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Diaspora in Toronto urged to partner with Guyanese companies

Guyana's Private Sector Commission (PSC) over the weekend partnered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Diaspora Unit, to organise a Toronto job fair, aimed at attracting not only skilled Guyanese/Canadians to return home and employ those skills, but also for businesses from the diaspora community to seek business partnerships in Guyana.

The job fair was held at the Toronto Don Valley Hotel and Suites, and saw more than 250 attendees participating. During the job fair, attendees signal strong interest in jobs, investment opportunities, and returning home to contribute.

PSC Chairman, Komal Singh, was in attendance, and expressed support for the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government's economic policies and the work of the Diaspora Unit to attract Guyanese home. Singh went on to urge them to explore the opportu-

nities available in Guyana.

"What is taking place right now, can actually expand beyond the boundaries of Guyana. And help everyone. Together we are here as the private sector, along with the Government, to solicit your interest in coming back home, not just to be workers in companies and organisations. There are huge amounts of investment opportunities, in almost every sector."

"You can form yourselves into consortiums, you can come to Guyana, you can find local partners in Guyana. There are many, many small businesses in Guyana right now. That want to develop, but they lack technical capability. They lack the experience. They lack access to finance. That's where you come in from the diaspora unit."

As such, Singh urged the Canadian diaspora to have conversations and to work with them, noting that they will re-



Foreign Secretary Robert Persaud and GolInvest CEO Dr. Peter Ramsaroop at the job fair in Toronto

ceive a warm reception. He also made it clear that the PPP/C Government is willing and ready to assist them when they return.

"We have a Government today, that works very closely with the private sector. And they allow the private sector to grow. This Government has removed significant barriers, that prohibited the private sector from growing. In 2020,

when (the PPP/C) took back office, the private sector had close to US\$1 billion sitting in investments."

"If that investment would have been completed, we would not have been behind in the oil and gas sector. Right now, we are catching up, because a lot of those infrastructure was supposed to be in place in 2016. But it was lagging behind," Singh further said.

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Guyana rejects Venezuela's distorted claims on Geneva Agreement

THE Government of Guyana, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, has issued a strong rebuttal to recent claims by Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro that Guyana has misinterpreted the 1966 Geneva Agreement regarding the longstanding territorial controversy over the Essequibo region.

President Maduro, in a letter dated March 19, 2025, addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), António Guterres, asserted that the territorial issue concerning Essequibo was “dragged into the International Court of Justice (ICJ) without Venezuela’s consent, in open violation of the 1966 Geneva Agreement.”

Guyana has categorically rejected this claim, asserting that Venezuela’s interpretation has already been rejected by the ICJ, the principal judicial organ of the UN.

“President Maduro is wrong. His interpretation of the 1966 Geneva Agreement was thoroughly rejected by the International Court of Justice, in its ruling of December 18, 2020,” the ministry noted.

In a detailed response, the min-

istry emphasised that the ICJ, in its December 18, 2020 ruling, decisively upheld the jurisdiction of the court to hear and determine the controversy between the two states over the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award, which definitively established the land boundary between then British Guiana and Venezuela.

In that ruling, the World Court determined that the agreement provided for the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela over the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award which established the boundary between the two countries, ultimately to be resolved by the Court.

The ministry emphasised that President Maduro’s letter to the UN Secretary-General attempts to portray the Geneva Agreement as excluding the use of judicial settlement.

However, it reminded that the court has already ruled otherwise. The ICJ, in its 2020 judgment, made it clear that the Geneva Agreement, signed between the United Kingdom and Venezuela in February 1966 and acceded to by Guyana upon gaining independence in May 1966, does, in fact,



contemplate judicial settlement as a valid path to resolving the controversy.

The ministry emphasised: “As the court found, the Geneva Agreement, signed by the United Kingdom and Venezuela in February 1966, and joined by Guyana upon its independence in May 1966, called for a four-year period of diplomatic negotiations to resolve the controversy created by Venezuela’s challenge, asserted for the first time in 1962, to the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award that fixed the boundary between the two countries.

“The Agreement further provided

that, in the event diplomatic negotiations failed to resolve the controversy within four years, the parties would attempt to agree on one of the means of settlement listed in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter, which includes judicial settlement. In the event they could not agree on the next means of settlement, the Agreement stipulated that they would leave the choice of that means of settlement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations who would choose the means of settlement and this choice would be binding on the parties.”

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation specifically pointed to Article IV(2) of the Agreement which states: “If the Government of Guyana and the Government of Venezuela should not have reached agreement regarding the choice of one of the means of settlement provided in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, they shall refer the decision as to the means of settlement to an appropriate international organ upon which they both agree or, failing agreement on this point, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

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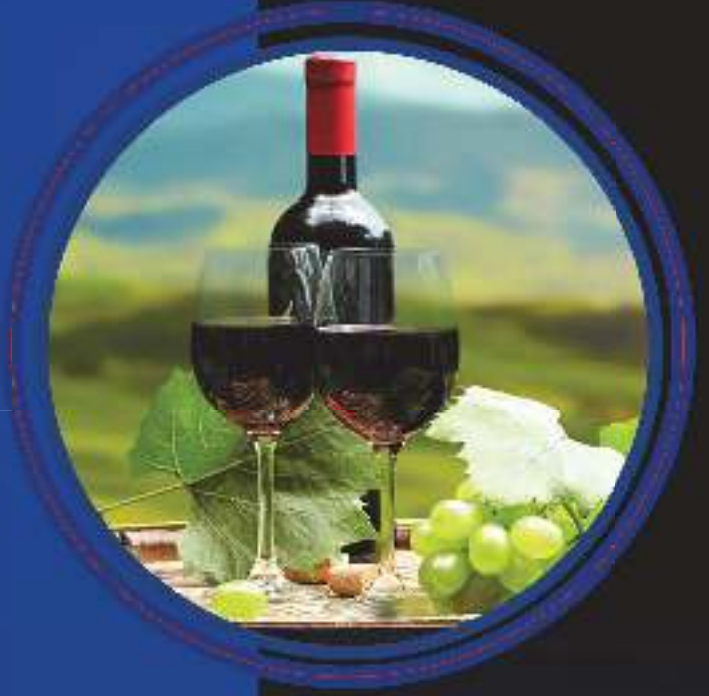
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Leave immediately, temporary migrants to the USA being told by government app

Migrants who were temporarily allowed to live in the United States by using an online appointment app have been told to leave the country "immediately," officials said Monday. It was unclear how many beneficiaries would be affected.

More than 900,000 people were allowed in the country using the CBP One app since January 2023. The CBP One was a cornerstone of Joe Biden administration's strategy to create and expand legal pathways to enter the U.S. in an attempt to discourage illegal border crossings or people arriving en masse at the southern border after making a perilous journey through Central America.

Those accepted into the U.S. via the app were generally allowed to remain in the country for two years with authorization to work under a presidential authority called parole.

"Cancelling these paroles is a promise kept to the American people to secure our borders and protect national security," the Department of Homeland Security media affairs unit said in response to questions.

Authorities confirmed termination notices were sent to CBP One beneficiaries but did not say how many. They were urged to voluntary self-deport using the same app they entered on, which has been renamed CBP Home.

"It's time for you to abandon the United States," the Department of Homeland Security wrote to a Honduran family that entered the U.S. at the end of 2024. The Associated Press reviewed the email received Sunday.

Others shared the same email on social media platforms.

By the end of December, 936,500 people had been allowed to enter with CBP One appointments at border crossings with Mexico. President Donald Trump ended CBP One for new entrants on his first day in office, stranding thousands in Mexico who had appointments into early February.

Homeland Security said Monday that Biden's use of parole authority — more than any president since it was created in 1952 — "further fuelled the worst border crisis in U.S. history."

Meanwhile, the Trump administration plans to fine migrants under de-



More than 900,000 people are affected by the new policy

portation orders up to \$998 US a day if they fail to leave the U.S. and to seize their property if they do not pay, according to documents reviewed by Reuters.

The Trump administration is also considering seizing the property of immigrants who do not pay the fines, according to government emails reviewed by Reuters.

In response to questions from Reuters, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement that immigrants in the U.S. illegally should use the rebranded CBP One — now known as CBP Home under Trump — to "self deport and leave the country now."

"If they don't, they will face the consequences," McLaughlin said. "This includes a fine of \$998 US per day for every day that the illegal alien overstayed their final deportation order." DHS warned of the fines in a March 31 social media post.

The fines stem from a 1996 law that was enforced for the first time in 2018, during Trump's first term in office. He invoked the law to levy fines of hundreds of thousands of dollars against nine migrants seeking sanctuary in churches. The administration withdrew the penalties, but then proceeded with smaller fines of about \$60,000 US per person against at least four of the migrants, according to court

records.

President Biden stopped issuing the fines and rescinded related policies when he took office in 2021.

Scott Shuchart, a top Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) policy official under Biden, said migrants and their supporters could challenge the fines in court but that the threat alone could have a chilling effect.

"Their point isn't really to enforce the law, it's to project fear in communities," he said.

The immigration advocacy group FWD.us estimates that some 10 million migrants with no legal status or temporary protections are living with U.S. citizens or permanent residents in what are known as "mixed status households."



President calls for calm after fatal shootings

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, has called for calm in Linden as investigations continue into the fatal police shooting of 21-year-old Ronaldo Peters.

Speaking to reporters outside an event at the Marriott Hotel on Tuesday, the President said the relevant authorities are following all legal procedures.

"The Office of Professional Responsibility is undertaking their investigation, and I am asking that whatever external support... is needed, that that external support is sought to ensure that all parties and all stakeholders are comfortable with the outcome of the investigation and the process of investigation," he explained.

President Ali assured residents that the matter would be handled professionally and cautioned against politicising the young man's death.

In a later statement on Facebook, the President said he intends to meet with Peters' family and community leaders in the coming days.

"I am appealing to all residents to remain calm..." he said.

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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

Trade wars: Caricom must look elsewhere

In light of the global tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump, we echo the call of Caribbean community chair Mia Mottley, the Prime Minister of Barbados, for the regional grouping to start exploring or strengthening trade relations with other countries, instead of relying mainly on the US market for exports.

The Caribbean region, like most other parts of the world, has been hit with a minimum 10 percent tariff on exports to the US. This is expected to drive up the costs of products made in the Caribbean to consumers in the USA, which is likely to have a negative impact on exports.

Mottley said that Caricom should renew its focus on strengthening connections with Africa, Central and Latin America, while also re-establishing long-standing relationships with traditional allies in the United Kingdom, Europe, and Canada.

In a video address posted on her Facebook page on Saturday, Mottley emphasised the need to fortify the region's ties with other parts of the world.

"We must not rely solely on one or two markets. We need to be able to sell our Caribbean goods to a wider, more stable global market," Mottley said.

This especially rings true for Trinidad and Tobago, which had put all of its hopes in the Dragon Gas deal with Venezuela. Earlier this week, Trump pulled T&T's licence to explore this deal, effectively leaving the once-resource rich twin island dead in the water economically.

This has led to some speculation by regional experts that a new government in T&T -- which goes to the polls April 28 -- should revisit a deal signed by the incumbent government with a questionable operator to take over the country's lone oil refinery, Petrotrin, which the Rowley government shut-

tered without explanation several years ago.

The TT government has been looking for a buyer for the refinery, and announced just recently that it has entered an agreement with Oando PLC, a Nigerian energy company, to take over the refinery. However, it has since been revealed that Oando has no experience in the oil refinery business, while the company itself is in accounting insolvency, meaning that it owes more than it owns.

If this situation persists, it means creditors could force the energy company into bankruptcy.

With elections looming, political pundits are predicting that the opposition United National Congress under Kamla Persad-Bissessar could emerge victorious, and are suggesting that she revisits the Oando deal with a mission to restart the refinery as a state-owned entity.

They say that with forethought, a new government could try to negotiate refining deals with two major oil producers in the geographical area -- Guyana and Suriname.

The TT refinery is actually the closest operable refinery to both those countries.

And with Mia Mottley now urging regional partners to explore options other than the US, there is an opportunity for both the Guyanese and Surinamese governments to encourage the move by its partners to bring refining home. As it stands, Guyanese oil is shipped to Texas for refining.

Mottley, who is a formidable presence in the Caribbean, told the USA that the Caribbean is not the enemy.

"We are your friends... We welcome your people to our shores and give them the holidays and for many of them, the experiences of a lifetime," Mottley said in her address on Satur-

day.

"I say simply to President Trump, our economies are not doing your economy any harm in any way. They are too small to have any negative or distorted impact on your country. So, I ask you to consider the decades-long friendship between your country and ours. And look to the Caribbean, recognising that the family ties, yes, are strong. Let us talk, I hope, and let us work together to keep prices down for all of our people."

Mottley also noted that the international system is in great danger of collapse and nations are on the precipice of a global trade war. She noted that Caribbean economies are largely reliant on imports.

"We have been working to diversify ourselves away from this dependence," she said, adding: "We've already started to reap some successes, especially in the field of agriculture, for example, but we still have a long way to go. As we do this work, we have to be mindful that those recent announcements that have been made in the last few days will impact us very directly as a Region and as a Caribbean people."

Mottley said that this trade war and the possibility of a U.S. \$1 million to \$1.5 million levy on all Chinese-made ships entering U.S. harbours will mean higher prices at the corner shop, higher prices at the supermarkets, higher prices at the electronic store and beyond.

"A lot of Caribbean people will think that these things that you are see-

ing on television news or reading about are far away and 'they don't impact on me.' A lot of people think, 'I'm just a farmer,' 'I'm just a schoolteacher,' or 'I'm just a mechanic.' They say, 'I live in Saint Lucy in Barbados,' or 'I live in Portmore in Jamaica,' or Kingstown in St Vincent, or Arima in Trinidad or Basseterre in St Kitts & Nevis, or San Ignacio in Belize'.

"...But the reality, my friends, is that if you buy food, if you buy electronics, if you buy clothes, it will impact you. It will impact each of us."

She emphasised that Caribbean economies are relatively small, making the region vulnerable to fluctuations in global prices. Mottley pointed out that if Europe, China, the U.S., Canada, and Mexico continue imposing tariffs on each other, it will disrupt supply chains.

"We could lower our tariffs to zero in CARICOM, and it will not make a lick of difference because our economies are small and vulnerable. This crisis, my friends, will impact not only goods, but it may also have a large spillover effect on tourism."

She called for the regional private sector and the tourism sector to come together and to work with governments to collaborate for an immediate tourism strategy, as well for Caribbean people to buy local and regional products where possible.

We agree. It's time for the rest of the world to stand together in the face of the US tariffs.

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Liberals being targeted by Chinese in election interference plot

Federal security officials say they have found an online information operation linked to the Chinese government that focused on Liberal Leader Mark Carney.

The Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force says it traced the operation to Youli-Youmian, the most popular news account on the social media platform WeChat.

Intelligence reports link the Youli-Youmian account to the Chinese Communist Party's central political and legal affairs commission.

A background document released Monday by the Privy Council Office said narratives were spread on WeChat "amplifying" Carney's stance on the United States and targeting his experience and credentials.

Analysts saw "positive and negative narratives" about Carney in the operation, said Larisa Galadza, a director general at Global Affairs Canada, which houses a unit that monitors the online environment.

The security task force includes representatives of Global Affairs, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the RCMP and the Communications Security Establishment, Canada's cyberspy agency.

The task force concluded the information operation aimed at Carney was intended to influence Chinese communities in Canada and sought to shape perceptions about him.

The Youli-Youmian account was also responsible for targeting Conservative politician Michael Chong two years ago and Liberal Chrystia Freeland earlier this year, the backgrounder said.

The task force reported large increases in what federal officials call "co-ordinated, inauthentic" online behaviour citing Carney on March 10 — before the federal election was called — and again during the writ period on March 25.

"When we talk about co-ordinated and inauthentic behaviour, we see things, for instance, like the same headline appearing across multiple media sources, foreign media sources, usually ... and being posted within minutes, if not seconds, of each other," Galadza said Monday at a media briefing.

"That's not a typical, organic kind of spread of information."

Chong said Monday that the campaign is evidence that the Chinese government wants the Liberals re-elected.

"They know that for a decade the Liberals have turned a blind eye to Beijing's interference in Canada's democracy. They know that the Liberals have



Prime Minister Mark Carney is a target of the Chinese interference plot, say security officials

stood by as Beijing interfered in our democracy, targeted and harassed our citizens and threatened Canada's interests at home and abroad," he said in a statement.

Chong pointed to examples of positive posts about Carney, including one that suggested the Liberal leader is being "tough" in his dealings with the U.S. administration.

Under a federal protocol introduced in 2019, a panel of senior bureaucrats has the power to warn the public if it decides one or more incidents threaten Canada's ability to hold a free and fair vote.

The panel includes the clerk of the Privy Council, the national security and intelligence adviser, the deputy attorney general and the deputy ministers of public safety and foreign affairs.

Known as the "panel of five," it receives regular updates from the security task force.

Laurie-Anne Kempton, assistant secretary to the cabinet for communications and consultations, told the briefing Monday that the panel concluded the WeChat activity about Carney was not affecting Canada's ability to hold a free and fair vote.

"This case is contained to one platform and has not spread further, nor is it affecting Canadians' abilities to make informed decisions about their vote," Kempton said. "It's unclear to us how many Canadians might have seen the narrative, so it was important for us to flag it, but it's difficult to gauge beyond that."

A Liberal party representative was briefed on the findings on April 6, Kempton added.

In addition, the task force will be raising its concerns with Tencent, the developer of WeChat.





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Caricom chair Mia Mottley: 'We must not rely solely on one or two markets'

CARIBBEAN Community (CARICOM) Chair and Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, has reiterated the call for a renewed focus on strengthening connections with Africa, Central and Latin America, while also re-establishing long-standing relationships with traditional allies in the United Kingdom, Europe, and Canada.

In a video address posted on her Facebook page on Saturday, Mottley spoke about the impact of the United States imposition of a 10 percent baseline tariff on all imports, along with higher duties on several other countries. She emphasised the need to fortify the region's ties with Africa, Central and Latin America, and to renew partnerships with older allies in the UK, Europe, and Canada.

"We must not rely solely on one or two markets. We need to be able to sell our Caribbean goods to a wider, more stable global market," Mottley said.

Mottley also sent a strong message to the U.S., stating: "To the United States, I say this simply; we are not your enemy, we are your friends... We welcome your people to our shores and give them the holidays and for many of them, the experiences of a lifetime.

"I say simply to President Trump, our economies are not doing your economy any harm in any way. They are too small to have any negative or distorted impact on your country. So, I ask you to consider the decades-long friendship between your country and ours. And look to the Caribbean, recognising that the family ties, yes, are strong. Let us talk, I hope, and let us work together to keep prices down for all of our people."

The CARICOM Chair outlined the crises currently facing the world, noting that the international system is in great danger of collapse and nations are on the precipice of a global trade war. She noted that Caribbean economies are largely reliant on imports.

"Together with colleague Heads of State and Heads of Government, we have been working to diversify ourselves away from this dependence," she said, adding: "We've already started to reap some successes, especially in the field of



Guyana President Irfaan Ali: Sovereignty is not a matter for negotiation

agriculture, for example, but we still have a long way to go. As we do this work, we have to be mindful that those recent announcements that have been made in the last few days will impact us very directly as a Region and as a Caribbean people."

Mottley said that this trade war and the possibility of a U.S. \$1 million to \$1.5 million levy on all Chinese-made ships entering U.S. harbours will mean higher prices at the corner shop, higher prices at the supermarkets, higher prices at the electronic store and beyond.

"A lot of Caribbean people will think that these things that you are seeing on television news or reading about are far away and 'they don't impact on me.' A lot of people think, 'I'm just a farmer,' 'I'm just a schoolteacher,' or 'I'm just a mechanic.' They say, 'I live in Saint Lucy in Barbados,' or 'I live in Portmore in Jamaica,' or Kingstown in St Vincent, or Arima in Trinidad or Basseterre in St Kitts & Nevis, or San Ignacio in Belize'.

"...But the reality, my friends, is

that if you buy food, if you buy electronics, if you buy clothes, it will impact you. It will impact each of us."

She emphasised that Caribbean economies are relatively small, making the region vulnerable to fluctuations in global prices. Mottley pointed out that if Europe, China, the U.S., Canada, and Mexico continue imposing tariffs on each other, it will disrupt supply chains.

"We could lower our tariffs to zero

in CARICOM, and it will not make a lick of difference because our economies are small and vulnerable. This crisis, my friends, will impact not only goods, but it may also have a large spillover effect on tourism."

She called for the regional private sector and the tourism sector to come together and to work with governments to collaborate for an immediate tourism strategy.



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Diaspora investment eyed as plans for Silica City moves into 2nd phase

NOW focused on diaspora investments, the second phase of Guyana's premier smart city – Silica City – will commence soon, President, Dr Irfaan Ali disclosed on Sunday while addressing a mammoth gathering at a community engagement in Belle West, Canal #2 in Region Three.

“You know, we have people in the diaspora. They want [to] know how [they're] going to be involved. The second phase will be opened up within two weeks. And that second phase will be for diaspora investment. You can come there, build your mall, build your apartment complex and you will have the opportunity to own your own homes in the next phase of Silica city,” the Head of State said.

This new phase will allow those investors to build malls, apartment complexes, and even own homes within the city, as part of a broader vision to create a modern urban centre that accommodates 15,000 families.

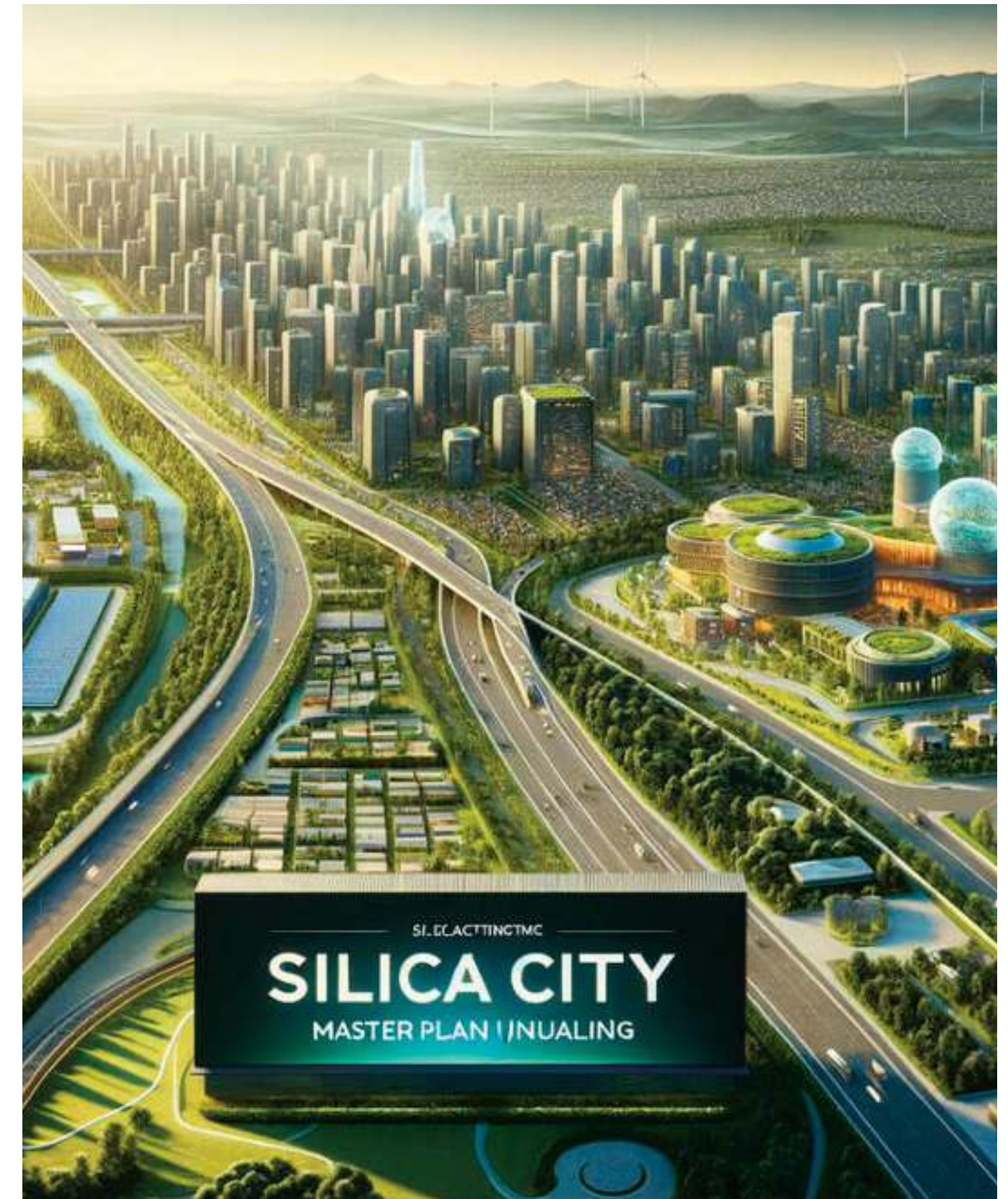
Dr Ali emphasised that Silica City will not only be a place to live but also a transformative “way of life,” focused on improving mental health, wellness, technology and self-sufficiency through innovative infrastructure. “It will extend life expectancy, naturally,” he said, underscoring the project's long-term benefits for residents.

“It's not only a city, it's a way of life, it's going to be a way of life. It's going to extend life expectancy naturally, because of the infrastructure and [the] way in which the city will be built, focusing on mental health, wellness, technology, self-sufficiency,” he reiterated.

Back in August 2024, the government partnered with the University of Miami to complete the comprehensive plan for Silica City. It was during the building expo when the master plan for the city was unveiled, showcasing all the cutting-edge technologies and other amenities it will have.

“We will have this Silica City realised by 2030. Nothing will stop us. We are going to continue engaging and working with the best planners,” President Ali had stated.

The city will represent a significant step forward in Guyana's develop-



mental strategy for a sustainable and climate-smart future. It is set to emerge as the most desirable area for ecologically conscious living.

Recreational parks, community centres, buildings, an electrical system, and multi-specialty healthcare will all be part of the city, creating an atmosphere that improves enjoyment, productivity and well-being.

The ambitious undertaking will address the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise, as well as the issues associated with the growth of non-coastal urban settlements.

Already, the first 110 young pro-

Silica City will be Guyana's first smart city

fessionals' houses being constructed at Silica City are nearing completion.

Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water, Susan Rodrigues, has since expressed satisfaction with the progress of works, following an inspection during a November site visit.

She had previously disclosed that all the infrastructural works have been completed, including road and drainage networks and the installation of utility services.

There are 75 flat housing units and 35 elevated ones. The flat houses are priced between \$25,200,603 and \$25,290,178, while the elevated ones cost approximately \$33,980,153 to \$34,450,145.

Once completed, Silica City will be outfitted with the newest energy-saving technologies for wastewater management, energy management and water conservation.

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First phase of Parika Port Development out to tender as Guyana eyes becoming a hub

GUYANA is moving full-speed ahead to becoming a major transshipment hub, as President, Dr. Irfaan Ali has announced that the first phase of the Parika Port Development is out to tender.

President Ali made this announcement during a recent public meeting at La Grange Village, West Bank Demerara.

The President told the large gathering: “The first phase of the Parika port development... is out to tender now. The first phase of the Parika Port Development, that’s going to allow us to ship directly from Parika to the Caribbean. That will allow the transshipment of containerised traffic, coming into Parika.”

Notably, the Public Works Ministry has allocated funds from its \$9.9 billion River Transport budget for the project.

This includes dredging the Demerara River channels and clearing wrecks from the Demerara and Essequibo rivers.

Additionally, the upcoming regional ferry service will operate out of Parika, which is already a major port.

This is being done through a joint venture among Guyana, Barbados, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Last year, CARI Cargo Inc., the company responsible for regional ferry service, was incorporated.



An aerial view of the Parika Stelling

The Galleons Passage, a vessel from Trinidad and Tobago, will ply the route. Operations will commence between Guyana and Trinidad initially, with plans to extend services to Barbados.

President Ali had also previously highlighted that there are ongoing discussions for a specialised ferry service with Aruba, catering specifically to the transportation of agricultural produce.

Given Guyana’s strategic geographical location on South America’s edge, it stands as the shortest and most cost-effective route for Brazilian exports through the Panama Canal.

As the President reflected on the plethora of developments that are taking place within Region Three (Essequibo Islands-West Demerara), he highlighted the Vreed-en-Hoop Shorebase, and the Gas-to Energy (GtE) Project, which are bringing a range of benefits for all.

“Look at the investment. Two major shore base facilities. One completed, going to the second phase, the other one under construction. In this region, you will host 600 megawatts (MW) of power for the country. Two power plants. We will have an industrial hub, with manufacturing. You will have a fertiliser plant built in this region, to

supply fertiliser for all of our agriculture needs in this country,” he said.

Guyana is positioned to emerge as a pivotal transshipment hub, fostering vital connections between South America and the global arena.

President Ali, last year, had met with DHL Caribbean executives, urging them to explore opportunities and extend services to northern Brazil from Guyana.

Given Guyana’s strategic geographical location on South America’s edge, it stands as the shortest and most cost-effective route for Brazilian exports through the Panama Canal.

Demerara Bridge on schedule for August completion

AS construction of the new Demerara River Bridge progresses steadily towards its August 2025 completion, Minister of Public Works, Juan Edghill, has assured the public that no jobs will be lost as a result of the project.

During a media briefing on Sunday, Minister Edghill highlighted the timely advancement of works on the bridge, commending the construction teams for staying on schedule. He emphasised the government’s commitment to job creation, stating, “The PPP/C government is about creating jobs, not taking away jobs.”

Minister Edghill made it clear that there will be no disruption in employment for current bridge workers. “No one will be thrown to the curb,” he affirmed, while outlining the avenues available to workers post-construction. Employees will have the option to continue in similar positions within other agencies or locations, or receive their due benefits should they choose to part ways. These matters, he noted, will be addressed through the Public Service Ministry, relevant unions, and associated agencies.

The Public Works Minister also underscored the broader economic potential tied to the bridge’s development. Once completed, the bridge will link Schoonord to the Parika highway, creating seamless connectivity for commuters



Ongoing work on the Demerara Harbour River Bridge

and commerce. Complementing this infrastructure, connector roads have already been awarded and are currently being developed.

In an exciting addition, Edghill revealed plans for a new port facility at Parika, which is currently open for tender. “Not just a stelling, but a port facility,” he stressed, noting the transformative potential of the project. “New lands will be opened, housing developments...people who are choked in Georgetown for space, for manufacturing and factories—everything will mi-

grate, because you could get to home and get back in 15 minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes, depending on how you’re going.”

The Minister also addressed the re-deployment of skilled bridge personnel, noting there will be no shortage of opportunities for their integration into ongoing infrastructure projects. “We’ve got mechanical engineers. We’ve got other engineers who run the whole bridge, who have served for many, many years. Those skills will be mopped up, from the moment that that is ready.”

He further pointed to recent hiring under the Special Projects Unit, which has recruited hundreds for roadworks, including clerks of works and drivers. “Some of those same people will go into an expansion of what is taking place in the ministry,” Edghill said, signalling a wider employment ripple effect stemming from the bridge’s completion.

Minister Edghill concluded that the new Demerara River Bridge is more than a transport link—it is a cornerstone of economic development, job creation, and regional transformation.

Traditional agriculture evolving to meet global challenges: Mustapha

AGRICULTURE Minister Zulfikar Mustapha said that while Guyana is blessed with a diverse agricultural landscape, the country is not exempt from the immense global challenges that also impact agriculture and food security in countries in this part of the region.

Minister Mustapha made these remarks virtually while addressing Ministers of Agriculture and other officials from around the world at the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS+4).

He explained that the Government of Guyana has been making efforts to ensure traditional approaches evolve to address transforming agri-food system challenges, adding that has integrated food systems strategies into various national policies that promote sustainable development, livelihoods, nutrition, health, economic growth, and climate action.

“Guyana is endowed with abundant natural resources and a diverse agricultural landscape. However, we understand that these advantages come with considerable challenges, such as climate change, rising food prices, and the need to maintain food security. Guyana has integrated food systems strategies into various national policies that promote sustainable development, improved livelihoods, enhanced nutrition, improved health, economic growth, and climate action. Notably, the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 directly aligns with the national pathway for transforming food



Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha

systems. This strategy emphasizes food security, climate resilience, and financing mechanisms that support sustainability and biodiversity preservation. Its goals include generating income while promoting initiatives for food security and climate resilience,” he explained.

Minister Mustapha also said that the government has been collaborating with the local Private Sector to streamline local supply chains and ensure that farmers are able to deliver fresh, nutritious produce to consumers efficiently.

“The Government of Guyana understands the importance of public-private partnerships in enhancing our agri-food system. By working hand in hand with the private sector, we are developing undertaking key initiatives to streamline our supply chains and also

ensure that our farmers can deliver fresh, nutritious produce to consumers efficiently.

“We believe that by fostering cooperation among all stakeholders, from producers to processors and retailers, we can counteract fragmentation and create a coordinated effort that stabilizes food prices and increases market access for our local agricultural products,” he noted.

Minister Mustapha also said that empowering smallholding farmers remains a key priority and that the government has been instituting various financial support mechanisms to help them invest in modern technologies.

“Empowering our smallholder farmers is also a key priority. We have instituted various financial support

mechanisms, including low-interest loans, to help them invest in modern technologies. This financial empowerment is crucial to increasing their productivity and resilience, allowing them to thrive even in the face of challenges. Moreover, we are committed to creating an enabling policy framework that attracts investment in agriculture.

“We have introduced tax incentives and duty waivers for agricultural inputs, significantly reducing the financial burden on persons investing in the agriculture sector. Such measures are paramount for enhancing productivity. Our vision is clear; we aim for self-sufficiency, reducing our food import bill significantly while increasing local agricultural production. Our target includes key commodities such as poultry, corn, and rice, which are essential for both sustaining our population and ensuring regional food security,” Minister Mustapha underscored.

The session featured a dialogue between National Coordinators, international financial institutions, and the private sector during which they discussed investment opportunities and platforms that promote scalable and sustainable solutions, in line with the Secretary-General’s Call to Action, to ensure access to finance for food systems transformation. Investment opportunities in food systems transformation were also addressed.

Guyana was among 20 countries, which also included Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic, to participate.

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

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

Key priorities of the WGC include:

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

World Guyanese Congress

5200 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor
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To find out more about World Guyanese Congress and our goals and priorities. Scan the QR code, or visit www.wgc-org.com

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

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Landmark Berkeley-Guyana NASA Innovation Forum set for 2026

COME January 2026, the first Berkeley-Guyana NASA innovation Forum will be held locally, creating a platform for the country to leverage expertise from major technology giants.

This was according to President, Dr Irfaan Ali, on Sunday, following his visit to the Spring 2025, Berkeley Innovation Forum, California, United States.

“In January next year, we will have the Berkeley-Guyana NASA Innovation Forum in Guyana. These were things we fantasised about in the past looking at television,” President Ali told a commu-

nity gathering in Region Three.

Last week, the Guyanese Head of State was awarded the prestigious Global Leadership Award for Open Innovation for 2024 from the University of California, Berkeley, at the NASA Ames Research Centre.

President Ali said: “A rush of emotions went through me as I walked into the NASA centre, walked into the Google X innovation room, knowing that these are things that you wished that is [sic] upon us now.”

A highlight of the tour was the Ver-



Dr Irfaan Ali during his visit last week to the NASA Ames Research Center

tical Motion Simulator (VMS), a key tool used by innovators and contractors to advance drone and aviation technology.

Another significant area of interest was NASA’s advanced supercomputer at the Advanced Supercomputer Facility.

This cutting-edge technology enables researchers to collaborate on solving real-world challenges, offering a one-billion-pixel resolution across 128 LED screens to visualise complex research data.

SGCC elects a new board

The Suriname-Guyana Chamber of Commerce (SGCC) is pleased to announce the successful conclusion of its Second Annual General Meeting (AGM), held on 24th March, 2025. During the meeting, members elected a new Board of Directors for 2025-2026. With strong participation from its dynamic membership, the AGM reaffirmed the Chamber’s ongoing commitment to promoting bilateral trade, collaboration, and deeper regional integration between Suriname and Guyana.

The SGCC extends its sincere thanks to the outgoing, 2024 directors, Ms. Charlene Tjon-Sien-Kie and Ms. Anuska Varsha Sonai, for their invaluable service. The Chamber also warmly welcomes its new board members, Ms. Carter-Sharma and Mr. Gangaram-Panday.

At its first board meeting convened on 7th April, 2025, the Board elected its officers for the 2025 term as


per the SGCC Constitution, as follows:

- Chairperson: Dr. Vishnu Doerga
- Vice Chairperson: Mr. Derrick Klaverweide
- Treasurer: Mr. Mark Sookhai
- Secretary: Mr. Samuel Glasgow


These officers will work closely with the SGCC Secretariat to advance the Chamber’s vision of strengthened private sector collaboration and shared prosperity in the Guyana-Suriname corridor.

The Chamber also reconfirms the appointment of its two esteemed Honorary Members, whose whose ongoing guidance and support are deeply valued: Her Excellency Liselle Blankendal, Ambassador of Suriname to Guyana, and His Excellency Virjanand Depoo, Ambassador of Guyana to Suriname.

The SGCC extends its gratitude to all members, partners, and stakeholders whose support made the 2nd AGM a success.






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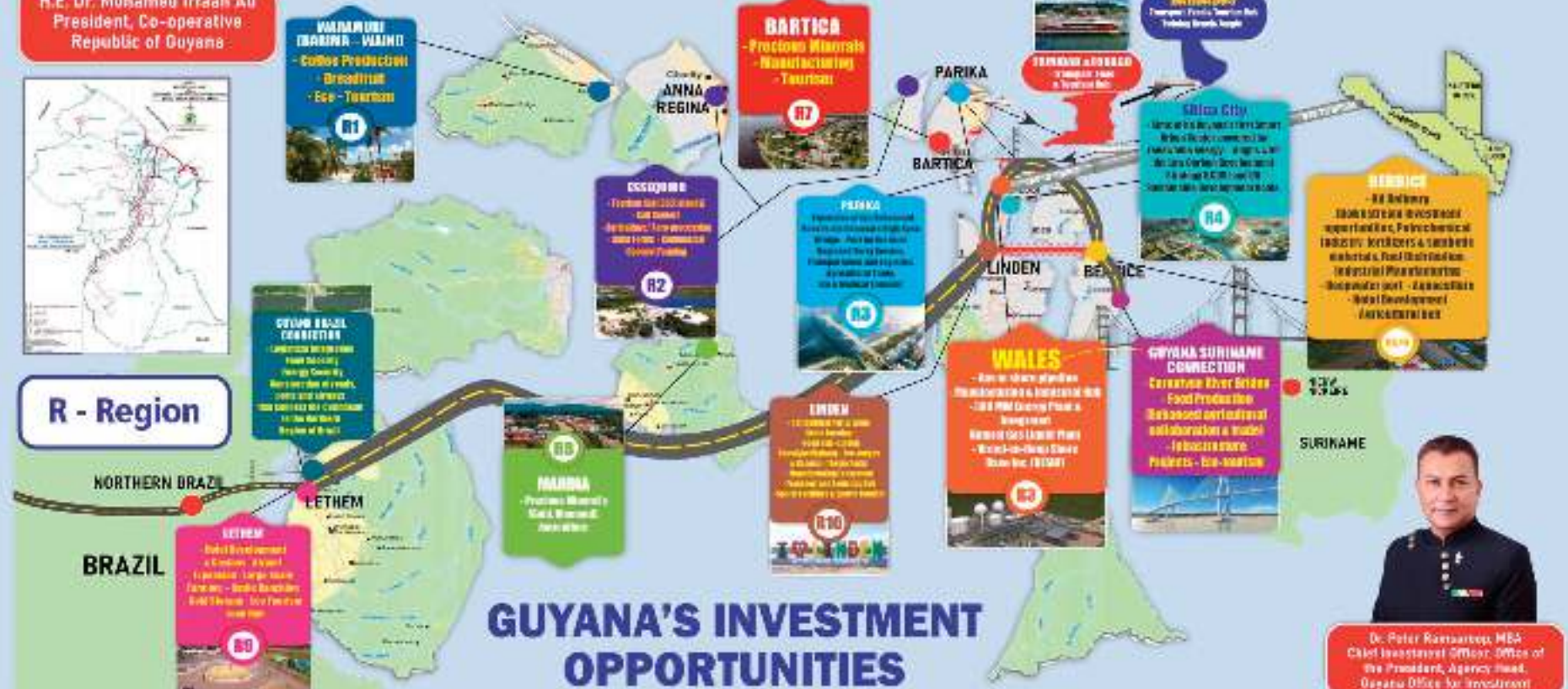
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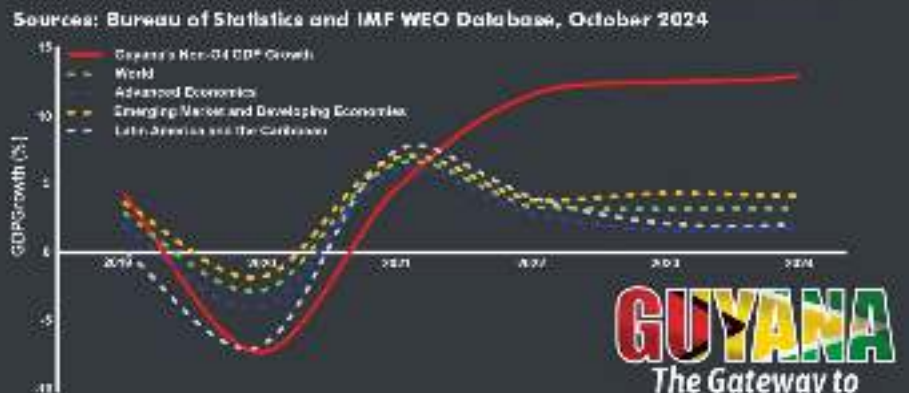
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Sources: Bureau of Statistics and IMF WEO Database, October 2024





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AI-powered holograms could transform math in Guyana: Dr Ali

PRESIDENT, Dr. Irfaan Ali has outlined an innovative approach to transforming education in Guyana, with hologram technology set to play a central role in teaching mathematics.

DURING a community engagement on Sunday, Dr Ali said: "We're looking at the hologram technology to deliver mathematics, so that your children can walk up to a screen and ask an AI robot how to solve [an] equation."

The interaction, he said, would be seamless and without the typical frustration some students may encounter in traditional learning environments.

Guyana is not just keeping up with global trends but is actively positioning itself as a leader in the field of education technology.

"That is where the world is going, and we are going ahead," Dr Ali remarked confidently, stressing that his administration is prioritising strategies that will ensure that Guyanese children are equipped to thrive in the ever-evolving global economy.

The Head of State said: "We are busy strategising on the strategies that will enable us to be ahead of the competition, enable your children to function effectively in the new world."

This is a part of a broader vision, as the government is pursuing ambitious plans to establish Guyana as a global education hub.

Dr. Ali said: "We are not just building an education hub to meet our national needs, we want children from around the world and the Caribbean to come to Guyana as an education destination, making it a part of the economic expansion of the country."

Already, he noted, Guyana has begun discussions with major tech giants to explore areas for opportunities.

"We are now discussing with major tech giants on how we are going to convert the Institute of Applied Science and Technology, into a world innovation hub, where we will get startups to come here, to experiment here, to build the next generation of technology from Guyana with investment from the private sector," the Head of State said.

He added: "That is the future we are talking about young people; this is exciting things."

Guyana, he stressed, is not only preparing its youth for the future, but also positioning itself as a global player in the world of innovation and education.

Just last week, the Guyanese Head

of State called on global leaders to use open AI and digital access to bridge the divide, while addressing the Spring 2025, Berkeley Innovation Forum, California, United States.

"AI must serve rather than replace humans. It must empower rather than exploit and uplift rather than marginalise. Only through such re-imagined vision where AI is directed towards the common good can we ensure the next era of globalisation is one of conversion not division," President Ali firmly said.

As the President reflected on digital revolution throughout history, he had pointed out that "big data," robotics and

the internet are shaping economies at an unprecedented speed, concentrating technological power in a few hands.

"Today, as AI and automation redefine industries, there is growing backlash against globalisation, rising populism and increasing disparities between the developed and developing world," the President noted.

In that regard, he said that in the late 20th century, globalisation was expected to narrow economic and technological gaps between developed and developing nations, through international trade, investment and technology transfer.



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US\$1M injected into cardiology care through cross-border partnership

WITH cardiovascular diseases accounting for 70 per cent of Guyana's national disease burden, cardiology care here has been given a boost with a US\$1 million donation from the Subraj Family Foundation in partnership with Northwell Health.

The landmark philanthropic gift from the George Subraj family foundation amounts to approximately GYD \$209 million and is set to improve cardiac care in both Guyana's public sector and in Richmond Hill, Queens, the home of the largest Guyanese community in the United States.

This investment which was made through Northwell Health's Centre for Global Health, aims to address the rising burden of heart diseases in Caribbean and South Asian communities by advancing clinical training, medical research and community-based health outreaches.

While speaking at the launch of the cross-border partnership dubbed the Guyana Global Cardiology Initiative, President, Dr Irfaan Ali noted that the collaboration is another step that is being taken in Guyana's journey to better health.

Against this backdrop, he indicated that when it comes to cardiovascular diseases, Guyana is in crisis, and as such, it must be treated as a national emergency.

Giving some statistics, Dr Ali noted that cardiovascular diseases which include heart attack, stroke and health failure are the leading causes of death in the Americas.

In 2017 alone, an estimated two million people died from cardiovascular diseases in the Americas, with 30 per cent of those deaths occurring in persons 70 years and under.

He highlighted that here in Guyana, the situation is more sobering.

"Cardiovascular disease account for at least 70 per cent of our national disease burden... that means seven out of every 10 people living with a serious illness in Guyana are battling cardiovascular-related conditions."

To this end, he disclosed that this is the leading cause of death in Guyana with the rates here being among the highest in the Americas.

Dr Ali noted that if authorities are



Minister of Health Dr Frank Anthony

serious about guaranteeing better health outcomes for Guyanese citizens, this must be tackled head-on with bold, collaborative and sustained action.

The partnership between Northwell Health and the Subraj Family Foundation, President Ali said, represents exactly the kind of collaborative effort needed to turn the tide.

He stated that Northwell brings to the table world-class expertise, cutting-edge cardiac technologies and a strong record of compassionate high-quality care, while the Subraj Family Foundation brings a deep and enduring commitment to Guyana, backed by

philanthropic work that has changed lives here already.

"Together we are working to enhance cardiac services in Guyana, this isn't a donation it is a long-term investment in people's health," he said.

Meanwhile, Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony in his remarks, stated that steps have been taken over the years to improve cardiology care with the implementation of programmes such as the paediatric cardiac programme.

While a lot of the care has been centred at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, he noted that the aim

is to decentralise services and provide access to this type of care across all regions.

With the building out of new and modern facilities in various regions, Dr Anthony stated that the country is pushing its way to facilitate this decentralisation to ensure that these services reach persons where they live.

He said that with this partnership, Guyana will be able to send doctors to Northwell to acquire skills and work with the latest advanced technologies and return to implement these techniques here.

"What we want to do is to expand the amount of training that we can do and so it's very timely and with all these plans that we have working over the next couple of years, training people, upskilling people... so that we can decentralise these services," he said.

Also addressing the launch was Tony Subraj, board member of the Subraj Family Foundation, who indicated that this partnership will provide training for Guyanese physicians in cardiology specialties in the United States who will return home with the skills.

Additionally, it will also provide health outreaches in rural areas, providing screening and care.

Subraj said the foundation prioritises building communities by investing in health and education among other things in Guyana and in New York.



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Trump with Indian leader Narendra Modi

India prepares to navigate trade war as US tariffs take effect

Donald Trump's blanket tariffs have put the world on the brink of a possible global trade war. The European Union has vowed a united response, and China has threatened countermeasures.

Ratings agencies like Fitch have warned that the mass tariff hikes could result in lower growth, higher inflation and potentially a recession in some parts of the world.

How will India - Asia's third largest economy - navigate these global tremors?

Trump has dealt the most brutal blow to Asian countries, slapping 34% tariffs on China in addition to the 20% previously levied. Vietnam and Cambodia will have to pay 46% and 49% respectively.

In relative terms, at 27% India has fared better.

But the rate is still steep and will severely affect major "labour intensive exports", says Priyanka Kishore of the consultancy Asia Decoded. "That will likely have a knock-on impact on domestic demand and headline gross domestic product at a time when growth is already stuttering," said Ms Kishore.

But the new trade realities also throw up opportunities for India.

Its new tariff differential with Asian peers may potentially lead to some export re-routing. "We can bring the footwear and garments business from Asian peers if we get our act together," says Nilesh Shah, a veteran fund manager.

This will take time though.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government will thus have to be strategic in how it navigates the situation.

Foremost, the announcement should "give the government a greater sense of urgency in wrapping up a trade deal with the US", says Rahul Ahluwalia, a public policy expert who previously worked for a government department. "The US is our largest export market, so this is serious stuff."

India exports some \$91bn (£69bn) in goods to the US, which account for 18% of its overall exports. Hectic trade negotiations have been under way with a fall deadline for conclusion. Ahluwalia says that deadline could now be compressed and brought forward.

While doing that, India must also expand export markets beyond the US and focus on regions where tariffs remain low, such as Europe, South-east Asia, and Africa, recommends Indian trade research agency GTRI.

In the last couple of years, India has shown a renewed appetite for trade deals, launching free trade agreement (FTA) talks with a range of countries and blocs, including the European Union and the United Kingdom.

Last year, Delhi signed a \$100bn free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) - a group of four European countries that are not members of the European Union.

Experts say talks with other partners could now be expedited as cracks deepen between the US and many other global economies over Trump's actions.

But even as trade negotiations carry on with global partners, the government will need a plan on how it deals with the domestic fallout of Trump's decision.

Impact on sectors that employ millions of people - like gems and jewellery and textiles - is likely to be significant. The government will need to extend support through means like expanding production-linked subsidies to ensure that India's domestic industry stays globally competitive and can leverage the new opportunities this has thrown up, according to the consultancy, Ernst & Young.

The tariffs are "fundamentally reshaping the global trading system", says Agneshwar Sen, a trade policy expert at Ernst & Young India. This will require a "fundamental revaluation of trading strategies" as new supply chains emerge, he adds.

India will also have to be mindful of other risk factors that emerge from this - such as "Chinese dumping", says Mr Shah.

As it becomes more difficult for Chinese goods to enter the US, these will have to find other markets. And there are few others that are as large as India. "The global South accounts for more than 20% of global consumption and is where the new middle class is being created. This is where China will attempt to sell," says Akash Prakash of Amansa Capital, an investment management company in Singapore.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): The temptation to break rules and cut corners today will be strong and it's unlikely you will be able to resist it. Hopefully nothing bad will come of it but if someone in a position of authority gets upset you will have to admit your guilt.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): The fact that certain people have not been pulling their weight is not an excuse for you to do less, in fact it is an invitation to do even more so the powers that be can see you are a cut above everyone else. Their laziness is your opportunity.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): Now that your ruling planet Mercury has ended its retrograde phase you can safely make an important decision regarding your career. You have thought about it a lot over the past few weeks - now turn those thoughts into a plan for action.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): This is not the right time for second thoughts - whatever it is you decided to start doing a couple of weeks ago is what you must focus on now with the absolute belief that it CAN be made to work. Have confidence in your own abilities.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): The message of the charts today is that you must do whatever takes your fancy and completely ignore those who say you are being irresponsible. Maybe they are right, maybe you are, but if you play safe now you will regret it later on.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): Make an effort to be nice to everyone over the next 24 hours, even to people who clearly don't deserve it. Their words and actions must not be allowed to influence you to the extent that you change your ways of dealing with the world.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): If you need help of any kind today you must speak up and let friends and colleagues know. Asking for assistance is not a sign of weakness but a sign that you are aware of your own limitations - and in a very real sense that is a strength.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): Your mind may be full of good ideas but you cannot make use of them all, so decide what two or three things inspire you the most and focus on those alone. Better still, focus on a single goal and only move on from it when it's been reached.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): If your conscience tells you that what a friend is doing is wrong then you must speak up and let them know. You don't have to make a huge issue of it, and you should certainly keep it between the two of you, but silence is not an option.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): You have never been one of the herd or the mob and there is no reason why you should change your ways now. In fact, if you are smart you will observe how the majority of people are behaving and choose a very different course for yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): Whatever challenges you face over the next 24 hours you can find ways to overcome them. It may even be the case that because you are forced to come up with new solutions you are able to turn some of those challenges to your advantage.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): It may feel as if nothing is beyond you but don't start thinking you are invincible and can do as you please because the universe will see that as an invitation to prove you wrong. Never forget that you are human like everyone else!

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161 candidates to contest Trinidad and Tobago's April 28 elections

A total of 161 candidates will vie for seats in Trinidad and Tobago's House of Representatives on April 28, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) confirmed.

The announcement, made by Chief Election Officer Fern Narcis, followed a flurry of activity across the country as aspiring parliamentarians filed their nomination papers with returning officers in all 41 constituencies.

Nomination Day saw vibrant scenes outside EBC offices, with supporters decked out in party colours marching alongside music trucks, tassa drummers, and rhythm sections. Candidates were flanked by campaign managers and election agents as they submitted their paperwork, officially entering the race for the upcoming general election.

According to the EBC, 17 political parties have fielded candidates this year. The People's National Movement (PNM) is the only party contesting all 41 constituencies. Close behind is the newly formed Patriotic Front, entering 37 candidates, followed by the United National Congress (UNC) with 34, and the National Transformation Alliance (NTA) with 17.

Three independent candidates will also be on the ballot: Ernesto Singh (Chaguanas East), Vivian Johnson (Port-of-Spain North/St Ann's West), and Leroy Richard Kelton George (Tobago West).

In comparison, 19 parties contested the 2020 general election. Here's the full breakdown of party participation for 2025:

- People's National Movement (PNM): 41
- Patriotic Front: 37
- United National Congress (UNC): 34
- National Transformation Alliance (NTA): 17
- All People's Party: 8
- Progressive Empowerment Party (PEP): 3
- Trinidad Humanity Campaign: 3
- People's Democratic Patriots (PDP): 2
- Congress of the People (COP): 2
- Innovative Democratic Alliance (IDA): 2
- Tobago People's Party (TPP): 2
- National Coalition for Transformation: 2
- Class Action Reform Movement: 1
- Movement for National Development: 1



The opposition UNC is experiencing massive crowds at their campaign events

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With a wide field of contenders and a diverse slate of parties, the race to the Red House promises to be one of

the most competitive in recent years.

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US flags Jamaica as top drug source country

Jamaica continues to grapple with its dual role as both “a significant producer of illicit drugs and a key transit country for narcotics destined for North America and Europe,” according to the 2025 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) released recently by the U.S. Department of State.

The annual report, compiled by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, singles out Jamaica as the Caribbean's largest cannabis producer, with “expansive rural areas” used for cultivation. At the same time, the island's location makes it a critical transshipment point for cocaine moving out of South America, “especially Colombia,” to the United States.

The report notes that “Jamaican criminal networks are often linked to transnational organized crime and facilitate drug trafficking via air and maritime routes.” Despite the ongoing challenges, the Jamaican government “continues to prioritize bilateral collaboration to address the critical security risks posed by both firearms and drug trafficking.”

In 2024, Jamaican law enforcement made major drug seizures, including the largest cocaine bust in the nation's history—2.5 metric tons in Havendale. Altogether, authorities confiscated over 3.18 metric tons of cocaine and 18.07 metric tons of marijuana last year.

But these victories are tempered by continued logistical and institutional limitations. “Jamaica's lack of adequate air and maritime assets limits the ability to effectively intercept these exchanges,” the report states.

The U.S. also flagged persistent issues at the island's ports, where “commercial containers [are] disappearing each month” due to “leadership turnover and vacancies within the port authority.”

The report further highlights a growing threat from firearms trafficking, particularly in connection with Haiti. “Evidence of an active exchange of guns and drugs between Jamaica and Haiti... exacerbates local crime and violence, fueling organized criminal activities on both islands,” the document reads.

Corruption remains a major concern. While the U.S. government acknowledges that Jamaica “does not, as a matter of policy, encourage or facilitate illicit drug production or distribution,” it emphasizes that “internal conspiracies involving customs officials and law enforcement personnel allow traffickers to exploit vulnerabilities.” In 2024, several “high-profile corruption cases highlighted the complicity of public officials in drug trafficking operations.”

The report does credit Jamaica with taking steps to regulate marijuana through its Cannabis Licensing Authority, which was formed after marijuana was decriminalized in 2015. As of November 30, 2024, a total of 162 licenses had been issued for medical and scientific marijuana production.

Public education and addiction treatment remain under-resourced. The Ministry of Health's National Council on Drug Abuse “expanded its prevention programs, targeting at-risk populations, including adolescents.”

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Caribbean hoteliers ask US to reconsider tariffs on port fees

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) is urging the U.S. government to reconsider proposed port service fees and tariffs, warning of potential economic fallout for both the Caribbean and the United States, especially Florida.

In a recent submission to the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), the CHTA called for regional exemptions and proposed alternative measures aimed at protecting the vital trade and tourism links between the two regions.

The proposed U.S. policy includes service fees of up to \$1.5 million per port call for vessels made in or flagged by China. According to CHTA, these fees—alongside accompanying tariffs—would sharply raise the cost of imports and cruise operations, leading to higher prices for consumers and decreased traveler demand.

While the CHTA acknowledged the U.S. government's goal of expanding the use of domestically built cargo ships, it cautioned that the timing and scope of the policy could hurt Caribbean economies and U.S. interests alike. The organization noted that Caribbean and U.S.-owned shipping companies face serious challenges in rapidly phasing out Chinese-built vessels.

CHTA President Sanovnik Destang stressed the importance of maintaining strong tourism ties between the two regions, citing economic benefits such as job creation, increased business opportunities, and higher tax revenues.

“The region was beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel with many tourism-related businesses recovering



A cruise ship docked at a Caribbean port

from the tremendous impact the pandemic had on travel and tourism,” said Destang. “Even as our industry has rebounded, we remain highly vulnerable to the high cost of operations—particularly food and beverages—driven largely by five years of inflation. One-third of our tourism-related businesses reported a net loss in 2024, according to CHTA’s annual performance study.”

In its formal response, the CHTA

joined

with the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) and regional shipping interests in requesting exemptions for Caribbean nations and smaller shipping firms that often operate through multiple transshipment ports. The proposed exemption list includes 29 Caribbean jurisdictions, from Jamaica and The Bahamas to Suriname and St. Vincent & the Grenadines, as well as U.S. territories like Puerto Rico and the

U.S. Virgin Islands.

Proposed policy could disrupt Caribbean trade and tourism flows

Tourism remains a powerful economic driver in the Caribbean, contributing an estimated \$91.2 billion to the region’s GDP and supporting over 2.9 million jobs in 2024, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. That year, more than 68 million tourists visited the Caribbean—roughly half by cruise and half via land-based stays—according to the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO).

The U.S. is the Caribbean’s largest supplier of food products, with 70–80 percent of goods arriving by sea. Florida, a major hub for cruise tourism, would be particularly affected, as it is home to the majority of cruise passengers heading to the Caribbean and a key source of provisioning for cruise ships.

Data from the CPSO shows that each stayover tourist to the Caribbean contributes roughly \$944 in direct and indirect U.S. imports, totaling an estimated \$6.2 billion in U.S. exports to CARICOM nations in 2023. Cruise visitors contribute about \$23 each, adding up to approximately \$0.3 billion in U.S. exports that same year.

“Given the clear mutual advantages to both the U.S. and the Caribbean of a vibrant Caribbean hospitality and tourism industry, and in the spirit of mutual collaboration, longstanding benefits from trade and tourism, and our shared commitment to free enterprise and democracy, we are hopeful that our recommendations are considered and adopted for our mutual benefit,” said Destang.

Antigua declares gun amnesty to curb violence

The government of Antigua and Barbuda is appealing to citizens to take full advantage of a nationwide gun amnesty that begins April 7 and runs until the end of April, offering a final window for individuals to surrender illegal firearms without facing prosecution.

The initiative, approved by Cabinet, is part of ongoing efforts to curb gun violence and remove illegal weapons and ammunition from the streets.

Ambassador Lionel Hurst, Chief of Staff in the Prime Minister’s Office, emphasized the urgency of the initiative, noting that recent changes to the country’s firearms laws have already resulted in convictions.

“Several individuals have already been brought before the courts and sentenced to up to two years in prison under the country’s updated firearms laws,” Hurst said.

“This is yet another opportunity for people to hand over unlawful firearms. There’s now a mandatory jail sentence for those found in possession. So we urge individuals to do the right thing and turn them in,” he added.

During the amnesty period, individuals can surrender illegal guns and ammunition voluntarily, without fear of arrest or prosecution. In addition to the legal reprieve, the government is also offering rewards for credible information that leads to the successful recovery of illegal weapons.



The gun amnesty will run to the end of April

Law enforcement authorities have confirmed that all police stations are equipped to handle the process safely and discreetly.

“All information shared with the police during this amnesty will be treated with strict confidentiality. Let us work together to keep our communities safe and free from the threats of illegal firearms,” the police said in a statement.

Hurst stressed the life-saving potential of the initiative.

“Even one gun handed in could save a life,” he said. “We hope this measure will be seen as a final chance for individuals to avoid jail. This is about making Antigua and Barbuda safer for everyone.”

Victims of SSL fraud to receive partial payout starting May 2025

Victims of the alleged multibillion-dollar fraud at Stocks and Securities Limited (SSL) will begin receiving partial payouts next month, more than two years after news of the scheme devastated clients, including Jamaican sprint legend Usain Bolt.

In an official notice dated April 3, 2025, trustee Caydion Campbell announced the launch of the SSL Victims Compensation Fund, aimed at facilitating payouts to those affected by the alleged fraudulent activities. Clients are required to submit proof of claims by April 30, 2025.

“We are seeking to make a partial distribution to these clients in May 2025 and invite all affected clients, who have not yet done so, to submit their POCs [proof of claims],” Campbell’s notice stated. “Your submission should include any supporting documentation or other forms of evidence to substantiate actual losses suffered due to the alleged fraudulent activities.”

The development marks a significant step in the ongoing court-supervised closure of SSL, one of Jamaica’s largest-ever investment frauds, with over US\$30 million (approximately J\$5 billion) reportedly siphoned from more than 200 accounts.

The fraud was first brought to light in 2023, with Usain Bolt among the high-profile victims. In February, Bolt expressed frustration with the government’s handling of the investigations, hinting that he may not recover any of his funds without further public pressure.

“Clearly, it looks like if me no



SSL offices in Kingston

apply some pressure or do something or start make whole heap o’ questions being asked, me nah go get back nutten,” Bolt said in an appearance on the podcast The Fix. A government-appointed temporary manager confirmed that Bolt’s company, Welljen, suffered a loss of US\$6.2 million (approximately J\$950 million) due to the fraud.

At the center of the criminal investigation is Jean Ann Panton, the former client relations manager at SSL, who has been charged with orchestrating the

fraud. Panton faces a 22-count indictment, including charges of forgery, larceny as a servant, and engaging in transactions involving criminal property. She is set to stand trial in May 2026 but has recanted a previous confession and denied any involvement in the crime.

Public interest in the case remains high, with many individuals seeking redress for their financial losses. Among those speaking out is former Jamaican Prime Minister PJ Patterson, who recently warned the Financial Services

Commission (FSC) to prepare a “top-class legal team” to defend against potential lawsuits from SSL investors. Patterson also questioned whether the FSC had failed in its duty to prevent the fraud, suggesting that the agency could be exposed to civil action for its role in the scandal.

The SSL fraud case continues to unfold, and as the compensation process moves forward, clients are hopeful that they will see further restitution for their losses.

Barbados tops list of most expensive destinations

If you’re planning a Caribbean getaway in 2025, you might want to take a closer look at your travel budget. A new global ranking from HelloSafe, a price comparison site, has placed three Caribbean nations at the very top of its list of the world’s most expensive travel destinations for the year – with Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis claiming the top three spots.

According to HelloSafe’s comprehensive study, Barbados emerged as the most expensive country for tourists, with an average daily budget of £264 (approx. USD \$335) per person. The report highlights the island’s luxury appeal – from its pristine beaches and upscale resorts to fine dining and high-end excursions – as key reasons for the high price tag.

Antigua and Barbuda isn’t far behind, taking second place with an average spend of £248 (approx. USD \$315), followed by Saint Kitts and Nevis at £217 (approx. USD \$275). Grenada also made the top five, coming in just behind the Maldives, which ranked fourth globally.

HelloSafe attributes the Caribbean’s dominance on the list to its “high-quality tourism accommodation sector,” which includes world-class resorts, boutique villas, and all-inclusive experiences that tend to come with premium prices. The region’s focus on upscale hospitality, paired with the often-limited avail-



Barbados boasts luxury appeal

ability of budget options, contributes significantly to the higher daily costs for visitors.

The study evaluated the average daily expenditure of travelers in 131 countries, taking into account four main categories: accommodation, food, local transport, and tourist activities. Notably, the cost of

getting to each destination – such as international airfare – was not included in the analysis.

To ensure accuracy, HelloSafe used a dual-method approach. Its in-house AI engine analyzed thousands of listings for accommodations, restaurants, and transport options in each country. At the same time, it incorporated real-world data from platforms like Numbeo and Budget My Trip, which aggregate on-the-ground spending reports from travelers worldwide.

The rest of the top 10 includes a mix of luxury-friendly destinations such as the Maldives, Switzerland, and the UAE. Other Caribbean nations like the Bahamas and Puerto Rico are included in the top 15.

Here’s the full list of the most expensive countries to travel to in 2025, according to HelloSafe:

- Barbados
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Maldives
- Grenada
- Switzerland
- United States
- Micronesia
- Greenland
- United Arab Emirates

Former Jamaican MP fined for Integrity Commission breach

Former Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister Leslie Campbell has been fined \$400,000 for failing to comply with a request from the Integrity Commission (IC) regarding his statutory declarations.

The fine, imposed by Senior Parish Judge Paula Blake-Powell in the Kingston and St Andrew Parish Court on Friday, has already been paid by the former lawmaker. Campbell, an attorney by profession, was found guilty in December 2023 following a trial into breaches of the Parliament (Integrity of Members) Act and the Integrity Commission Act.

The charges stemmed from Campbell's failure to provide additional information about his assets and income, which the IC requested after he filed his statutory declarations while serving as Member of Parliament for North East St Catherine between 2016 and 2020.

Campbell, who later served as a Government Senator from September 2020 to May 2023, denied the allegations during the trial, insisting that the Commission had misplaced the documents he submitted. Despite this defense, Judge Blake-Powell found him guilty and gave him 90 days to comply fully with the IC's request.

In determining the sentence, the judge took into account that Leslie Campbell had no previous convictions.

The Integrity Commission's Director of Investigations, Kevon Stephenson, reported in 2023 that



Former Jamaica Labour Party MP and Cabinet Minister Leslie Campbell

Campbell had been made aware of the Commission's requests but failed to respond appropriately. The IC's Director of Corruption Prosecution, Keisha Prince-Kameka, later ruled that Campbell should be prosecuted for breaching Section 15(1)(C) of the Parliamentary

Integrity of Members Act and Section 43(1)(B) of the Integrity Commission Act.

In a June 2023 press release, Campbell's attorneys said he was shocked by the Commission's decision to press charges and called for an ur-

gent review. His legal team also maintained that one of the pieces of information repeatedly requested — the surrender value of a Guardian Life Care Plus insurance policy — was irrelevant, as the policy had no surrender value.

Concern grows as Canadian goes missing in T&T

CONCERNS are growing for a 57-year-old man who has been missing for over a month in south Trinidad.

Canadian citizen Marlon Henwood, also called "Yellowman," from Logie Street in Siparia, was last seen on March 1.

Despite ongoing searches and public appeal, he has not been seen since.

Henwood has mental-health challenges, and his family remain deeply worried, particularly given his condition and his need for medication.

"There is still no word or sign of him anywhere. He does not have a cell phone, so I know it is harder to track him. We do not know if he is dead or alive. We want closure," his brother Sherwin Henwood told Newsday by phone on April 6.

"People do not just vanish in thin air like that. There must be a logical explanation for his disappearance. I will be travelling to Trinidad to drive around the country to try to find him myself."

Sherwin, who lives in Canada, recounted that on March 1, his brother was attacked and beaten on High Street in Siparia.

Henwood was taken to the Siparia District Health Facility before being transferred to the San Fernando General Hospital for further treatment.

The family was notified of the incident on March 2, and his mother, accompanied by other relatives, immediately went to the hospital.



Marlon Henwood: missing

However, they were told that Henwood had been discharged and already left.

Sherwin expressed confusion and concern over the hospital's handling of the situation, saying his brother was discharged without the family's knowledge and considering Henwood is an outpatient of the hospital's psychiatric ward.

People claimed to have spotted him at King's Wharf, San Fernando, and walking in La Romaine asking for money.

Siparia and San Fernando police confirmed that a relative filed a missing person's report.

The police did not have any leads.

"The Canadian police are in contact with local authorities as well as Interpol (International Criminal Police Organisation). We just want to find my brother," Sherwin added.

Anyone with information about Henwood's whereabouts can call the Siparia police station at 649-2333, the San Fernando Police Station at 652-1771, the police emergency numbers 999, 555, 911 or Crime Stoppers at 800-TIPS (8477).





Dr Jerome Teelucksingh: UWI historian and economist

Should Caribbean be worried about intervention with Trump's policies?

US President Donald Trump's recent statements of annexing Greenland, reclaiming the Panama Canal and referencing Canada as the US's 51st state raised questions of sovereignty and independence once again.

In the Caribbean, some questioned what this could mean for former European colonies.

University of the West Indies (UWI) historian Dr Jerome Teelucksingh and economist and former minister of foreign affairs Winston Dookeran spoke to the issue and how the region and Trinidad and Tobago should best respond.

When Teelucksingh heard of Trump's intentions for Greenland and the Panama Canal it reminded him of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine.

Former US president James Monroe articulated its four basic points: the US would not interfere in Europe's internal affairs or wars; the US recognised and would not interfere with existing colonies and dependencies in the western hemisphere; the hemisphere was closed to future colonisation and any attempt by a European power to oppress or control any nation in the western hemisphere would be viewed as an act of aggression against the US.

In a recent phone interview, Teelucksingh said Trump's statements were a "backward step" in US foreign policy.

But this was not the only regressive step Teelucksingh noticed.

The tense political situation existing between Venezuela and the US also reminded him of another piece of 20th century US foreign policy: dollar

diplomacy.

It was the brainchild of US president William Howard Taft and his secretary of state Philander C Knox, "to ensure the financial stability of a region while protecting and extending US commercial and financial interests there," Britannica.com said.

Answers to how the region should address this starts with Caricom, Teelucksingh said.

"We need to ensure all Caribbean governments, in a collective way, deal with this and I think this is very relevant. It has to be dealt with this year and cannot be delayed to 2026 or 2027.

"We have to examine what would be the impact on taxes for us and the higher cost of goods, Caribbean security."

In 2024, TT allocated \$6.9 billion to national security but much of that was spent on internal defence and crime suppression as opposed to a focus on external threats.

TT's crime problem made it "ripe" for invasion and sent a bad international message, Teelucksingh said.

He added that the US was helping TT with its coast guard and drug enforcement.

"We have to be very cautious that if Caribbean countries cannot handle their internal affairs properly, be it crime, poverty or unemployment, it makes them vulnerable for US intervention."

It was important for Caribbean countries to ensure sovereignty was maintained, he added.

"We need first-world countries to respect our independence and republicanism."

Caricom and the Caribbean Development Bank needed to work together to ensure regional defence budgets were increased and external threats neutralised or minimised, he said.

He added the region also collectively had to let the US know its boundaries.

Teelucksingh, however, sees these developments as a wake-up call for the region's countries and an opportunity to be free of "first-world ownership."

This presents a chance not only to protect existing independent countries but to assist others in gaining theirs.

He used Barbados' recent transition to republicanism. The country became a republic on November 30, 2021.

"That is a very good sign other Caribbean countries need to follow. Give up your European link, is it so hard to do that?" he asked.

He also suggested revisiting the idea of a Caribbean currency to give the region greater global power.

"Have one Caribbean currency so that we, now, would be a major player in the world. It is difficult to have a small-island developing state with a budget but if we have a Caribbean currency we would be as strong as the yen, as the pound.

"That idea that was floated in the last century, it now has to be put back on the front burner. We have to sit down and find out, 'How could the Caribbean have one currency where we could play a major role in the stock markets of the world, where we could now deal with our defence because our currency is strong.'"

While there was Caricom, countries

were not on the "same page" or "singing from the same book" because they have different currencies, he said.

Teelucksingh added that neutrality was also a major tool in dealing with the shifting geopolitics.

"Sometimes, economists and politicians think we need to take a stance. Are we pro-Trump, are we anti-US, are we pro-Venezuela?"

"Neutrality is a very important political position in this game of chess. If we are not neutral we could be targeted by a country that is against one of our allies."

Now more than ever, Caribbean countries need to be careful in developing global alliances, Teelucksingh said.

Dookeran said the world was not only facing a period of uncertainty but also unpredictability given the new global political developments.

However, TT and the Caribbean should not panic, he added.

"Every time a statement is made particularly by US president Donald Trump, he keeps attacking and backtracking and forward tracking and backtracking.

"We are not too sure those things would ever see the light of day. We must be cautious against jumping to conclusions until there is something specific."

He suggested a hands-on approach be taken to address threats to sovereignty.

"We need to have hands-on monitoring to focus on all the different ideas on the global agenda led largely by the US," he said.

TT had to be prepared if anything came to pass, Dookeran said.

Sexual harassment claims in Women's World Cup 'scary'

PARENTS of a West Indies Under-19 women's cricketer have described claims of sexual harassment in the 2020 West Indies women's World Cup team as scary.

In an interview with Newsday on April 7, the parents say they continuously talk to their daughter to encourage her to speak up about anything.

In a Starcom Network interview, former West Indies women's manager Evril "Betty" Lewis, spoke about the 2020 World Cup incident in Australia. She said the situation was so serious that she brought the player into her room in an effort for her to feel safer.

"I had a scenario where one of the players was traumatised and I had to bring her into the manager's room to see if I could get her settled...and try to get herself in that mindset for the tournament."

The West Indies Players' Association (WIPA) and Cricket West Indies (CWI), in a joint statement on March 21, said they are aware of the allegations and will review safeguarding policies.

"Both organisations take such matters seriously and remain fully committed to ensuring a safe, professional, and supportive environment for all players and staff.

"In light of this, WIPA and CWI will convene to review all aspects of athlete safeguarding within West Indies cricket. This joint effort reflects our commitment to upholding the highest standards of player welfare and ensuring that all safeguarding policies remain robust and effective."

Asked how they felt hearing the allegations, the parents said, "(When you) hear those things, it's frightening."



CWI president Dr Kishore Shallow

As a regional cricketer, even at the junior level, travelling to different countries for tournaments is part of the job.

However, the parents said regular updates from their daughter helps them feel more comfortable. "We keep talking to her and we try to tell her once anything (goes wrong), we are always there – a phone call away. You could always call us."

The parents said they feel satisfied with the measures put in place by CWI to ensure the safety of women's players, such as the single-room occupancy rule when on tour, which was introduced in 2023. The policy brought the women on par with the men's team.

They were also impressed that when their daughter represented her national team strict protocols were put in place. If parents visit players on a tour they can only leave the hotel together

with the permission of the team manager.

"As a parent, you have to keep talking to your child...because she might be shy to tell somebody else (if something is wrong)."

Having coaches and managers you can trust is important in protecting players, the parents said.

"Once you have the right managers in place, it may not have that.

"In the night time, you don't know what will be playing off (though)."

In 2021, improved safeguarding measures were introduced by CWI for women's tours to strengthen security and well-being.

Additionally, CWI and WIPA are adhering to UNICEF's Children Protection Policy by not allowing minors to share rooms with adult players.

"WIPA and CWI remain committed to fostering a culture of respect, ac-

countability, and professionalism within West Indies cricket. There will be continuous evaluation of all aspects of policy to ensure every player deserves to feel safe, valued, and fully focused on their career," CWI and WIPA said.

Sports psychologist and former West Indies women's A player Dr Dawn-Marie Armstrong, who played for Barbados and Leeward Islands, in an interview with SportsMax recently, said she was disappointed in CWI's response to the issue and gave the regional body a failing grade on safeguarding. She said young players may turn away from the sport if issues are not addressed properly. She also spoke about her playing experience and feeling like an outcast.

Former West Indies players declined to comment on the issue.

Rovman Powell grateful for time as Windies T20 captain

ROVMAN Powell is thankful for his time as captain of the West Indies T20 team.

In a Cricket West Indies media release on March 31, it was announced that Powell was removed from his role after being at the helm for almost two years. His replacement Shai Hope is also the skipper of the One-Day International team.

On Instagram, Powell said, "West Indies cricket is of great importance to not just myself, but the people of the Caribbean. Leading West Indies was an honour and something I will forever be proud of. To the players, a SPECIAL thank you for the support from the very first day to the last day as your captain."

West Indies were able to move up the International Cricket Council rankings with Powell in charge from May 2023-March 2025. "During the duration of my captaincy, we have made incredible strides, moving from ninth to third in the world, something we can be tremendously proud of," Powell said. "To the maroon fans and all lovers of West Indies cricket, my family and I thank you all for the support."



Rovman Powell of the West Indies

From Despair to Hope...

Conquering Peripheral Neuropathy



"It's as though I'm stepping from razor blade to razor blade."

"It feels like my feet are under attack by fire ants."

"Like I'm walking on wet paint with rolled up socks."

And you're in this type of pain all the time.

"It's relentless, keeping you up at night and preventing you from doing even the most mundane tasks. Things I used to take for granted, like wearing shoes, going grocery shopping. Two of my three children were getting married last year, I wasn't even sure I was going to be able to attend their weddings," shares Norah W.

Norah was diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy in 2015, a degenerative condition affecting almost 5% of people over the age of 55.

"My doctor sat me down and said, 'Norah I'm sorry to tell you this, but you have peripheral neuropathy. I'm going to prescribe you gabapentin to manage the discomfort but overall, neuropathy is untreatable.'

My first thought was, 'we can cure cancer but you can't stop my feet from hurting?' It felt like a cruel joke."

While neuropathy can be caused by a number of things including diabetes and chemotherapy, over 23% of neuropathy cases are classified as idiopathic. In layman's terms, the cause is unknown. This was the case with Norah.

"Basically every question I had was met with an 'I don't know.' It was depressing to say the least."

Eventually, Norah was forced to quit her job because the numbness had started to set in and prevented her from driving.

Fortunately for Norah, she would attend a health fair featuring TLC Medicine and the work they were doing to treat peripheral neuropathy.

"I thought it had to be a sham," Norah shares. "After so many specialists told me there was no hope, here was this acupuncturist saying she had a 90% success rate in treating neuropathy! I just had to call and I can't begin to tell you how grateful I am that I did."

Teresa Lau, founder of TLC Medicine, says that cases like Norah's are incredibly common. "Almost all of my neuropathy patients have been told at one point or another that there is no hope. I like to think I specialize in offering hope."

...with TLC Medicine

To quote the New York Times, "Chinese medicine proves itself where Western medicine fails."

"Acupuncture has been treating complicated, chronic conditions such as neuropathy for thousands of years," shares Teresa.

"I start with a foundation based on this time-tested science and my decade of clinical experience. I then tailor treatments based on a number of factors. This includes the severity of your neuropathy, how long you've had it, whether or not there are any underlying factors, things of that nature," explains Teresa.

"It's because of these personalized treatment programs that we're seeing such incredible results!"

Four months after treatment, Norah is back at work and thriving.

"Being back at work isn't even the most exciting part," exclaims Norah. "Not only was I able to attend my son's wedding, but I could walk down the aisle! It was the most magical moment and I have Teresa to thank for it. To think I might've missed that." Norah held back tears.

If you've recently been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy, regardless of its cause, it's time to call Teresa and the staff at TLC Medicine.

Call (416) 461-0581 to schedule your very own comprehensive consultation or visit TLC-Medicine.ca to take advantage of their new patient offer, a \$40 consult (normally \$240).

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