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Commonwealth leaders gather in Georgetown

Commonwealth Parliamentary leaders gathered in Georgetown this week for the 46th Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

The CPA is being held from September 1 – 7, 2024. The regional conference will bring together parliamentarians and clerks from jurisdictions across the

CPA CAA Region for discussions on the theme 'Democracy: Challenges facing modern parliaments.'

The CPA is being held from September 1 – 7, 2024.

In addressing the gathering, Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali pointed out that many of its partners have stood alongside the country to ensure the rule of law was safeguarded in the light of several threats.

"It is our regional partners, it is CARICOM [Caribbean Community] and CARICOM's principle[d] position

that was a part of the process in ensuring that our democracy remained strong and alive," he said.

Dr. Ali related that Guyana's political evolution has been marred by the pervasion of democratic rule for almost three decades, followed by the restoration of democracy, and then an aborted attempt to subvert democratic elections.

President Ali, as such, believes that the hosting of this year's conference in Guyana is timely and the country can be a case study for further discussions.

He noted that the country's experi-

ence also offers an insight into the relationship of democracy, the rule of law, development and stability.

"When you look at periods of democratic threats or periods when the rule of law is threatened and correlate that with economic expansion, economic impact, social fragments and crime, you will see that there is positive correlation, because threats to the democracy is a threat to the ecosystem of the country," the Head of State said.

Throughout the week, a series of Plenary Sessions will be held in the Chamber and in Committee Rooms One and Two at the Public Buildings, Brickdam, Georgetown. The sessions will cover critical topics including Artificial Intelligence, Healthcare Access for Women and Girls, Gender Sensitive Parliaments – Toolkit/Guidelines, Peace and Security, and Migration. The week of activities will see the hosting of the 17th Regional Youth Parliament,

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Guyanese DIASPORA DIGEST

KEEPING THE DIASPORA INFORMED EDITION 75

GUYANA'S INFRASTRUCTURE BOOST: MAJOR HIGHWAY OPENS, NEW BRIDGES TOLL-FREE



\$15.1B SCHOONORD TO CRANE HIGHWAY OPENS, TRANSFORMING CONNECTIVITY **PAGE 3**



RECONSTRUCTED SOESDYKE-LINDEN HIGHWAY TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY AND ATTRACT INVESTMENTS

NO TOLLS FOR NEW DEMERARA, BERBICE, AND WISMAR/MACKENZIE BRIDGES - PRESIDENT ALI DECLARES

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NO TOLL TO CROSS NEW DEMERARA, BERBICE, WISMAR/ MACKENZIE BRIDGES- PRESIDENT ALI ANNOUNCES

Upon completion, there will be no toll to cross the new Demerara River Crossing, Berbice River Bridge or the new Wismar-Mackenzie bridge.

This astounding announcement was made by President, Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, during the commissioning of the new Schoonord to Crane highway in Region Three.

This significant step will bring greater ease in travel, while eliminating financial burdens on commuters.

The US\$260 million Demerara River bridge is a key component of the government's bid to alleviate traffic congestion and foster greater connectivity between regions three and four. It is expected to be completed this year.

Infact a recent update provided by the Minister



New Demerara harbour Bridge 64% completed

within the Ministry of Public Works, Deodat Indar, who inspected

the ongoing work on the 2.8-kilometre bridge, indicated that the project

is now over 60 per cent complete.

Currently, bridge crossing tolls range from \$40 for motorcycles to \$700 for motor lorries, while cars and minibuses pay \$200.

In Region Ten, a bridge connecting Wismar to Mackenzie is underway and once completed, commuters will also enjoy free travel across this stretch. This project is slated for a

2026 completion.

On the other hand, the president disclosed that the government is in discussions to acquire the Berbice Bridge, and once negotiations are completed, the toll to cross the Berbice bridge will also be eliminated.

"We are bridging the hearts and minds of every Guyanese. We are bridging every community, and we are doing it free of cost," the president asserted.

PRESIDENT ALI SECURES KEY PARTNERSHIPS WITH CANADA TO BOOST SPORTS, DEVELOPMENT, AND CONNECTIVITY



President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali met with Air Canada's Executive Vice President Mark Nasr

President Dr. Irfaan Ali recently engaged in a series of high-level meetings in Toronto,

aimed at bolstering bilateral relations, and enhancing cooperation between Guyana and Canada.

President Ali met with Air Canada's Executive Vice President Mark Nasr and Director of Investor Relations Claudette McGowan. The conversation focused on the potential introduction of a new air route between Guyana and Canada, a development that would further enhance connectivity and economic ties between the two countries.

President Ali also

met with Masai Michael Ujiri OC, Vice Chair and President of the Toronto Raptors and Co-Founder of Giants of Africa, at the OVO Athletic Centre, the Raptors' cutting-edge training facility. The discussion centered on expanding basketball in Guyana, with a focus on developing sports facilities, organising coaching clinics, implementing talent identification programmes, and promoting grassroots basketball initiatives. This collaboration aims to leverage the Raptors' expertise to inspire and

nurture young talent in Guyana.

In a broader regional context, President Ali and Mr. Ujiri also explored a Caribbean-wide initiative to enhance basketball development across the region. This partnership seeks to utilise the Raptors' experience to uplift the sport and foster new opportunities for young athletes in the Caribbean. As part of this collaboration, Mr. Ujiri is expected to lead a delegation to Guyana later this year, marking a significant step in strengthening

the sports development ties between Guyana and Canada.

Additionally, President Ali met with Canada's Minister of International Development, Ahmed Hussen, to discuss ongoing collaboration and explore new areas of cooperation between the two nations. The discussions underscored the deepening relationship between Guyana and Canada, emphasising shared goals and mutual interests in various sectors.

25-MEMBER GRENADIAN TRADE DELEGATION EXPLORES PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL PRIVATE SECTOR

Collaboration and knowledge sharing are essential for individual and collective growth, and necessary in driving sustainable economic progress and development within the Caribbean region.

The statement was emphasised by Grenada's Prime Minister, Dickon Mitchell, as he delivered remarks at the first Pure Grenada Expo spearheaded by the Grenada Tourism Authority (GTA) in partnership with Guyana's Private Sector Commission (PSC) at the Marriott Hotel in Kingston, Georgetown.

A 25-member trade delegation from the Caribbean Island visited Guyana, and explored avenues to capitalise on opportunities in agriculture, tourism

and trade among other lucrative industries.

At the opening ceremony, the Grenadian prime minister emphasised the need



Grenada Trade Mission

to invest in education, which he believes fosters a deep understanding of shared assets and resources within the Caribbean region.

"Education doesn't mean formal schooling; education means learning

about who we are as a people, understanding the assets and resources that we have been blessed with,

investing in research, development, and technology, and communicating with each other and sharing...As a region, if we are going to grow both individually and collectively, it is vital that we get to

know, understand, and learn about each other," PM Mitchell underscored.

He also discussed the importance of addressing logistical challenges and trade patterns to ensure food security and economic sustainability, particularly in global events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The prime minister acknowledged the significance of small and medium-sized enterprises and encouraged a shift in perspective towards recognising their value and potential for success.

He called for continued support for agriculture and a focus on resilience, innovation, and strong values for economic growth and development in the Caribbean region.

Meanwhile, Grenada's Minister of Economic Development, Planning, Tourism, ICT, Creative Economy, Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries and Cooperatives, Lennox Andrews, underscored the importance of the trade mission, particularly in the agriculture sector.

"We aim to establish mutually beneficial agreements that

will contribute to the growth and diversification of our agricultural sectors and that can bring benefits to the man on the street... Grenada is well known for its spices. We have the best cocoa in the world. We have our nutmeg and mace, and all of these are available for export here to Guyana," he stated.



Pure Grenada Expo

\$15.1B SCHOONORD TO CRANE HIGHWAY OPENS

- GREATER CONNECTIVITY, LESS TRAFFIC CONGESTION TO BE REALISED

Residents of Region Three celebrated a significant milestone, as the new Schoonord to Crane four-lane highway was officially commissioned.

This modern roadway, a cornerstone of the country's infrastructure development, promises to revolutionise transportation, stimulate economic growth, and create new job opportunities.

Beyond its immediate benefits, the highway unlocks vast tracts of land for residential and commercial development, further bolstering the region's burgeoning economy and tourism potential.

It is the first phase of a greater plan to connect Crane to Parika, and Parika to Del Conte, and features an emergency lane, 4.1 kilometres of dual-carriageway road, medians, and two



President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali and members

roundabouts, among other key elements.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, emphasised the road's alignment with the government's ambitious plan to transform Guyana into a major transportation and logistics hub.

"The value creation that you see in this region did not happen by accident. It happened by a carefully articulated vision that outlined

a clear strategy as to what the development trajectory will be. What this government has demonstrated is a commitment to hard work," he said.

He assured that Region Three is set to experience tremendous growth, not only in terms of infrastructure, but also in terms of job creation.

President Ali pointed to the monumental investments his government has poured into the region, drawing

a stark contrast to the abject failures of the previous government.

According to the head of state, in the last four years, the PPP/C Government's investment in Region Three have surpassed that of the previous government by 800 per

spent \$28 billion to improve community roads. And every time we build a road in your village...your property values go up. Your net value goes up," he explained, adding that within the last four years, more than 1,000 roads have been

cent more than they spent. When you look at our expenditure in housing, over the last four years, we have spent almost \$65 billion in region three," the head of state underlined.

He dismissed critics who seek to disparage the investments made to enhance the well-being of Guyanese citizens, asserting that their attempts to foment strife and disharmony will be unsuccessful.

The revolution of the future is here. Call out the instigators and let them know we are not going back, we are staying on the right track, right into the future with the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government," the Guyanese leader emphasised.



Schoonord to Crane Highway set to ease traffic congestion in Region Three

cent. **"In the last four years alone, in this region, we have** built and maintained in the region. **"In housing alone, we have spent 1,321 per**

SIR SHRIDATH RAMPHAL, GUARDIAN OF SOVEREIGNTY, DIES

Sir Shridath Ramphal, a towering figure in diplomacy and a staunch defender of sovereignty, has passed away, leaving Guyana and the Caribbean in mourning. His death marks the end of an era characterised by his unwavering commitment to justice and his homeland. Sir Shridath's remarkable legacy of service and leadership will be remembered across the



Sir Shridath Ramphal

region and beyond.

President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali expressed profound sorrow at the loss, calling Sir Shridath "a giant among men" who dedicated his life to defending Guyana's territorial integrity. **"His unwavering commitment to our nation, especially in his defense before the International Court of Justice and the UN Tribunal, was**

an act of supreme devotion," President Ali stated.

Sir Shridath's influence extended beyond Guyana. As Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, he became a formidable voice against apartheid, championing the rights of the oppressed and standing firm for global justice. His leadership within the Caribbean region, particularly in fostering regional

integration, secured a strong and united front for the Caribbean on the global stage.

"He was more than just a diplomat; he was the guardian of our sovereignty and a beacon of integrity," President Ali added, emphasising the profound impact Sir Shridath had on both national and international affairs.

GUYANA TRIPLED LAST YEAR'S HATCHING EGG PRODUCTION - MIN. MUSTAPHA

With 94,000 hatching eggs produced so far this year, Guyana is aggressively working to increase its production of this commodity.

This was stated by Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha, during a community meeting at No. 63 Village in Region Six.

Currently, Guyana imports nearly 53 million eggs annually at a cost of over \$350 million.

To reduce this dependency, the country

launched a hatching egg production programme in 2023 with a private partnership, resulting in the production of 27,000 eggs last year at the broiler breeder facility on the East Bank corridor.

This facility was established to reduce the reliance on imported hatching eggs.

"So, at the end of the year, we will produce more. So, you could see how much we have

produced already. But that will not be sufficient for us... We are spending a lot of money importing eggs into this country," the agriculture minister stated.

Minister Mustapha noted that, initially, Guyana produced a significant number of table eggs before starting hatching egg production. Table eggs, also known as shell eggs, are unfertilised.

He continued, **"These hatching eggs come from North**

you have the cost for import increasing, the farmers in

towards that."

Looking ahead, Minister Mustapha is optimistic that Guyana will be able to produce a substantial number of hatching eggs to supply both local and regional markets.

The government continues to prioritise the agriculture sector by undertaking numerous projects aimed at boosting food production and reducing the region's food import bill.



Hatching eggs in a facility

America and Brazil. But sometimes, when you have supply chain issues and

Guyana suffer. So that is why we have to be self-sufficient and we are working

Linden Highway which will be reconstructed to the tune of US\$161 million, underlining its role in the country's holistic development.

Speaking at the contract signing and sod-turning event, along the highway on August 28, President Ali outlined the broader impact of the investment in facilitating economic growth, connecting regions, including the hinterland, and supporting infrastructure development, that will expand the Guyanese economy.

This massive project will be linked to critical infrastructure in Regions Three, Four, and Seven, thereby paving the way for multi-faceted investments in agriculture, tourism, and



President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali

housing.

Ten, specifically Linden, is poised for significant transformation as the government seeks to establish it as a key industrial centre to support the mining community, with backing from the new highway.

"This is not guesswork. This is not accidental planning. This is a careful, well-articulated strategy that will put Guyana number one. We are not working to be number two..."

US \$161M CONTRACT INKED FOR SOESDYKE-LINDEN HIGHWAY RECONSTRUCTION

This economy, by the time we are finished, will be the most advanced, most diversified...and our urban and regional planning will be the best," the head of state underscored.

An important factor of the two-year project is that around 300 high-paying jobs will be created across various sectors, providing employment opportunities for residents along that stretch.

To this end, President Ali urged residents to maximise these prospects.

"Forget the noise. Block out the noise.... Fit yourself in the

development of the country, fit yourself in the opportunity. Block the noise out, and see how you can benefit from the 300 jobs. See how you can be a part of what is happening, involve yourself," President Ali urged.

The head of state emphasised that the government is dedicated to realising the vision of a unified Guyana, where every Guyanese can prosper. He also called for unity and collaboration amongst stakeholders, emphasising the importance of collective efforts in advancing the nation's progress.

"No one will

hinder this president and this government from building a united Guyana. There is no difference among us...we are one, and nothing will stop us from building this unified Guyana," he stated, adding, **"Every obstacle, every barrier before us will be dismantled...because One Guyana is what we strive for."**

The multi-million project will be undertaken through a collaboration between Trinidadian firm Namalco Construction Services Limited and local partner GuyAmerica Construction Inc. Al

Habishi will be providing supervisory services for the project.

This reconstruction is part of a broader US\$200 million framework agreement signed with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in May 2023. It aligns with the government's vision for an integrated, efficient, cost-effective and sustainable transport network, that would lay the foundation for economic growth and prosperity.

The Soesdyke-Linden highway was constructed between 1966 and 1968 and officially opened in 1969 (55 years ago).

GOVT, GTU INK AGREEMENT

- TEACHERS TO RECEIVE 27% SALARY INCREASE OVER THREE YEARS

A new agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Guyana Teachers Union (GTU) will significantly enhance teachers' salaries and benefits over the next three years.

President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali has praised the agreement, highlighting its potential to greatly improve the working conditions and lives of public school teachers across Guyana.

In a virtual broadcast, President Ali detailed the key aspects of the agreement, stating, **"Over the next three years, teachers will see a direct increase of 27 percent in their salaries. In 2024, they will receive a 10 percent increase,**

followed by an eight percent increase in 2025 and a nine percent increase in 2026. But this is not the full extent of the increase."

He added that the agreement includes an adjustable clause to ensure fairness. **"If the government announces a higher increase for public servants at any time, teachers will receive the difference between their initially agreed increase and the new higher rate."**

Under the new agreement, teachers with a doctoral degree will now receive a monthly allowance of \$32,000, those with a

master's degree will get \$22,000, and holders of **represents a 25 percent increase**



The new deal delivers significant gains for teachers

postgraduate diplomas will receive \$7,000 monthly. **"Holders of an advanced graduate diploma will receive \$7,000 monthly, while those with a certificate in education will get \$5,000. This**

from the previous rate. Additionally, teachers with a certificate in education management will receive \$5,000 monthly for the first time," President Ali explained.

The agreement also includes substantial increases in various allowances. Station allowances have risen by 108 percent, while hardship allowances have increased by up to 67 percent. Clothing allowances have been boosted by 88 percent.

Teachers will benefit from a 50 percent increase in concessions and can now access motor vehicle concessions of up to 1500 cubic centimetres (CC). Those in hinterland and riverine areas can use their concessions for outboard engines or all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). Furthermore, scholarships for teachers have doubled.

President Ali noted that despite many teachers already receiving education through the Guyana Online Academy of

Learning (GOAL) or other universities, the new agreement provides additional support. **"Teachers will now be paid for marking and supervising School Based Assessments (SBAs) and the National Grades Five and Six Mock Examinations for the first time."**

Additionally, the agreement includes a 156 percent increase in the Remote Area Incentive (RAI), raising it to \$32,000. Non-graduate teachers from TS 1A to TS 5B will receive two additional increments on their salary after three years of continuous service.

"This agreement is a testament to our commitment to improving the education sector and supporting our dedicated teachers," President Ali concluded.



Representatives of The Government of Guyana and Guyana Teachers' Union shaking hands after the signing of the multi-year agreement for teachers' salary increases

Guyana's Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, criticised the hypocrisy of the political opposition for suggesting that the current multi-year agreement between the government and teachers is unfair.

Speaking at a recent press conference, Dr. Jagdeo highlighted that the previous government had never increased the salaries for teachers by more than 10 per cent.

The Vice President noted that in 2015, the

JAGDEO CALLS OUT OPPOSITION'S HYPOCRISY OVER TEACHERS' SALARY INCREASE AGREEMENT

APNU+AFC government had never even given a salary increase, but rather a one-off cash bonus; after campaigning that it would raise the salaries of teachers when the party gets into office.

In that very year, Dr. Jagdeo reminded the APNU+AFC government had increased the salaries of its ministers by 50 per cent.

"APNU never went beyond 10 per cent. In 2016, the salary increases ranged from 1 per cent to 10 per cent.

Ten per cent was the maximum for people who were earning under \$99,000 a month...In 2017 they lowered the scale and then it was 0.5 to 8 per cent. In 2018 it was 0.5 to 7 per cent. In 2019 it was 8.5 per cent. In no year did they go beyond 10 per cent and they said 10 per cent is insulting," Dr. Jagdeo explained.

This lack of care from the previous government is what justified the industrial action taken in 2018 though there

was not much that was resolved at that time.

Dr. Jagdeo, drew attention to the fact that the bill for teachers' salaries in 2015 would have been around \$14.9 billion and that 10 per cent of that would equate to \$1.5 billion.

He contrasted the data to the wage bill of the current PPP/C government while citing that the teaching workforce has increased and is already being paid more.

The current wage bill of this government,

he pointed out, equates to \$40 billion per year and 10 per cent of that, equates to \$4 billion.

The Government of Guyana and the Guyana Teachers' Union signed an agreement which will see teachers across the country benefit from a 27 per cent increase in salaries over the next three years. This multi-year agreement is a testament to the government's unwavering commitment to providing for the needs of all its citizens.

GOVT HOLDS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TO ADVANCE MINING SECTOR



General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party Civic, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo

A stakeholder engagement, to facilitate an exchange of best practices and address issues facing the nation's mining sector, was held at the Marriott Hotel in Kingston, Georgetown.

Facilitated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), the forum saw representatives from the

private and public sector agencies attending, to discuss regulatory challenges within the industry, and explore innovative techniques.

This comes on the heels of recent remarks by Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, who defended the government's unwavering support for the mining industry, calling it essential for the nation's economy and livelihood.

Responding to a critical editorial in Stabroek News, Dr. Jagdeo emphasised, **"We are unapologetic about encouraging mining in this country. Mining provides a significant part of our GDP, creates income for many Guyanese, and offers employment**

opportunities for tens of thousands."

Dismissing claims that mining is harming the environment and violating Indigenous rights, he noted that Guyana has maintained some of the lowest deforestation rates in the world.

During his remarks, GGMC's Commissioner, Newell Dennison, emphasised the importance of dialogue between the regulatory and industry arms of the sector.

"It has to be obvious to anybody who is committed to the growth and development of this mining sector that the regulator and industry must chart ways where there is optimum congruence. This will lead to better decision-making by all parties

[and] the removal of potential areas of conflict," Dennison said.

He explained that discussions of this nature are critical to ensure the sector is managed effectively, especially in the face of challenges.

At a recent press conference, Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat acknowledged several challenges faced by the industry including labour shortages, and low recovery rates.

The minister expressed confidence that the government's policies will alleviate these issues.

Additionally, the government recently signed a US\$1.8 million mineral mapping contract with a US company, Global Venture Consulting LLC,

to facilitate strategic mining, and added benefits for medium and small-scale miners.

Mineral mapping is a low-impact mining technique that refers to the process of identifying and mapping the distribution of minerals in a given area or region. This process will assist in identifying areas that hold mineralisation potential, to avoid aimless deforestation by miners.

It aligns with the government's drive to enhance mining practices in ways that allow for the extraction of minerals while protecting Guyana's environmental credentials.

"This project will significantly help us to identify not only where our gold deposits are,

but all minerals. In keeping with what is happening around the world, the transition phase from fossil to renewable, critical minerals is... heavily in demand. If you look at lithium and other minerals, they are highly sought after. [The project] will help us in the allocation of properties and in ensuring we safeguard our forests at the same time," the minister said.

The stakeholder engagement forms part of a slew of activities to commemorate Mining Week, scheduled from August 25 – 31, under the theme: 'LCDS 2030: Adapting to Change, Overcoming Vulnerability, Forging Sustainability.'

The government has allocated a significant US\$400 million to accelerate the development of its ambitious Gas-to-Energy project in Wales, West Bank Demerara. Despite facing delays in securing a US\$660 million loan, the project is progressing steadily.

Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, General Secretary of the ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP), announced this investment at a press conference in Georgetown.

GOVT ACCELERATES GAS-TO-ENERGY PROJECT WITH US\$400M INVESTMENT

He emphasised the government's commitment to the project, stating, **"We have, from our resources... paid about US\$400 million, more than half of the project [cost]."**

The Gas-to-Energy project involves constructing a 200-kilometer pipeline to transport gas from

offshore oil fields to a new Natural Gas Liquid (NGL) plant in Wales.

This infrastructure will support power generation and create

numerous economic opportunities.

Senior Minister with responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh is scheduled to meet with executives from the US EXIM Bank to discuss the loan application further. Dr. Jagdeo reaffirmed the government's determination to see the project through, even if it means funding it entirely from its own budget.

The project is expected to have a significant impact on Guyana's economy, reducing energy costs by up to 50% and attracting new investments. The government has partnered with ExxonMobil to develop the necessary infrastructure and facilities.



Drawing from the ongoing Gas-to-Energy project

GUYANA'S GDP GREW BY 49.7 PER CENT IN FIRST HALF OF 2024

Guyana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to have grown by 49.7 per cent in the first half of 2024, driven by the government's strategic planning and prudent financial policies.

The non-oil economy also saw growth, with an estimated increase of 12.6 per cent, up from 11.7 per cent last year.

This was according to President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, during the opening ceremony of Citizens Bank's new Mandela Branch in Georgetown,

He also noted that the construction sector has expanded by an estimated 43.7 per cent, and while recognising

that some sectors faced difficulties early in the year, the government demonstrated its strategy to improve performance.

STABLE, REGULATED FINANCIAL SECTOR

The president highlighted the banking and financial sector's transformation since 1992, identifying significant increases in deposits, assets and credit to the private sector.

However, several waves of financial sector reforms led to a 44 per cent increase in credit to the private sector from 2020 to 2023, triggering a ripple effect across

various sectors.

He also spoke of non-performing loans, which were at an all-time high in 2019, but reduced in 2023, reflecting a 145 per cent drop and a drastically improved capacity of borrowers to repay their debts.

The head of state also highlighted several initiatives, such as low-interest rates for poultry farmers and increased mortgage ceilings, demonstrating his government's dedication to improving access to financing.

The government also plans to update the Financial Institutions Act (FIA) to modernise Guyana's banking sector and align it with

international banking standards.

The amendments will allow for representative offices of international banks to showcase their financial products, which will in turn stimulate foreign direct investment and increase access to credit by local corporate borrowers.

He lauded the instrumental role that the country's two indigenous banks – Citizens Bank and Demerara Bank – have played in the development, transformation and integration of the economy.

"We saw the establishment of a stock exchange,

the expansion of bank branches throughout the country, and notable improvements,



President Ali unveiling the commemorative plaque for the new Citizens Bank Mandela branch

as I said, in the payment system. We saw tremendous improvement in access to credit for the regular man, and this is demonstrated by the number of

homes we see being constructed, small businesses, [and] commercial activity," the president underlined.

He also emphasised the importance of continued innovation as the work continues to position Guyana's financial sector as a key player in international markets.

Meanwhile, Citizens Bank's Mandela Branch operations will be supported by a staff complement of 27, and promises seamless, consistent delivery of products and services.

The \$1.8 billion state-of-the-art building incorporates many modern features, and will host the banking operations of the Thirst Park branch, commencing September 2.

GOV'T WILL CONTINUE IMPROVING AMERINDIANS' LIVES - PRESIDENT ASSERTS

President Ali has emphasised the essential role that indigenous communities play in Guyana's growth, and assured them of ongoing initiatives to improve their lives and open doors to greater opportunities.

The president was at the time addressing those gathered at the Kamana Community Ground in Region Eight for the North Pakaraimas District Games 2024.

He said that successive People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) governments have prioritised inclusivity, and the

development of all communities.

"The People's Progressive Party Civic is on a mission, and that mission is to, bridge our country, to bridge every divide, to bring our people together, to build prosperity in every single community. And our Amerindian brothers and sisters, the indigenous people of this country, will not be left out of the development in our country," President Ali said.

The head of

state spoke of the

advancements in infrastructure and



President Ali and members of Cabinet attend North Pakaraimas District Games 2024

healthcare in Amerindian communities, affirming that these efforts will

continue. **"We will continue to invest so that more**

teachers, sports administrators, whatever you want to be, we want to invest to ensure you can be that person," the president assured.

Recognising the importance of connectivity, especially in the context of the global digital transition, President Ali announced that the government will work over the next three months to improve internet facilities in all Region Eight villages to reduce data costs.

"These are the things that are critical," he told the

residents.

President Ali also highlighted the government's strong support for sports facilities in Amerindian communities, noting that approximately \$300 million has been allocated for the development of sports grounds in Amerindian areas across the country.

Moreover, the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport, along with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, has collectively allocated \$7 million to ensure the successful hosting of the games.

GUYANA'S AVIATION SECTOR SOARS BEYOND PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

Guyana's aviation sector is experiencing a remarkable resurgence, surpassing pre-COVID-19 activity levels, and showing strong signs of continued growth. Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, highlighted this positive development during the opening ceremony of the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority and the Civil Aviation Training School.

"We are getting back to pre-covid levels. At the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) we have about 500 arrivals and

departures per month," Minister Edghill remarked.

The Eugene Correia International Airport, another major hub in the Caribbean, has also seen a significant increase in traffic, with operations reaching approximately 4,800 per month. This represents a 10 percent growth since the pandemic, indicating a steady recovery and expansion of the aviation sector.

To accommodate the rising demand, the government has been investing in infrastructure and capacity enhancements.

The Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCCA) has been focusing on improving its capabilities through accreditation and modernisation efforts, aligning with international standards.

"The GCCA has been focusing on bolstering its capabilities through accreditation and modernisation efforts to align with international standards," Minister Edghill stated.

One of the key initiatives is the GCCA's pursuit of accreditation with the International



Eugene Correia International Airport, handles around 4,800 operations monthly, reflecting a notable 10 percent increase in traffic

Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) TrainAir programme. This accreditation will ensure that Guyana's aviation training and operational standards meet global benchmarks,

standardising practices, and ensuring that local aviation personnel are well-versed in internationally accepted

procedures and curriculum.

In addition to training and capacity building, the government has also invested in upgrading air traffic

management systems at the CJIA. Recent improvements include the enhancement of the automatic weather station at Timehri, which is crucial for accurate weather navigation and flight safety.

These advancements demonstrate the government's commitment to supporting the growth of the aviation sector through infrastructural and technological enhancements. As Guyana continues to strengthen its aviation capabilities, the sector is expected to maintain its upward trajectory, further integrating the country into the global aviation network.

reaching and long-lasting, impacting everything from tourism and fisheries to the overall health of the natural environment.

As a result, he pointed out that preparedness involves a comprehensive understanding of potential risks, a robust response framework, and the necessary resources and capabilities to act swiftly.

It also requires collaboration among government agencies, industry players, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, and the public.

Thus far, Guyana has taken several proactive measures to strengthen its oil spill preparedness and response capabilities.

GUYANA STRENGTHENS OIL SPILL PREPAREDNESS

Guyana is intensifying its efforts to enhance national capacity for oil spill preparedness and response with the commencement of a four-day workshop on oil spill contingency planning.

The workshop, held at the Guyana Police Force Headquarters, is being conducted by the Regional Activity Centre/Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information, and Training Centre for the Wider Caribbean Region (RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe).

During the opening ceremony, Prime

Minister Brigadier (ret'd) Mark Phillips emphasised the critical importance of the workshop.

He further noted that Guyana has had a national oil spill contingency plan since 2020, which was tested in an exercise in 2022.

In addition, the PM said that the workshop coincides with the ongoing drafting of the National Oil Spill Prevention and Management Bill 2024.

"We are at the stage where we want to put a bill before the National Assembly to make this whole issue lawful in Guyana."



Prime Minister Brigadier (ret'd) Mark Phillips, CDC Representatives, Maritime representatives, RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe representatives and stakeholders

This workshop serves as a precursor to the passage of this critical legislation, further solidifying our commitment to oil spill preparedness and response," PM Phillips said.

Underscoring

the importance of preparedness in mitigating the risks associated with the burgeoning oil and gas industry in Guyana, Prime Minister Phillip stated that the repercussions of an oil spill could be far-

The workshop would see participants being exposed to mechanisms such as the readiness evaluation tool for oil spills, which will help identify gaps in the national contingency planning and enhance overall response capabilities.

RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe representative, Matthew Martin commended the progress made by the government in Guyana's preparedness efforts.

The workshop is sponsored by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Environmental Programme Regional Coordination Unit, and RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe.

GOV'T ON THE VERGE OF ACHIEVING 'GUYANESE DREAM' FOR NATIONAL PROSPERITY

The PPP/C Government is on the cusp of making the 'Guyana Dream' a reality, through steady and consistent economic, infrastructural and socioeconomic change.

This is according to Vice President Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, who emphasised the government's commitment to creating a just and inclusive environment where everyone can thrive, against the backdrop of a rapidly expanding Guyanese economy.

The Vice President highlighted several elements of the government's vision for nationwide prosperity during a press conference.

"We have clearly outlined that we see a country that is united and prosperous...that all of our people, regardless of their race, religion or

gender, can benefit from high quality services offered by the state and that they can benefit from growing opportunities provided by the state," he explained.

He believes that the PPP/C government has demonstrated its dedication and ability to implement policies that support this vision.

"It's easy to come up with a set of slogans, but it is hard to define a vision and then work in ...times of scarce resources and times of plentiful resources to have the discipline to stay the course over the long period to achieve the vision," Dr Jagdeo expressed.

He emphasised that the economic vision is to ensure that the country's resources are managed in a way that promotes sustainability. To achieve this, the government has

been investing in long-term programmes and projects, which include mega infrastructural development ventures.

"In terms of social



benefits and assistance to people, we believe that we can transfer wealth in a manner that creates a better quality of life for our people, and prepares them for a better future through more education. That is why we are investing tens of billions

of dollars in education now," Dr Jagdeo stated.

The budget for the education sector, he noted, has grown from \$53 billion when the

TVET programmes, the construction of new schools and enhancement of existing ones also reflect this dedication.

This vision was outlined in the PPP/C's 2020 manifesto, and 90 per cent of the promises enshrined in that document have been fulfilled, according to Dr Jagdeo. These include:

- * An increase in disposable income in the public sector by \$90 billion.

- * Delivery of over 33,000 house lots.

- * Provision of government scholarships to 50,000 individuals.

- * Doubling of the old-age pension.

- * Restoration and expansion of the 'Because We Care' cash grant for all school children.

- * Restoration of the Joint Services bonus.

- * Reversal of over

200 taxes and fees.

- * Implementation of a comprehensive infrastructure plan, including 140 kilometers of four-lane roads and over 400 bridges.

- * Stimulating non-oil investments and removing taxes on private healthcare and education

Other aspects of this ethos include ensuring that there is a free media, an independent judiciary, and constitutional protection of the rights of the people.

The opposition political parties will continue, Dr Jagdeo asserted, to be short-sighted and engage in their usual anti-development politics which remains a threat to the forward movement, and modernisation of Guyana.

FORESTRY SECTOR FLOURISHES WITH 100 NEW SAWMILLS, 50 LUMBER YARDS



Minister of Natural Resources, Vickram Bharrat

Guyana's forestry

sector has seen remarkable growth over the past four years, with the establishment of nearly 100 new sawmills and 50 lumberyards. This expansion is driving a surge in value-added products, according to Minister of Natural Resources, Vickram Bharrat.

Minister Bharrat, during a recent media briefing, highlighted that the upcoming gas-to-energy project, which will reduce electricity costs, is expected to further boost the industry.

The focus has shifted towards producing more value-added products, resulting in reduced log

exports and an increased supply to the local market. The government is also promoting activities like coal and mulch production, with efforts to improve packaging and find new markets.

In addition, the National Forest Restoration Initiative

(NFRI) is making significant strides, with over 2,500 trees planted in various regions. "This is a costly but necessary venture," Minister Bharrat noted, emphasising the initiative's role in reclaiming mined-out areas and aligning with the Low Carbon

Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030.

The NFRI includes pilot projects in Linden and other regions, focusing on reforestation with native species. The establishment of seedling stations and community involvement are key to the initiative's success.

REGION SIX FARMERS' GROUPS RECEIVE BREEDING BULL, OTHER FARMING INPUTS

Several farmers' groups from Highbury and surrounding communities on the East Bank of Berbice, Region Six have received various farming inputs, including a tractor and trailer, a breeding bull, and high-yielding coconut seedlings, to boost agricultural productivity.

Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha handed over the farming implements during a recent community meeting.

Over the last four years, farmers within the region have benefited from numerous interventions to enhance their production.

"We will continue

to [help you]. We will repair the dams and make the inputs available to you. We will work with you to develop the agriculture sector in this entire area," the minister stated.

Livestock farmers from Mara Village had requested the development of pastures for their cattle.

In response, Minister Mustapha said, "I have asked GLDA to work along with NDIA and we will develop 500 acres of pastures for the farmers in that area...So that they can have better pastures for their animals."

During the meeting

at New Market Primary School at No. 63, eight farmers' groups from the area were provided with 139 spray cans, eight 2-inch pumps, 80 small tools, and eight tillers.

Moreover, the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) will collaborate with cash crop farmers to establish a programme to determine the most profitable crops to produce. Free planting materials will also be provided.

Minister Mustapha assured the gathering that all the access dams and 10 canals in the farming areas will be rehabilitated, providing relief to both residents

and farmers.

He reminded them that work has already commenced on the flood embankments from No. 66 Village to Canje, which will strengthen the drainage and irrigation



Breeding bull that was handed over to the farmer's group

infrastructure.

Construction work will soon begin on the

two high-level, Hope-like canals at No. 51 and 52 Villages and Whim/Lancaster.

Meanwhile, the President of the Rice Producers' Association (RPA), Leakha

crop this harvest due to the government's interventions.

As a result, Rambrich emphasised that there has been a decline in paddy bug infestation. "...For this crop, for the paddy bug, we have seen the government's contributions to chemicals and assisting with spraying, and, in this area, we even paid labour to spray the dams and abandoned fields. For rice harvesting presently, we see paddy coming in the mills with below three per cent damage. This is excellent," he said.

Rambrich, noted that rice farmers are expecting a remarkable

\$600M ABATTOIR AT ONVERWAGT COMPLETED



Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha

The state-of-the-art, \$600 million abattoir at Onverwagt, West Coast Berbice, Region Five is now completed, modernising Guyana's meat processing capabilities and bringing them up to international standards.

It is also expected to unlock new markets for Guyana's beef.

The transformative project was funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and will serve as Guyana's main slaughtering area for cattle, as Region Five is

set to become the hub for the cattle sector.

"They had a test the other day and the contractor has to do some modifications, and as soon as that is completed, I will do the commissioning," Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha said.

He added that the abattoir will help enhance income for many cattle farmers and generate additional employment opportunities.

It will complement efforts made by the government over the last four years to boost meat

production and reduce meat importation.

Other initiatives being undertaken in the livestock sector include cultivating corn and soya beans and using artificial insemination (AI) in cattle to improve the country's breeding stock.

These initiatives aim to help Guyana become self-sufficient and ensure food security locally and regionally.

GUYANA GETS SIX NEW LAND SURVEYORS

Six new land surveyors were sworn in by President Ali, at his Shiv Chanderpaul Drive office in Georgetown.

The surveyors are Navindra Looknauth, Joel Trotman, Ramnaresh Persaud, Tamesh Persaud, Kemo Cornelius, and Kishan Crichlow.

President Ali urged the recently appointed land surveyors to maintain their integrity and professionalism.

He stressed that their duties must be guided by truth and accuracy, emphasising that each measurement, map, and report produced should reflect the highest

standard required.

"There may be times when you will face pressures that challenge your ethical principles ... Remember that the true value of your work lies not in the financial rewards, but in the trust and respect that you earn from those who rely on your expertise," President Ali pointed out.

By upholding high standards, President Ali underscored that it will safeguard their reputation and contribute to the integrity and credibility of the land surveying

profession.

Meanwhile, Commissioner of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC), Enrique Monize explained that the analysis of the results indicates that land surveying is a very challenging examination.

"I would like to offer my congratulations to those who were successful. I thank you for choosing land surveying as a career since there are many other opportunities in Guyana during this period," Monize stated.



President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali swears in 6 new Land surveyors

OVER 700 SMALL MINERS RECEIVE LAND TENURES

Guyana's mining sector has seen significant growth in recent years, largely due to increased land tenure for small miners.

According to Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat, over 700 small miners have received land tenures in the past four years alone.

"I can say safely over 700 small miners have land tenures. The 550 I mentioned is only through the lottery, but of course,

there is still the normal procedure through the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC)," Minister Bharrat noted during a recent press conference.

Three lotteries held during this period have distributed mineral property to approximately 550 small miners. Of these, 150 lots were allocated in Bartica and 200 in Mahdia earlier this year.

The minister also highlighted the reopening of the mining station in Marudi, Region Nine, which has benefited over 40 small miners. This development has not only boosted economic activities in the region,

but has also contributed to the overall growth of the mining sector.

While gold declaration has been lower than expected, Minister Bharrat expressed optimism about the future. **"The road ahead is a bright one indeed because we have signed a recent agreement with Reunion Gold... There will be a start-up in 2027, meaning, the production of the first gold in 2027."**

He added that this production will yield over 200,000 ounces of gold annually.

Another large-scale mining company is also expected to begin production in 2027. Additionally, AJM/

Zijin Mining Company is transitioning to underground mining, which is anticipated to significantly increase its output.

Minister Bharrat also mentioned the significant contribution of Omai Gold Mining, which has produced approximately four million ounces of gold. Other notable projects include the Toroparu deposit and the ongoing exploration efforts in the Marudi area.



Guyana's mining sector flourishing

PRESIDENT ALI DEFENDS NEW BERBICE BRIDGE MODERNISATION PLAN

President Ali has robustly defended his administration's modernisation plans to allow for smoother interconnectivity between the counties of Berbice and Demerara, thereby enhancing travel, transportation, trade, and development of the lives of all Guyanese.

The head of state chided the opposition's Alliance for Change (AFC) for its baseless nit-picking of the government's plan to construct a high span fixed bridge across the Berbice River.

This new bridge will replace the current

structure, which has been in place since 2009. The plan was also conceptualised to accommodate the massive development unfolding in Region Six.

The government has already issued a Request for Prequalification for contractors to design, build and finance the bridge.

However, the AFC has called into question the financial viability of the project.

In a candid discussion with Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Oneidge Walrond, and Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar

Mustapha, President Ali pointed to the hypocritical nature of the AFC, as they claim to be committed to development, but failed to deliver during their tenure in office.

According to President Ali, the AFC's criticisms are political in nature and not intended to be constructive, or in the interest of Guyanese.

He highlighted AFC's track record of hindering key development projects, such as the Amaila Falls Hydro-power project, which posed a notable setback in the country's transition to renewable

energy.

"They have no vision, but every single idea they want to kill. They believe



President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali responded to criticism regarding plans for New Berbice Bridge

that any investment in these regions is a political investment, and then they try to lie to the people," the

president said.

Much like Linden, he said that Berbice is poised to become a major industrial hub.

Corentyne Highway as some of the beneficial projects underway in the county.

With a new and improved Berbice bridge, the region will enjoy greater ease in transportation.

The head of state made it clear that his government will continue to work towards nationwide development, and groundbreaking projects such as the Berbice bridge will continue to be implemented to transform the lives of Guyanese.

President Ali spoke of the development of a deep-water port, the Palmyra Stadium, and the expansion of the

GOVT REFUTES DIVISIVE CLAIMS OVER MOCHA-ARCADIA LAND USE



The Housing Ministry has clarified that the land in question is being used solely for the publicly stated purpose of highway construction

the Office of the Prime Minister, Kwame McCoy, and the Ministry of Housing and Water have strongly rebuked recent claims made by veteran journalist Adam Harris and Opposition Leader Aubrey Norton, accusing the PPP/C government of unfairly targeting the black community and misusing land at Mocha-Arcadia (Cane View).

condemned Harris' article, which he described as **"sensational, misplaced, and irresponsible,"** noting that it aligns with Harris' longstanding allegiance to the PNC's divisive tactics. **"Harris has spent years masquerading as a journalist while pushing a political**

agenda," Minister McCoy stated.

The Minister defended the government's actions regarding the removal of squatters from the Heroes Highway, noting that the process was conducted with fairness and transparency. **"The government engaged in extensive consultations, offering compensation, relocation assistance, and land titles,"** Minister McCoy explained.

The Ministry of Housing and Water also addressed the controversy, firmly rejecting the allegations about the land's use. The Ministry clarified that the land in question is

being used solely for the publicly stated purpose of highway construction, with no plans to allocate it for any other use.

Minister of Housing and Water, Collin Croal, referenced an August 13, 2024, article in Stabroek News, stating, **"The lands are not allocated to anyone...there are no structures on the land."**

Both Minister McCoy and the Ministry accused Harris and Norton of distorting the facts to incite racial strife. **"This is yet another attempt to sow seeds of ethnic division in a nation focused on unity and progress,"** Minister McCoy asserted. The Housing Ministry echoed these sentiments, calling

the claims **"erroneous and mischievous,"** and emphasising that the majority of squatters had been relocated to developed housing areas at no cost and had received compensation, becoming legal landowners.

Minister McCoy highlighted the government's commitment to all citizens, pointing out that key positions and benefits, from housing to scholarships, have been equitably distributed under the 'One Guyana' agenda. **"The Irfaan Ali-led administration's 'One Guyana' agenda is transparent and inclusive,"** he emphasised.

Minister McCoy

urged Guyanese to reject divisive narratives. **"These unpatriotic machinations will fail, while the vast majority of Guyanese continue the noble quests for nation-building and unity,"** he declared.

The Ministry of Housing and Water also noted that the government's successful housing programme over the past four years has been a point of contention for the Opposition, particularly in light of their poor performance in the sector during their tenure from 2015 to 2020. The Ministry acknowledged that legal proceedings initiated by a few squatters who opposed the government's decision are currently pending in the High Court.



Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water, Susan Rodrigues

The high demand for house lots in Guyana has resulted in 67 new housing areas developed countrywide within the last four years, paving the way for thousands of Guyanese to become homeowners, according to Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water, Susan Rodrigues

From August 2020,

the government has allocated more than \$240 billion to the housing sector, bolstering housing infrastructure development.

"It's a historic investment in the housing sector, and one that we are tremendously proud of. The only way we could have done this is by setting such a high target for ourselves and ensuring that we do everything and spare no effort to reach our target of 50,000 house lots," Minister Rodrigues underlined.

She said the ministry is in negotiations for

67 NEW HOUSING AREAS DEVELOPED IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS - MINISTER RODRIGUES

lands for housing development with National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL), Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo), and the Guyana Lands and Survey Commission.

This year, the government has earmarked 21 housing areas for development in Regions One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, and Ten.

"We continue to work on new housing areas. It

is an ongoing effort to identify land for housing. We have competing interests for land. We have to make lands available for GuySuCo, agriculture, and our housing programme," the minister added.

The establishment of the housing areas with the necessary infrastructure provides the allottees with the opportunity to commence house construction.

The minister noted that there has been a

tremendous increase in the number of people who are very eager to build. This is due to the plethora of measures implemented by the government to provide assistance to homebuilders, geared to boost their standard of living.

These initiatives include the distribution of land titles, house lot allocation, regularisation of squatting areas, and the housing construction support initiative. For

example, the government worked with the local banking institutions and the New Building Society (NBS) to reduce the mortgage rates to as low as 3.5 per cent for loans up to \$9 million.

Thus far, over 36,000 house lots have been distributed to families countrywide, in keeping with the government's ongoing commitment to providing sustainable and affordable housing to Guyanese.

OVER 300 AMERINDIAN LEADERS SWORN IN AS JPS, RURAL CONSTABLES

A total of 362 toshaos, senior councillors and chairpersons of the Community Development Councils from across Guyana were sworn in as ex-officio justices of the peace and rural constables.

Some 114 toshaos were sworn in as JPs, while 248 toshaos, senior councillors and CDC chairs were sworn in as RCs. Following the ceremony, they were issued with their instruments.

The swearing-in of these officers was the highlight of the final day of the National Toshias Council (NTC) Conference.

The leaders confidently took their oath of office, vowing to serve their communities in their respective capacities with integrity, and without fear or favour, before Magistrate Abigail Gibbs and the head of the Guyana Police Force's (GPF) Strategic Planning Unit,

Khali Pareshram.

Magistrate Gibbs commended the leaders for their dedication to serving their communities.

She also expressed confidence, that they would handle their responsibilities with fairness, integrity and grace.

Pareshram took the opportunity to remind the new appointees that they are now bound by the law of Guyana, and that all their actions

must reflect the letter of the law.

He also urged leaders to ensure they satisfy the needs of their people.

"When you return to your communities, you will be dealing with issues relating to safety and security. I expect you to deal with all matters impartially and professionally. You are now the eyes and ears of your communities," he stated.

Pareshram noted that as representatives



Amerindian Leaders Sworn in at NTC

of the Guyana Police Force, they must conduct themselves professionally.

AMERINDIAN LEADERS SOLIDIFY SUPPORT FOR LCDS 2030



Amerindian Leaders reaffirm support for LCDS

Some 254 Amerindian leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030, underscoring their recognition of sustainable development and the well-being of their communities.

The commitment was

solidified as the National Toshias Council (NTC) Conference came to an end at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC).

At the conference, toshaos and chairs of Community Development Councils (CDCs) unanimously affirmed their unwavering support for the LCDS, including active participation in the national carbon credits programme under ART TREES and the benefits sharing mechanism.

They are dedicated

to collaborating with the government, civil society, and other stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of the LCDS 2030.

This critical national framework aligns with the aspirations of the indigenous peoples and promotes sustainable economic growth while safeguarding forests, ecosystems, and cultural heritage.

It also aligns with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and international climate commitments,

positioning Guyana, as a leader in sustainable development and climate change mitigation.

With 15 per cent of all financial resources earned through the LCDS 2030 allocated to Amerindian villages, they are already benefitting significantly from this framework, with \$4.7 billion in projects currently underway in 242 villages nationwide.

Additionally, President Ali has announced a 26.5 per cent increase in the distribution of carbon

credit earnings this year, translating to \$4.84 billion.

Since 2009, resources from the US\$150 million agreement with the Kingdom of Norway have been benefitting the Amerindian Land Tenure project, and helping villages sustainably manage their territories.

Guyana boasts one of the most intact forest landscapes, thanks to the indigenous peoples, who play a crucial role in its preservation.

GOVT DEFENDS NATIONAL TOSHAOS CONFERENCE AMIDST OPPOSITION CRITICISM- 'SINGULAR VOICES MUST NOT ECLIPSE 200 ELECTED LEADERS'

Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, General Secretary (GS) of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), has defended the National Toshias Conference (NTC) against recent criticisms from the Amerindian People's Association (APA) and opposition figures.

Speaking at a press conference at Freedom House in Georgetown, Dr. Jagdeo denounced the opposition's attempts to undermine the conference and dismiss the achievements of the government.

"Singular voices must not eclipse the voices of over 200 elected Indigenous leaders," the PPP/C General Secretary asserted. He praised the NTC for its unique format, which facilitates direct, meaningful dialogue among Toshias, government

officials, and the Head of State. "The Minister and technical staff engage with Toshias in a free-flowing format about their development needs. This kind of engagement is unprecedented globally," Dr. Jagdeo added.

He also highlighted the significance of the 2006 Amerindian Act, which was enacted under the PPP/C government, granting Amerindian communities self-determination and management rights. "For the first time in Guyana, we legally enshrined the right of villages to manage their own affairs," he stated.

The PPP/C General Secretary pointed to substantial investments made in Indigenous communities, including

large sums of money allocated for ICT hubs, new schools, healthcare facilities, and infrastructure projects. "Through the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), Toshias are leaving with \$5 billion

Dr. Jagdeo defended the government's record. "Misinformation will not undermine the PPP/C's accomplishments," he warned. "We must remind people of our record and progress, or the villains of the

describing it as evidence of "deep-seated panic and desperation" from the APNU/AFC. She criticised the opposition for attempting to undermine the conference's purpose.

"The National Toshias Council leads a full week of intensive engagements with the government on key issues of hinterland development," Minister Sukhai stated.

The Amerindian Affairs Minister rebuked the APA for distorting President Dr. Irfaan Ali's opening comments at the conference, and obstructing development efforts. "The APA's actions reveal a self-destructive path as they attempt to sabotage progress and unity," she said. The Minister highlighted the APA's history

of blocking crucial funding and initiatives despite significant financial allocations for Amerindian development.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the NTC, Derrick John, addressed the issue of unauthorised access to the conference by Opposition Toshias Vincent Henry and Mervin Williams. John clarified that the closed-door sessions at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC) required proper accreditation, which Henry and Williams did not possess. "Mr. Henry even attempted to impersonate a delegate with a fake badge," John revealed. He stressed the importance of adhering to strict rules and protocols to ensure the conference's security and smooth operation.



President Ali with Indigenous leaders at the conference

for community development," Dr. Jagdeo noted.

In response to claims that the NTC is not meeting its objectives,

Minister of Amerindian Affairs Pauline Sukhai also addressed the criticism,

NTC CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS PROGRESS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS

GOVT ANNOUNCES \$4.84B CARBON CREDIT FUNDING FOR AMERINDIAN VILLAGES



President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali addressing the NTC Conference 2024, emphasising Indigenous empowerment and development

At the National Toshaos Conference 2024, President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali delivered an inspiring message to Guyana's Indigenous leaders, asserting that their dreams of a better future are now being realised through substantial government efforts.

"Today, you're not dreaming, you are achieving," President Ali declared, emphasising the transformative progress made under his administration.

The President contrasted the current achievements with the severe marginalisation faced by Amerindian communities before 1992. He praised the government's investments in essential services, including \$20 billion allocated for road improvements, \$4 billion for agriculture, and the expansion of the Hinterland Electrification Programme, which now benefits 30,000 households. Education advancements include the construction of 42 nursery and 16 secondary schools, alongside 5,000



NTC Chairman, Derrick John, addressing the National Toshaos Conference

youths pursuing studies through the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL).

CARBON CREDIT REVENUES

In a significant boost for Amerindian development, President Ali announced a \$4.84 billion allocation from carbon credit revenues to support over 242



Minister of Amerindian Affairs, Pauline Sukhai, addressing the NTC Conference

Amerindian, riverine, and remote villages. This increase from the previous year's allocation aims to further enhance Amerindian livelihoods under the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030. "We have increased the percentage of this year's earnings to 26.5 percent, ensuring you will receive no less than last year," the President affirmed.

The allocation follows the \$4.7 billion distributed in 2023, funding 811 transformative projects in areas such as tourism, agriculture, infrastructure, and income-generating ventures.

CDCs to receive \$100 Million in new carbon credits disbursement

Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo revealed a \$100 million allocation from carbon credit revenues to support Community Development Councils (CDCs) that did not receive funds last year. This additional support reflects the government's ongoing commitment to Amerindian and hinterland development.

INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS AND CONNECTIVITY

Minister of Amerindian Affairs Pauline Sukhai provided a detailed update on the government's efforts to advance Indigenous land rights and improve connectivity. She highlighted the establishment of a dedicated land titling unit and reaffirmed the government's dedication to addressing land-related issues. "The Government of Guyana has stood as a solid and dependable partner with the National Toshaos Council," Minister Sukhai stated.

NTC CHAIRMAN PRAISES GOVT SUPPORT, URGES UNITY

Derick John, Chairman of the National Toshaos Council (NTC), praised the government's support and called for unity among Indigenous leaders. "Guyana is the only country that gives Indigenous leaders this opportunity, and we should be proud of that," John emphasised. He also acknowledged the significant progress made in recent years and the importance of using



Minister of Home Affairs, Robeson Benn, addressing the NTC Conference

available resources to transform community ideas into reality.

SEVEN MORE VILLAGES SECURE LAND TITLES

During the conference, seven more

fulfilling long-held promises and noting the positive impact on agriculture and economic growth.

Six Indigenous communities were awarded their certificates of title for the land in 2023, while five received



President Ali enjoying lunch with toshaos at NTC Conference opening, strengthening community bonds

Indigenous communities received land titles, marking a significant milestone in securing their land rights. The communities of

theirs in 2022.

ENHANCED CONNECTIVITY AND ENERGY ACCESS



Seven more villages secured land titles

Hotoquai, Hobodai, Red Hill, Akawini, and Moco Moco were awarded absolute grants, while Arrau and Karasabai received certificates of title. President Ali and Minister Sukhai presented the titles,

Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips highlighted the government's commitment to improving internet connectivity and energy access in hinterland regions. Under the first phase of the initiative, 66 communities have been connected to high-speed internet. The second phase will extend this connectivity to 250 more communities. Additionally, 31 communities now benefit from microgrids, with plans to build five more and establish larger solar farms and mini hydropower projects.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DISCIPLINED SERVICES

Minister of Home Affairs Robeson Benn urged Amerindian leaders to guide their youths into disciplined services to diversify and integrate local professionals. He emphasised the importance of local involvement for effective and responsive service delivery and outlined recent advancements in the Guyana Police Force, Guyana Fire Service, and Guyana Prison Service.

GOVT'S COMMITMENT TO AMERINDIAN ACT AND COMMUNITY RIGHTS

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs Mohabir Anil Nandlall, S.C, reiterated the government's commitment to upholding the

Amerindian Act of 2006. He highlighted the unique empowerment provided to village councils and the government's efforts to ensure compliance with international standards to protect Amerindian lands and resources.

The National Toshaos Conference, themed 'Astute Leadership for the Amerindian People,' for five days (August 19-23), provided a platform at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre, for dialogue between Amerindian leaders and government officials, focusing on accelerating Indigenous development and addressing key issues.

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RESTAURANT SPECIAL

Grid of restaurant special items: Spanish Onion, Green Leaf Lettuce, Carrot, Green Pepper, Green Onion, South Africa Orange, Broccoli, US Tomato, Lime, Yellow Plantain, Frozen Pangas Fillet, Headless White Shrimp, Frozen Galungong, Extra Large Egg, Diamond Brand Ured Red Chili, Ary-D Coconut Milk, Container 532, Container NG-093, Container NG-081, Kraft Singlefold Towels, ADM All Purpose Flour, Monosodium Glutamate, Capri Vegetable Oil, VALUE Dishwashing Liquid, Lee Kum Kee Kum Chur Oyster Flavoured Sauce, Lee Kum Kee Hoisin Sauce, NG-18 New Gen Eco-Friendly Redpath Sugar.

FROZEN

Grid of frozen items: Pacific White-Head on Shrimp, Craig Golden Pompano, Viva Sea Skipjack Tuna, Organic Frozen Waxy Corn Series, Ocean Food Imitation Crabmeat, Shi Banana Leaves, Seaway Shrimp Baby, Bingrae Milk Drink Series, Ferma Breaded Fanta! Shrimp, Surasang Cabbage Kimchi, Grace Green Pigeon Peas, Buenos Dried Herring.

GROCERY

Grid of grocery items: Quaker Quick Oats, Nescafe Coffee, Grace Coconut Milk Powder, Crush Orange Soda, Arizona Mango Fruit Juice, Kinn M & Tea, Flying Goose Brand Sriracha Hot Chili Sauce, Merkin Chicken Flavoring, VINA THUAN Banh Bao Dumpling, Dan's River Coconut Milk, Grace Milk Beverage, Gatorade Sports Drink, Chaohou Young Green Jackfruit, Maggi Seasoning Soy Sauce, Squid Fish Sauce, Heritage Debonzo Jiang Rice Verm, Thai Top Choice Rice, Three Angels Brand Rice Stick.

MEAT

Grid of meat items: Pork Belly, Best Choice Sliced Pork Roll, Beef Eye Round, Beef Eye Round, Chicken Leg Meat.

SEAFOOD

Grid of seafood items: Frozen Fresh Head-on White Shrimp, Fresh Yellow Tail Snapper, Fresh Pompano, Live Blue Crab, Live Cat Fish.

NATIONAL CLEANUP CONTINUES TO M

In a concerted effort to address the pervasive issue of littering and improve the overall cleanliness and aesthetics of the country, Guyana's National Enhancement Cleanup Campaign has continued to yield positive results.

Led by President Dr. Irfaan Ali, the latest cleanup exercise saw hundreds of volunteers from across the nation coming together to beautify communities. Government officials, members of the Guyana Defence Force, private sector representatives, and other stakeholders participated in the initiative.

Target areas in Georgetown included Independence Boulevard, Sussex Street, Hill Street, Smyth Street, Hunter Street, Saffron Street, High Street, East Street, Thomas Street, Camp Street, Waterloo Street, Carmichael

Street, Merriman's Mall, Cummings to Irving Street, and the seawall. Similar cleanup exercises took place in various regions throughout Guyana.

The National Enhancement Committee, established in 2022 by the Ministry of Public Works, has successfully organised nine countrywide cleanup campaigns since its inception. By fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors, the committee has made significant strides in combating littering and promoting environmental awareness.

President Ali emphasised the importance of maintaining a clean and healthy environment for both residents and visitors. He encouraged citizens to take pride in their communities and to refrain from littering.



President Ali and his team thanks the almost 6000 volunteers who came out nationwide.

REGION 1



REGION 2



REGION 3



REGION 4



TUP CAMPAIGN KE A DIFFERENCE

REGION 5



REGION 6



REGION 7



REGION 8



REGION 9



REGION 10





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GUYANA MAINTAINS STABLE CAPE PASS RATE, SEES SLIGHT DECLINE IN CSEC RESULTS



Some of the students at the ceremony at Queen's College



Chitra Parbhu from Saraswatie Vidya Niketan, her parents and Minister of Education, Priya Manickchand

Guyana has recorded a stable pass rate for the 2024 Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE),

Hussain announced the preliminary results at Queen's College in Georgetown. This year, 721 students from 13

units achieving a 100% pass rate.

For CSEC, the pass rate in 2024 is 67.23%, a minor drop from 67.34% in 2023. A total of 11,612 students took the exams, with an increase in subject entries to 75,018. Notably, Guyana saw improved performances in 12 subjects, including Agriculture Science (98.85%), Theatre Arts (98.98%), and English B (70%).

However, some subjects, such as English A and Mathematics, experienced declines, with pass rates dropping to 69% and 31%, respectively.

TOP STUDENTS ATTRIBUTE SUCCESS TO HARD WORK



Chief Education Officer, Saddam Hussain

while the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) results saw a slight decline.

Chief Education Officer Saddam Hussain

secondary schools and four private centres sat the CAPE exams, marking a small increase from 2023. The overall pass rate for CAPE stands at 92.57%, with

Top performers in this year's CSEC and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) credit their exceptional results to

dedication and hard work.

TOP CSEC Performers:

- **Rudranath Sankar** from Anna Regina Secondary School topped the list with 23 grade ones and one grade two. "I didn't expect to be number one; it's a great feeling,"

- **Aniya Couchman** from Queen's College excelled with 11 grade ones, two grade twos, and one grade three. "All of my hard work has finally paid off," she stated. Couchman has ambitious plans to pursue computer engineering abroad.
- **Lateisha McArthur** from Queen's College

from Queen's College, who earned 14 grade ones, six grade twos, and one grade three, expressed enthusiasm about continuing her studies at the same institution.

- **Chitra Parbhu** from Saraswatie Vidya Niketan secured 17 grade ones, two grade twos, and one grade three, with plans to study civil engineering at the University of Guyana.

Minister of Education Priya Manickchand praised the students for their resilience and success despite recent challenges.

"Even with disruptions, the results are a testament to the students' hard work and the ministry's efforts to support them through difficult times," she said.



Rudranath Sankar from Anna Regina Secondary School, his parents and Minister of Education, Priya Manickchand

Sankar said, noting that he was confident about most exams, but had some doubts.

- **Dave Chowtie** from Queen's College achieved 23 grade ones and six grade twos.
- **Pradesh Dwarka** from Anna Regina Secondary also secured 23 grade ones and three grade twos.
- **Brianna Sobers** from Queen's College earned 20 grade ones and five grade twos.
- **Randhir Toney** from Anna Regina Secondary obtained 19 grade ones and seven grade twos.

achieved eight grade ones, four grade twos, and two grade threes.



Dave Chowtie from Queen's College and Minister of Education, Priya Manickchand



Minister of Education, Priya Manickchand, Chief Education Officer, Saddam Hussain and some of the CSEC and CAPE students

TOP CAPE PERFORMERS:

‘Democracy is not just a political system’, Ali tells Commonwealth colleagues

DEMOCRACY in many countries is often heavily politicised; however, the true definition of democracy reflects all aspects of society and economic development, President, Dr Irfaan Ali has said.

“Democracy is about society. It is about the country, it is about every walk of life, it’s about civil society, It is about the private sector, [and] it is about government. It is about every aspect of societal life [that] must uphold the value system of democracy,” President Ali said during his address at the 46th Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), held in Georgetown.

The President urged stakeholders to examine the value systems of democracy, noting that it must not only be viewed as “just a political” system, but rather as a system that transcends beyond the politicking.

“We shoot ourselves in the leg when we somehow believe that this democracy that we speak about is only at the parliamentary level and only at the government level.

“Democracy is that engine that drives development, the shield that protects human dignity and the framework that enables society to thrive. When democracy flourishes so too does economic development. When the rights of the people are upheld, when the voices are heard and when representatives act in their best interest, nations are empowered to reach their full potential,” Dr. Ali said.

He further reiterated that it is not just a political commitment and requires parliamentarians to examine their own internal affairs, confronting democracy in modern parliament and examining its value system.

Pointing to electoral systems, Dr. Ali said that elections are a core pillar of democracy, and while parliamentarians are representatives chosen through that democratic process, they themselves must ensure that their internal elections reflect the tenets of democracy.

“Many times you will see cracks in democracy at the foundation level; so many times we focus on the outcome of what should be democratic principles, what should be democratic arena. So we focus on the outcome, but democracy must transcend every walk of life. It must transcend every action within the society, if we are to build and make it a national architecture,” the President said.

He further challenged stakeholders to establish an action plan that is implementable, and commit to same.

“This conference, which assembles some of the greatest minds and dedicated practitioners of parliamentary democracy in the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic region I am confident that your deliberations will do justice to the timely and relevant theme chosen for this conference—‘Democracy: Challenges facing modern parliaments’,” President Ali said.

The CPA is being held from September 1 – 7, 2024. The regional conference will bring together parliamentarians and clerks from jurisdictions across the CPA CAA Region for discussions on the theme.

Highlighting Guyana’s own challenges with democracy, President Ali pointed out that many of its partners have stood alongside the country to ensure the rule of law was safeguarded in the light of several threats.

“It is our regional partners, it is CARICOM [Caribbean Community] and CARICOM’s principle[d] position that was a part of the process in ensuring that our democracy remained strong and alive.

“The UK [United Kingdom] and the EU [European Union], they also played an important role and of course



President Irfaan Ali

the Commonwealth Secretary General and the Commonwealth itself played a key and critical role in ensuring democracy was secured in Guyana and remains alive,” he said.

Dr. Ali related that Guyana’s political evolution has been marred by the pervasion of democratic rule for almost three decades, followed by the restoration of democracy, and then an aborted attempt to subvert democratic elections.

President Ali, as such, believes that the hosting of this year’s conference in Guyana is timely and the country can be a case study for further discussions.

He noted that the country’s experience also offers an insight into the relationship of democracy, the rule of law, development and stability.

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NUMEROUS ROAD PROJECTS TO BEGIN IN REGION THREE

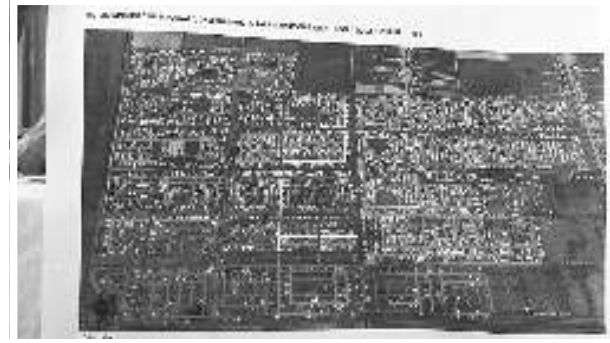
Seventy-four contracts totalling \$1.3 billion have been awarded for road

Onderneeming, West Minster, Recht Door-Zee, and Lust-en-Rust. The extensive

Works Deodat Indar at La Parfaite Harmonie. Highlighting the importance of road development, Minister Indar noted that it fulfils a commitment made by President Ali and complements an \$8.4 billion road construction initiative that began in June.

“When the president makes a commitment, it is not water on duck's back. It has to be followed through with action and this is the follow-through action,” the minister emphasised.

In Parfaite Harmonie alone, the ministry has



Map of aerial works

identified 97 kilometres of roads for upgrades. To date, 33.5 kilometres have been completed. Of the remaining amount, 15.4 kilometres of road were awarded for construction in June, with work scheduled to begin soon.

“And today,

with 74 contracts, we are awarding an additional 18.9 kilometres of road construction,” Minister Indar announced.

He added that while the construction of concrete roads is underway, the ministry

will also rehabilitate the remaining 29 kilometres of main access roads in the area.

Additionally, the minister emphasised that this infrastructure development aligns with the government's broader regional development agenda, which aims to boost investment and improve the living standards of citizens.

He also urged contractors to efficiently use the mobilisation advances provided, and warned that project extensions would not be granted lightly.



Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Deodat Indar, and team inspecting community roads in Parfaite Harmonie, Region Three

construction across infrastructure project several communities in Region Three, including La Parfaite Harmonie, the Ministry of Public

US\$10M JOE VIEIRA PARK DESIGN 'UNMATCHED' IN CARIBBEAN - MINISTER INDAR



Ongoing work at Joe Vieira Park

The US\$10 million Joe Vieira Park, currently under construction on the West Bank of Demerara (WBD), is poised to become an 'unmatched' landmark in the Caribbean, according to the Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Deodat Indar.

will make it an unmatched park,” the minister underscored during a site inspection.

The park will feature a basketball court, a tennis court, a football field, an elevated walkway through the trees, and a large fountain.

Minister Indar expressed his enthusiasm for the project and urged the Chinese counterparts and contractors to expedite the construction, which was originally scheduled for 18 months.

“The established delivery date was 18 months, we are

asking them to see if they can do it in 15 months, just to bring the project to a particular progress level. I have asked the Chinese counterparts and contractor to see if they can put in some extra hours so that the delivery of sand and loam can be accelerated so that the volume of work can rapidly progress,” said the minister.

The Joe Vieira Park project is fully funded by the Chinese Government as part of the 50th-anniversary celebration of diplomatic

ties between Guyana and China.

The agreement for the project was signed on January 25, 2022, at the Office of the President, marking a commitment between the two governments to bring

this vision to fruition.

In addition to its recreational features, the park will also house a Guyana-China Friendship Monument, symbolising the enduring relationship between the two nations.



Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Deodat Indar makes site visit to Joe Vieira Park

NEW SCHOOLS FOR CASHEW ISLAND AND MAZARUNI

Children from Cashew Island in New River, Region Six and the Lower and Middle Mazaruni in Region Seven, will benefit from the construction of new schools, in keeping with the government's vision for equitable access to quality education.

Minister of Education, Priya Manickchand told Amerindian leaders of this development during the recent National Toshaos Council (NTC) Conference.

“Education is important to us... We are building and repairing nursery,



Minister of Education, Priya Manickchand addresses the National Toshaos Council Conference

primary and secondary schools all across Guyana, and that is what you call equity,” the minister stated.

These include secondary schools in Northwest, Hosororo,

Waramuri, Matthews Ridge, Kabakaburi, Orealla, Jawalla, Phillipai, Monkey Mountain, Kopinang, Micobie, Karasabai, Nappi and Massara.

The education minister also revealed that despite a few logistical challenges, Kwebanna Secondary in Region One is slated to be completed by the end of the year.

At the nursery level, 13 learning institutions will be constructed in various areas in Region Nine, including Parabara, Bashaizon, Semonie, and Quatata.

Also, construction

will commence on primary schools at Kuribrong, Lake Mainstay, and other areas this year.

Minister Manickchand also highlighted that hinterland and riverine communities are benefitting from a plethora of educational interventions.

In terms of transportation in the hinterland, the ministry is currently compiling a comprehensive list which will determine where transportation is needed.

“We are currently looking village by

village, school by school, to see where we need boats and buses, and we are putting that list together. We had a conversation with the president about it,” Minister Manickchand highlighted.

Pupils in the hinterland communities are also receiving nutritional meals through the school feeding programme.

Meanwhile, the government continues to intensify efforts to increase access to distance education through the Guyana Learning Channel (GLC)

and the ministry's radio station, EDYOU FM.

To increase access to educational content in hinterland and remote areas, televisions, solar systems, satellites and radios were provided to many communities.

Over the years, the complement of trained teachers has also increased in the hinterland.

Persons there were provided with scholarships through the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) to pursue various programmes at accredited universities.

PIRARA BRIDGE TO BE COMPLETED BY YEAR-END

The construction of 32 concrete bridges along the Kurupukari to Lethem corridor is nearing completion, with the final bridge at Pirara

expected to be finished before Christmas.

This is according to Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill who made the announcement at the National Toshihaos Council Conference.

"We are committed, with all of the problems and all of the situations, the Pirara bridge will be completed before Christmas this year," the minister assured.

Speaking directly to the residents of Region Nine, the minister highlighted that a

high-level meeting was recently held with Vals Construction. He said the contractor responsible for the project will ensure the timely completion of the Pirara bridge.

Additionally, senior engineers will be dispatched to the region over the weekend to work closely with the contractor.

The \$410.2 million Pirara bridge, which is being built to international standards aims to enhance the transportation network between Kurupukari and

Lethem corridor.

Once completed, it will significantly enhance connectivity and facilitate smoother travel in and out of the hinterland.

This bridge is also part of a broader strategy by the PPP/C government to advance hinterland development through improved infrastructure.

The Kurupukari to Lethem project, which includes the construction of 32 bridges, is complemented by the ongoing development

of 13 bridges from Linden to Mabura Road, further strengthening interconnectivity.

Similarly, Minister Edghill announced that repair works have commenced on the Santa Rosa bridge in Region One, following the recent awarding of the contract for the project.

He noted that these ongoing infrastructural projects contribute significantly to the overall development and integration of hinterland communities and their residents.



Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, engineering team and contractor inspecting works on the Pirara bridge

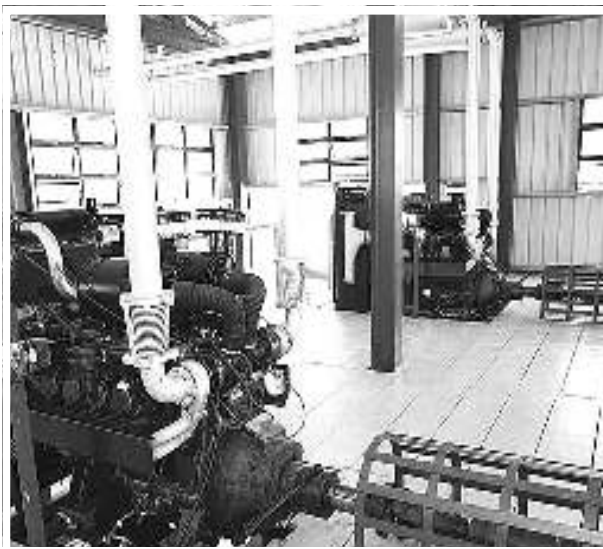
NEW PUMP STATION AT ADVENTURE TO BENEFIT OVER 6,000 ACRES OF RESIDENTIAL AND FARMLANDS

A newly commissioned \$446.8 million pump station in Adventure Village, along the Corentyne Coast, is set to significantly improve drainage and irrigation in Region Six, benefiting over 6,000 acres of residential and farmlands.

The pump station, constructed by D. Sawh Mechanical Workshop, features two 150 cusec pumps capable of draining 126,000 gallons per minute. It will provide relief to farmers and residents in Black Bush Polder and other

areas by supporting all the major outfalls, including those in Eversham and Number 43 Villages.

Minister of Agriculture, Zulfiqar Mustapha, emphasised the importance of this investment, stating, **"This is an investment for the future of our country. By the end of next year, we will be building approximately 19 of these projects across the country. Right here, in Region Six, we have one at Anchorville, Letter**



An interior view of the Adventure Pump Station

Kenny and another one will be awarded shortly at Chesney in the Albion area."

The pump station is part of a broader national programme to improve Guyana's

drainage and irrigation infrastructure, which includes the construction and rehabilitation of pump stations, sluices, and canals. Minister Mustapha expressed optimism about the region's future, stating that upon completion of embankments and high-level canals, farmers will have 24-hour drainage to the Atlantic Ocean.

"That is why we are putting all these pumps and other mechanisms in place. By the end of this year or early next year, we will be

procuring another 40 pumps which we will put in different parts of the country to complement the system that we have now...In order for our farmers to benefit more effectively, we have to make those investments," he added.

The new pump station is expected to boost food production in the region and contribute to Guyana's overall agricultural development.

GWI ASSURES IMPROVED WATER QUALITY IN CENTRAL GEORGETOWN

The Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) has been working diligently to address recent water quality problems in Central Georgetown, caused by high turbidity and sediment intake at the Shelter Belt water treatment plant.

According to GWI's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Shaik Baksh, the issues arose due to the recent dredging of the East Demerara Water Conservancy, which led to increased sludge buildup in the system. Heavy rainfall further exacerbated the problem.

"About a month ago, we noticed a significant decline in water quality.

Further investigation revealed an unprecedented level of sedimentation entering our treatment plant," Baksh explained at a press conference.

To mitigate the situation, GWI has implemented various measures, including flushing contaminated water from the system. **"We are already seeing some improvement. Regular water samples indicate that the quality is gradually returning to normal,"** Baksh assured.

The CEO acknowledged the inconvenience caused

to residents, but emphasised that the Shelter Belt plant is not equipped for iron removal. **"We are deeply concerned about the impact on residents and apologise for the unavoidable situation,"** he stated.

In addition to addressing water quality, GWI is investing over \$1 billion to replace aged transmission pipelines in the city. These pipelines have been leaking and collapsing, contributing to low water service.

"There is tremendous - what we call non-revenue water losses in Georgetown, and its impacting on the

level of service," Baksh explained. "No matter how much water we pump into the system, a lot of it is being lost and contributing to the low level of service."

The water company is replacing the old cast-iron pipes with high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipes in three phases: along High Street between Broad Street and Brickdam, along High Street from Broad Street and Brickdam onto Avenue of the Republic, and along High Street (Kingston) from Lamaha Street to the Pegasus hotel.

GWI's Director of Projects, Lt. Col. Marlon Daniels, noted that the majority of the work



Chief Executive Officer of GWI, Shaik Baksh inspecting the remedial works to the transmission line at High Street and Brickdam

will be done at night to minimise disruptions to traffic. "We have an arrangement with the Guyana Police Force and other agencies, where at about 7-8 p.m we'll start working and we'll close of at about, maybe 5 in the morning,

ensuring that access to each property has been restored," Daniels noted.

The water company is urging residents to exercise patience as they work to improve water quality and service in Central Georgetown.

D&I WORKS TO BEGIN SOON IN PERTH, STRATH CAMPBELL



Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha addressing farmers and residents

Drainage and irrigation (D&I) works will begin shortly in Mahaicony, Region Five, providing farmers and residents in Perth, Strath Campbell, and

surrounding areas with the opportunity to expand their agricultural output.

Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha made the disclosure during a community meeting at Mahaicony Branch Road.

This undertaking will also provide rice farmers with an adequate supply of water for their rice fields.

"We recognised the importance of agriculture...This area, Perth and Strath Campbell, we have to develop some of the canals and rehabilitate some

of the canals...I will ask NDIA to have a machine to work in this area to start to desilt the most important canals. The [farmer] who raised concerns about water for his

rice field. Those will be the first priorities for us," the agriculture minister explained.

The ministry and the farmers will work to create a programme that will include a list of all the canals that need to

be desilted.

The government consistently spearheads community meetings across the country where residents at the grassroots level, can voice their issues.

"We are working with every single section of the population...So, when farmers are saying that they need help, we will continue to give help. We have been giving help over the last four years. As a government, we are responsive to the needs of the farmers and stakeholders in this country," the minister affirmed.

Also, a committee will be established in the area for additional canals to be desilted which will be undertaken in phases.

Free planting materials, technical assistance and agrochemicals will be provided to cash crop farmers to increase food production.

Farmers will soon have better access to their farmlands when transporting their produce, following a contract recently awarded for the extension of Mahaicony Branch Road from Green Mill.



Farmers and residents at the community meeting

BLOOMFIELD FARMERS RECEIVE FARMING IMPLEMENTS TO BOOST PRODUCTION

The government continued its efforts to support the agricultural sector by distributing essential farming implements to farmers in Bloomfield, East Berbice-Corentyne. Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha spearheaded the distribution exercise, which included forks, cutlasses, shovels, a tiller, and two water pumps.

The timely provision

of these implements aims to enhance the farming capacity of Bloomfield residents and generate additional income for their families. The government has reaffirmed its commitment to providing farmers' groups with the necessary resources, assistance, and extension services to boost their productivity.

In recent years, the government has

implemented various initiatives to support the agricultural sector in the region, including providing farmers with access to more farmland, improving drainage and irrigation systems, distributing farming inputs, and providing black giant chickens and fertilisers. These interventions have significantly benefited farmers in the East Berbice-Corentyne

region.

By investing heavily in the expansion of the sector's food production capacity, the PPP/C government demonstrates its dedication to ensuring Guyana's food security. These efforts contribute to the overall economic development of farming communities nationwide.



Some of the farming inputs that was distributed to Bloomfield farmers

NEW SEED PROCESSING FACILITY IN REGION SIX TO BOOST RICE PRODUCTION

A newly commissioned Seed Processing Facility in Lesbeholden, Black Bush Polder, is set to revolutionise rice production in Region Six. The facility, equipped with modern amenities and refurbished at a cost of \$70 million, will provide local farmers with a reliable source of high-quality seed paddy.

Minister of Agriculture, Zulfikar Mustapha, emphasised the significance of this development, stating, **"This facility will provide seeds for the entire Black Bush Polder area. We will now also contract growers to grow quality seed paddy so that we could take it here...A set of seed growers will have an automatic market for their paddy at a good**

cost."

The commissioning of the facility marks a major milestone in the government's efforts to transform the rice industry from subsistence farming to a lucrative export sector. According to Minister Mustapha, strategic policies implemented by the PPP/C government since taking office in 2020 have significantly boosted rice production and generated substantial revenue for the country.

"Rice has been making a valuable contribution in this country. The government has been making a lot of investments. GRDB has invested \$1.3 billion in the rice industry," he stated.

The seed processing facility is expected to

have a direct impact on farmers' incomes and productivity. Regional



Scene from the commissioning of the seed processing facility

Vice Chairman, Zamal Hussain, noted that the facility will enable farmers to plant more land and increase their yields, ultimately leading to higher earnings.

"In Region Six

farmers plant close to 65,000 to 70,000 acres of land. It

is important that farmers have proper seed to do the sowing. As long as we have proper seed paddy, our production will eventually increase which will also

increase our income in the fields when we do our harvesting," he added.

The facility is part of the government's plan to establish one seed processing facility in each of the major rice-producing regions in Guyana. The seed edifices in Anna Regina and Leguan are scheduled for rehabilitation in the near future.

In addition to the seed processing facility, the government has been supporting the rice industry through various initiatives, including the distribution of high-yielding rice varieties, fertilisers, and pesticides. These efforts have contributed to a significant increase in rice production in recent years.

In 2023, the rice sector recorded a 7

percent increase in production, reaching a total of 653,706 metric tonnes (MT). Guyana has already recorded over 360,000 metric tonnes produced in the first half of 2024.

The government's ambitious plans for the rice industry include further expanding production to 710,000 tonnes by the end of 2024 and 750,000 tonnes by 2025. With the support of the newly commissioned seed processing facility and other government initiatives, Guyana is well-positioned to achieve its rice production goals and continue to contribute to the country's economic growth.

MORE BERBICIANS UNDERGOING BIT TECHNICAL PROGRAMMES

An increasing number of Berbicians are currently being trained in various skill programmes through the Board of Industrial Training (BIT), reflecting the government's ongoing commitment to providing Guyanese with enhanced job opportunities.

The programmes offered include welding and fabrication, information technology, agro-processing, motor mechanics, cosmetology, A/C repairs and refrigeration and electrical installation.



Some of the trainees who are undergoing training programmes through BIT

During an inspection of the programmes in Region Six, Minister of Labour Joseph Hamilton praised the participants for taking advantage

of these opportunities to improve their livelihoods.

"We will do everything to make sure that you are successful. All you have to do is show up. You have to be focused, multi-skilled and multitasked. No one skill will take you through this life. You have to be able to diversify your skillset. That is how you will survive as a businessperson," Minister Hamilton told the trainees.

These programmes

are aimed at enhancing the participants' skill sets, making them more marketable in today's economy. Trainees receive a stipend during the course and an accredited certificate upon completion.

Technical and vocational training programmes like these are being implemented across Guyana, especially in areas with high demand, to strengthen the country's human resource capacity.

Following a graduation ceremony in August, 292

Berbicians became certified Heavy-Duty Equipment Operators. This programme was conducted through a partnership between the Ministry of Finance's Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) and BIT.

Since August 2020, over 12,000 people nationwide have been certified in various skill training programmes.



97 NEW FIREFIGHTERS JOIN GFS



Minister of Home Affairs, Robeson Benn

Following a rigorous three-month training course, 97 new firefighters graduated from the Guyana Fire Service's (GFS) Training Centre at Leonora, Region Three.

This is the largest cohort of recruits to graduate from the GFS.

The graduating batch includes 11 persons from Region One; 11 from Region Three; 34 from Region Four; 14 from Region Five; four from Region Six; six from Region Seven, nine from Region Nine, and 10 from Region Ten.

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister of Home Affairs, Robeson Benn, highlighted the significant efforts government is making to expand the GFS, through the procurement of new and improved firefighting equipment and the construction of new facilities.

Four new stations are currently being built across the country, increasing the total number in Guyana to 22.

Minister Benn further noted, the Government is also providing a slew of opportunities to young people which is in keeping with its manifesto's commitments.

"We are doing these things not simply as a way of keeping the promises, putting the promises in the physical assets and architecture on the ground, but also in the development of our young people who are very well represented here today by the young inductees into the Guyana Fire Service," Minister Benn underscored.

The new firefighters were encouraged to

maintain a high level of commitment and discipline as they advance in their careers.

"When we are making the investments and the training in young people, and when we are looking at upgrading our methodologies

and approach to firefighting, it is because we want to see continuous improvement, progress and development in our country," the minister added.

Meanwhile, Chief Fire Officer, Gregory Wickham, said the

recruits from various regions reflect the fire service's strategic plan for diversity.

Now equipped with relevant firefighting skills, Wickham urged new recruits to demonstrate their abilities and embrace discipline and camaraderie when they return to their respective regions.

The training course, which began on May 13, included theoretical instruction in the fire service order, the history and structure of the fire service, discipline, control room attendance, firefighter safety and health, hose and fitting, and water supply and hydrants.



GFS New Recruits

GUYANA'S SKILLED WORKFORCE EXPANDS WITH OVER 290 HEAVY DUTY EQUIPMENT OPERATORS

The government has taken a significant step towards fulfilling its promise of creating more jobs and providing opportunities for skilled workers. On August 17, 2024, a graduation ceremony for 292 Heavy Duty Equipment Operator (HDEO) trainees was held in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne).

The HDEO training programme, a joint initiative between the Ministry of Finance's Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) and the Ministry of Labour's Board of Industrial Training (BIT), has equipped

graduates with the skills necessary to operate heavy machinery such as tractors, excavators, skid steers, and forklifts. The programme is part of the government's broader efforts to promote skills training and provide employers with a pool of highly qualified human resources.

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, Dr. Ashni Singh, emphasised the importance of skilled workers in Guyana's rapidly growing economy. He urged graduates to

take advantage of the opportunities available to them and contribute



Government and regional officials at the graduation ceremony

to the country's development.

"You now have a skill to be able to take

advantage of that opportunity to apply your skill, to earn

an income, to save up a bit and maybe potentially at some point you can set up

your own business," Dr. Singh said.

Minister of Labour, Joseph Hamilton, also highlighted the government's commitment to providing training and development opportunities for young people in all regions of Guyana. He mentioned that the BIT has been offering a variety of training programmes in addition to HDEO, including those in other fields such as agriculture and construction.

"The government is committed to the training and development of

young people in all regions of Guyana," Minister Hamilton said.

The graduation ceremony marked a significant milestone in the government's efforts to address the skills gap and create a more competitive workforce. With the country's economy experiencing rapid growth, there is a high demand for skilled workers in various sectors. The HDEO programme has played a crucial role in meeting this demand and providing graduates with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their careers.

RETIRED SERVICEMAN RECEIVES NEW HOME THROUGH MOM INITIATIVE



Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister with responsibility for Public Affairs, Kwame McCoy overseeing the cutting of the ribbon by Albert Hunte and his son

Albert Hunte, a 66-year-old retired Guyana Defence Force (GDF) serviceman, has become the latest beneficiary of a new home through the Men on a Mission (MoM) initiative.

Hunte received his new home during a simple handing-over ceremony spearheaded by Minister Kwame McCoy, who is responsible for Public Affairs and Information within the Office of the Prime Minister.

The father of three expressed immense gratitude for the new

home, noting that it will provide a comfortable and secure living space for his family. "I was living first at Red Road but I was squatting there. Although I was squatting, I applied for my land a long while back. Housing [the ministry] got back to me and offered me this piece of land," Hunte told the Department of Public Information (DPI).

Minister McCoy emphasised the government's commitment to improving the lives of ordinary citizens through initiatives like MoM. "We as a government, have demonstrated

astute leadership in being able to overcome challenges and intervene in ways that would avoid the worst burden on the ordinary man and woman in our society," he stated.

The minister added that numerous interventions have been made by the PPP/C Government to ease the cost of living and other burdens on citizens. MoM is one such initiative that aims to

make homeownership more accessible for vulnerable communities.

"This Men on a Mission initiative is one among a plethora of other initiatives and interventions by this government that allow us to work with people and to bring people's lives to a point that is filled with happiness," Minister McCoy stressed.

The MoM initiative, spearheaded by President Ali, has been making a significant impact on the lives of many individuals, both young and old, by providing them with better living and working conditions.



The new house that was presented to Hunte

EAST COAST RESIDENTS GET ACCESS TO EYE TESTING, SPECTACLES VOUCHERS

Residents of several East Coast Demerara (ECD) villages including Cane Grove, Strathavon, and Unity were delighted to receive essential services from the government during a recent outreach programme.

The initiative, spearheaded by the Ministries of Health and Human Services and Social Security, provided eye testing, spectacles vouchers, and information on various social services.

Residents were given vouchers worth \$2000 for eye testing, and those needing spectacles were eligible for an additional voucher valued \$15,000



A resident benefitting from the outreach

to purchase a pair.

One grateful resident, Bagwandin Ramsaram, expressed his appreciation for the government's support. "I must thank the Government of Guyana for this initiative of eye testing and spectacles, which is a great assistance

for me and others who can't afford spectacles on their own," he said.

Minister of Human Services and Social Security Dr. Vindhya Persaud highlighted the importance of such outreach programmes in ensuring that residents have access to government services

and resources. "This is something we do all through the year, and it's about taking the ministry's services to the communities, giving me and the entire team a chance to engage with you, to understand how we can better serve you, and how we can deal with any challenges you have with our services," she stated.

Staff from various ministry departments, including the Difficult Circumstances Unit, Childcare Protection Agency, and Family Enhancement and Services Section, were also present to provide immediate assistance.

Minister Persaud announced plans to establish a sewing hub and a youth-friendly space at the craft centre in Cane Grove to offer free training and support for young people to start their own income-generating businesses.

She also emphasised the importance of the

914 hotline, a toll-free number available to victims and survivors of sexual offences and domestic violence. Additionally, the Difficult Circumstances Unit distributed wheelchairs and walking canes to senior citizens and differently-abled persons.



A resident benefitting from the outreach

\$40M UPGRADE TO SOON BEGIN ON LUSIGNAN HOUSING SCHEME ACCESS ROAD

The government is set to invest \$40 million in upgrading the access road to the new Lusignan Housing Scheme on the East Coast of Demerara, with rehabilitation work scheduled to begin soon. This upgrade aims to provide immediate relief to residents who have raised concerns about the deteriorating road conditions.

The announcement was made by Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water, Susan Rodrigues, during

a community meeting. Residents had previously expressed their concerns to President Ali, citing issues such as road deterioration due to heavy truck traffic, as well as dust and noise pollution caused by the congestion.

Minister Rodrigues assured residents that the government is taking swift action. "We have made provisions to issue contracts for this road's upgrade. We have already approved \$40 million

for these upgrades," she stated. The minister emphasised the



Residents at the community meeting in Lusignan

importance of this road as a major access point and noted that the initial upgrades would involve

laying a crusher-run surface.

Looking ahead,

the housing scheme is fully developed. "By the end of 2024, when the work in the housing scheme is completed, we can properly upgrade this road to an asphaltic level with proper revetment. Doing so before completion would only result in further damage," she explained.

The road's current state is largely due to the heavy trucks accessing the housing schemes, a common issue across

the East Bank and East Coast as new housing areas expand. "With the housing drive all over the country and the extension of these areas, this is a common problem we are facing," Minister Rodrigues noted.

In the meantime, an alternative route has been identified for residents and commuters to use during the upgrade process. Additionally, a dust suppression schedule will be implemented three times a day to help mitigate the impact on the community during the construction period.

Minister Rodrigues informed residents that further enhancements will be made once the

MINISTER EDGHILL CALLS FOR NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN WAKE OF CLEAN-UP EXERCISE

Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, has issued a strong call to action for all Guyanese to take greater responsibility for their environment, following the successful national clean-up exercise held on August 17, 2024.

The exercise, which involved the participation of the Disciplined Forces, Private Sector, Religious Organisations, Community Groups, and citizens, saw the removal of 22 truckloads of waste from the area opposite the Georgetown Public Hospital alone. Minister Edghill highlighted this as a stark example of the ongoing issue of poor waste management in the capital city.

"Guyana is our country, the place

that sustains our lives and livelihoods, and we must treat it in a way that reflects this," Minister Edghill stated. He expressed his gratitude to all who participated in the clean-up effort, noting that their dedication is crucial to maintaining the beauty and safety of the nation.

However, Minister Edghill also pointed out the disappointing reality of the situation, stating, **"Georgetown is a beautiful city but, it is too dirty. Is this how we wish for our city to be remembered?"**

Addressing calls for stricter penalties and enforcement against littering, Minister Edghill emphasised the need for personal responsibility. **"As right-thinking**

members of society, are we not all capable of doing the just

we continue to battle the effects of climate change, let us not

In response to criticisms of the clean-up initiative, Minister

adhere to," he said. **"We shouldn't only sing the song, 'Let Us Cooperate for Guyana,' at Independence time, but rather all year round, and its meaning must be made plain through our actions."**

Minister Edghill concluded his statement with a powerful reminder to the nation: **"While we are the present custodians of this landmass, there are generations coming after us who will rely on this same space for sustenance, and we must not jeopardise their ability to do so successfully. A word to the wise is enough."**



The aftermath of the cleanup exercise

and right thing? Must citizens be strong-armed into keeping their own surroundings clean?" he questioned.

The Minister also underscored the broader implications of poor waste management, particularly in the context of climate change. **"As**

forget that our capital city Georgetown, is below sea level and therefore prone to floods," he warned. **"A dirty environment is also an unsafe one that encourages the spread of diseases and places your lives and the lives of your children at risk."**

Edghill defended the effort as a means of fostering patriotism and environmental awareness among citizens. **"The principle of cooperativism enshrined in our country's name and our constitution is still an important ideal that we**

GUYANA TO SURPASS TWO MILLION TONNES OF AGGREGATES IN 2024

Guyana's aggregate production is set to surpass two million tonnes in 2024, driven by the rapid expansion of infrastructure projects across the country.

Minister of Natural Resources, Vickram Bharrat, announced this significant milestone during a recent media briefing, highlighting the substantial progress made in the mining sector since the PPP/C Government took office in 2020.

Aggregates, including gravel, crushed stone, loam, and sand, are essential building materials used

in various infrastructure projects. The demand for aggregates has surged in recent years due to the government's focus on infrastructure development.

"We are poised to surpass the two million, maybe we will get up to 2.5 million tonnes of aggregates in 2024 which is a significant achievement and improvement from 2020 to now," Minister Bharrat disclosed.

The minister attributed the significant increase in aggregate production to several factors. "This is because of the expansion of

the quarry sector, the re-financing and the additional investment being made by the existing and longstanding quarry operators, and also the new licences that we would have issued over the last few years. Some of those quarries are now coming into operation and production," he explained.

Minister Bharrat further noted that the country's aggregate production is expected to continue growing in the coming years, with projections reaching over five million tonnes within two to three years.

The Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) is actively working to ensure that Guyana has the capacity to meet this increased demand. "The Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) is making preparations to ensure that within another few years, we will be in a position to produce if not all, most of what the demand is locally," Minister Bharrat stated.

In addition to aggregates, the bauxite sector is also experiencing a resurgence. Two major companies, GINMIN and



Aggregates being extracted from a mining location in the country

Bosai, are operational, with Bosai expanding its operations through a new permit issued by the GGMC. This expansion is expected to significantly boost bauxite production and create more employment opportunities in Region Ten.

Overall, Guyana's mining sector is thriving,

driven by the increasing demand for aggregates and the resurgence of the bauxite industry. These developments are contributing to the country's economic growth and infrastructure development.

BLOCK-MAKING PROJECT LAUNCHED IN 'B' FIELD SOPHIA TO BOOST EMPLOYMENT

A new block-making initiative has been launched in 'B' Field Sophia as part of the Community-based Employment Stimulation Project (CESP), aimed at empowering residents to produce concrete blocks and generate income.

Launched by President Ali in May 2021, the project first took root in Tiger Bay, Georgetown, and has now expanded to Sophia.

Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water, Susan Rodrigues, led the launch event at the community centre in 'B' Field Sophia. She emphasised the



Sophia residents

project's alignment with the ministry's broader housing objectives.

"We look forward to everyone's cooperation and participation. This programme is not just

about block-making; it's about community growth and economic empowerment," Minister Rodrigues said.

The project will offer comprehensive training in life skills,

block-making, financial management, record-keeping, and leadership. Initial investments include the construction of a shed and the procurement of necessary equipment.

The Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA) will assist by facilitating the market and transportation for the first batch of blocks, helping residents connect with contractors and potential buyers.

Minister Rodrigues highlighted the success

of similar programmes, citing the Leopold Street group's achievement of forming a company and securing a contract through CHPA for house construction.

"We have many success stories, including the Leopold Street group who formed their own company and are now actively involved in constructing houses for our allottees," she noted.

Residents interested in participating can

sign up for the project, and certificates of participation will be awarded upon completion.

The meeting also provided a platform for residents to address housing and related concerns with the minister and her team, including Deputy Director of the Community Development Department, Donell Bess-Bascom, and engineer Jamal Brotherson.



GTA's Director, Kamrul Baksh, Chinese Embassy representatives, and graduates of the weaving training programme

SANTA ARATAK RESIDENTS COMPLETE BAMBOO, RATTAN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Twenty-eight residents of Santa Aratak Mission, Region Three have completed the Bamboo and Rattan Products Development training programme.

The initiative, launched a month ago, was a collaborative effort among the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA), and

the International Centre for Bamboo & Rattan, with support from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Guyana.

At the graduation ceremony, Merlene Campo, one of the graduates, reflected on her experience.

She said, "The training was amazing. It was a journey I thought I would never accomplish,

but as the weeks went by, it became easier and more fun."

Another graduate, Shonetta Samuels, echoed these sentiments, noting that the training was both exciting and challenging. She added that with so much bamboo in their community, it was thrilling to learn how to utilise this resource effectively.

The 30-day training programme provided participants with a comprehensive introduction to the craft of bamboo and rattan weaving. The curriculum

covered a wide range of topics, including the characteristics and uses of bamboo, the production and dyeing of bamboo strips, and the operation of bamboo weaving tools.

Participants also mastered fundamental weaving techniques, such as cross-over and Hasagana weaving, and gained practical skills in creating items like flower vessels and baskets.

Throughout the training, the participants produced approximately 300 pieces across three major categories: flat bamboo weaving, three-dimensional bamboo

weaving, and simulated bamboo weaving.

GTA's Director Kamrul Baksh praised the graduates' craftsmanship and emphasised the importance of harnessing the area's abundant bamboo resources.

"I am really happy that you were able to take this course and utilise this very important resource, bamboo," he said.

Baksh also highlighted the GTA's commitment to further developing the programme, indicating plans for a second phase and ensuring that the

products created reach wider markets beyond Santa Aratak Mission.

As the community prepares for the upcoming Indigenous Heritage Month, the GTA has encouraged participants to showcase their new skills at these events.

Additionally, plans are underway, in collaboration with the Chinese Embassy and the Ministry of Agriculture, to cultivate the ideal species of bamboo for continued production of bamboo crafts in the region.

GUYANA TO LAUNCH TOURISM HANDBOOK FOR AMERINDIAN VILLAGES

The Ministry of Tourism, Industry, and Commerce is developing a comprehensive tourism handbook to assist Amerindian villages in meeting international standards for their eco-lodges and guesthouses.

Minister Oneidge Walrond announced the initiative during the National Toshas

Council (NTC) Conference, emphasising the importance of providing villages with the necessary tools to attract more visitors and boost their local economies.

"The handbook will give you the know-how with the information of what an eco-lodge needs to look like," Minister

Walrond said. "When people come into a facility and especially when they want to stay overnight, you want to ensure that they can sleep well, water is running, and that they are comfortable."

The government is committed to supporting sustainable community-based tourism and

has been recognised globally for its efforts in promoting indigenous-owned tourism. Minister Walrond noted that the ministry will provide technical support to villages, including assessments, training, marketing, and licencing.

"Each of your villages has a unique allure and beauty," she added.



The handbook will assist Amerindian villages in meeting international standards for their eco-lodges and guesthouse

"We would come with our technical staff to do an assessment of your business readiness."

The Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) is also playing a crucial role

in providing technical skills to help villages improve their tourism products and make them more competitive on the international stage.

Guyana's squash star Nicolette Fernandes has claimed gold in the women's 40+ category at the World Squash Federation Masters tournament, held in the Netherlands. Fernandes secured her victory with a dominant performance, defeating Mexico's Samantha Teran in straight sets, 11-6, 11-4, and 12-10.

This win marks another significant achievement in

GUYANA'S NICOLETTE FERNANDES WINS GOLD AT WORLD SQUASH FEDERATION MASTERS TOURNAMENT



Nicolette Fernandes stands atop the podium after winning the 40+ category. (World Squash Masters Photo)

Fernandes' illustrious career, showcasing her enduring skill and competitive spirit on the global stage. Her triumph at the tournament is a proud moment for Guyana, further cementing her status as one of the nation's top athletes.

Fernandes'

success against Teran, a formidable opponent, highlights her exceptional talent and determination. The closely contested final set, which ended 12-10 in Fernandes' favour, demonstrated her ability to remain composed under pressure and secure the championship

title. This gold medal adds to Fernandes' impressive collection of accolades, bringing pride to her home country and inspiring the next generation of athletes in Guyana.

YOUTH CAMP PROMOTES CULTURAL UNITY AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

A three-week youth camp held in 12 locations across Guyana brought together over 400 young people from all 10 administrative regions. The camp aimed to expose participants to the arts, dance, music, and other aspects of Guyanese culture.

Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sport, Charles Ramson Jr., at the graduation exercise at the Umana Yana, emphasised the

importance of this initiative in uniting the country. "One of the things that we noticed across the country, was that despite us having great cultures that it's a combination of cultures that we have that are segmented across different ethnicities, there were still invisible walls where not everybody was participating in that

and sharing in that," he stated.

The minister highlighted the ministry's mission to promote and showcase young Guyanese talent. "We wanted to knit the country together. We wanted to be a force and a movement that would help to unite the country. One of the ways to do that is to bring common understanding and common



Image from the closing ceremony of the youth camp

appreciation, to know that there is beauty in all culture, all representation of culture," he said.

Minister Ramson noted that Guyana's unique cultural heritage, shaped by the diverse backgrounds of its people, offers a wealth of opportunities for creative expression.



PM PHILLIPS LAUNCHES 8TH EDITION OF PRIME MINISTER'S SOFTBALL CUP



Scene from the launched the 8th edition of the Prime Minister's Softball Cup

Prime Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd), Mark Phillips, officially launched the 8th edition of the Prime Minister's Softball Cup at the Muslim Youth Organisation (MYO) in Georgetown. The annual T20 tournament,

organised by the Georgetown Softball Cricket League in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, will take place from October 11-13, 2024.

Prime Minister Phillips highlighted the tournament's growth, particularly the expansion to include 10 female teams this year. "This is the people's game, the people's sport," he stated. "I'm proud to be the patron and will continue as long as I'm Prime Minister."

The Prime Minister

also praised the organisers and sponsors for their continued support in fostering the event's growth, noting that such partnerships are essential for the tournament's success.

This year's competition will offer \$3 million in cash and prizes, with teams competing across four categories: Legends (Over-50), Masters (Over-40), Open, and



Scene from the launched the 8th edition of the Prime Minister's Softball Cup



Scene from the launched the 8th edition of the Prime Minister's Softball Cup

the newly expanded tournament is set to feature teams from New York, Orlando, Florida, Canada, and Guyana, with 31 teams already confirmed and more expected to join in the coming weeks.

The inclusion of female teams marks a significant milestone in the tournament's history, reflecting the event's growing inclusivity and commitment to broadening participation in softball cricket.

200 YOUTHS COMPLETE PAN MINORS MUSIC LITERACY PROGRAMME

The Pan Minors Music Literacy Programme wrapped up, with some 200 participants receiving their certificates at the Umana Yana in Kingston, Georgetown.

As customary, this year's programme was made possible through a collaboration between the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, and Republic Bank Limited.

During the closing ceremony, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Charles Ramson Jr highlighted the government's



Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Charles Ramson Jr, gave remarks at the Pan Minors Music Literacy Programme closing ceremony

continuous investments in the steel pan industry to create talented and prominent players.

"This is an investment that the Government of Guyana has made in you and I'm going to make a commitment on behalf of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport that the groups who shared their talents today, will be playing at the next event the ministry hosts that is appropriate for your talents to be showcased...You all

will be compensated for your talent," Minister Ramson underscored.

According to the sport minister, the government has tripled its investment in the steel pan industry, to allow more persons to participate in the art.

As part of cricket carnival events, the government will also be adding these new steel pan talents to the schedule, allowing them to have a feel of the big stage.

A state-of-the-art steel pan school for

teaching and competition purposes will also be designed soon.



Participants showcasing their talents

GUYANA HOSTS CARIBBEAN SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP



Senior CASA Championship launched



Senior CASA Championship launched

Squash Championship among the Guyana government, the Guyana Olympics Association, and the Guyana Squash Association, received significant support from local businesses like ENet, ExxonMobil, and Value4u Inc.

Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sport Charles Ramson Jr. emphasised the government's commitment to developing sports and producing world-class athletes at the launch ceremony. He highlighted the country's recent investments in

sports infrastructure, including new stadiums, indoor facilities, and community grounds. Teams from Barbados, Cayman Islands, Barbuda, Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, and Guyana competed in the championship. Lorraine Ince, Vice President of

the Guyana Squash Association, noted the strong camaraderie within the Caribbean squash community, emphasising the shared passion for the sport that unites them.



Senior CASA Championship launched



Senior CASA Championship launched

INJURED? CAR ACCIDENT?

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LATE DAVE MARTINS DESCRIBED AS AN ICON OF CARIBBEAN IDENTITY

Guyana is mourning the loss of its beloved cultural icon, Dave Martins, who passed away after a brief illness.

Often revered as the "Voice of Guyana", Martins was a legendary musician and songwriter whose work resonated deeply with the nation and the Caribbean.

President Dr. Irfaan Ali led the nation in paying tribute, attending a private funeral service at the Kaashi Dhaam Crematorium. Reflecting on Martins' legacy, President Ali described him as an "Icon of Caribbean Identity", noting that his music, contributions to the cultural landscape, and his efforts to promote national unity would continue to inspire future generations.

In an official statement, the Government of Guyana honoured Martins as a "beloved musician extraordinaire and cultural icon," and announced plans for a public memorial to allow all Guyanese to celebrate his extraordinary life and enduring influence.

Martins is best known for founding the band Tradewinds in the 1960s, through which he created music. His songs often reflected the experiences, humour, and spirit of the people of Guyana and the wider Caribbean region.

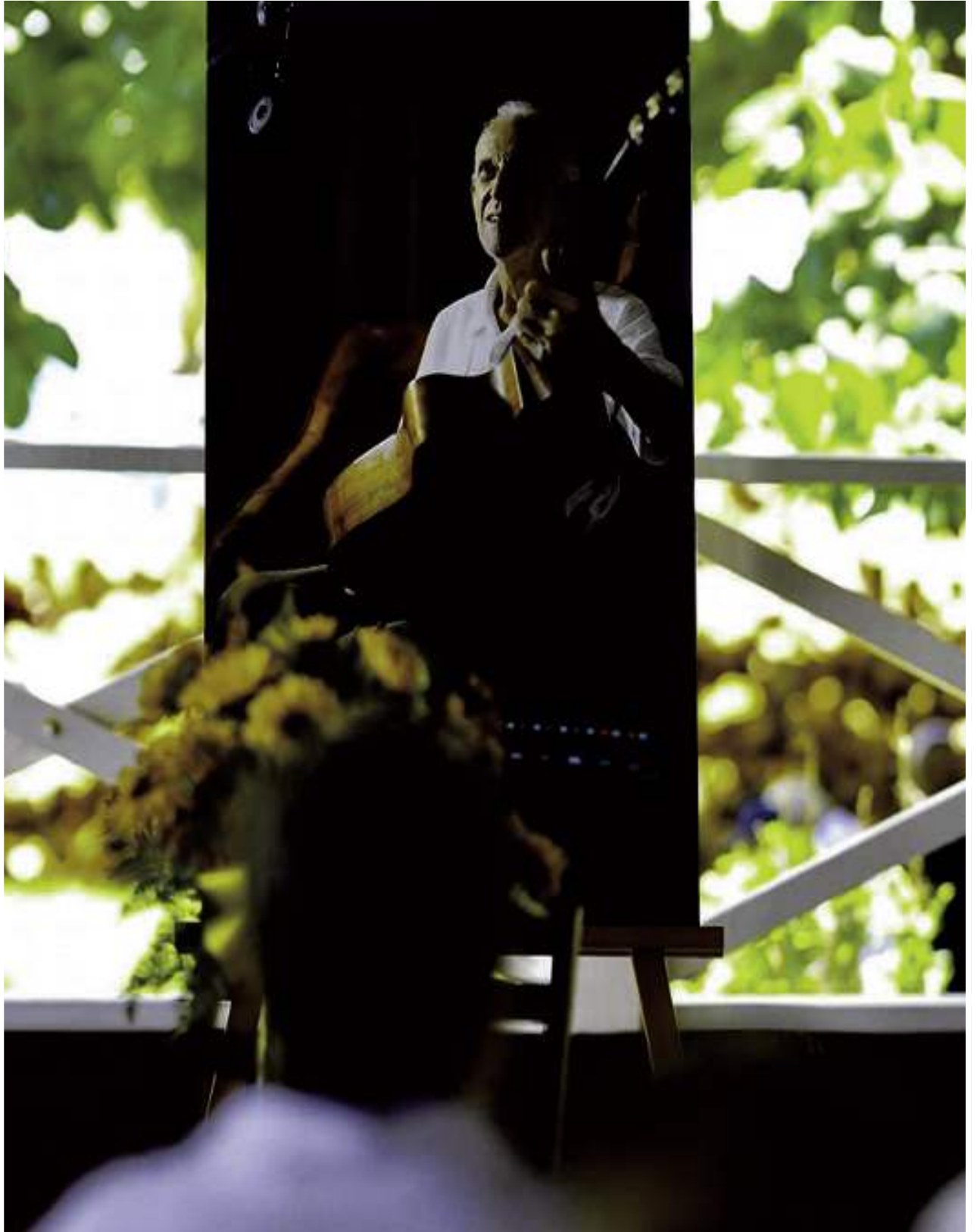
Among his most

iconic works are "Not a Blade of Grass", a patriotic anthem expressing Guyana's commitment to protecting its sovereignty; "A Guyana Boy", a nostalgic and heartfelt tribute to the identity of a Guyanese person; "El Dorado", capturing the allure and promise of Guyana, often referred to as the land of gold; and "Sweet, Sweet Guyana", a celebration of the nation's beauty and richness.

These songs, and many others, have become anthems of national pride, resonating with listeners for their relatable themes, catchy melodies, and the way they capture the essence of Caribbean life.

Beyond his musical achievements, Martins was a passionate advocate for cultural preservation and development in Guyana. He played a vital role in nurturing local talent and fostering a vibrant cultural scene, leaving an indelible mark on the nation's heritage.

As the nation grieves the loss of this iconic figure, it is clear that Dave Martins' legacy will continue to inspire and unite the people of Guyana for generations to come. His music remains a treasured part of the country's cultural heritage.



Legendary Guyanese musician Dave Martins passes at 90



President Ali with Annette Arjoon, wife of the late Guyanese musical icon, Dave Martin



President Ali was part of the private funeral service at the Kaashi Dhaam Crematorium, Ruimzeight, West Coast Demerara



Guyanese DIASPORA DIGEST



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NEW TOTEM POLE STANDS TALL AT SCHNOARD TO CRANE HIGHWAY



A NEW CULTURAL LANDMARK HAS BEEN ADDED TO GUYANA'S LANDSCAPE. A BEAUTIFULLY CARVED TOTEM POLE, DESIGNED BY THE RENOWNED ARTIST WINSLOW CRAIG, NOW GRACES THE SCHNOARD TO CRANE HIGHWAY ROUNDABOUT. THIS IMPRESSIVE STRUCTURE STANDS AS A SYMBOL OF WELCOME, CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND UNITY.

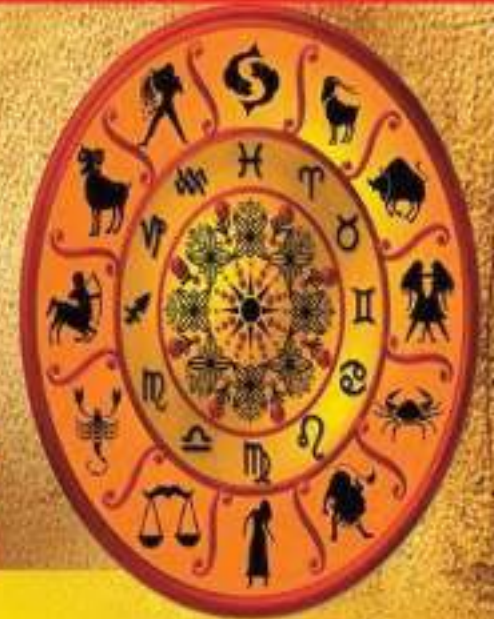
THE TOTEM POLE FEATURES INTRICATE CARVINGS OF AN EAGLE, A JAGUAR, AND AN OWL, EACH HOLDING DEEP CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE. TOTEM POLES, DEEPLY ROOTED IN INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS, SERVE TO COMMEMORATE ANCESTRY, HISTORIES, PEOPLE, AND SIGNIFICANT EVENTS. THE SYMBOLS CARVED INTO THESE STRUCTURES REFLECT THE VALUES AND BELIEFS OF THE COMMUNITIES THAT CREATE THEM.

WINSLOW CRAIG, A LEGENDARY FIGURE IN INDIGENOUS ART, HAS BROUGHT THIS TOTEM POLE TO LIFE WITH HIS EXPERT CRAFTSMANSHIP. HIS DESIGN NOT ONLY PAYS HOMAGE TO TRADITIONAL ARTISTRY BUT ALSO EXTENDS A WARM GREETING TO VISITORS TRAVELLING THROUGH THE AREA.



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Three Options to Renew your Mortgage

With inflation driving up the cost of living in Canada, including essential items like gas and food, and mortgage rates, which now seem to be retreating, the financial landscape for mortgage holders is becoming increasingly challenging. Many homeowners are facing potential payment increases of up to 59%. If your mortgage is nearing its renewal date, it's not just important. It's urgent to take proactive steps to explore strategies to reduce your mortgage payments and alleviate financial strain.

With an estimated 3.4 million Canadians set to renew their mortgages by 2025, the country faces a potential \$900 billion mortgage renewal shock. The fear of unaffordable mortgage payments or the possibility of having to sell homes is very real for many Canadians. According to Realtor.ca, there were 37,198 new residential listings in July 2024, a 15% increase from July 2023, the highest number of new listings in Ontario's history.

When your mortgage is up for renewal, your lender will not offer its lowest rate, but you can still find a better deal elsewhere. At Sunlite Mortgage, we work with over 60 lenders ready to compete for your business. We can help you secure a lower rate and make your mortgage payments more manageable, which can significantly reduce your financial stress.

For instance, if you took out a three-year fixed-rate mortgage in 2021

with a \$700,000 mortgage at 1.84%, your monthly payment might have been \$2,910.39. Today, the renewal rate might be 5.09%, increasing your monthly payment to \$4,107.17—a 41% increase. If you had opted for a variable-rate mortgage at 1.49% in 2021, your payment could now jump from \$2,794.79 to \$4,437.12 with the current variable rate of around 5.90%, a 59% increase.

Lenders typically consider many factors when offering renewal terms, including a soft credit pull to check your payment history with them and other creditors. While it may seem like the renewal rate is based on your loyalty to the lender, this isn't always the case. In fact, banks often reserve their best rates for new customers, not for those renewing existing mortgages.

Some banks may make the renewal process straightforward by sending a notice 30 days before the term ends, allowing you to choose from a few options. However, others might send a notice 60 days in advance with an inflated rate, giving you only 30 days to secure a 'discounted rate' often higher than a mortgage broker could offer. This underscores the importance of being proactive and exploring the market to secure the best deal for your mortgage renewal. Don't wait. Start exploring your options now.

Surprisingly, approximately 41% of Canadian homeowners accept their lender's initial renewal offer without

considering other options. This is a significant missed opportunity, as exploring other lenders could potentially save you thousands of dollars over the life of your mortgage. At Sunlite Mortgage, we aim to prevent this oversight by providing access to over 60 lenders, giving you a wide range of options to find a mortgage that aligns with your financial needs and could save you a substantial amount of money.

There are also strategies you can consider when your mortgage is up for renewal:

Insured Mortgage: If you purchased your home with less than 20% down, you could switch your mortgage to another lender if you don't change the mortgage amount, amortization, or who is listed on the mortgage. This is an excellent option if another lender offers a lower rate and term, potentially reducing your payments and helping you pay off your mortgage faster. There are no legal fees or appraisal costs to switch.

Collateral Transfer: If you have a collateral mortgage, you can transfer it to another lender without changing the balance, amortization, or borrowers, but you can select a term and rate that fits your financial goals. Many Canadians opted for HELOCs in the past, but with current HELOC rates around 7.30%, switching to a lower mortgage rate and saving on interest may be beneficial.

Refinance: If you have other debts

you'd like to consolidate into your mortgage at the time of renewal, refinancing could be a better option than renewing. Refinancing allows you to increase the mortgage amount, extend the amortization, add or remove borrowers, and select a better rate and term. By consolidating high-interest debt into your mortgage, you could save up to 60% on your monthly payments, improving your cash flow and reducing financial stress.

Renewing your mortgage doesn't have to mean higher payments and increased stress. You can find a mortgage that fits your current financial situation by exploring alternative lenders and refinancing options. At Sunlite Mortgage, we work with over 60 lenders to help you secure the best rate and term, ensuring that your mortgage payments remain manageable. Don't settle for your lender's first offer—let us do the legwork to find you the ideal mortgage solution, helping you save money and achieve financial peace of mind. Contact Sunlite Mortgage today to learn how we can help you easily navigate your mortgage renewal.

Regards,
Devon Jones, Principal Broker
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CAR LOANS	\$ 87,500.00	\$ 2,625.00/M		
STORE CARDS	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 750.00/M		
TOTAL	\$989,928.00	\$12,290.56/M	\$989,928.00	\$ 5,014.43/M
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