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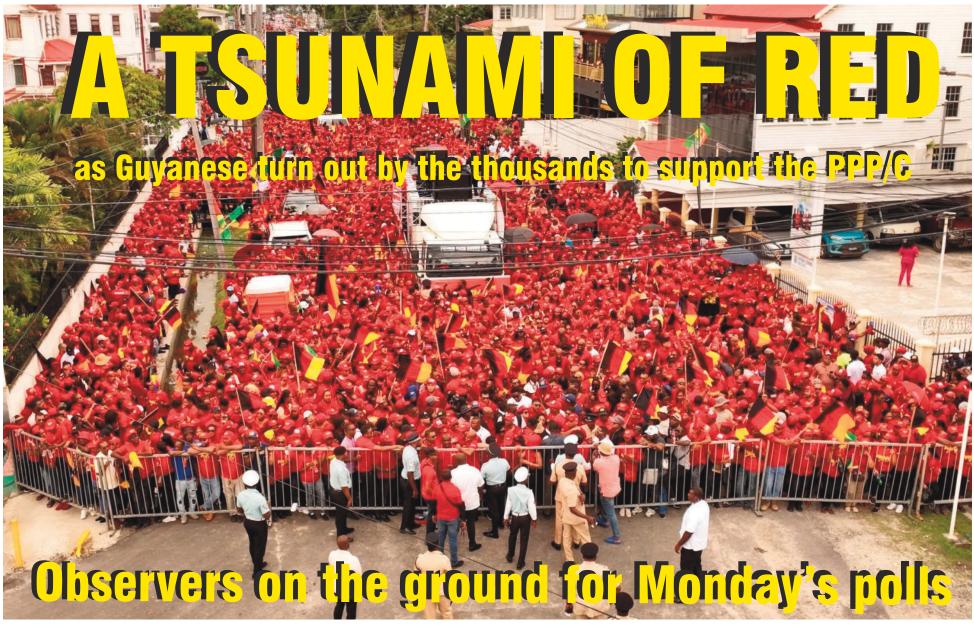
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In response to an invitation by the government of Guyana, the European Union has deployed an Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) for the General and Regional elections scheduled for 1 September 2025. The mission, led by Chief Observer Robert Biedroń, Member of the European Parliament from Poland, commenced with the arrival of eight core team experts in Georgetown on 23 July.

"By deploying this second full-scale EU election observation mission to Guyana, we reaffirm the EU's strong partnership with the country and our support for a transparent and credible electoral process. I would also like to thank the Government of Guyana for inviting the European Union to observe these important elections," said Chief Observer Robert Biedroń. "Elections are more than ballots they are the foundation of democracy. This is why we are here, with a strong team of observers, to assess the process with professionalism and impartiality."

The EU EOM will observe and analyse all aspects of the electoral process, including the election administration, legal framework, conduct of the campaign, involvement of civil society, and media coverage, including on digital and social media platforms. The mission will assess compliance with Guyana's domestic laws as well as regional and international commitments to democratic elections.

"As international election observers, we care only about the integrity of the process, not about any

particular party or candidate," stressed Chief Observer Biedroń. "Our mission is fully independent and impartial. All observers follow a strict code of conduct in line with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. We aim to contribute to transparency, public confidence, and peaceful participation during this important electoral process."

Meanwhile, an 11-person team has been deployed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General to observe the entire polling process, following an invitation from the Guyana Elections Commission.

Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group is Mrs Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, former Foreign Affairs of Tonga.

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## Strong, intelligent leadership needed as Guyana navigates rising US-Venezuela tensions

GUYANA and the Caribbean are facing rising military tensions between the United States and Venezuela.

President, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali warned that this conflict could destabilise the region and challenge the country's sovereignty.

In these defining moments, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces stressed that it is clear that only strong and experienced leadership can safely navigate the country through this turbulent period.

Speaking at the People's Progressive Party/Civic's (PPP/C) public meeting at Bush Lot on the West Coast Berbice, President Ali declared that this is not a time for weak leadership.

"We must be able to have leadership that is respected and trusted by our partners so that when we work with them, they know that they are working with people whom they can trust and respect," the head of state asserted.

He told the energised crowd that intelligence from Guyana's strategic partnerships has already exposed the presence of criminal enterprises and networks that are linked to destabilisation efforts in the region.

As Venezuela ramps up its aggression and the international community observes closely, President Ali said Guyana must be able to make decisions with maturity, respect, and credibility.

"These decisions are not easy.

They require experience, they require international presence, and our sovereignty, our national security, our existence, our livelihood and our country must be prepared to work in this new environment," he maintained.



President, Dr. Irfaan Ali engages supporters at the PPP/C's Bush Lot meeting

Beyond diplomatic manoeuvring, the situation demands unity. President Ali called on citizens to stand together, rejecting the "false prophets" of the opposition who, in the past, made empty promises to farmers, youth, and Indigenous communities.

While the opposition continues to spew reckless statements, he pointed out that the PPP/C Government is actively defending Guyana's territorial integrity and securing strong alliances with partners across the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia and even the Middle East.

President Ali stated that the PPP/C will not allow "demons to run loose" and destroy what the people have built over the past five years, a clear reference to the PPP/C's political rivals, who, combined, have nothing to offer the Guyanese population.

Instead, the president pledged the PPP/C Government's commitment to

confront these challenges head-on with courage, strategy, and with the support of allies who recognise Guyana's strong commitment to democracy.

Apart from this issue, the president informed supporters of the PPP/C's plans for Region Five and the nation, urging the crowd to ensure they vote for prosperity and reject the agents of destruction.

(DPI)

### All set for 'peaceful, lawful' elections

PRESIDENT, Dr. Irfaan Ali has expressed confidence in the integrity and preparedness of Guyana's Joint Services ahead of the September 1, 2025, polls, as he has been given all assurances by the various heads that they will ensure peace is maintained.

This was according to Head of State in an invited comment to the media on the sidelines of polling day activities for the Joint Services, on Friday.

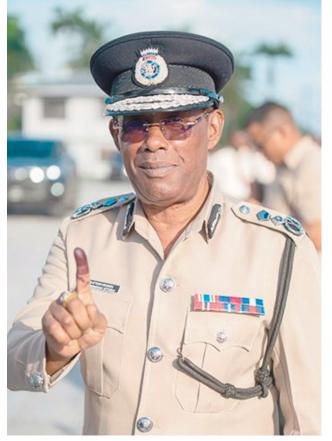
He said that the Joint Services have activated their mechanisms and, for a number of weeks now, have held joint meetings.

"They have assured me that they have every system in place, they have assured me that they have the equipment, the manpower, and they have a well-laid-out system to deal with any issues if they arise," President Ali said.

Meanwhile, Commissioner of Police Clifton Hicken, while speaking to members of the press after casting his ballot, stated that prior to elections, the Guyana Police Force has been working with other arms of the Joint Services in relation to training.

Additionally, he said that their units are preparing with continuous training, which is still ongoing.

"We're adequately prepared, remember Nomina-



Commissioner of Police, Clifton Hicken shows off proof that he voted early

tion Day we were quiet... we expected that this day would be quiet and similarly for the General and Regional Elections, we expect it to be quiet," he said.

He went on to reiterate that the police are going to be prepared and will be monitoring polling activities in all regions come September 1.

Meanwhile, President Ali also expressed confidence in the preparedness of the Guyana Elections Commission while fielding questions about possible efforts to derail the process.

He said, "I think some may have the belief or they may have the desire or the genesis of what they are attempting may be very well that, but I don't have any concerns of the stalling of elections."

He underscored that he is confident in the readiness of national institutions, particularly the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM).

He said: "I think our core systems are meant to deal with these issues... GECOM has made its position clear, and we are just concentrating now on these polls."

Over 10,000 members of Guyana's Disciplined Services were slated to cast their ballots yesterday, some 10 days ahead of the general public.

## Essequibo dispute in the homestretch for final, binding ICJ judgement

Venezuela on Monday filed its final written pleadings to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in Guyana's case over the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Tribunal land boundary award after decades of an unresolved controversy, paving the way for a final and binding judgement by mid-2026.

Venezuela's filing of its rejoinder to Guyana's reply in December 2024, "constitutes the final written pleading in the case", the Foreign Ministry said in a statement, indicating that the case was now slowly drawing to a close.

"In accordance with its standard procedures, the Court, upon returning from its summer recess, will schedule oral hearings on the merits of the case, to be followed by its deliberations and the issuance of its final judgment, which will be binding on the parties under international law," the foreign ministry added

The foreign ministry said the ICJ notified the Guyana government of Venezuela's filing of the rejoinder within the time-limit fixed by the Court in its Order of 14 June 2024.

"Guyana welcomes the filing of the rejoinder by Venezuela, which ensures that the Court will have before it all the factual and legal arguments of both Parties when it issues its final judgement, rendering it fully authoritative and in-



Meeting: Guyana's Irfaan Ali with Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro

contestable," the ministry added.

Guyana says it remains steadfastly committed to the peaceful resolution of this controversy in accordance with international law by the ICJ — the world's highest and most respected judicial authority.

While Venezuela has been participating in the ICJ case, politically the Nicolás Maduro-led administration has maintained that Venezuela does not recognise the ICJ's jurisdiction in the case. By the Venezuelan government's interpretation of the Geneva Agreement,

it believes that the only means of settling the border controversy is through bilateral negotiations.

Guyana maintains that the 1899 Award is final and binding, but Venezuela continues to lay claim to the 160,000 square kilometer region.

Over the years, Venezuela had intercepted or chased out seismic research ships and Guyanese fishing vessels from the Atlantic sea offshore Essequibo.

Earlier this year, a Venezuelan naval vessel had entered the Stabroek Block and communicated with production and exploration vessels, informing them that they were in Venezuelan waters not yet delimited with Guyana.

After four hours, the military vessel left without further incident.

Since then, the United States had sent a stern warning of tough action should Venezuela invade Guyana or attack ExxonMobil's assets in the Stabroek Block.

The United Kingdom and France have also expressed solidarity with Guyana.

### Venes turn out in droves in Maduro militia call

Supporters of the Venezuelan government turned out during the weekend to enroll in the country's militia following President Nicolas Maduro's order to mobilize 4.5 million members in response to the recent deployment by the US of warships to the Caribbean.

The military deployment, ordered by President Donald Trump, includes three guided-missile destroyers, an amphibious squadron, at least 4,500 sailors and some 22,000 marines, the Navy confirmed.

According to the Pentagon, the purpose of the heightened naval presence is to combat drug cartels in the region. The naval deployment is unfolding against the backdrop of deepening US-Venezuela tensions as the US Justice Department recently doubled its reward to \$50 million for information leading to Maduro's arrest, having accused him of being one of the world's largest drug traffickers.

In response, Maduro last week announced the deployment of 4.5 million militiamen across the country. He has urged people to participate in the mass registration, calling the US naval oper-



Venezuelans are responding to Maduro's order to join the militia

ations an "unacceptable provocation."

"We will defend our seas, our skies, and our lands," he said, referring to any incursion.

Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado has claimed that "very few high-ranking military officers are supporting Maduro."

Some Caribbean governments have been speaking of the mission. The government of Trinidad and Tobago has weighed in on the US deployment, stating that it gives its "full support" to the presence of "American military assets" aimed at dismantling drug cartels.

"Trinidad and Tobago has always had good relations with the Venezuelan people, and that will continue," Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar said in a statement.

"However, I want to make it very clear that if the Maduro regime launches any attack against the Guyanese people or invades Guyanese territory and a request is made by the American government for access to Trinidadian territory to defend the people of Guyana, my government will unflinchingly provide them that access."

Guyana and Venezuela have been engaged in a border dispute over the oilrich Essequibo region.

On Friday, Guyana said the government is "committed to working with our bilateral partners to find meaningful solutions and will support regional and global initiatives aimed at dismantling criminal networks to safeguard our shared security."

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#### **EDITORIAL & OPINIONS**

### One Guyana, One Vote

It goes without saying that race has no place in elections anywhere in today's world.

The end result of voting based on race -- or religion or class, for that matter -- always results in bad government. We just have to look south of us today to see the result of this, where white Christian nationalists elected a government, determined to target brown and black people, now rule the roost.

In Guyana, which goes to the polls on Monday September 1, there have been attempts by some parties to revive the age-old trend of tribal politics.

In some quarters, voters are being told to vote by race to ensure they're well represented in government. But we all know how that story ends. One just has to look at Guyana's history to understand why tribal politics have failed miserably in the past.

Indeed, we dare say that Guyana has only truly progressed when it shrugged off that harness and moved forward.

Fortunately, two scenarios exist today that should prevent that ugly trend from impacting the result of Monday's vote.

One is that a new generation of

voters has moved past the tribal politics of their parents and grandparents, and now, as they are more educated, they are more likely to choose a government based on performance than race.

The second is that the incumbent government has, over the past term, adopted a One Guyana stance, making sure all Guyanese, whatever their ethnicity, benefit from the newfound oil wealth that has found its way into their pockets.

Indeed, the PPP/C Government of Dr Irfaan Ali has done nothing but reach out to the entire population since taking office. It has taken extra care to put tribal politics into the history books, and to make the party and government as inclusive as possible.

If one is to look at all the policies of the Ali government fairly, it will become apparent that every move it has made has followed its core One Guyana strategy.

And this means that voters in Guyana must not allow themselves to be fooled by others who are trying to raise the spectre of race into the campaign. Instead, they must use only one marker to judge the party they would like to lead them into the next five

years: performance.

And on that, the PPP/C cannot be beaten. The party has not just shown that "performance beats ole talk" but has lived it via every strategy over the last five years.

One just has to look around Guyana today and compare it to the Guyana the other main party left five years ago to see for themselves.

It is almost as though it is two different countries. In fact, it is incredible that a government has done so much in just five short years.

Every facet of life in Guyana has been positively impacted by the Ali government, from social needs to infrastructure development to the environment and agriculture, to economic management.

Every Guyanese now has the security of knowing they will have a home, that their children will have the best education possible, that they can now enjoy world-class health care at brand new hospitals built in every region.

They know that the Guyanese economy is now one of the best performing in the world, under the astute management of Dr Ali, which means that their jobs and income potential are

secured well into the future.

They also know that the incumbent government has taken the steps necessary to ensure that all of the country's eggs are not in one basket, but it has diversified the economy to make sure that Guyana will survive comfortably well into the future because of the development of other earning sectors, such as agriculture and tourism.

Because of Dr Ali and his team, Guyanese are assured that they will continue to enjoy comfortable lifestyles even when the oil runs out.

That is the kind of performance that beats ole talk.

And that is what this coming election must be all about.

Don't let those who are desperate to get into power bring up the spectre of race into this election. That bogeyman is dead, at least when coming to the politics of the PPP/C.

So please, go out and vote, and use it as an opportunity to send a message to those who will try to drag you back into the past that you're beyond that and above it.

You want performance. And only the PPP/C can deliver it.

#### Time for some relics to step aside

Dear Editor,

EVERY day, Guyana's public discourse is crowded out by a group of self-styled commentators who, truth be told, would serve the nation better as museum pieces than as thought leaders.

The familiar roll call—Lalbachan Chris Ram, GHK Lall, Anand Goolsarran, Kenrick Hunte, Charles Sugrim, Lincoln Lewis, Henry Jeffrey, David Hinds, Vishnu Panday, among others—echoes endlessly across newspapers and airwaves.

Each of these individuals has had ample opportunity, in various roles, to make a meaningful contribution to Guyana's development. Yet their résumés reveal little of enduring value.

What binds them is not vision but vitriol; not substance but cynicism. They cast stones at everything under the sun, while clinging stubbornly to

the comfort of outdated ideas.

It is long past time they shifted gears. Instead of monopolising the public square with tired rhetoric, they could offer genuine value as mentors—passing wisdom, if any remains, to younger professionals who are ready to lead.

The generational baton must pass—not because of age, but because a refusal to evolve suffocates progress.

Look instead at the PPP/C's slate of candidates—brimming with some of the nation's finest young professionals in their 20s and 30s. Consider President Irfaan Ali: Still among the youngest leaders in Guyana's history, whose dynamism, accessibility, and drive have redefined the tone of national leadership.

President Ali's energy is second to none. And behind him stands a team equally vibrant, equally competent, equally determined to build the Guyana of tomorrow.

Of course, the critics will argue that this logic should also apply to Bharrat Jagdeo, who has walked the corridors of power for decades.

Jagdeo is no relic. He is a political phenomenon; one of the most successful and visionary leaders Guyana has produced. Unlike those mired in the rut of antiquated thinking, Jagdeo has evolved into a contemporary statesman: Adapting with the times, mastering the complexities of a changing global order, and leaving behind both leadership and legacy.

The same distinction applies to the late Dr. Cheddi B. Jagan, who remained an enduring force for progress until his last breath. And to be fair, L.F.S. Burnham and Desmond Hoyte also earned that recognition. Both men served

Guyana at the highest levels of leadership, dedicating their lives to public service. Both died in office—Hoyte while serving as Opposition Leader. Whatever one's political persuasion, it would be dishonest to dismiss them as relics. They were active, evolving leaders who met their end still in the arena.

This is the crucial distinction: Not all long-serving leaders are fossils; only those who refuse to evolve deserve that title. Guyana's future cannot be driven by those staring perpetually into the rearview mirror. It demands leaders who grasp where we are, envision where we are going, and chart a path to get us there.

Relics belong in museums. Leaders belong in the arena.

Yours truly, Joel Bhagwandin



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## A temperature reversal is flipping the summer switch in Canada

By Denise Singh

LJI REPORTER

Meteorological summer may be winding down, but the heat isn't done with Canada just yet.

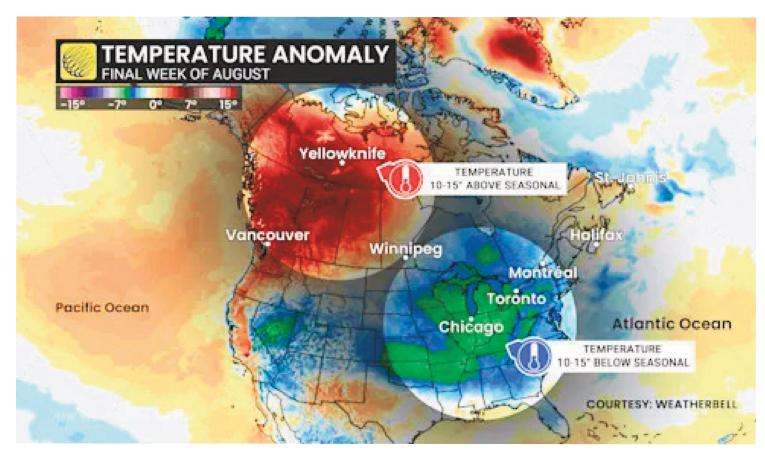
A sharp dip in the jet stream is driving an unusual temperature split across the country.

While this shift could bring relief to wildfire-ravaged regions, it also raises concerns for areas that have yet to experience peak fire activity.

On the eastern side of the jet stream, cooler air has settled over Eastern Canada and much of the United States after a scorching summer.

As August closes, temperatures across the Eastern U.S. and the Great Lakes are running 10 to 15 degrees below seasonal norms, delivering an early taste of fall.

In Ontario, where temperatures haven't dipped below 20°C since mid-June, much of the province will struggle to reach that mark this week as



An unusual temperature shift has caused a split across the country

another surge of cold, dry air arrives Friday.

In contrast, Western and Northern Canada are bracing for a late-summer

heat wave.

A strong ridge of high pressure has built over the region, funnelling hot, dry air northward and pushing temperatures 10 to 15 degrees above average—hotter, in fact, than much of the Deep South in the U.S.

### Self defence comes with limits, says lawyer

By Denise Singh

LJI REPORTER

Canadians are permitted to defend themselves during a home invasion, but those rights come with limits, says a Toronto criminal lawyer.

Kim Schofield told a Toronto Television show that self-defence under Canadian law is often misunderstood.

"You can do anything that's reasonable in the circumstances, not anything you want," she explained.

"It really is context-based."

Unlike U.S. "Castle Laws," which grant broad protections to homeowners, Canada's Criminal Code permits the use of force only if it is "reasonable" and "proportionate."

"For example, if the person starts to run away, can you pursue and stab them repeatedly in the back? The answer is no," Schofield said. "There's a point where self-defence ends and criminal liability begins. You can't just get mad—there's no vigilante justice."

Her comments follow a violent home invasion in Lindsay, ON., that left one man seriously injured and another facing charges.

Jeremy McDonald has been charged with aggravated assault and assault with a weapon after police allege he used a knife against Michael Kyle Breen, who had broken into his apartment.

Breen, who was airlifted to a

Toronto hospital, faces charges of break and enter, theft, and possession of a weapon.

At the time of the incident, he was also wanted on an outstanding warrant.

The case has sparked public debate after Ontario Premier Doug Ford criticized the charges against McDonald, calling the situation evidence of a "broken system."

"This criminal that is wanted by the police breaks into this guy's house, this guy gives him a beating, and this guy gets charged," Ford said. "Something is broken."

McDonald is scheduled to appear in court on Sept. 25. Breen remains in custody and will face a bail hearing once released from hospital.

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Kawartha Lakes police charged a homeowner after intruder was assaulted



## Trump-Putin Dialogue a Success

#### By Former Guyana President Donald Ramotar

Since the announcement of the meeting between Presidents Trump and Putin was announced, the establishment media in the United States and Western Europe went into a frenzy. The media in those countries are reflecting the views of those that pushed Ukraine into this war. They wanted to fight Russia to the last Ukrainian.

Immediately after the meeting the media once again opened some serious slanders against President Trump. Saying things such as he (President Trump) was out maneuvered, outsmarted by President Putin. This was a deliberate attempt to disparage President Trump.

The fact is that the meeting was a success. The main outcome was that the parties should push for a lasting agreement to end the war and restore peace instead of working for a "ceasefire", which could be easily broken.

Russia's concern is that a ceasefire can prolong the war. It fears that Ukraine and its European backers will use the period of a ceasefire to rearm and recruit and train more soldiers to resume the war.

The Russians have reasons to believe that that is the plan. Recall that eight years before the Ukraine/Russia war, the US and the EU had agreed to a process which would have seen some autonomy be given to the regions in Ukraine where the population was predominantly Russian. This agreement was sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council, while Germany and France took the responsibility to see that it was implemented.

Later on, the then Chancellor of Germany, Ms. Merkel and the then President of France Mr. Francios Hollande admitted that it was just a rouse to give NATO more time to arm Ukraine.

Recall too, that days after the Russian Special military operation began, Russia and Ukraine had come to an agreement to implement the Minsk agreement. Before it could have been



Trump and Putin met in Alaska

signed the former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson flew to Kyiv and stopped Zelensky from signing the agreement with the promise of NATO'S help for Ukraine to defeat Russia.

Russia having had those experiences is not willing to put all their trust in a cease fire, instead they are saying that let's move to end the conflict in a definitive way.

Many people have been saying that Ukraine borders should not be changed even though they reneged on all the agreements that were reached. They are basing their arguments on the UN charter on sovereignty. However, they conveniently forget another important principle of the UN, that is "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination."

In the case of Ukraine at the time of the coup in 2014 Donetsk and Luhansk, two regions (Oblast) had broken away from the Ukraine and established themselves as independent countries since 2014. They took that drastic step because the regime in Ukraine had banned the use of their mother tongue, Russian, and began burning books written in Russian among other atrocities. Their national traditions were being trampled on, including their Orthodox church.

The Ukrainian regime then began a war against the two Oblasts. More than fourteen thousand Russia people mainly civilians were killed. Yet Russia tried to make peace and only recognised those as independent states in 2022, just before

they began their military operation. Therefore, the talk of Russia wants more land has proven to be nonsense!

Moreover, before Russia accepted those areas as part of its territory, Referenda were held in which the population overwhelmingly voted to join the Russian Federation as the Russian people did earlier in Crimea.

These were all done in accordance with International Law. Therefore, all the talks by Western media and propagandists are useless and baseless.

If anyone believes that this was an anomaly, they should recall what happened in the former Yugoslavia in the late 1990s. When the US wanted to establish a military base in Kosovo they just broke it away from Serbia. No referendum was ever held.

The other issues that must be discussed to bring the conflict to an end relates to the security of Russia and Likraine

Recall that Russia had to deal with many broken promises from the collective West. The first was given in 1991 when Russia agreed (then the Soviet Union) to allow for the re-unification of Germany, the US and Germany, the two leading members of NATO promised that NATO would not move one inch eastward from Germany.

En passant, Britain, under Margaret Tacher was against the re-unification of Germany.

NATO broke that promise and

moved more than one thousand miles towards Russia. The whole idea was to encircle Russia with Military bases.

In regard to Ukraine and Georgia, Russia decided to put its feet down. Allowing them to join NATO with the possibility of putting missiles on its borders was totally unacceptable to Russia. Should that happen a missile fired from Ukraine or Georgia could hit Moscow in less than three minutes. Russia viewed this as an existential threat.

Ukraine joining NATO is in violation of another principle which the UN had agreed to, i.e. no country should increase its security at the expense of another.

History shows us how dangerous the violation of that principle could be. In 1962, the Soviet Union and the United States almost went to war when the Soviet Union installed missiles in Cuba. That was to protect Cuba on the one hand and on the other it was a response to US putting missiles in Turkey, on the border of the Soviet Union.

That was resolved when both countries withdrew the offensive weapons from Cuba and Turkey.

It is clear therefore that Ukraine's accession into NATO is unacceptable to Russia and a violation of an important international principle.

Presidents Trump and Putin have displayed remarkable wisdom and responsibility for the world when they seem to have agreed to proceed to direct peace negotiations and not just a ceasefire.

The hysteria of the media shows how war mongering European leaders and sections of the Ruling class in the US Congress and Senate really are. For the war mongers domination and profits are more important than people's lives.

President Trump needs all the support to resist the pressures that are being placed on him. It is hoped he will show his mettle in resisting the war lords.

It is also hoped he will find the strength to stop the Israeli Genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.





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## Put our booze back on Canadian shelves, US Liquor industry urges

By Denise Singh

LJI REPORTER

The Canadian government's decision to lift retaliatory tariffs on goods covered by the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) is being welcomed by the U.S. liquor industry, though the sector says the real test will be whether American spirits return to Canadian shelves.

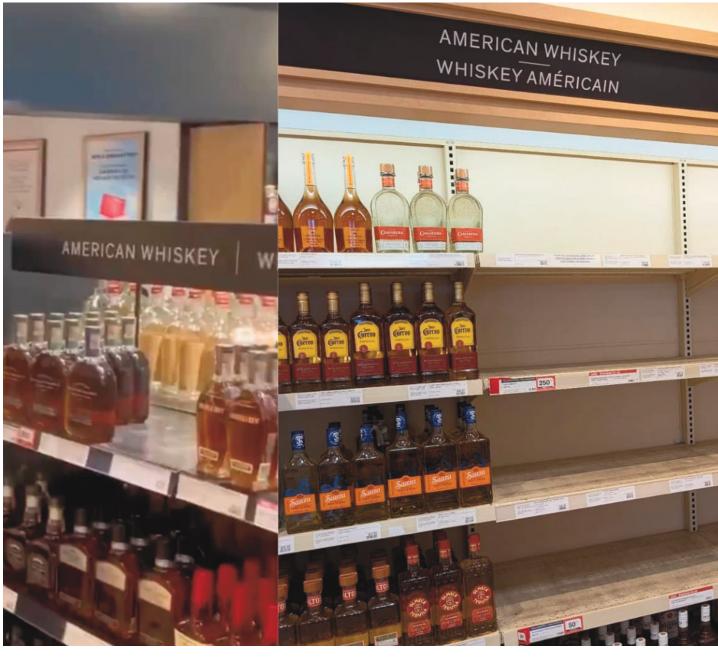
"This is a very positive sign, but until all provinces put American spirits back on their shelves it won't have much of an impact," the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States said in a statement following Prime Minister Mark Carney's announcement Friday that most counter-tariffs on U.S. goods would be removed.

In March, Canadian provinces and territories pulled U.S. alcohol products from government-run liquor stores in response to tariffs imposed by then-U.S. President Donald Trump.

Six months later, American-made spirits remain absent from shelves in Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, Atlantic Canada and the northern territories.

"The unfortunate decision to remove American spirits from Canadian retail shelves is not only harming U.S. distillers, but it's also needlessly reducing revenues for the provinces, and placing unnecessary burdens on Canadian consumers and hospitality businesses," the council said.

Industry data underscores the fall-



No US booze here — Canadian liquor store shows empty shelves where US booze is normally displayed

out.

A joint report released last month by Spirits Canada and the Distilled Spirits Council showed that from March 5 to April 30, sales of U.S. spirits in Canada plunged 66.3 per cent compared with the same period a year earlier.

Over the same stretch, Canadianmade spirits dropped 6.3 per cent, while imports from other countries slid 8.2 per cent.

Overall, spirits sales in Canada fell 20 per cent in March, though sales of Canadian and other imported spirits recovered modestly in April, rising 3.6 and 3.7 per cent respectively. Those gains, however, failed to offset the sharp decline in American product sales.

—with files from Global News



## Lima Hospital 'quantum leap' in Guyana's health system

RESIDENTS of Region Two will no longer need to journey to Georgetown for advanced medical treatment, following the official commissioning of the \$6.6 billion state-of-the-art Lima Hospital on Friday afternoon.

The modern 75-bed facility, strategically located at Lima, Essequibo Coast, represents a major milestone in the transformation of Guyana's healthcare system.

It is one of six new hospitals being built nationwide to expand access to specialised services.

Offering an extensive range of care. including Internal Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Cardiology, Orthopaedics, Mental Health, and Psychiatry, the hospital is also equipped with a 24/7 Emergency Department, Inpatient and Outpatient care, advanced laboratory and imaging services, dental and optical units, and modern operating theatres.

Delivering the feature address, President Dr. Irfaan Ali said the new hospital symbolises a "quantum leap in healthcare" and is designed to revolutionise medical services in Region Two.

To guarantee high standards, the hospital will soon have a dedicated Quality Assurance Unit, while incentives will be offered to healthcare workers.

President Ali further highlighted that the facility includes a 12-chair dialysis unit, digitised patient records, CT scans, and telemedicine services to ensure timely and efficient care.



The new Crown Hotel

## **US\$5M Crown Hotel opens at Providence**

GUYANA'S already bustling tourism and hospitality industry now has a new addition with the introduction of the Crown Guyana Hotel Inc at Plantation Providence on the East Bank of Demerara.

Spearheaded by managing director, Guyanese businessman and entrepreneur Rajendra Maye, the state-of-the-art facility was opened on Friday evening with a great reception and public support. The US\$5 million investment, designed to offer modern amenities and comfort, is expected to contribute significantly to the city's accommodation offerings and to support growing tourism demand.

The hotel features 62 modern and luxurious rooms, eight executive suites, a fine dining restaurant, and outdoor pool facilities complete with a swim-up bar and lounge.

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Oneidge Walrond, said with the establishment's 70 rooms in total, the Crown Hotel enriches Guyana's hospitality landscape and moves the country closer to the national target of 2,000 new rooms by the end of 2025.

"This investment is a strong vote of confidence in the PPP/C Government, the resilience of Guyana's economy, and the rapid growth of our tourism sector," Walrond said.

She added that similar investments will continue with a new aircraft terminal set to be commissioned soon and a number of other hotels slated to take shape in the coming months.

Delivering remarks at the hotel's opening ceremony, Minister Walrond described the investment as clear evidence of Guyana's expanding tourism sector and overall economic growth. She noted that as Guyana continues to position itself as a leading destination, the government remains focused on creating the right environment for investors.

"As a people's representative of the government, we have always supported and provided the environment for investors to feel that their investment is less risky than in other places," Walrond emphasised. "We have put in programmes and policies and incentives for your investment to thrive," she stated.

The minister explained that the establishment of hotels such as Crown Guyana represents confidence in the government's vision to transform the country's tourism sector. Policies, incentives, and a stable environment have been put in place to encourage both local and international investors to commit to projects of this scale.

According to the minister, Crown Guyana is part of a larger national push to expand the availability of high-quality accommodation. She recalled that just a few years ago, Guyana struggled with limited room capacity. Today, however, the country is well on its way to adding more than 2,000 new rooms, including 12 international brand hotels expected to open between this year and next.

"Between his year and next year, we're going to have 12 international brand-new hotels coming to Guyana," Minister Walrond said. "Your rooms are added to the stock of high-quality rooms that we need. This mid-tier, this level of room stock is much needed. Our tourism sector is booming. Every single year, we have these great, great rooms."

Walrond also highlighted the government's broader tourism development strategy, which includes new international routes and expanded airport facilities. She announced that the second terminal at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport will soon be commissioned, allowing Guyana to welcome larger aircraft and more visitors.

"When you land into that terminal, you will feel that you are landing into the rainforest to showcase our beautiful biodiversity and ecosystem," the minister said, underscoring the government's aim to align infrastructure development with Guyana's natural identity.

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## Higher paying jobs on the way as Guyana's workforce to be transformed

HIGHER-paying jobs are one of the central focuses within the government's blueprint for the next term, as there will be more emphasis on skilled employment, especially in the areas of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Information Technology (IT).

The plan commits to putting more money into the pockets of citizens, and this includes better wages and new opportunities in the public and private sectors, General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and Guyana's Vice President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, has outlined.

During a public meeting in Diamond, East Bank Demerara (EBD) on Thursday last, the Vice President framed the government's five-year development plan as evidence of the PPP/C's long-term planning and commitment to transforming communities and lifting the quality of life for all.

In its manifesto, the PPP/C has promised to maintain policies that encourage private investment, job creation, and income generation, and continue to invest heavily in training, so that persons are equipped to take up the good quality jobs being created.

Jobs generate income, reduce poverty, lower crime rates, and foster a sense of purpose and community whilst bridging inequality gaps by providing opportunities to marginalised groups, such as youths, women, and rural communities.

Since assuming office, the PPP/C has created more than 50,000 jobs, and according to Dr. Jagdeo, this momentum will continue.



Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo

He said: "We have to create betterpaying jobs, higher wages for the public service and those who work in the private sector. And we are going to do that, and we're going to create jobs that require more skilled people, jobs in information technology, in the use of AI to improve our effectiveness, that is artificial intelligence, in every area we plan, also a digital society, so that your children, when they finish school, they can get jobs in that society, but FinTech will allow us to have easier access to banking

"So that will happen in the next term. If we get better jobs, we want people to own more things, and that's why anyone who has not received a house lot as yet will get a house lot. We are going to give people a grant to assist them to build and improve their homes."

A \$100 billion boost to households and building 40,000 new homes are also a part of the plan, and according to the Vice President, they are designed to ease household burdens and expand opportunities nationwide.

"With the increase in public assistance, with the help to the pensioners and to the \$200,000 per child, that will amount to nearly \$100 billion per year in the pockets of our pensioners, public assistance and the children, \$100 billion per year, which is US \$500 million," he explained.

As he spoke in Diamond Dr. Jagdeo reminded citizens of when he was President and his government developed the first house in the area. Despite still reeling from the economic devastation that

the People's National Congress (PNC) left the nation in, the PPP/C administration breathed "economic life" into the EBD.

"Today, this is a vibrant area powerhouse," he said.

From 2020-2025, the entire East Bank Corridor has become a construction hub, and as the Vice President pointed out, thousands of jobs have been created as a result.

The Vice President stated that a number of infrastructure projects were planned by the PPP/C some two decades ago, but because of the financial constraints, these plans were not carried out at the time.

However, today, Guyanese have seen several of these projects take manifestation, such as the Heroes Highway and the new high-span Demerara River Bridge.

These projects are changing the life of the country, Dr. Jagdeo affirmed.

He further stated: "We didn't have a single plan for any of the hospitals that we built, and now 12 of them are also under construction because we put together the plans, we mobilised the funds, we got the contracts going, and this happened."

In June, the new Diamond Regional Hospital was commissioned by President, Dr. Irfaan Ali and is designed to meet international standards and outfitted with 24-hour emergency and laboratory services. The new hospital will see residents being able to access world-class health care with specialised services in internal medicine and surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology.

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:

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- 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.

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To find out more about World Guyanese Congress and our goals and priorities. Scan the QR code, or visit <a href="https://www.wgc-org.com">www.wgc-org.com</a>

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

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### 'We are the only viable option to take Guyana forward', AG tells supporters

"SUPPORT us because we have been created. delivered," People's Progressive Party (PPP) Executive Member and Attorney-General Anil Nandlall told East Coast residents on Monday evening, framing his party as the only viable contender in the upcoming elections that can continue to take Guyana on its transformational

During a public meeting at Enmore, he cited the construction of modern hospitals and schools, and the thousands of housing allocations and jobs that have

He used the opportunity to urge citizens to support a party that has consistently delivered results; that is the PPP/C.

"We don't want you to support us blindly. As I said, you are a conscious people, you must make a decision that you can defend anywhere, and you must support this party and be able to defend your support for this party... We don't want you to support us because of history, or because of tradition or because



Attorney General Anil Nandlall on the campaign trail

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of race, we want you to support us because we have delivered, and today, we are the only viable option to take this country forward," he said.

This statement by Nandlall is a stark difference to the comments that were mounted on the opposition's podium during its public meeting on Sunday in Plaisance, whereby one speaker said race voting is acceptable, before stroking the flames of ethnic polarisation.

Nandlall, while pointing to the PPP/C's track record of development, referenced the new highways, the modern Demerara River Bridge, 12 national hospitals, state-of-the art schools, and other projects and initiatives that have been created by his government.

He highlighted the \$12.4 billion Paediatric and Maternal Hospital being built at Ogle.

Already, Enmore has a spanking state-of-the art hospital which was commissioned by President Dr. Irfaan Ali in July. The facility is a significant step up from the polyclinic that had served the ECD communities for years.

Regarding housing, over 10,000 house lots have been distributed on the East Coast corridor, Nandlall said, while also underscoring the creation of new housing schemes.

In the coming years, residents living on the ECD will witness the sweeping transformation, as the corridor will be converted into one that delivers significant economic returns and employment opportunities, especially with the upcoming industrial park in Enmore expected to drive development, with over US\$500 million in investments already lined up.







Members of the media and disciplinary forces were allowed to cast their votes early for Monday's election

## **GECOM reports 83 per cent turnout for Disciplined Services vote**

ONE week before the polls, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) is reporting an 83 per cent voter turnout for the Disciplined Services, even as ballot discrepancies were detected in three districts.

Members of the Disciplined Services—comprising the Guyana Police Force (GPF), Guyana Defence Force (GDF), and Guyana Prison Service (GPS)—cast their ballots last Friday as part of early voting, ahead of Election Day scheduled for Monday, September 1, 2025.

The early voting of security personnel is intended to allow them to fulfil their electoral duties without disrupting the deployment of officers to polling stations on Elections Day.

A total of 10,481 personnel were listed to vote. The breakdown showed 2,575 of 3,106 eligible soldiers voted, along with 5,729 of the 6,909 police ranks, and 397 of the 466 prison officers.

The overall turnout is slightly higher than the 81.8 per cent recorded in 2020.

Speaking at Monday's press briefing, Chief Elections Officer Vishnu Persaud said the August 22 balloting was carried out in full compliance with the

law. He noted that while there were minor issues early on, nothing occurred that would undermine confidence in the electoral process.

But Persaud confirmed that two extra ballots were discovered in District Four's batch, while Districts Five and Ten each came up one short. "All ballots went out, and all came back in," the CEO clarified, dismissing any suggestion of missing votes.

He explained that the mix-up stemmed from how ballots were returned. Each was supposed to be placed in a district-marked inner envelope, but some were mistakenly sent back in the outer envelope, which cannot be used for counting because it would compromise secrecy.

"Disciplined Services ballots go out in an envelope with the name, identification number, and address of the collector. Inside that envelope is a smaller one labeled with the district in which the ballot is to be counted. The direction given to the Disciplined Services is to insert the ballot in the inner envelope, which is labeled only with the district," Persaud explained.

After reviewing the issue, Persaud said it appears that ballots meant for Dis-

tricts Five and Ten were accidentally placed with the set for District Four. According to him, a memorandum outlining the findings and recommendations will be sent to the seven-member Commission.

Persaud further confirmed that photographs of the ballots appeared Online while Disciplined Services members voted across the country last Friday.

Persaud told reporters that while the photographs are of actual ballots, GECOM has not been able to determine how, where, or when they were taken. He emphasised that the images do not compromise the integrity of the voting process.

The CEO said, "At the level of the Secretariat, we have operated at the highest and most optimal level to ensure compliance with statutory requirements, the policy decisions of the Commission, and internal best practices, in line with the expectations of stakeholders."

When asked about additional measures to prevent the use of mobile phones in polling stations, Persaud said GECOM has already restricted their use. The move, he emphasised, is intended to curb vote buying, and stop voters from photographing their ballots.

On the issue of vote buying, he explained: "It is considered illegal, and one can be prosecuted, imprisoned if found guilty, and fined \$65,000," Persaud explained. He said the restriction was tested during the Disciplined Services balloting, and it worked effectively.

"We have not received expressions from stakeholders that it did not work." He added: "We [GECOM] do not have the 'teeth' to force someone to comply with this provision," he said.

"We did consider using a receptacle for voters to place their phones in, but that would slow down the voting process." He described the current measure as "the most suitable".

When asked if GECOM would investigate the photographing of the ballot, Persaud remained cautious. "This is something I will undertake to interrogate to examine if we can go in that direction." On the placement of voting compartments, the Chief Elections Officer explained that the setup was designed so that the GECOM staff is not solely responsible for preventing voters from bringing phones into polling stations; stakeholders also share that responsibility.

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# Second terminal at CJIA a gateway to culture, life in Guyana: Ali

WITH travellers to and from Guyana increasing exponentially over the past few years, the sod was turned on Monday for a new terminal two at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Timehri, to further modernise and cater for additional traffic at the country's main international port.

At the sod turning ceremony, President Dr Irfaan Ali noted that it was not just a ceremony, but the occasion marked the beginning of a new vision for Guyana.

During his remarks, Dr Ali stated that if Guyana is to truly position tourism at the centre of its transformation, then this new terminal must tell the story of what embodies the country.

"The new terminal will tell the story of our culture, about life in Guyana. You'll be walking through a journey of our culture. You'll be celebrating who we are as Guyanese. You'll be experiencing nature, because that is what we have to build. We have to build something that represents the country and represents what we want to be known for," the Head of State said.

Against this backdrop, he noted that a lot of time and effort was invested in fine-tuning what is to be achieved with the new terminal, as it is not just a building but an experience and a story.

Looking ahead, President Ali stated that the port is currently a bustling one but will get busier, with hopes that Guyana will become a major hub.

"That is our vision to make this airport a major departure, an arrival point for visitors, for our country, and a major transit station for those going to South America, Africa and North and Central America," he added.

The new terminal will be constructed by BHM, a European firm in partnership with Manchester Airport Group, with work expected to begin early next year.

Construction on the 150,000 square-foot terminal will take approximately 18 months, even as the company will also cater to the reconfiguration of the existing international terminal.

British High Commissioner to Guyana, Jane Miller, disclosed that the company has worked in 25 countries across the world and has delivered to some 35 international airports.

The diplomat added that she was

WITH travellers to and from happy to facilitate having a high-quality and increasing exponentially over British company here to deliver someoust few years, the sod was turned thing special for Guyana.

Meanwhile, Minister of Public Works, Juan Edghill, stated that the addition of the new terminal takes the country into a new wave of development, as he added, "The world is coming to Guyana and Guyana is preparing for the world."

With this, he disclosed that there will be more concession areas, more space for added facilities and speedier access for persons arriving in the country.



Artist's impression of the new terminal Two at CJIA

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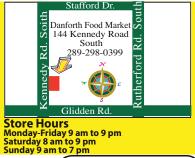
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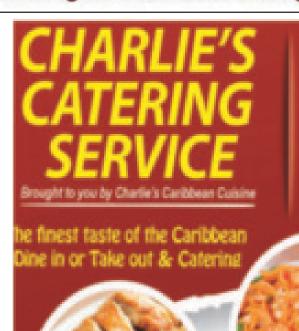
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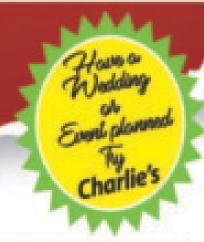


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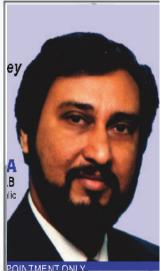
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# New Great Diamond to Buzz Bee Dam highway commissioned

COMMUTERS can now look forward to improved travel and reduced congestion, as President, Dr Irfaan Ali on Monday officially opened the new \$10.1 billion Great Diamond to Buzz Bee Dam highway.

At the commissioning ceremony, President Ali emphasised that the new road is more than just concrete and asphalt; it's a symbol of the government's strategic vision and commitment to improving the lives of all Guyanese.

"That is the difference a government makes when it governs with foresight, and we are not stopping here at Buzz Bee Dam. This road will not end at Great Diamond; we are extending it to Soesdyke."

Government also plans to connect the road to Linden.

The highway, part of a broader national infrastructural plan, is designed to ease traffic congestion, boost economic activities and open up previously inaccessible areas to

development. According to the President, road infrastructure is foundational to Guyana's transformation into a modern, connected, and prosperous nation.

"Unless we create a road transport system that removes burdens from citizens, we will never unlock the full potential of this country," he said, before underscoring the broader implications of infrastructural development, saying roads are essential to every sector of the economy. "Roads are not just for cars. They are arteries of development. They are veins that carry commerce, industry, agriculture and tourism. Without good roads, we cannot get produce from farm to market in time. Without good roads, workers cannot reach factories and offices on schedule. Without good roads, families cannot connect with each other easily without good roads. Without good roads we are stuck

The new road is expected to reduce travel time, increase property

value, and enhance productivity.

Meanwhile, Housing and Water Minister Collin Croal reminded those gathered that the new highway is part of a broader infrastructural transformation, with over 56.5 km of major roadways completed or underway.

These included the Eccles to Great Diamond interlink road, commissioned back in 2021; the Mandela Avenue to Eccles highway commissioned in 2022 and the Eccles to Great Diamond highway also commissioned in 2022. The Great Diamond extension four-lane highway, commonly known as the Heroes Highway was commissioned in 2023.

According to Minister Croal, the project, led by the Ministry of Housing and Water, has saved millions by using local expertise.

"This highway is more than an asphalt road. It is a road to opportunity. It's a faster route for commuters; it's a cheaper path for businesses; it's a smaller journey for families; from

farmer to entrepreneur; worker to students. This highway carries not only vehicles, but the votes of a more modern Guyana, We all know of the frustration our people face, hours wasted in traffic, time stolen from families, productivity lost because of congestion," Minister Croal said.

He added, "This corridor answers those frustrations with further relief, ease and efficiency. The completion of this highway is not an isolated achievement. It is part of a bold and deliberate strategy of infrastructural transformation."

Meanwhile, Minister within the Ministry of Housing, Susan Rodrigues, noted that the works for these massive road networks were first conceptualised in 2009 by President Ali, who was the housing minister at the time.

She said he had a vision to alleviate traffic congestion on the East Bank corridor, open new lands for housing and spur development across the country.



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The centuries-old temple to Manjunatha Swamy attracts thousands of pilgrims daily

## Man who claimed hundreds of women murdered at temple site is arrested

Police in India have arrested a man who recently alleged that he had been coerced into burying hundred of bodies of women who were raped before being murdered.

His startling claims had thrown the tiny religious town of Dharmasthala in the southern state of Karnataka into turmoil.

Home to the centuries-old temple to Manjunatha Swamy - an incarnation of Shiva from the Hindu holy trinity - the town attracts thousands of pilgrims daily and is central to the fabric of local people's lives.

A political row in the state resulted in the government setting up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to verify the man's allegations.

The centuries-old temple to Manjunatha Swamy attracts thousands of pilgrims daily

A SIT official who did not want to be named said on Saturday morning that the man "has been arrested for perjury".

In early July, the middle-aged man had lodged a police complaint and appeared before a magistrate to record his statement. His identity has been withheld and, so far, he has appeared in public dressed fully in black, including a hood and a face

In the police complaint, the man said he worked as a cleaner at the temple from 1995 to 2014 - and alleged that he had been forced to bury the bodies of hundreds of girls and young women who were brutally raped and murdered.

He narrated five alleged incidents where he gave specifics, and said there were many others. Some of the victims, the man alleged, were minors.

He said he had been in hiding since 2014 and had returned and spoken up to silence his nagging conscience.

The cleaner did not name anyone but blamed the "temple administration and its staff" - allegations the temple chief rejected as "false and baseless"

When he was taken to the magistrate, the man went on to produce a human skull from his bag as evidence. He said it belonged to a body he had buried and that he had retrieved it recently from the spot.

"The skull and skeletal remains he produced are not brought from any spot in which he claimed to have buried the bodies," the SIT official said.

Saturday's arrest comes as a major turn in a saga that has set off a firestorm within the state and outside.

The allegations received intense media coverage. After concerns were raised by the state's women's commission, the government launched a major criminal investigation and set up the SIT.

For the past several weeks, the team conducted excavations at locations in and around Dharmasthala to verify the man's claims. He had initially identified 13 spots - some of them in hard-to-reach areas covered by dense foliage and reportedly infested with venomous snakes.

Sources in the SIT confirmed that human remains, including a skull and nearly 100 bone fragments, have been found at two of the spots and had been sent for forensic testing. It is not clear who they belong to.

Police officials have confirmed that human remains have been found at two places

The allegations also put the spotlight on the influential Heggade family - hereditary administrators of the temple.

In a statement, chief administrator Veerendra Heggade, an MP in the Indian parliament's upper house who received the country's second highest civilian award Padma Vibhushan in 2015, welcomed the SIT inquiry.

The temple "really appreciates the government for appointing the SIT for investigating the alleged unnatural deaths claimed to have occurred in and around Dharmasthala", he wrote.

"We are already extending full support for the investigation. We have full faith on our judiciary and investigation agency and constitution of India," he added.

In an interview with Indian news agency PTI later, he called the former cleaner's claims "impossible" and said that "once and for all the truth should come out".

The allegations also resulted in a huge political row - the issue was discussed in the just-concluded session of the state assembly, with the opposition BJP members calling it a "smear campaign" against a Hindu religious site that has millions of devotees. Home Minister G Parameshwara from the state's governing Congress party said the government had no intention of either shielding anyone or maligning anyone.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): You can easily win an argument with a loved one but in doing so you could create a bit of bad feeling. You don't have to lose the argument on purpose, of course, but you can find a way to call it a draw so they don't get upset.

**TAURUS (April 21 - May 21):** Venus, your ruler, makes positive links to three major planets today, so you will be in tune with the spirit of the times. If you can see a way to turn your popularity into cash you must not hesitate – go for it and get rich!

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21):** Uranus in your birth sign will fill your head with all sorts of way out and wonderful ideas today and the good news is they will be right on the money. Listen to your sixth sense and act quickly and decisively on what it tells you to do.

**CANCER (June 22 - July 23):** You may not have found it easy to express yourself on the work front lately but if you try again today you should be able to get your message across. And if some of your opinions upset people in positions of power ... that's good!

**LEO** (July 24 - Aug. 23): You need to accept that not everyone can be as motivated and ambitious as you. It may be frustrating that colleagues and loved ones seem to be dragging their feet but there is no point trying to hurry them along. It may be easier to travel alone.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): There are many things in your life that you would like to change but there is only one thing that MUST be changed and that is your tendency to stick with the old way of doing things. New methods and routines should be embraced, not feared.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): As your ruling planet Venus is linked to Saturn, Neptune and Uranus today there is clearly something very special going on in your world. This would be a great time to revisit a project you once had high hopes for. This time it WILL come good.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22):** If you feel the urge to slow down a bit on the work front then do so and don't feel in the least bit guilty about it. If you conserve your energy now you will be tanked up and ready to go again come the end of the week.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21):** Listen carefully to what a friend or loved one tells you about an issue that may not be important to you at the moment but which is likely to grow in significance over the next few weeks. Their good advice could save you considerable anguish.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): Why do you worry so much about situations that you cannot change? Ignore anything and everything that is taking place in the world that does not affect you directly. That may sound selfish but it is also the only way to find peace of mind.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): The message of the stars today is that you need to change your outlook in radical ways. You may be a creature of habit but it should by now be clear that some of those habits are seriously holding you back. Let go of the past!

**PISCES** (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): You have no choice now but to be ruthlessly practical in everything you say and do. Don't waste a moment looking for ways to postpone what you know must be said and done – just do it and ignore the complaints and the tears.

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## CPSO warns of severe impact from US tariff hike on Trinidad and Tobago

The Caricom Private Sector Organisation (CPSO) is warning that the United States' decision to increase Trinidad and Tobago's reciprocal tariff rate from 10 per cent to 15 per cent could have the most severe impact on any Caribbean Community (Caricom) member state.

"Trinidad and Tobago was already the most exposed Caricom economy under the reciprocal tariff regime," said CPSO chief executive officer and technical director, Patrick Antoine.

The tariff adjustment, which took effect on August 7, follows the introduction of a 10 per cent baseline rate in April 2025 under Washington's "America First" trade policy. Prior to April, Caricom member states enjoyed duty-free access to the US market through the longstanding Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).

Antoine said the higher tariff magnifies the risks faced by Trinidad and Tobago, adding that the losses would be concentrated in critical export sectors. "This adjustment not only increases the scale of potential losses, but it does so in sectors that are vital to our industrial capacity and to US manufacturers who rely on our exports for input," he said.

CPSO modelling now projects potential annual export revenue losses of US\$291.9 million for Trinidad and Tobago, up from US\$194.6 million under the 10 per cent baseline. More than two-thirds of those losses are expected



US President Trump intoduced his global tariffs a few months ago

in the base metals sector (US\$199.3 million) and the chemicals sector (US\$74.8 million).

The base metals category includes iron and steel products widely used in US construction, automotive and manufacturing industries, while the chemicals category covers exports such as anhydrous ammonia, methanol and urea — key inputs for fertiliser production, plastics, and other industrial processes. Antoine linked the development to a broader erosion of Caricom's

trade position with the US, warning that preferential access that has underpinned the economic relationship for decades is being steadily eroded. "In our recent submission to the US review of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, we highlighted that these new tariffs erode the preferential access that has underpinned our economic partnership with the US for decades. That erosion is now accelerating," he said.

The CPSO said coordinated regional action is urgently needed. An-

toine argued that the latest tariff hike should be treated as a signal for rapid response. "The joint regional and private sector position that secured exemptions for China-built ships and short-sea shipping for the region is a proven model of collaboration," he said. "Now is the time to apply that same resolve, to protect current trade flows, engage the US on tariff differentials and position T&T and Caricom for long-term strength in a more contested global market."

#### Party appeals to UN, CARICOM over closure of bank accounts

Guyana opposition We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) party, led by U.S.-sanctioned businessman Azruddin Mohamed, has written to the United Nations (UN) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to protest the closure of bank accounts belonging to several of its candidates.

In letters addressed to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and CARICOM Secretary-General Dr. Carla Barnett, the party named the Bank of Nova Scotia, the Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry, the New Building Society, and Demerara Bank as institutions that have taken action against WIN members. Citizens Bank, however, was not listed, even though it also closed the accounts of WIN candidates.

The letters, copies of which were released to the press on Wednesday, were signed by WIN's General Secretary Odessa Primus. The party said banks had closed accounts, cancelled loans, and denied access to financial services for its members and candidates.

WIN has urged the UN and CARICOM to intervene by:

Publicly condemning the actions of the banks, which it described as "discriminatory practices" and "an assault on human and political rights."

Demanding the reinstatement of all affected ac-



WIN leader Azruddin Mohamed

counts and full access to salaries, savings, and services for its members.

Engaging the Government of Guyana and the financial institutions involved to prevent further political discrimination.

Deploying observers and monitors to investigate the matter and ensure alternative access to financial services until the situation is resolved.

The banks' actions are linked to concerns about

WIN's association with Mohamed, who, along with his father Nazar Mohamed, was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) on June 11, 2024, for alleged gold smuggling and corruption. Former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour, Mae Thomas, was also sanctioned.

Financial institutions in Guyana have been under pressure to strengthen compliance with Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regulations. These measures aim to prevent illicit funds from entering the banking system and to protect international relationships with correspondent banks.

Guyana has previously faced fallout from weak compliance. In 2016, Bank of America and Citibank ended correspondent banking relationships with local banks over money laundering concerns, severely affecting overseas wire transfers, remittances, and international trade. The situation was part of a wider "de-risking" trend in the Caribbean, where global banks severed ties with jurisdictions seen as high-risk.

WIN maintains that the closures amount to political persecution and has called for international attention to safeguard what it says are the human and political rights of its candidates.

## As Independence Day celebrations cancelled in T&T, city to host its own

With the traditional Independence Day Parade in Trinidad and Tobago cancelled this year, Port-of-Spain Mayor Chinua Alleyne says the city is determined to ensure children still have a chance to celebrate the nation's 63rd anniversary of independence.

The City Corporation has rolled out a full-day programme branded For the Love of Liberty, featuring activities for families and cultural showcases designed to preserve the spirit of the occasion.

"Our hope is that the children are not deprived of an opportunity to celebrate independence and to celebrate the 63rd anniversary of independence," Alleyne said. "This is about giving them memories and traditions they can hold on to for the rest of their lives."

The celebrations begin at 10 a.m. at Nelson Mandela Park with a Children's Fun Day featuring bouncy castles, slides, snow cones, popcorn, cotton candy, and face painting. Families are then invited to stay for Picnic in the Park, which will highlight local cultural talent.

The day concludes in St. James with Pan on the Avenue, hosted in partnership with the St James Woodbrook Community Association, the Garcia family, and Pan Trinbago.

Reflecting on his own tradition of attending the parade growing up, Alleyne said he wants children today to have their own rituals to remember. "Even when I got into my teenage years and into my 20s and 30s, I still went every year. I always go to buy some snow cone, and it's something I always



Crowds at previous Independence Day celebrations in Trinidad

look forward to. I want today's children to have their own version of that ritual, something they will never forget."

While acknowledging that the government cited cost savings among the benefits of cancelling the parade, the growth into a nation state, our sovermayor argued that certain traditions should not be sacrificed. "What I will say is that there are some things that are priceless. And our independence, our

eignty, those things are very precious. That is something that should be celebrated each and every year."

#### Carter Center: US sanctions and bias threaten fair polls

The countdown is on in the oil-rich CARICOM nation of Guyana, where voters head to the polls on September 1 amid warnings from international observers and claims of political discrimination from a rising third party.

The U.S.-based Carter Center, which has been monitoring Guyana's electoral process since late June, released a preliminary assessment this week, citing several issues that could undermine the integrity of the elections. Among the concerns: "local authorities' approval of campaign events, alleged intimidation of public workers, as well as overcompliance of local banks with recent U.S. sanctions, which threatens political participation."

The sanctions, issued in June 2024 by the U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), targeted Azruddin Mohamed, the presidential candidate of the We Invest in Nationhood Party (WIN), his father Nazar, several of their companies, and government official Mae Thomas Jr. The measures froze Mohamed's U.S.-linked assets to block any transactions that could benefit him.

Following the approval of WIN's candidate list in July 2025, the Bank of Nova Scotia and Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry closed the personal accounts of 40 WIN candidates and members. The Carter Center warned that while banking caution is understandable, "mere association with a political

party, without any evidence of transactions or facilitation of these transactions, does not constitute a proper basis for terminating accounts."

WIN alleges that dozens of its candidates, supporters, and donors have had accounts frozen, loans canceled, and salaries withheld, leaving teachers without pay and small businesses forced to operate in cash. "This is about the right of every citizen without fear to work, bank, and participate in democratic processes," the party said in a statement on

Mohamed has denied wrongdoing, maintaining his eligibility to run while his lawyers contest the U.S. sanctions. WIN has called on CARICOM to condemn "discriminatory practices" and urged the United Nations to deploy investigators and pressure Guyanese authorities and banks to reinstate affected accounts.

The claims of bias come as WIN's multi-ethnic coalition gains momentum, with some analysts suggesting it poses a growing threat to the incumbent People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). President Irfaan Ali, seeking a second five-year term, has rejected accusations of interference, insisting financial institutions are acting under global compliance rules.

Tensions escalated Thursday when police in Region Six stopped Mohamed's convoy for an "obscured" license plate and tinted windows as he headed to a rally. WIN leaders accused authorities of harassment, noting that nearby PPP/C vehicles leaving a government event were not stopped.

The Carter Center also reported complaints of state resources being used to benefit the ruling party, including government vehicles deployed for campaigning, temporary workers assigned to political activities, and public events doubling as PPP/C promotions.

It further cited promotions for 2,800 police officers and free bridge crossings announced in recent weeks. While legal under Guyanese law, the Center said such measures "violate international standards for fair play," and flagged state media bias in favor of the government.

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## Trinidad backs US military deployment in Caribbean: "We are drowning"

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has thrown its full support behind the deployment of U.S. military assets to the Caribbean region, stating the move is intended "to destroy the terrorist drug cartels."

This follows reports that the United States ordered the deployment of 4,000 Marines and sailors to the waters around Latin America and the Caribbean as part of a ramped-up effort to combat drug cartels, according to CNN.

In a press release issued lst week, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar assured the public that "The only persons who should be worried about the activity of the US military are those engaged in or enabling criminal activity. Law abiding citizens have nothing to fear."

The Prime Minister's statement directly addressed regional concerns and internal criticism, including a clear position on the role of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). "The Trinidad and Tobago government has not engaged and has no intention of engaging CARICOM on this matter; each member state can speak for themselves on this issue," the release said.

Persad-Bissessar also clarified the government's stance on Venezuela, saying, "NO requests have ever been made by the American Government for their military assets to access Trinidadian territory for any military action against the Venezuelan regime." However, she made it "very clear that if the Maduro regime launches any attack against the



US warships currently deployed in the Caribbean

Guyanese people or invades Guyanese territory and a request is made by the American Government for access to Trinidadian territory to defend the people of Guyana, my government will unflinchingly provide them that access."

The Prime Minister linked the military deployment to a long-standing crisis of crime and violence in the region, arguing that local governments are ill-

equipped to handle the scale of the problem. "Due to drug, human and firearms trafficking, Caribbean countries, and in particular Trinidad and Tobago have experienced massive spikes in transnational crime, gang activity, murders, violence and financial crimes. Most Caribbean countries and in particular Trinidad and Tobago have been dealing with out-of-control crime for the last twenty years," the statement read.

It continued, "Small island states like ours simply do not have the financial and military resources to take on the drug cartels."

She noted that these cartels have become deeply embedded in society, "rendering governments toothless to enact actual change to stop criminal activity." The Prime Minister pushed back against critics of the U.S. presence, stating it is "shocking to hear some persons using referrals to the Caribbean region as a zone of peace to push negative commentary on the US military deployment against these terrorist cartels."

Concluding her statement, Persad-Bissessar reiterated her government's position, referencing remarks made by a U.S. official. "Trinidad and Tobago has been helplessly drowning in blood and violence for the last twenty years; Vice President Vance spoke the truth when he mentioned our high murder and crime rates. Therefore, no amount of Trump derangement syndrome tantrums and anti-American propaganda will prevent my government from welcoming assistance to combat the terrorist drug cartels."

Earlier this week, U.S. Vice President JD Vance used Trinidad and Tobago as an example of high crime while defending President Donald Trump's security crackdown in Washington, D.C.

"You hear these guys outside, they appear to hate the idea that Americans can enjoy their communities, and they do the fact that DC a week ago had a higher murder rate than Trinidad and Tobago, which the United States State Department has said you shouldn't visit because it's unsafe. We ought to be able to enjoy great American cities. That's what we're trying to do in the Trump administration," Vance said.



**T&T Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar** 





## PNP pledges no income tax for Jamaicans earning \$3.5 million or less

People's National Party (PNP) President Mark Golding has pledged that Jamaicans earning \$3.5 million or less annually will pay no income tax if his party wins the September 3 general election.

Golding made the announcement Sunday night before thousands of supporters packed into Mandeville Square for a mass rally. The pledge came just hours after the governing Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) unveiled its own proposal to gradually reduce the personal income tax rate to 15 per cent from the current 25 per cent.

"We are going to deal with that matter in a way that benefits those who need it more," Golding declared.
"Under the PNP government that is to come, we will be increasing the tax threshold so that those who pay taxes at 25 per cent, if they are earning up to \$3.5 million a year, they will be paying tax at zero per cent."

Golding argued that the JLP's approach would unfairly favour wealthier Jamaicans. "I hear the Labourites are talking about adjusting the rate of income tax, but is that gonna benefit those who are very, very wealthy more than those who are less wealthy?" he asked, to loud applause from the crowd.

The PNP leader said the policy would be the start of a broader reform. "As the economy improves and the fiscal space improves, we will raise that tax threshold further and further because we want money to be in the pockets of those who are struggling right now to make ends meet," he said.

Golding described the promise as a "sneak preview" of the party's Manifesto Lite, which will be released Monday as a companion to the PNP's main election manifesto launched two weeks



PNP leader Mark Golding

ago

The dueling tax promises from both major parties set the stage for a heated exchange in Tuesday's economy debate, followed by Thursday's highly anticipated face-off between Prime Minister Andrew Holness and Golding.

Currently, Jamaica applies a 25 per cent personal income tax on taxable income, with a higher rate of 30 per

cent on earnings above \$6 million. The JLP's landmark 2016 pledge to raise the tax-free threshold to \$1.5 million was considered a turning point in that election.

### Grenadian Senator Franklyn dies at 28

Neilon Franklyn, one of Grenada's youngest senators, has died at the age of 28. Franklyn, who represented the main opposition New National Party (NNP) in the 11th Parliament, collapsed on Sunday and passed away at the General Hospital. The cause of death has not been disclosed.

Franklyn, who was appointed to the Upper House in June 2022 at the age of 25 on the recommendation of then Opposition Leader Dr. Keith Mitchell, resigned as a senator effective 30 September 2024 and later left the NNP. He had graduated from St. George's University in May 2025 and was employed as a customs officer.

Tributes have poured in from across the political spectrum. Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell described Franklyn as "a passionate advocate for youth empowerment and economic development," praising his dedication to



Senator Neilson Franklyn — died at 28

fostering youth leadership and contributing to national dialogue. Opposition Leader Emmalin Pierre offered her condolences, noting he was "definitely gone too soon."

The NNP also extended sympathies to Franklyn's family, highlighting his service in the Upper House and his

commitment to national development. The party said, "Senator Franklyn served Grenada with distinction and dedication... His contributions to our nation will be remembered with deep respect."

Franklyn was widely recognized for his commitment to youth empowerment and regional integration. In 2023, the United Nations in Barbados described him as someone who "believes that young people have the power to make a difference in their communities and in the world, and he is committed to giving them a voice."

News of Franklyn's death was first shared on social media by his family, who wrote: "Good evening, everyone. This is Neilon's family, confirming that he has passed away. May his soul RIP."

## Social issues take spotlight as JLP, PNP clash in first election debate

The 2025 Jamaica general election campaign entered high gear Saturday night as teams from the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP) clashed in the first national debate, trading punches on education, healthcare, and transport policies.

The Social Issues Debate, staged at the Creative Production and Training Centre in Kingston, featured three-person teams from both parties. The JLP was represented by Pearnel Charles Jr, Matthew Samuda, and Kamina Johnson Smith, while the PNP's team comprised Damion Crawford, Raymond Pryce, and Sophia Frazer-Binns.

According to the Jamaica Debates Commission, a total of 22 questions were posed—representing a 10 percent increase compared to the average number in previous debates. "The objective of getting more questions and answers by the removal of the opening statements was achieved," the commission said.

Nineteen of the main questions were asked by journalists Natalie Campbell of Irie FM and Romardo Lyons of Television Jamaica (TVJ). The third questioner, CVM Television's Amoy Harriot, posed eight queries drawn from social media submissions, while TVJ's Janella Precius moderated the proceedings. There were also two follow-up questions from the panelists, in addition to each team posing one question to their opponents.

JDC Chairman Brian Schmidt said the commission was encouraged by the high level of public engagement and urged Jamaicans at home and abroad to continue submitting questions via @jamaicadebates. He added that the JDC looks forward to the remaining debates—The Economy on Tuesday, August 26, and The Leaders on Thursday, August 28. Both will air live at 9:00 p.m.

The debate saw spirited exchanges on education, healthcare, and transport. Responding to a question on youth opportunities, Foreign Affairs Minister Kamina Johnson Smith outlined new proposals for the Students' Loan Bureau (SLB). She said the JLP would expand SLB loans to cover accommodation, books, laptops, food, and other living expenses, while also introducing a "debt



Candidates square off on the debate stage in Kingston

reset" policy that would wipe penalties, insurance charges, and a portion of arrears for delinquent borrowers. Students in good standing, she added, would receive a \$100,000 credit toward their accounts

On healthcare, Labour and Social Security Minister Pearnel Charles Jr said the government has upgraded 138 health centres, created 3,000 positions for medical professionals, and advanced construction of a new regional children's and adolescent hospital. But the PNP's Damion Crawford countered that the health system remains in crisis, pointing to long-delayed works at Cornwall Regional Hospital and a lack of basic diagnostic equipment at leading facilities. Opposition debater Raymond Pryce also criticized the absence of Health Minister Dr Christopher Tufton from the debate stage.

Another flashpoint was the JLP's Rural School Bus System. The PNP's Crawford described the programme as inefficient, arguing that importing buses from the United States was costly and unnecessary, suggesting Toyota coasters could have been a more practical pur-

chase. Charles Jr defended the initiative, claiming it would save parents up to \$180,000 per year per child while keeping students safer, and said the plan was funded by savings from reduced fuel theft at the JUTC.

Data protection and privacy, environmental issues, and beach access for Jamaicans were among the other issues debated.

Social media users and members of the diaspora split over who won the debate, though many said the JLP's Matthew Samuda delivered the strongest individual performance. Both parties later declared victory.

Observers also noted that, for the first time in a social issues debate, crime was not a central topic. No questions on the issue were posed—something many viewed as a reflection of Jamaica's recent historic 42 percent drop in the murder rate, and an achievement that the JLP has taken credit for.

The next debate on the economy will take place on August 26 at 9 p.m. JLP's Fayval Williams, Dr. Christopher Tufton, and Dr. Dana Morris Dixon will face off against PNP's Julian Robinson, Peter Bunting, and Kisha Anderson.





## Brathwaite dropped from central contracts amid WI Test turmoil

Cricket West Indies (CWI) is preparing to leave long-serving opener and former Test captain Kraigg Brathwaite out of its list of centrally contracted players for the 2025-2026 season, signaling what many view as the dawn of a new chapter in West Indies cricket.

According to reports in The Nation, Brathwaite — a mainstay at the top of the order for more than a decade — will instead receive a domestic contract with his home franchise, the Barbados Pride, following the recent regional draft.

The 31-year-old Barbadian has been a fixture in West Indies Test cricket since 2011, amassing over 100 appearances and recently reaching the prestigious milestone of 100 Test caps against Australia in Grenada, becoming just the 10th West Indian to do so.

Yet his career-defining endurance has collided with a sharp dip in form. His struggles culminated dramatically when he was dropped for the third Test at Sabina Park earlier this year, where the Windies suffered the humiliation of being bowled out for a record-low 27 runs in a series whitewash against Australia. That omission ended Brathwaite's remarkable streak of 90 consecutive Test matches, stretching back to 2014.

Brathwaite's likely removal from the central contracts list comes in the



Kraigg Brathwaite: reportedly out of CWI contract

wake of his resignation as Test captain in March, just weeks after he guided West Indies to a memorable series-leveling victory over Pakistan — the side's first Test win on Pakistani soil in 30 years.

His successor, all-rounder Roston Chase, was confirmed as captain following a rigorous selection process that even included psychometric testing. But the team has since stumbled, rooted

to the bottom of the ICC World Test Championship table after a crushing 3-0 defeat to Australia, with daunting tours to India and New Zealand looming.

CWI has not yet released the official list of central or regional contracts, and Brathwaite has remained silent on his exclusion. For now, speculation swirls about whether the stalwart opener — who once symbolized re-

silience at the crease — will continue to press for an international future or redirect his energies to regional cricket.

What is certain is that the omission of such a seasoned campaigner underscores the shifting sands in Caribbean cricket, as the board appears intent on placing its faith in a new generation of players to carry the maroon forward.

#### Dorne to lead young West Indies in Sri Lanka series

The future of West Indies cricket will be on full display later this month when the region's most talented youth cricketers take on Sri Lanka in a sevenmatch Youth One-Day International (ODI) series from August 25 to September 16.

All matches will be staged in Antigua, with the first four contests scheduled for Coolidge Cricket Ground before the series shifts to the historic Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium for the final three encounters.

Barbadian batting prodigy Joshua Dorne, fresh off a tournament-best 328 runs and MVP honors in the Rising Stars Under-19 Championship, will captain the regional side. Described as a dynamic stroke-maker with a mature head on young shoulders, Dorne is tasked with guiding a group that blends attacking firepower with disciplined bowling.

The squad, drawn from the standout performers of the recently concluded regional Under-19 tournament, reflects the strength and depth of Caribbean youth cricket.

Beyond the immediate series, the matches form a critical part of preparation for the 2026 ICC Men's Under-19 World Cup, set to take place in Zimbabwe and Namibia next January. Cricket West Indies (CWI) has outlined this series—and an upcoming tri-nation event later this year involving England and the USA—as pivotal steps in shaping a side capable of competing at the highest youth level.

Sri Lanka's Under-19 squad, renowned for producing generations of international talent, arrives in Antigua on August 25. They will undergo a five-day preparation camp before locking horns with the young Windies. Known for their flair, technique, and tactical discipline, the visitors promise to provide a stern test for the Caribbean hopefuls.

CWI Director of Cricket Miles Bascombe underscored the importance of such contests, emphasizing both development and opportunity.

"We are delighted to welcome the Sri Lanka Under-19 team to the Caribbean for what promises to be a highly competitive and rewarding series," Bascombe said. "Encounters like these are invaluable to our cricket pathway, as they expose our young players to different styles of play, varying conditions, and the intensity that comes with international opposition."

He added: "Beyond the immediate competition, this tour represents a development opportunity for both teams—allowing our players to test their skills,

build confidence, and understand the standards required to excel at the next level."

All matches begin at 9:30 a.m. and conclude by 5:00 p.m., ensuring full days of action for supporters. Fans across the region and beyond can follow the series live via the Windies Cricket YouTube channel, while scorecards will be updated on the CWI Match Centre at www.windiescricket.com.

Sri Lanka departs Antigua on September 16, bringing down the curtain on what promises to be a series brimming with skill, learning, and international promise.

West Indies Under-19 squad: Joshua Dorne (captain), Shaquan Belle, Brendan Boodoo, Tyriek Bryan, Afraz Ali Budhoo, Zachary Carter, Earsinho Fontaine, R'Jai Gittens, Micah Greenidge, Vitel Lawes, Pajay Nelson, Matthew Miller, Isra-el Morton, Jakeem Pollard, Aadian Racha, Johnathan Van Lange.

Team Management: Head Coach – Rohan Nurse; Assistant Coaches – Jerome Taylor & Dalton Polius; Physiotherapist – Kwayne Dalrymple; Strength & Conditioning Coach – Shayne Cooper; Manager – Clint St Hill.

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## Usain Bolt among SSL fraud victims to receive partial payout

Usain Bolt's company, Welljen Limited, is among roughly 40 clients set to receive payouts from the Stocks & Securities Limited (SSL) Victims' Compensation Fund beginning Monday, trustee Caydion Campbell confirmed in a report by The Sunday Gleaner.

The payments mark the first disbursements in one of Jamaica's largest financial fraud cases, which saw an estimated US\$30 million (J\$5 billion) siphoned from more than 200 clients, including US\$6.2 million (J\$950 million) belonging to Bolt's company. Campbell said he has signed off on the initial distributions alongside the courtappointed Committee of Inspection, following months of verification delays.

"Fourteen Tier 1 claimants will receive a total of \$61 million beginning on August 25," Campbell said, noting that another 26 Tier 2 claimants will receive roughly \$14 million the following week. The 40 beneficiaries fall into the category of off-balance-sheet affected trust claimants, whose funds were held outside SSL's formal accounts.

Campbell stressed that early payments were delayed to ensure all legiti-



Usain Bolt — lost millions of dollars

mate claims were fairly captured. "This might very well be the only source of funds for some of the claimants, so we just wanted to make sure we capture as many persons," he said. At present, the fund holds \$79 million, while approved claims total \$1.7 billion, meaning victims will recover only a small fraction of their losses for now.

Asked specifically whether Bolt's

company would receive funds, Campbell confirmed: "To avoid any mischief, I can confirm a distribution is to be made to Welljen. No further comments."

Welljen's attorney, Linton Gordon, welcomed the disbursement but emphasized it remains only a partial recovery. "Payments being made are just a fraction of what persons have lost, and it's

just the start," he said, declining to disclose the specific amount Welljen will receive.

Bolt has publicly rejected suggestions that he was negligent in his dealings with SSL, noting the brokerage was licensed by the Financial Services Commission and counted several state entities among its clients. Welljen filed a lawsuit against SSL and former client relations manager Jean-Ann Panton to recover damages of US\$6.2 million, or US\$12.7 million based on one of the last statements received in 2022.

Meanwhile, Panton, who has been in custody since February 2023, is set to stand trial on May 4, 2026. She faces a 22-count indictment including forgery, larceny as a servant, and engaging in transactions involving criminal property.

The Financial Services Commission had flagged SSL as far back as 2017 for "a culture of non-compliance and mismanagement of client funds." Months of public frustration, including from Bolt himself, prompted pressure on the winding-up process, which Campbell assumed in May last year after a court ended government oversight of the company.





Harjimder Singh, left, an illegal immigrant, is accused of casuing a crash that killed 3 people in Florida

## Truckers beware: Florida weigh stations are now immigration checkpoints

Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier announced Monday that all truck agricultural inspection stations throughout the state will also serve as federal immigration checkpoints, targeting drivers who are undocumented or hold out-of-state licenses.

The move comes in the wake of a deadly August 12 crash on Florida's Turnpike near Fort Pierce, which killed three South Florida residents when a tractor-trailer allegedly driven by 28-year-old Harjinder Singh made an illegal U-turn.

Singh, who entered the U.S. illegally from Mexico in 2018, later obtained a commercial driver's license in California and a work permit before being arrested and extradited to Florida.

"There's no telling how many illegal aliens are in this country driving large commercial vehicles and putting American families in a safety risk every single day," Uthmeier said during a press conference Monday morning in Live Oak, a city north of Gainesville.

Uthmeier said the program would focus on weigh stations operated by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Currently, FDACS has 23 agricultural inspection stations that have been deputized to assist with immigration enforcement. While the stations' primary role is to inspect vehicles for agricultural safety and food quality, in 2025, all Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement (OALE) officers were certified under the federal 287(g) program. This allows them to assist with federal immigration enforcement if they encounter individuals violating federal law.

Officials said a new station, Sta-

tion No. 20 — Highway 231, will be added soon. The station will be located near the Florida/Alabama border.

In addition, more pullover lanes are planned in north Florida, along with new advanced X-ray technology to allow officials to see inside trucks as they pull up to stations.

"We're continuing to crack down and interdict others who may have gotten into Florida from other sanctuary states," Uthmeier said. "If you can't read street signs, how are you going to drive large commercial vehicles, 18wheelers, tractor trailers in a safe manner?"

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson emphasized that the state will comply with President Donald Trump's executive order requiring commercial drivers to demonstrate proficiency in English.

Uthmeier also warned that driver's licenses from states such as California, Washington, or New Jersey — like Singh's — "are no good here."

The program is part of a broader effort to enhance safety on Florida highways while preventing undocumented drivers from operating commercial vehicles without proper oversight.

It follows an announcement by the United States government that it has stopped issuing visas for commercial truck drivers. Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced the move Thursday, saying the freeze takes effect immediately.

"Effective immediately we are pausing all issuance of worker visas for commercial truck drivers," Rubio wrote on X. "The increasing number of foreign drivers operating large tractor-trailer trucks on U.S. roads is endangering American lives and

undercutting the livelihoods of American truckers."

Foreign-born truck drivers have become an increasing presence in the U.S. industry, doubling in number between 2000 and 2021 to more than 720,000, according to federal data. Today, they make up 18 percent of the workforce, with most coming from Latin America, as well as growing numbers from India, Ukraine, and other countries.

Large Caribbean diaspora communities in places like New York, Florida, New Jersey, Georgia, and Texas also have members working in trucking, especially Jamaicans, Haitians, Trinidadians, and Guyanese. These communities often enter trucking because it offers stable employment, relatively quick certification through CDL programs, and opportunities for entrepreneurship (owning/operating rigs).

### American denied bail in Dominica double murder

Justice Davidson Baptiste of the High Court on Monday denied bail to 57-year-old American national Jonathan Lehrer, who faces charges related to firearms trafficking in connection with a double murder case.

Lehrer is charged with trafficking and unlawfully importing firearms, including a Mac-11 9mm with threaded barrel, multiple Glock magazines, and over 140 rounds of 9mm ammunition. The alleged offences relate to an incident on December 4, 2023. Senior Magistrate Michael Laudat had previously denied Lehrer bail, citing public interest concerns.

Lehrer's attorney filed an urgent application, arguing that the firearms charges were being used as a "colorable device" to keep Lehrer incarcerated and prevent him from accessing medical treatment abroad, referencing a prior bail grant in November 2024. The state opposed the application, maintaining its stance against bail on both the firearms and double murder charges.

Lehrer and 62-year-old Robert Snyder Jr., also an American, are accused of murdering Canadian animation pioneer and philanthropist Daniel Langlois, 62, and his longtime partner Dominique Marchand, 58, between November 29 and December 2, 2023. The victims' bodies were later discovered incinerated in a car near Gallion, where they owned a hotel. Because murder is an indictable offence, Lehrer and Snyder were not required to enter pleas in magistrate's court. Previously, Lehrer had applied for bail on medical grounds to travel to the United States, but the request was denied.

Justice Colin Williams had outlined strict conditions for any potential bail, including a one-million Eastern Caribbean dollar bond, revocation of U.S. citizenship, approval from the High Court for any travel, and daily reporting to the Grand Bay Police Station. The surety would also need "total control" over Lehrer.



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