

guidelines under the Noise Abatement Act for night-time entertainment and to regularize electricity in communities with illegal connections, with the state covering most rewiring costs.

Golding assured supporters that the PNP would apply a mix of policy changes to “put things right” and emphasized that the party is prepared to lead with a diverse pool of talent.

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US names four Caribbean nations as major drug-producing countries

The United States has listed Jamaica, The Bahamas, Belize, and Haiti as major drug transit or major illicit drug-producing countries for the fiscal year 2025.

In a statement, President Joe Biden highlighted the inclusion of these four Caribbean nations, along with other countries, noting their significant role in drug trafficking and the production of precursor chemicals that impact the United States.

The president clarified that being named on the list does not reflect the government's counter-narcotic efforts or cooperation with the U.S., emphasizing that "the list is not a sanction or penalty." Instead, it is a result of geographic, commercial, and economic factors that facilitate the transit or production of drugs or precursor chemicals, even in countries that have implemented strong law enforcement and narcotics control measures.

Biden also pointed to recent changes under U.S. law that expand the definition of drug source countries. The James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 now includes countries that are sources of chemicals used to produce illicit drugs, further explaining the inclusion of the Caribbean nations.

Among other countries mentioned in Biden's report were Bolivia, Burma, and Venezuela, which were designated as having "failed demonstrably" to

meet their international counter-narcotic obligations over the past year. The U.S. continues to maintain support programs in these countries despite the challenges.

Provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated that the U.S. saw an estimated 107,543 drug overdose deaths in 2023, a slight decrease from 2022. This marks the first decline in drug overdose deaths since 2018, which Biden credited to his administration's efforts and investments in combating the drug epidemic. However, he acknowledged that addressing the drug crisis requires global cooperation.

In July 2023, the Biden administration launched a Global Coalition to combat synthetic drug threats, uniting over 150 countries to tackle the alarming rise in the manufacturing and trafficking of illicit synthetic drugs. The coalition's membership has tripled within the past year, reflecting the global scale of the problem.

Earlier in March, the United Nations (UN) Commission on Narcotic Drugs adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution aimed at preventing and responding to drug overdoses. The resolution encourages international data collection and information sharing on synthetic drug threats. Additionally, the Commission implemented international controls on chemicals used in the production of fentanyl, methamphetamine, and



US DEA agents guard a shipment of drugs seized in the Caribbean

MDMA, which Biden noted is a critical step in disrupting trafficking networks.

The U.S. president emphasized that international cooperation remains essential in addressing the fentanyl epidemic and dismantling the criminal organizations profiting from it. He highlighted trilateral mechanisms such as the North American Drug Dialogue, which has strengthened collaboration between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada on controlling precursor chemicals and combating illicit drug production.

"While we expand our efforts at home, we also recognize this problem as a global one that requires a coordinated international response," Biden said.

Other countries named in the U.S. report include Afghanistan, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Laos, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela.

Bail extended for 'Slickianna' accused murderer

Rushawn Patterson, the man charged with the October 2022 murder of popular Jamaican social media influencer Aneika 'Slickianna' Townsend, had his bail extended during his appearance in the St James Circuit Court on Monday.

The case, which has been delayed due to outstanding post-mortem and DNA reports, is set to be mentioned again on October 18.

Patterson, who suffers from haemophilia, a blood disorder, was initially granted bail on humanitarian grounds during a previous court sitting on July 16. He is represented by attorney Dionne Meyler.

During Monday's proceedings, High Court Justice Bertram Morrison was informed that the prosecution is still awaiting critical reports to complete its case file. The outstanding post-mortem and DNA reports have delayed the setting of a trial date. Justice Morrison extended the bail and scheduled the next hearing for October 18, allowing time for the case file to be finalized.

Patterson was arrested on November 2, 2022, following a high-level po-



Popular Jamaican social media influencer Aneika 'Slickianna' Townsend

lice operation. Townsend's body was found floating in the sea in Reading, St James, on October 21, 2022. A post-mortem conducted on November 5 confirmed that Townsend had been strangled, with her death occurring between 11 p.m. on October 20 and 9 a.m. on October 21.

According to police reports, Townsend had traveled from Kingston to Montego Bay on October 20 and was picked up by Patterson. The two visited a restaurant in Hanover and a guest house in St James. An argument reportedly broke out between them later that night, resulting in Patterson allegedly strangling Townsend and disposing of her body. He was formally charged with her murder on November 11, 2022.

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Prime Minister Holness threatens lawsuit against PNP members

Jamaica's Prime Minister and leader of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), Dr. Andrew Holness, has directed his legal team to take action against senior members of the People's National Party (PNP) for making "false and defamatory statements" regarding his knowledge of an Integrity Commission probe into alleged illicit enrichment.

In a press release, JLP Senator Abka Fitz-Henley, a member of the party's communication taskforce, stated, "Should they not take the appropriate action, lawsuits will be filed against the PNP members who made the false statements and without any credible basis defamed the prime minister concerning the question of when he came into awareness of an illicit enrichment probe."

Fitz-Henley further emphasized that Prime Minister Holness had been truthful when he told the media on August 17, 2023, that he was unaware of any JLP member being contacted by the Integrity Commission regarding an investigation into illicit enrichment.

"The prime minister and party leader takes his reputation seriously and will not allow members of the PNP to attempt to use false and malicious statements to destroy his character in their desperate bid for political power,"



Prime Minister Andrew Holness' house in Beverly Hills, St Andrew

Fitz-Henley added.

Holness' attorneys from the law firm Henlin Gibson Henlin issued a statement on Thursday with the headline, 'The Prime Minister did not lie', which was signed by attorney Georgia Gibson Henlin KC.

The attorneys outlined that none of the communication via letters from the IC referenced section 14(5) of the CPA/Judge's Rule Notice or the words

"illicit enrichment."

Further, Holness' legal team said the timeline it presented confirms that the prime minister did not lie when he said on August 17, 2023, that he was not aware of the investigation.

The JLP's press release also raised concerns over what they described as "the appearance that members of the PNP have unique access to information from the Integrity Commission."

Additionally, the JLP called on the PNP to address recent reports indicating that at least five of their members, including a senior official, are currently under investigation for illicit enrichment. "The party restates its call for the PNP to indicate how it will address a revelation in a recent newspaper report," the statement concluded.

Grenada to host global conference on sargassum

Grenada will host the second European Union-Caribbean Global Gateway conference on sargassum early next month.

Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, as well as Felix Fernandez-Shaw, the Director of the European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnership, will address the October 1-2 event being held under the theme "Turning the Tide: Sustainable Practices and Economic Opportunities for Sargassum in the Caribbean Basin".

The conference is an initiative under Global Gateway, the European Union's strategy to boost investments that generate smart, clean and secure value chains across the world.

The Barbados-based Delegation of the European Union said that since 2011, countries within the wider Caribbean basin have wrestled with the growing inundations of sargassum on their coasts.

It said that this phenomenon has a substantial economic impact in sectors like tourism and fisheries, and poses public health risks and the event in October will provide the estimated 250 delegates an opportunity "to drive dialogue, action and investment in Sargassum valorization and the development of value chains at scale to meet the magnitude of the challenge.

"The conference will generate a comprehensive conversation to understand the building blocks of a sustainable value chain: Research & Innovation, Enabling Environment and Transformation. The event will explore the latest on research, monitoring and forecasting, prevention and containment, collection and harvesting, treatment, valorization and/or use, and disposal of sargassum biomass," it added.

It said that the October event will also bring together public authorities from Caribbean and Latin American countries and European Overseas Countries



Sargassum, an invasive seaweed, affects tourism and fisheries in the Caribbean

and Territories and Outermost Regions, as well as the private sector financing institutions, scientific community, and non/governmental organizations.

"It will connect the different actors to identify

opportunities for investments and partnerships to support public initiative and commercial operations targeting the different stages of a Sargassum value chain."

Trinidad could be removed from EU's blacklist

TRINIDAD and Tobago might be taken off the European Union's blacklist after the second round of the EU's peer review, which started on June 28 and is expected to finish next month with a site visit.

Wade George, executive chairman of Ernst and Young (EY) Caribbean, mentioned this at the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce's discussion on "Private Sector Opportunities in the New Special Economic Zone" at its conference hall at Columbus Circle, Westmoorings on Thursday. George stated, "We have been on that list since 2017 and based on the most recent report in February, we remained there. We haven't put on a framework to address the issue of common reporting standards."

The EU blacklist was created to increase transparency, have fair tax competition and prevent measures against base erosion and profit shifting (anti-BEPS measures) to fight tax evasion and avoidance.

George mentioned that Trinidad does not have a common reporting standards framework and has not been rated as "largely compliant" by the Global Forum for information exchange. Additionally, T&T has not signed or ratified the Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters and has not established the necessary legal and administrative frameworks for country-by-country reporting minimum standards. Previously, T&T operated under the Free Zones Act, but it was repealed after the full proclamation of SEZ in 2022. George explained that the Free Zones Act posed challenges such as a ring-fenced regime to protect banks' core retail function, minimal reporting requirements, discretionary authority elements, and full tax exemptions.

George said additionally, the act



Wade George, executive chairman of Ernst and Young (EY) Caribbean

lacked a sunset clause, which would allow for termination of contracts if certain conditions weren't met by a specified date.

We have been on the list for quite some time now, but there's hope that we will be removed from it by the end of October. In recent months, several legislative measures have been put in place to increase transparency.

If all goes well, we might move from the blacklist to the grey list, which means we'll still be monitored but won't face the severe penalties associated with

being on the blacklist. The potential consequences of being on the blacklist include damage to our reputation, the termination of double taxation agreements, penal tax implications, loss of investment, restricted access to EU funding, difficulties in financial transactions, and reduced economic growth.

Minister of Finance Colm Imbert presented a bill to modify several acts, including the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Proceeds of Crime Act, the Anti-Terrorism Act, the National Insurance Act, and the Financial Intelligence Unit

of Trinidad and Tobago Act.

Speaking about the SEZ regime, which differs significantly from the Free Zone Act, Kiran Maharaj, president of the T&T Chamber of Industry and Commerce, mentioned, "This is intended to be a tool for our economic development and growth, a place where businesses can innovate, expand and thrive without the usual bureaucratic and financial constraints. SEZ has the potential to attract much-needed foreign direct investment, and there is opportunity for new partnerships and joint ventures."

T&T now has diplomatic relations with Palestine

The Trinidad and Tobago Government has formally established diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine.

A release posted on the website of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs announced the Joint Communiqué establishing diplomatic relations was signed by Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs Dr Amery Browne and Prime Minister of the State of Palestine Dr Mohammad Mustafa at the Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations in New York on Sunday.

"This historic event is one of Minister Browne's major engagements at the commencement of the High-Level Week of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The move is in follow-up to Trinidad

and Tobago's recognition of the State of Palestine on 2nd May, 2024," the release stated.

The Ministry reported the establishment of diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine "is rooted in the ongoing commitment of Trinidad and Tobago, at both the regional and multilateral levels, to contribute to international peace and security.

"(Sunday's) signing reinforces the call for a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a two-state solution that guarantees the security of Israel and the right of Palestine to an independent, viable and sovereign state within the pre-1967 borders," the release added.

The Ministry stated that Trinidad and Tobago's consistent support for Palestine has been demonstrated



Dr Amery Browne (right) with Palestine Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa

through its endorsement of critical resolutions regularly presented to the United Nations General Assembly, as

well as those adopted at the Emergency Special Sessions on the protection of civilians and humanitarian obligations.

Fishermen find 22 ‘missiles’ hidden under bridge in south Trinidad

Two men fishing along the Godineau riverbank in the vicinity of the Godineau bridge in South Oropouche, have discovered what resembles missiles, according to police.

The projectiles were found between rocks on the south eastern side of the bridge.

The discovery was made at 7p.m Sunday, but by Mondya afternoon, officers were able to identify what had been found.

They are not warheads, said ACP Wayne Mystar about.

He said they were concrete piercing munitions that were used for the blasting of the rocks in relation to work on the Mosquito Creek in South Oropouche as part of the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway project.

However, he said an investigation will be launched as it is an offence to have such items exposed in public.

The area is a popular recreational fishing area. Boats are often seen entering the river mouth near the Shore of Peace Creation Site, to reach the wetland



Photo shows the “missiles”, later identified as blasting munitions, found under a bridge

and the upstream village of Woodland.

The river is known to be a location for migrants entering from South Amer-

ica, and for contraband to land.

On Sunday, responding police officers counted 22 cylindrical projectiles

which the police said resembled military warheads.

Holness’ net worth increases by \$51.5M: Integrity Commission

Jamaica’s Integrity Commission has revealed that Prime Minister Andrew Holness’ net worth increased by \$51.5 million between 2017 and 2021.

The findings were part of an investigation into Holness’ 2021 statutory declarations, which remain uncertified.

The commission explained that its calculation of Holness’ net worth included the conversion of income and assets from US dollars to Jamaican dollars. It also identified \$4.49 million in unexplained net worth changes for the year ending December 31, 2021.

“Although the declarant’s net worth appeared to align with income for some years, the growth of the net assets of companies for which the declarants and close family members are majority shareholders and the actual contributions of the minority shareholders need to be further examined,” the commission noted in its report.

The investigation, based on a referral related to Holness’ 2021 declaration, was expanded to cover the years 2018 through 2023 to provide a more thorough examination of the issues.

Despite the commission’s findings, Kevon Stephenson, the director of investigation (DI), noted that he was unable to conclude whether there was illicit enrichment due to a lack of access to Holness’ personal expenses over the relevant period and unresolved questions about companies con-

nected to the prime minister.

The referenced analysis did not reveal any unexplained growth in Holness’ net worth for the year 2021. The analysis, however, revealed unexplained growth in Mr Holness’ net worth for the year 2022.

Prime Minister Holness has rejected parts of the Integrity Commission’s report, particularly the conclusion that his net worth experienced unexplained growth of J\$1.9 million in 2022, representing less than one percent of his total net assets.

“I reject this finding based on materiality and significance... I have seen an error in figures they have used in their calculations, and therefore, I challenge this finding on incorrect use of data,” Holness stated.

He further denied claims that he acquired an asset without adequately explaining the source of funds, pointing to errors by a financial institution. “The Commission, in its own report, pointed out that this whole episode started with an incorrect statement from a bank,” Holness explained, adding that the bank’s verification of his US dollar holdings was inaccurate.

Holness also rejected suggestions that he hindered the investigation by not supplying requested information, asserting that he has complied with all legal obligations. He indicated that he would seek legal advice regarding the report’s recommendations, including



Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness

potential referrals to other entities.

Holness said he has always sought to discharge his duties with respect and dignity and has never lost focus on ensuring a stable, resilient,

and growing economy, reducing unemployment, improving our security as a nation, building out infrastructure, and providing support for the most vulnerable in our society.

Moeen Ali ensures Amazon Warriors advance to CPL playoffs

LED by a Man-of-the-Match performance from all-rounder Moeen Ali, Guyana Amazon Warriors beat Antigua Falcons by 17 runs at the Providence Stadium Saturday night to take the Warriors to the top of the points table with 10 points from seven matches, and a place in the CPL playoffs.

Ali's 33-ball 42 with three sixes and three fours, and 29 from Azam Khan made reaching the boundary once and clearing it twice the only scores higher than 15 as the Warriors fiddled with their top order and could only reach 135-7 when their 20 overs expired.

Mohammad Amir (2-15) and Imad Wasim (2-39) were the main wicket-takers for the Falcons, who were bowled out for 108 in 18.5 overs to lose by 17 runs, despite 27 from Kofi James, who hit three fours and a six from 23 balls.

Dwaine Pretorius (3-9), Ali (3-9) and skipper Imran Tahir (2-40) were the main wicket-takers for the defending champions.

Set 136 to win, the Patriots were 16-2 as Gudakesh Motie took his 11th wicket when he had Justin Greaves (5) stumped at 10-1 before Pretorius removed Brandon King (3).

Kofi James and Hassan Khan were staging a recovery, but with the score on 41, 45-year-old Tahir struck twice in the space of 13 runs when he dismissed Khan (10) and James (27) at 54-4.

Jamal Hamilton (12) was caught down the led side of Ali at 71-5 in the 12th over.

The Patriots lost two wickets at 76 before Joshua James and Skipper Chris Green, with a few big hits, brought the target to 36 from 18 balls.

Shamar Joseph bowled James (15) at 101-8, leaving 31 to get off 12 balls.

Pretorius removed Green (17) and Amir (0) in the penultimate over to give the Warriors victory with seven balls to spare.

Earlier, once again the Warriors rearranged their top order, and again this ploy failed to bear fruit.

Raymond Reifer and Khan were asked to open on a track that offered plenty of turn for the spinners, and prodigious lateral movement for left-arm pacer Amir.

Reifer missed five balls and hit the other back Amir, who started with a maiden.

Khan hit the first boundary off the 19th ball before Reifer faced 14 balls to get off the mark before playing a swipe off Amir; hitting a skier to point after making five at 14-9.

Motie (8) joined the burly Khan, and top-edged Imad Wasim to King at 33-2.

Khan (28) hit two massive sixes and a four before lofting Hassan Khan to long-off at 48-3 in 9.2 overs.

Shimron Hetmyer, with two fifties under his belt, hit Hassan Khan for a couple of huge sixes to revive the expect-



Moeen Ali from the Guyana Amazon Warriors celebrates after leading the team to victory over Antigua Falcons

tation of a capacity turnout. At the end of the 10th over, the home side were 63-3.

With Hetmyer and Hope at the crease, the flag-waving fans anticipated something special from the Warriors' most accomplished pair.

But Hetmyer (13) hit a full toss from leg-spinner Hayden Walsh to long-on to once again silence the home team's supporters.

Ali was dropped on nine, and along with Hope kept hope alive by taking the score from 63-4, with Hope executing an imperious off-driven boundary off Fabian Allen.

But when on 15 and the total on 85, Hope was bowled by Wazim to bring Friday night's saviour Romario Shepherd to the crease.

However, despite hitting a six, the Berbican could not reproduce his heroics from the previous night, and was taken in deep for 10 at 98-6.

Ali brought up 100 with an exquisite cover drive for four off Wasim, and

celebrated by depositing the left-arm spinner for three sixes and a four in the over which cost 26.

The raucous crowd once again danced in the stands as Keemo Paul (10*) dumped Joshua James for six in

the final over, while Ali was run out as the Warriors ended two runs less than they did against the Patriots.

The Warriors will play on Wednesday against the Barbados Royals from 19:00hrs at Providence.

TEAM	W	L	T	NET	PTS	DIFF
1 SLK	8	6	2	+0.543	12	✓✓✓✓
2 GWV	7	6	2	+1.071	10	✓✓✓✓
3 BR	8	6	3	+0.629	10	✓✓✓✓
4 TKR	7	5	2	+0.460	10	✓✓✓✓
5 ABF	10	3	7	-0.692	8	✓✓✓✓



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- 1 CPL Eliminator Match
- 1 CPL Party in Linden & Berbice
- 2-6 Regional Food Festival
- 2 CPL Qualifier 1
- 2 CPL Party in Linden & Berbice
- 3 Pan-on-the-beach Concert
- 3-5 Caribbean Content Creators and Influencers Summit
- 4 CPL Qualifier 2
- 4 CPL Party in Linden & Berbice
- 5 Super Concert
- 6 CPL Cricket Finals
- 6 Cricket Finals after party
- 6 Essequibo Drags Racing
- 8-9 2nd Regional Investments & Capital Market Conference
- 18-21 Berbice Expo
- 19 Conference on Hindu issues in the Caribbean & Diaspora
- 26 Monster Mash Halloween Fair and Fundraiser
- 27 Tapas Rum & Wine
- 30 Diwali Motorcade
- 31 Diwali - 'Festival of Lights'

November

- 1-30 Tourism Awareness Month
- 10 Circuit Racing Series 3
- 12 Entrepreneurship Conference
- 14-17 GuyExpo
- 16-17 Tourism Month Golf Putting Contest
- 16-17 Nature & Savannah Linden Hike
- 23 FumaCon 2024
- 24 Chutney Show Washiba Resort
- 25-30 Pakaraima Mountain Safari

December

- 13-15 Main Street Christmas Village
- 25 Christmas
- 26 Boxing Day

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