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### Marco Rubio assures Ali of US support for Guyana

Guyana's President Dr. Irfaan Ali and the new United States Secretary of State, Marco Rubio engaged each other on Monday.

In a statement, Mr. Rubio's spokesperson Tammy Bruce said the two leaders spoke to address the crisis of illegal migration and "agreed to jointly address this regional imperative and challenge."

Importantly, it was noted: "The Secretary affirmed the United States' steadfast support of Guyana's territorial integrity in the face of Nicolás Maduro and his cronies' bellicose actions."

Late last year, Guyana's Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo said the gov-

ernment expects "strong solidarity" from Florida Senator, Marco Rubio who then nominated by United States President-elect Donald Trump to lead the State Department.

"He is aware of the Venezuela issue and we expect strong solidarity from him and President Trump, the US administration on the Guyana/Venezuela border controversy that is now before the International Court of Justice," Vice President Jagdeo said then.

The border controversy case is squarely before the ICJ. Both parties are participating in the case.

Guyana hopes for a full, final and binding judgement that the border between the two states was settled after the 1899 Arbitral Award and a reaffirmation that the Essequibo region belongs to Guyana.

*Full story on Page 21*



### CARICOM envoys endorse Ramdin for OAS Chief

The CARICOM Caucus of Ambassadors at the Organization of American States (OAS) strongly reaffirms its unanimous endorsement of minister Albert Ramdin of Suriname as the CARICOM candidate for Secretary-General of the Organization at the election on March 10, 2025.

As Suriname's minister of foreign affairs, international business, and international cooperation, minister Ramdin has faced the pressing challenges of governance, development, human rights, democracy, and security in the Western Hemisphere. He has extensive experience in navigating the complex realities confronting hemispheric governments, including those in Latin America and the Caribbean. His deep understanding of these issues positions him uniquely to lead the

OAS during this pivotal time.

Minister Ramdin is deeply committed to reforming the OAS in collaboration with member states, addressing financial and administrative challenges while enhancing its relevance and impact. His leadership will prioritize consensus-building among member states, narrowing divisions and fostering collective responses to the region's shared challenges.

Despite CARICOM comprising 44 percent of the OAS membership, no Secretary-General has ever come from the Caribbean. Minister Ramdin's election would mark a historic recognition of the region's contributions while ensuring the OAS is guided by a leader with the vision, experience, and diplomatic expertise to reinvigorate the organization and address the needs of all member states.

The CARICOM Caucus of Ambassadors strongly believes that Minister Ramdin's election will strengthen the OAS and benefit the entire Western Hemisphere. We urge all OAS member states to support his candidacy.

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# “ I CAN WALK BAREFOOT ON THE BEACH AGAIN!

Local acupuncture clinic is treating the untreatable, peripheral neuropathy with incredible results!

Pain comes in many shapes and sizes. One of the most debilitating being the burning and tingling that comes with peripheral neuropathy. A disease that comes with years of shooting, stabbing pain that gradually ends in numbness, balance problems, and on occasion, amputations. A disease that was once classified as irreparable.

Michael R. of East York was facing such a fate.

**“I stopped golfing. I wasn’t taking walks on the beach with my wife. I was living on gabapentin and antidepressants and everywhere I went, my doctor, the specialists, the pain institute, told me there was no cure. How are you supposed to live your life knowing that everyday brings pain and suffering?”**

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves, commonly caused by a lack of blood flow to the hands and feet. This causes nerves to begin to degenerate due to a lack of nutrient flow. Most peripheral neuropathy sufferers experience heightened sensitivity to touch making it almost impossible for those diagnosed to even wear shoes, much less enjoy life.

“It was like walking on sharp river rocks. I barely left my recliner,” shares Michael, whose experience is not uncommon for those diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy.

That is until he found Teresa Lau of TLC Medicine in Riverdale, Toronto. Teresa and her staff have pioneered a cutting edge, medical solution to treat neuropathy, eliminate or greatly reduce its symptoms and give people their lives back. And they’re doing it without the use of prescription medications and invasive surgeries.

“Acupuncture is incredible at restoring blood flow and stimulating damaged nerves, preventing them from dying off,” tells Teresa Lau. “We take our treatments a step further by integrating ATP Resonance Bio Therapy” which targets specific nerves in the body using microcurrent. ATP therapy is like watering a plant. This treatment will stimulate the blood vessels to grow back around the peripheral nerves and provide them with the proper nutrients to heal and repair.”

**Three months later Michael is thrilled with his progress, “I can walk barefoot on the beach again!”**

Success stories like Michael’s are not atypical for the staff at TLC Medicine. “We have a 90% success rate at treating neuropathy,” shares Teresa.

The number of treatments needed to allow the nerves to fully recover will vary from person to person and can only be determined after a detailed neurological and vascular evaluation. So long as you have not sustained more than 85% nerve damage TLC Medicine offers hope where there once was none.

While Michael’s peripheral neuropathy was idiopathic, meaning the cause is unknown, Teresa’s treatment can also help people whose neuropathy is caused by diabetes or chemotherapy.

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# Newest B'dos Centenarian Justica Walters Believes In Living A Good Life

“You have to live a good life” to reach 100! Barbados’ newest centenarian Justica Walters gave this advice to family and friends, who gathered on January 24, 2025, to celebrate her special milestone.

Also present for the occasion was the President of Barbados, Her Excellency, The Most Honourable Dame Sandra Mason.

Responding to a query from Her Excellency about what a good life is, Mrs. Walters said it means living “a Christian life”. She added: “I worked pretty hard.... Praise the Lord for the time.... He was very good to me.”

Her son, Robert Walters, shared that his mother, who outlived her five siblings, had it hard. He said: “The years growing up was pretty difficult.... The wages were low; my mother worked very hard during the early years.” He disclosed that his mother, in her earlier days of work, sold pot fish, walking from Maxwell to Edey Village, Christ Church, and back.

Robert also said his mother worked as a cook, and for long hours. “She worked as a cook in the hotel industry or sometimes for private homes or even some ambassadors back in the day. I know for sure there was times when mum would start working from the morning and wouldn’t come off not until 9 o’clock...the night,” he said.

He said her long hours as a cook at the homes where she worked were often as a result of the dinners running late into the night. Recalling those days, he said: “Folks are chatting while she wants to go home; chatting...because they are eating late...and having a good time with their cocktails, while mum wanted to finish off the dinner and clean the kitchen to get home to her family.”

Mr. Walters, noted that his mother, at age 98, was still writing her own grocery lists with perfect spelling, even though her educational opportunities were limited. “Mum was very adamant about education. She even mentioned to me that at one time...she was one of the top students but because of being poor she was not able to go to high school in those days,” he said.

One of the centenarian’s daughters, Paulette Walters-Beckles, who relocated to Barbados to care for her mother, thanked her mother for “working so hard for us and loving us all” and for insisting that the family attend church every Sunday.

Mrs. Walters-Beckles remarked: “I thank my mum for all she did for me and for all of us and for raising us up in the right way and for taking us to the Pilgrim Holiness Church in Maxwell Hill for so many years, and she is amazing... Thank you, mum, for being my teacher and my friend.”

Another daughter, Betty Walters, also thanked the centenarian for encouraging her to pursue educational opportunities. She shared: “My mum and I lived a long time in Canada.... She is very blessed.... I want to thank her for her encouragement; she has been such an encouragement to me with my academics. She was always there for me when I was at Girls’ Foundation (now



Centenarian Justica Walters (seated left) with four of her children (standing left to right) Paulette Walters-Beckles, Tyronne Walters, Betty Walters and Robert Walters (seated).

Christ Church Foundation School); she would show up and support me and she would help me with my exams and tests....”

Also paying tribute to his mother, Tyronne Walters thanked her for focusing on their educational pursuits and for instilling in them a desire to want to “know the Lord”.

“She would get those clothes out and iron them and have them all ready and we had to go to Sunday School, and we certainly appreciate that. She was always there for us,” he said.

Noting that his mother also set the example of taking care of “her health and her family’s health”, he shared that he and his siblings are “here for her”.

Growing up in Maxwell, Christ Church, Mrs. Walters attended the St. Lawrence Girls’ School, also in Christ Church. After leaving school, she sold pot fish, and eventually worked as a domestic at the Southern Palms Hotel in Christ Church, private homes, and the Grantley Adams International Airport.

After retirement, she enjoyed travelling and spending time with her chil-

dren, dancing, and attending church services. She is in good health overall, and her favourite foods are soup, mutton, baked chicken, pot fish, and coucou.

Grateful for Dame Sandra’s visit, Mrs. Walters remarked: “I want to thank you” to which Her Excellency replied: “I want to thank you for having me.” Mrs. Walters, a widower, was married to Albert Walters. She had six children (one deceased), seven grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.



# 409 Guyanese re-migrated in 2024, says Foreign Minister Todd

The growing trust in Guyana’s economic and political climate has been demonstrated with the remigration of 409 Guyanese to their homeland in 2024. During the opening day of the 2025 Budget debates on Friday, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Hugh Todd highlighted that the majority of these re-migrants hailed from countries such as the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), Canada and various nations in the Caribbean.

Todd said that the government, under the leadership of President Dr Irfaan Ali, continues to aggressively pursue the involvement of the diaspora community in the national development.

The Foreign Minister said, “In 2024, Guyana undertook more than 15 diaspora engagements in approximately eight jurisdictions. We will continue to engage with Guyanese living abroad to encourage their involvement in the national development process.” He also pointed out that the ease and efficiency with which Guyanese nationals are now able to return to their home country is a direct result of the administration’s efforts to streamline the re-migration process.

“The remigration unit continues to process applications within seven working days. This represents one-third of the processing time under the ANPU+AFC [A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance for Change] government,” Minister Todd remarked during his speech.

He further shared that since the PPP/C took office in August 2020, the

The Remigration Unit is providing information for people in the Disapora looking to move to Guyana

government has processed approximately 2,000 qualified re-migrant applications, a significant achievement that reflects the growing trend of Guyanese nationals returning to their homeland. “This highlights the trust and confidence of the diaspora in the PPP/C government,” he emphasised.

The Diaspora and Remigration Unit within the ministry continues to play an essential role in processing applications expeditiously. For those wish-

ing to apply for re-migrant status, the required documentation and step-by-step guidelines are readily available on the ministry’s official website, as well as on the websites of Guyanese Embassies and High Commissions located overseas. The Re-migrant Scheme of the Government of Guyana is administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in conjunction with the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). The ministry is responsible for determining and granting re-migrant status while the GRA administers the tax exemptions.

To qualify for re-migrant status, a Guyanese citizen must meet certain criteria. The individual must be at least 18 years old, have lived legally overseas for a minimum of five consecutive years, and intend to return to Guyana or a Guyanese graduate who has completed their studies at an institution abroad and resided overseas for a minimum of three years and is now returning to Guyana to reside. Upon meeting these conditions,

the applicant qualifies for all tax exemptions offered by the GRA under the Re-migrant Scheme.

In his 2025 budget speech, Finance Minister Dr. Ashni Singh emphasised the government’s commitment to involving the diaspora community in Guyana’s national development. He said the administration worked to reverse changes to the re-migrant scheme, stating that engaging the diaspora is crucial to maximising the potential of the country’s human resources. To date, he said, the government has worked to enhance services to the diaspora through the revival of the Diaspora Unit and the re-establishment of stakeholder engagement programmes. Several fruitful engagements with the diaspora in recent times, the Virtual Diaspora Conference in 2021, webinars on remigration and investment in 2023, and job fairs held in Suriname, Trinidad and New York in 2024.

These, the Minister noted, have resulted in significantly higher interests in



Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Hugh Todd





# The Trump Factor

It's no secret that most people and countries around the world are apprehensive over the term of US President Donald Trump, none more so than those living without documents in the USA, some for decades.

Others, like Canadians, are worried about his threatened tariffs and what that might mean for us going forward in terms of cost of living and the overall economy.

But it's all doom and gloom. At least one country is welcoming Trump with open arms: Guyana.

The country, which has been under threat from neighbouring Venezuela which has been threatening to annex the Eseequibo region, can now rest assured that it has the US in its corner.

Trump is no fan of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who has been leading the sabre rattling against Guyana.

Indeed, in his first few days in office, Trump has maintained his position from his first term, that Maduro is a dictator.

He has imposed new sanctions on Maduro and his government, and in coming days is expected to review the licence granted to American oil giant Chevron to expand its oil operations in

Venezuela in order to recoup debt owed to it.

Venezuela has enjoyed some economic benefits from the Chevron arrangement.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio a long-time Maduro critic, and Richard Grenell, a former intelligence chief who is Trump's envoy for special missions are expected to recommend the termination of Chevron's arrangement in an effort to tighten the screws on Maduro.

Rubio, meanwhile, has met with President Irfaan Ali to assure him that the US has Guyana's back in its fight with Venezuela. This was seen as an important step to show that the Trump administration will continue to protect Guyana's -- and its own -- interests, as the major players in Guyana's oil and gas industries are American.

The moves on Venezuela, however, could spell bad news for another Caribbean country: Trinidad and Tobago, which has been depending on a deal made with Maduro to jointly develop the Dragon gas field in an effort to boost its economy.

Trump's sanctions on Venezuela could kill that deal before it starts and leave T&T in economic trouble.

More than that, Trump has already started deporting members of a deadly Venezuelan gang which has extensive operations in T&T.

According to veteran Trinidadian journalist Ken Ali, "United States President Donald Trump has taken decisive action against a deadly Venezuelan criminal group that has committed major crimes in Trinidad and Tobago.

"The Government of Dr. Keith Rowley was advised of the dreadful underworld activities of Tren de Aragua since 2020 but ignored intelligence reports.

"The brutal gangsters have committed murders, extortions, kidnappings, vehicle thefts, human, gun and drug trafficking, contraband trade, and other crimes in T&T.

"Trump has branded the group an international terrorist organisation under the Alien Enemies Act, allowing US authorities to make arrests, deport members, and seize bank accounts and other assets."

Ali continued, "Canadian security expert Dr. Justine Pierre, who was retained by Caricom, said in 2020 the gang's presence "should be a national security concern," since the criminals could "destabilise" the country. Pierre

said the gangsters, whom he described as "powerful in Venezuela," accompany undocumented migrants.

"They send women and children first," and, "in some cases, they are part of the trip with them."

"He said the criminals were "teaming up with local gangs."

Pierre said T&T was at the centre of a child trafficking and illegal adoption ring involving Venezuelan children.

Other reports tell of Tren de Aragua cells in various Venezuelan towns organising smuggling, drug trafficking, and other crimes with T&T.

When members of this gang are sent back home, it is clear that they will set their sights on T&T as their new base of operations, and this could be a disaster for a small country already grappling with historically high murder rates.

There's no doubt, then, that while Trump's presidency is good news for one, it's bad news for another. As the old people used to say, "Seepaul's luck is not Gopaul's luck."

We'll be keeping an eye on developments as they happen.

## Sugar is in good hands thanks to President Ali

Dear Editor,

I WRITE to express my heartfelt gratitude for the investments and unwavering support that your administration has shown towards the sugar industry. As a proud sugar worker, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by our industry, particularly in the East Canje area and your commitment to its revival has given us renewed hope.

The decision to invest in the modernisation of factories, the reopening of estates and the introduction of sustainable practices is not just an economic boost, but also a lifeline for thousands

of workers and their families. For many of us, the sugar industry is more than a job, it is our heritage and the backbone of our communities.

Your efforts have not only provided us with stable employment, but have also restored dignity and pride to our livelihoods. It is encouraging to see your focus on innovation and diversification within the industry, ensuring its long-term viability while safeguarding the livelihoods of workers like myself.

On behalf of my family and fellow workers, I extend our deepest gratitude to you for prioritising our welfare and

for recognising the importance of the sugar industry in Guyana's economy. We pledge our dedication to working hard and contributing to the success of this sector, knowing that we have a

government that stands by us. Thank you for believing in us. Yours faithfully,  
Sugar Worker

### Send us your letters

Equality welcomes letters to the editor from all of our readers. If you have an issue you would like to air in public, or an opinion to offer, please submit your letter to the editor to [Equalitygroup@rogers.com](mailto:Equalitygroup@rogers.com).

Please note that all letters are subjected to be edited for space and to ensure they meet our legal requirements. Letter writers must include contact information, which will be withheld from publication, so we can contact the writer to ensure the authenticity of the contribution.



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# Bars and restaurants gird themselves for looming booze battle with the USA

Bars and restaurants in Ottawa are gearing up for a cross-border booze battle.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said last week he'll ban the sale of American liquor and wine at LCBO stores if the U.S. follows through with President Donald Trump's 25 per cent tariff threat.

"I have sent a direction to the LCBO, if these tariffs come, to clear off every bit of U.S. alcohol off the shelves," Ford said last week. "Let's start promoting more Ontario-made wines and the vodkas and spirits."

The threat sent Jeremy Gaulin racing to stock up. He's the beverage director for Mati Inc., owner of several restaurants on Preston Street.

"I kind of freaked out when I found out, dropped what I was doing, ran to an LCBO and cleared off the shelves just in case," Gaulin told CBC's Ottawa Morning. "We don't know how long this battle will last, so we decided to be prepared."

Gaulin said customers want American wine and liquor, particularly bourbon — and that's good for his own bottom line.

"Bourbon and U.S. spirits have kind of a cult following. The profit margins on, especially Napa Valley wines, are very high," he explained.

Nor is it a simple matter of replacing one for the other, he said.

"Canadian whiskey is amazing, but when people think of an Old Fashioned, they think of bourbon. That's a very big seller for us."

Ivan Gedz had a different reaction to Ford's ultimatum. The owner of Union Local 613 on Somerset Street W. sees it as a potential opportunity to introduce patrons to something new.

"I think it's an opportunity for people to grab it by its horns and shift and maybe try different things," said Gedz. "We're very monkey see, monkey do ... because our buddy is drinking bourbon,



American liquor brands such as Jack Daniel's could disappear from LCBO shelves

well then I need to drink bourbon."

Gedz pointed out there are excellent whiskeys from other countries including Japan, and said he hasn't sipped a Californian Cabernet in 10 years.

"There's a plethora of wines not only from Canada but from Europe that I would argue are vastly superior," he said. "I get why people like [U.S. wines] but ... everybody can get over it and drink something else."

While he agrees, Gaulin said customers want what they want, and he worries Ford's plan to fight tariffs could hurt his bottom line.

"Unfortunately, when it comes to California wines, they hit on all the notes that a lot of people are looking for. Sometimes the customer doesn't want to be challenged. They like what's comfortable," he said. "At the end of the day, we want to keep the lights on and we want

to keep our guests happy."

American producers also don't want this fight to escalate, warning that "tit-for-tat" tariffs will cost American jobs.

"We hope [Canada] will consider not responding in kind," said Chris Swonger, president and CEO of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. (CBC)

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# Miscalculation, misleading interpretation of debt burden



Joel Bhagwandin

Incorrect calculation & misleading interpretation of increased debt burden per household by opposition spokesperson on finance: Increased public debt burden per household in nominal terms offset by tax reliefs and subsidies per household in real terms

The APNU/AFC's spokesperson on finance in the National Assembly contends that the PPP/C Gov't will add some \$5.9 million in debt per household. First off, her calculation is incorrect, which is dealt with hereunder. It is important to note that the increase in debt burden per household would only be realized in a real sense if the increase in debt is accompanied by increase in taxes. However, this has not been the case. In fact, the PPP/C Gov't has been offsetting the increase in debt burden per household with tax reliefs and both direct and indirect subsidies per household.

Secondly, in my calculation, I chose 2021 as the base year and not 2020. Reason being, the total public debt stock was unlawfully understated by the APNU-AFC between 2015-2020 by over \$100 billion, inter alia, the Bank of Guyana overdraft. In 2021, the PPP/C Gov't remedied this financial illegality by converting the overdraft into treasury bills, which was then added to the total stock of debt. As such, the total public debt is projected to increase by \$1.163 trillion by the end of 2025 from where it was in 2021. Therefore, with a total household of approximately 300k, the increase in the debt burden per household works out to \$3.9 million albeit in nominal terms. This means that the opposition finance spokesperson overstated her estimate by \$2 million.

As established earlier, the increase in the debt burden is in nominal terms per household, which is offset in real terms by tax reliefs, subsidies and indirect subsidies as well as measures to increase disposable household income by



the PPP/C Gov't, vis-à-vis, reduction in taxes. To this end, net disposable income is projected to increase by \$288.8 billion by the end of 2025 to reach an estimated \$415.7 billion from \$126.9 billion in 2020 (calculations are based on the personal income tax data and the effective tax rate).

Additionally, the indirect Cost of Living (CoL) measures aggregate to an estimated \$324 billion, giving rise to a combined total of \$612.8 billion increase in household income coupled with household direct and indirect subsidies. The 50% anticipated reduction in electricity cost by the end of the year when the Gas-to-Energy (GtE) project is realized will add another \$20 billion in savings, adding to disposable income at the household level. Altogether, these measures translate to approximately \$2.1 million per household.

In summary, the increased debt per household as alluded to by the opposi-

tion spokesperson amounts to \$3.9 million per household and not \$5.9 million. Be that as it may, this is a nominal increase in the sense that it is not actually realized such that the tax burden per household has not increased to service the national debt. The fact is that the PPP/C Government has reduced taxes, which means that each household will benefit from tax reliefs per household of approximately \$2.1 million in real terms.

(Note: This demonstration was merely to show that the fiscal measures in the budget together with the strategic investments in the various sectors and projects: how these would translate to net household benefit, offsetting nominal household debt. There is a menu of other measures and other factors excluded from this analysis, which would significantly add to the net household benefit).



Brian Tiwarie, OMC, AA - CEO



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# Leading Mexican oil & gas company Gold sponsor for Guyana Energy Conference

THE Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo (GECSCCE) is pleased to welcome Cotemar SA de CV onboard as a Gold Sponsor for the 2025 edition of our flagship event.

Cotemar is a leading Mexican company that provides services related to developing offshore oil fields through specialised vessels. It performs maintenance and rehabilitation of platforms and process centres in offshore facilities. It also provides catering and accommodation services and supports vessels, transport operations, and specialised services.

Additionally, it is a key provider in the supply chain industry and a manufacturer of steel components for the oil, gas, and industrial sectors. The company was incorporated in 1979 and is based in Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche, Mexico. It has over 5,500 employees and over 15 vessels to offer comprehensive solutions.

Since 2016, this leading company has been working on the onshore oil exploration and production through its subsidiary, Lifting de México. It is the first private company to extract hydrocarbons and explore oil fields for potential future exploitation and the only one in the sector to be funded exclusively with Mexican capital.

GECSCCE Chairman, Mr. Anthony Whyte, commended Cotemar for its considerable support of the region's most dynamic energy conference and expo.

Mr. Whyte said, "While Guyana has been considered the world's fastest-growing economy for five consecutive years, sustaining this incredible growth trajectory will necessitate forging connections with experienced global partners. I am therefore pleased to welcome Cotemar on board. It will not only be able to interface with leaders within Guyana's booming oil and gas sector, but certainly, it can share its expertise and showcase its technological prowess to authorities."

The Chairman concluded, "I wish Cotemar every success in its participation. It will set new benchmarks for private sector partnerships between our nations."

Cotemar is committed to strengthening and developing the energy industry and Mexico's well-being. The company provides comprehensive solutions for offshore exploration and production (E&P), adhering to stringent national and international standards for safety, quality, environmental protection, and health. True to its philosophy of being "one stop to get it done and done right," the company has earned the trust of its clients, positioning itself as the go-to partner.

The Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain reiterates appreciation for Cotemar's support and looks forward



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to facilitating discussions to integrate its advanced technologies and strategies within the local market.

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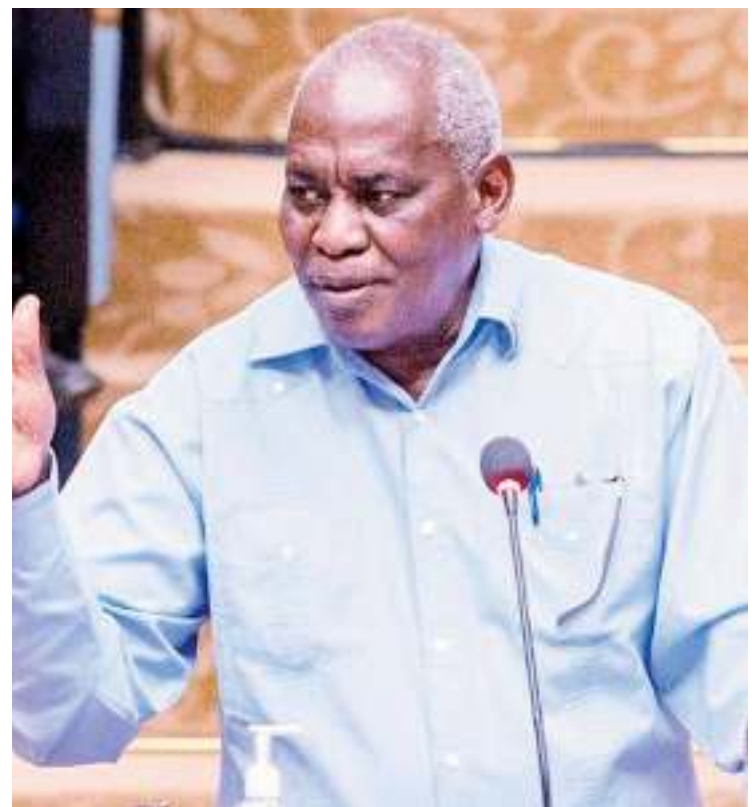
## Drug trade straining security forces

Minister of Home Affairs Robeson Benn on Monday told the National Assembly that the drug trafficking situation here is putting tremendous pressure on the security sector.

During the debates on the 2025 National Budget the minister told the House that there has been an increase of transnational crime but it is not directly related to Guyana, instead it is a result of the drug trade. "We are not the marketplace for the drugs. We are transit points, and the fact that the drug trafficking activity and the criminality bring tremendous pressures in relation to the security sphere. We will continue to fight. We're putting more money into this effort, and we are working at continuing to bring down the planes and to make the necessary seizures to deal with this nefarious business," Minister Benn told the House.

Speaking on narcotic seizures by the Guyana Police Force, in 2024, Benn said there were 1463 seizures, 581 reports, 1379 cases and 77 convictions. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) saw 31 reports and six cases being made. "The Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit made the significant seizure of over 4000 kilograms of cocaine seen in our country over the years, the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Police Force also seized after discovering particular types of submersible vessels, three vessels, which were being intended for use for drug trafficking..." Benn said.

While there have been concerns in relation to the crime rate in the country, Benn said over the last few years "we have had a reduction in serious crimes by 12.2%." Referencing the comments of Former Minister Khemraj



Home Affairs Minister Robeson Benn

Ramjattan on domestic violence Minister Benn said that last year they recorded 1535 reports of domestic violence of which 911 cases were made and there were 167 convictions, which is an increase from 2023.





Minister Mustapha alongside Inter-American Development Bank Country Representative in Guyana, Lorena Solorzano-Salazar cutting the ribbon

# Guyana launches \$520M food-safety lab to drive agricultural transformation

GUYANA has achieved a new standard of improving food quality and public health with the launch of the Guyana Food Safety Authority's laboratory and office at the Ministry of Agriculture's La Bonne Intention complex on the East Coast of Demerara.

The state-of-the-art facility, commissioned by Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha on Saturday morning, is a crucial part of the government's ongoing commitment to safeguarding public health and promoting food safety across the country.

The facility boasts some of the best testing capabilities in Guyana, designed to improve the quality of locally produced food and protect the public's health. Dr Richard Blair, Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture, emphasised the importance of food safety on a national scale.

"This commissioning is a commitment on the part of the government of Guyana to ensure that the food we produce, consume, and export meets the highest safety standards. Food safety, however, is not only about public health—it is an integral part of our national development; it protects our citizens and builds consumer trust," he explained.

Minister Mustapha addressed a gathering of farmers, residents, and

other stakeholders, underscoring the role of the laboratory in Guyana's agricultural transformation.

"This laboratory is a testament to where we want the sector to move. Guyana's agricultural sector is undergoing rapid transformation," he remarked. He further emphasised that the facility has long been a goal for the current administration, aimed at reducing and ensuring the quality of Guyana's food products.

"According to the World Health Organization, around 600 million people, almost one in every 10 in the world, fall ill after eating contaminated food. And almost 420,000 people die from contaminated food annually. He further added, "Our government wants to ensure that food is safe, and as a result, we are strengthening the capability of the Guyana Food Safety Authority."

The facility also supports Guyana's ambitious "25 by 2025" initiative, which aims to reduce the food-importation bill for CARICOM by 25% by the end of 2025.

"To take advantage of the opportunities created by the 25 by 2025 initiative, we must reduce the food-import bill by 25% by the end of this year within CARICOM," Minister Mustapha stated. He urged farmers and

agro-processors to seize the opportunities presented by this initiative: "You, the farmers and agro-processors here, will need to fill the gaps created when we reduce 25% of the imports into the region."

He also stressed Guyana's growing role in the region's food market. "Guyana is becoming a regional food hub and a leading player in the Caribbean's agri-food market. We have seen a renewed interest, with more people entering the agriculture sector. The opportunities are abundant, not just in Guyana, but in the region as a whole," he said.

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Country Representative in Guyana, Lorena Solorzano-Salazar, highlighted the collaboration between the IDB and the Government of Guyana in advancing food safety.

"This is a milestone in this collaboration with the Government of Guyana, sharing a vision to ensure food safety and public health in Guyana. It's not just about food; it impacts several areas of the economy, including the social sectors," she said.

The facility was funded through a partnership with the IDB, with more than GY\$520 million invested in outfitting the laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment capable of testing a wide

range of commodities to ensure their safety for consumption. This equipment will also enable sophisticated traceability studies and analyses, keeping the country ahead in the rapidly evolving global food-safety landscape.

This laboratory is part of the larger Sustainable Agriculture Development Programme, financed by the IDB and implemented by the Government of Guyana. Solorzano-Salazar further elaborated, "It's essential to establish high standards because today, it's not just about growing the products, but also about meeting the demands of both international and local markets. Consumers expect flexibility and quality in what they eat and drink."

Detailing the lab's capabilities, Solorzano-Salazar added, "This laboratory performs a variety of tests, including contamination testing, authenticity testing, and nutritional analysis. Food safety laboratories worldwide are critical for trade because they ensure that food products meet safety standards and comply with regulations." She also pointed out the lab's importance for capacity building, saying, "It's key to building the capacity of the authority to meet national and international food-safety standards, and it's encouraging to see students here—it's also a learning lab."



# Public, private healthcare systems being strengthened – VP Jagdeo

The opposition’s criticisms of the government’s strategy to ensure equitable healthcare for all have been rubbished by People’s Progressive Party (PPP) General Secretary and the country’s Vice President, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo.

At a recent news conference at Freedom House, Jagdeo responded to the opposition’s commentary regarding the \$1.38 trillion budget. He specifically addressed the concerns raised about the healthcare sector, emphasizing the government’s comprehensive plan to strengthen both public and private healthcare systems.

Opposition members, such as Alliance for Change (AFC) Leader, Nigel Hughes have made a series of claims in relation to the government providing a \$10,000 Universal Healthcare Voucher this year to every person in the country to help finance a basic menu of medical tests.

Although this intervention will benefit some 500,000 individuals, it was still met with fault-finding by the opposition. In a Facebook post, Hughes claimed that the investment being made by the government is aimed at “fattening the wallets” of private healthcare providers.

Not only did Dr Jagdeo reject this but he also highlighted the shallowness of this analysis. While Hughes claimed that public hospitals “desperately” need investment, the General Secretary pointed to the positive trajectory that the public healthcare system is undergoing because of the PPP’s interventions.



PPP General Secretary and Guyana’s Vice President, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo

One example of this is the 12 new regional hospitals that will come on stream shortly.

Further, he said that the services provided in these hospitals will be upgraded when it comes to management, cutting-edge technology and staffing, to

name a few.

“So public healthcare will be upgraded,” Jagdeo said.

However, he noted that this cannot solve all of the problems within Guyana’s healthcare system. Tax incentives for private healthcare are benefi-

cial because they encourage investment in infrastructure and services, improve accessibility and quality of care and because of this, the government has given tax incentives to private health facilities, he said.

As a result, Guyanese have seen an expansion in private healthcare. Speaking more on the universal healthcare voucher, he said: “Now, this voucher is for every Guyanese. It is to expand on what we have already.”

“Just imagine 500,000 Guyanese want to go this year to the public health system and try to get those tests. You will overload the system.”

He added, “The public health system must continue doing its work. And this is one way of getting service to our people and give them choices. They collect a voucher. They can still choose to go to the Georgetown Hospital and do it, and not use the voucher.”

Additionally, he said these vouchers along with the others, like the cervical cancer voucher, are a demonstration of the government caring for its people.

Highlighting the mentality of the Opposition, Dr Jagdeo said: “Should we just open the ophthalmology centre that they (APNU+AFC) closed, that was built in when I was president, [and] should we not give the kids now their money to buy a spectacle and or get your eyes tested or pensioners or let’s wait only for the public sector to provide those. It will take 50 years and people won’t be seeing, they would die and the children grow old and die. That’s the APNU mindset.”

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 [www.wgc-org.com](http://www.wgc-org.com)

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# Hospitality sector earned approximately \$13.6 billion in 2024

Estimates of tourism sector revenue for 2024 reached approximately \$13.6 billion Guyana dollars, according to Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Oneidge Walrond.

Minister Walrond was, at the time, delivering her presentation on Day 2 of the Budget Debates in Parliament on Monday. She emphasised the sector’s growth and its significant contribution to employment, with nearly 22,000 people directly or indirectly working in hospitality across the country.

Minister Walrond highlighted the increasing confidence of the private sector in tourism investments. “For hotels, we have seen more than \$35 billion of investment; lodges have seen \$21 million dollars in investment resorts \$200 million, local airlines \$600 million, malls \$12 billion with a total investment by the private sector of almost \$50 billion,” she said.

She also noted the expansion of Guyana’s room stock between 2020 and 2024, with the addition of four new hotels and 561 rooms, including facilities in Regions 2, 6, 7, and 10. “When you include ancillary services, almost 22,000 people are employed in the hospitality sector, and this employment follows the more than 1500 jobs that were created during the construction phase of the various new facilities,” she noted while pointing out that the PPP/C Government has exceeded its promise of 50,000 jobs.

Minister Walrond reflected on criticisms surrounding the government’s Expressions of Interest for internationally branded hotels, noting the sharp increase in demand. By 2023, occupancy in the business segment had



Tourism Industry and-Commerce Minister, Oneidge-Walrond

reached 83%, and grew by a further 5% in 2024, with similar increases in smaller segments of the hospitality sector.

She directly addressed comments made by Opposition MP Juretha Fernandes, who denigrated jobs in the hospitality sector as “washing hotel sheets and mopping hotel floors” and suggested that Guyanese cannot afford to stay in local hotels. “They come to this house disparaging jobs which offer steady employment, offer opportunities for advancement, as well as inclusion in the social safety net through the National Insurance Scheme,” she said.

Minister Walrond also dismissed opposition claims that the current government’s achievements are solely due to greater resources from oil revenue. “Before 2015, without even the prospect of oil resources, within the fiscal space available, the PPP government found the money to pay cash grants of \$15,000 per year to school children. The APNU/AFC came into

office, riding the wave of the first oil discovery in 2015 and took that grant away,” she pointed out.

In addressing statements that the budget does not consider small businesses and ordinary Guyanese, Minister Walrond spoke of the over 2000 small contractors across the country, who benefitted from approximately \$27 Billion in contracts to upgrade and enhance infrastructure in their communities.

“Many of these people are first-time contractors, and absent our deliberate policy of facilitation and community empowerment, they would not have had the opportunities that they do today,” she stressed.

She underscored the government’s investments in small business and industrial development, reporting that \$3 billion has been allocated to support small businesses in Regions 2, 3, 4, and 10. The Onderneeming Industrial Estate is now 95% complete and scheduled for rollout in early 2025, offering 90 business plots. Meanwhile, progress continues at the York Industrial Estate in Region 10, also slated for completion in 2025.

Minister Walrond noted the transformation of the Belvedere and Lethem Incubator Centres, which were once mere shells, in 2020. Today, these state-of-the-art agro-processing facilities are providing tangible benefits to the agro-processing sector in Regions 6 and 9.

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# President Ali calls for expansive collaboration with China in 2025

PRESIDENT, Dr Irfaan Ali has said that as China embarks on the Lunar New Year, Guyana looks forward to deepening the bonds of friendship and collaboration.

While extending wishes to all on the occasion of the Chinese Lunar New Year and Spring Festival 2025, the head of state on Friday noted that this year, they celebrate the year of the snake.

He called this animal “a symbol of wisdom, resilience, and transformation,” adding that “The snake’s graceful movements and its ability to shed its skin remind us of the importance of renewal and adaptability, qualities that are vital in navigating the ever-changing global economic landscape.”

President Ali went on to add that the Year of the Snake also encourages us to harness intelligence and insight to foster economic growth, while strengthening social bonds and achieving sustainable development for our people.

Against this backdrop, he stated that China’s remarkable achievements over the years continue to serve as an inspiration to the global community.

“As we embark on this new year, we look forward to deepening the bonds of friendship and collaboration



Charge d’Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Guyana, Huang Rui

between our two nations,” he said.

Further to this, Dr Ali indicated that while the Chinese presence in Guyana can be traced back more than 170 years, the community has made an inerasable contribution to Guyana’s development.

This partnership continues to yield mutual benefits in areas such as infrastructure, education, technology, and cultural exchanges.

He said: “Together, we can tackle shared challenges, seize emerging opportunities and contribute to the

collective advancement of humanity. Let us commit to expanding our collaboration in 2025, guided by the positive traits of the snake: foresight, perseverance, and a harmonious spirit.”

Meanwhile, on the same note, Charge d’Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Guyana, Huang Rui indicated that bilateral ties between the two countries grew even closer last year as Guyana and China co-operated closely economically and culturally.

“China and Guyana have become good friends and trusted and relied on each other,” he said.

Speaking on the Lunar New Year, the Chinese diplomat added that the year of the dragon is slipping away as the year of the snake is quietly approaching.

The Lunar New Year or Spring Festival he added, has not only been the Chinese traditional holiday, but it has also become an international one.

“The year of the snake is a year of smoothness, strength and vitality,” the Charge d’Affaires noted.



Lunar New Year celebrations in Guyana

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# Dartmouth farmers reap rewards as President Ali delivers on promises

FARMERS in Dartmouth village on the Essequibo Coast are celebrating a significant boost in agricultural production, thanks to the fulfilment of commitments made by President, Dr. Irfaan Ali. Regional Chairperson of Region Two, Vilma DeSilva, commended the President for his swift action in addressing the farmers' needs, particularly the clearing of 300 acres of dormant farmland for cultivation.

In an interview, Da Silva highlighted the progress made since President Ali's outreach to the region in December. Over 180 acres of land is already being used for red-bean production and additional acreage is being prepared to further expand cultivation efforts.

"These requests for land-clearing were made by the farmers during President Ali's visit and he immediately instructed that 300 acres of land be cleared to assist Dartmouth farmers," Da Silva explained. She also noted that a trasher was provided to reduce the labour required for the task.

Acknowledging the exceptional quality of red beans produced in the region, President Ali directed that farmers receive high-yielding bean varieties to strengthen their production capabilities. The initiative is expected to meet domestic demand and open opportunities for regional exports.

Support from the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) has also been instrumental, as extension officers provide guidance to ensure that crops remain pest-free and healthy.

Da Silva praised Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha for his unwavering commitment to the farmers in Region Two and beyond. She emphasised his hands-on approach to addressing farmers' concerns and providing essential tools and planting materials.

"Compared to where our region's agriculture was before 2020 and where it is now, the progress is unmatched. Minister Mustapha has gone above and beyond to ensure that farmers are empowered and their needs are addressed," she remarked.

For the first time in Guyana's history, farmers in the Pomeroon area now have access to free drainage services to enhance productivity. Four new excavators are working daily to drain farmlands and dredge koker trenches and outfalls, facilitating a smoother return to cultivation.

Additionally, Minister Mustapha has distributed over 7,000 Green Dwarf coconuts to farmers and pledged to provide more high-yielding planting materials. New varieties of cocoa and coffee are also being developed to benefit farmers, their families and the country's economy.



A view of the farmland cleared by the PPP/C government for the farmers

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**NEW HOUSE FOR MOM:** IN a heartwarming display of community and compassion, the Men on Mission (MoM) initiative, spearheaded by the Government of Guyana, handed over a newly constructed home to Ameena Elliot, a deserving resident of Enterprise on Saturday.

The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony, and key members of the MoM team, who expressed their commitment to uplifting vulnerable individuals and families across Guyana.

Ameena Elliot, the recipient of this life-changing gesture, expressed profound gratitude for her new home, which symbolises hope and a fresh start. Her story of resilience resonated with those in attendance, highlighting the importance of initiatives like MoM in transforming lives.

The programme which focuses on providing support and empowerment to those in need, has successfully delivered numerous homes to individuals and families across the country. This latest project in Enterprise underscores the Government's commitment to inclusivity and its vision for a better Guyana.

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# Gov't ensuring country's oil resources reach all of Guyana –Minister Bharrat

MINISTER of Natural Resources, Vickram Bharrat, has affirmed that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) government has and will continue to ensure that the benefits of Guyana's oil resources reach all citizens of Guyana.

Bharrat made this known during the second day of the 2025 national budget debate in the National Assembly, where he underscored that the government has implemented a significant number of initiatives to ensure prosperity for all.

The Natural Resources Minister called out the opposition for their lofty promises and claims of how they would manage the oil and gas sector of the country.

He said: "You come to the National Assembly with all these lofty promises and recommendations that we will manage this sector and that we will ensure that the oil money reaches down to the people.

"Mr Speaker, we are doing that! The People's Progressive Party/Civic is doing that and we will continue to do that in President Ali's second term in office after the 2025 election," he affirmed.

Bharrat, in calling out two opposition members, noted that when he listened to their recommendations, these are the very projects being implemented by the PPP/C government.

"So, I'm wondering if they're really following what is happening in this country or not," he lamented.

The minister noted that opposition members will come again as they did in 2015 and 2020 with lofty promises such as implementing a \$400,000



Minister of Natural Resources, Vickram Bharrat

threshold or \$80,000 pension, and a \$1 million cash grant.

However, he reminded the viewing and listening public that those were the same persons who took away the cash grant from students, added VAT on light and water and even education.

Addressing their recommendations, he said, "Apparently you have no idea as to the revenue earnings of our country because you would simply make our country bankrupt... we will be unable to do anything regardless of whether it is infrastructure, whether it is healthcare, whether it is education... or any other services, we will be a bankrupt country once you follow your policy."

Comparing and contrasting the policies based on track records, Bharrat said the people of the country will be able to see for themselves whether the PPP/C is good for the country, or if they would prefer to go back to fake promises from the group of people whose relationship is on "life support."

The minister noted that the current PPP/C administration has led with transparency, and further added that the people of Guyana deserve to know how the revenue garnered from the natural resources sector in the country is being spent on managing the country.

Against this backdrop, he indicated that the PPP/C government is doing and implementing plans and pro-

grammes to ensure that Guyanese and Guyanese businesses prosper.

Bharrat noted that one opposition MP spoke at length about new revenue and the amount of revenue that exists now.

"He failed to realise it is because of the prudent management of the resources and the economy that we are in the position that we are today," the Natural Resources Minister said.

He added: "It is not how much you have; it is how well you manage it."

With this, he reiterated that Guyana's resources are being managed properly with the revenue being used to ensure Guyanese have better lives.

## GRA is now your 'Padna', introduces new App

AS the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) continues to take steps toward modernising its services, the tax body has launched 'Padna,' a mobile application designed to facilitate taxpayer

registration and improve tax compliance. The initiative, which is part of the agency's broader digital transformation strategy, was unveiled at GRA's headquarters on Monday.

The Head of Information Technology (IT) at GRA, Sese Jones, explained that the term 'Padna' is derived from the agency's slogan, "Your partner in development."

He likened it to having a personal friend within the GRA, emphasising that it aims to streamline the process of obtaining documents. He said the app is designed to eliminate traditional barriers to taxpayer registration, such as lengthy paperwork and in-person visits to GRA offices.

"So, the key objectives for the product are to improve taxpayer engagement. We want a one-on-one conversation with you guys. We want to make that engagement closer and provide a convenient means for you to conduct your business at the GRA via mobile device," Jones added.

The app allows individuals and businesses to register for a Taxpayer

Identification Number (TIN), a critical requirement for conducting transactions in Guyana. It also includes features for updating personal and business details, tracking application statuses, notifications of important events related to the processing of documents and accessing tax-related information.

The 'Panda' app is available for download on both Android and iOS devices through the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. Upon downloading, users are required to create an account using a valid email address. Once registered, they can follow a step-by-step process to apply for their TIN by providing essential information, including proof of identification, contact details, and, for businesses, company registration documents. Once this information is verified, applicants will be required to visit their nearest GRA office to pay the necessary fees and uplift their document.

The app features a vehicle tax and income tax calculator, enabling taxpayers to easily estimate taxes for their ve-

hicles. The app uses a secure platform to protect users' personal data and employs advanced encryption methods to ensure privacy and security.

The app also generates quick-response (QR) codes that can be used for authentication purposes with banks and other institutions, ensuring secure and efficient verification of information.

Jones explained: "Our second feature, which I think you'd enjoy, is all documents that we issue—we give you an electronic version. The expectation is that we'll be working with our stakeholders: national institutions, banks and any other ministries. On the part of those agencies, you provide them a counterpart app, which allows them to look up any information you present to them. You present it through our code, and then they're able to pull up facts about what you just presented." For those who may require assistance, the app features a built-in help section with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), video tutorials and the option to contact GRA's support team.

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# US maintains support for Guyana's territorial integrity

THE United States of American, under the new Donald Trump administration, has reaffirmed its support for Guyana's territorial integrity in the ongoing border controversy with Venezuela.

According to information from the US State Department, the US' position was highlighted by Secretary of State, Marco Rubio during a call with the President of Guyana, Dr. Irfaan Ali.

"Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Guyanese President Irfaan Ali spoke today [Monday] to address the crisis of illegal migration and agreed to jointly address this regional imperative and challenge. The Secretary affirmed the United States' steadfast support of Guyana's territorial integrity in the face of Nicolás Maduro and his cronies' belligerent actions," the US State Department said.

Guyana had recently condemned the latest actions of Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro to assert claims over the Essequibo region.

The country via a statement through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed 'grave concern' regarding actions and statements by the Government of Venezuela, which constitutes a clear violation of the Argyle Agreement of December 14, 2023, and the binding Order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued on December 1, 2023.

The ministry had cited the Argyle Agreement, signed in the presence of regional and international interlocutors.

It reminded that this binding agreement unequivocally commits Guyana and Venezuela to refrain from escalating any conflict or disagreement arising from the territorial controversy between the two States.

"This includes refraining from actions that could aggravate tensions or alter the current situation in the disputed territory, pending resolution in accordance with international law," the statement read, adding:

"However, the announcement by President Nicolás Maduro on January 7, 2025, regarding the election of a "Governor of the Guayana Esequiba" by "the people of Guayana Esequiba" constitutes a direct violation of these commitments. This unilateral action disregards



President Irfaan Ali met with new US Secretary of State Marco Rubio

the spirit of the Argyle Agreement undermines the agreed framework for dialogue and peaceful coexistence and significantly escalates tensions between our nations."

The ministry noted that Venezuela's most recent assertion would be "flagrant violation" of the most fundamental principles of international law, if it forges ahead with its attempt to conduct an election in Guyanese territory involving the participation of Guyanese nationals.

Guyana also pointed out Venezuela's violation of the international court's December 2023 order, which stated that both States must avoid

actions that might aggravate or extend the controversy or make it more difficult to resolve.

Local authorities have maintained Guyana's commitment to the Rule of Law, and, more specifically, the ongoing case before the International Court of Justice.

In December, the country submitted its final written brief to the ICJ in the ongoing border controversy with Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela over Guyana's Essequibo region.

The submission, titled "Guyana's Reply to Venezuela's Counter-Memorial," was personally delivered to the Court by Guyana's Ambassador to Brus-

sels, Sasenarine Singh, marking a critical step in the case that has been ongoing for over six years.

After Guyana's submission, Venezuela will have the opportunity to file its rejoinder by August 2025, responding to Guyana's reply. Once both sides have submitted their written pleadings, the Court will schedule oral hearings.

Guyana remains optimistic that the ICJ will rule in its favour, reinforcing the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award, and confirming that the boundary established therein remains the definitive border between the two countries.



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President Trump with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

## Trump says India 'will do what's right' on illegal immigration

US President Donald Trump has said India "will do what's right" on the deportation of illegal migrants following a phone call with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The leaders spoke on Monday, their first conversation since Trump's inauguration last week.

They discussed immigration, security issues and trade in what the White House described as a "productive call".

Trump told reporters after the call that Modi was likely to visit the United States "sometime in February".

Since taking office on 20 January, Trump has announced a number of immigration-related executive orders, paving the way for a widespread effort to crack down on undocumented migrants in the US.

According to the Pew Research Center, there are an estimated 725,000 undocumented Indian immigrants in the US as of 2024.

Last week, India's foreign ministry said Delhi would take in Indians overstaying "anywhere in the world" as long as their documents were shared and nationality was verified.

In their phone call on Monday, the ministry said, Trump and Modi discussed the bilateral relationship, "including in the areas of technology, trade, investment, energy and defence".

The two leaders also discussed security in the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East and Europe.

According to a White House statement, Trump emphasised the importance of India increasing its procurement of US-made security equipment and moving towards a "fair" bilateral trading relationship.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Modi called Trump a "dear friend" and said they were "committed to a mutually beneficial and trusted partnership".

The White House said both leaders emphasised their commitment to advancing their countries' strategic partnership and the Indo-Pacific Quad partnership, which also includes Japan and Australia.

India will be hosting Quad leaders for the first time later this year.

Modi and Trump shared cordial relations during the US president's first term between 2017 and

2021.

But India faced a bitter tariff war with the Trump administration that affected businesses on both sides.

In November, following Trump's election victory, India's Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said the country was not nervous about working with the US president.

Trump had called Modi a "great leader" last year but also accused India of charging excessive tariffs.

Analysts say it will be interesting to watch if the bonhomie between the two will help overcome concerns about trade and immigration.

A cornerstone of Trump's immigration policy is removing unlawful migrants out of the US and the promise of "mass deportations".

To that effect, the defence department has said that it will provide military aircrafts to deport more than 5,000 people that have been detained by Border Patrol in San Diego and El Paso, Texas.

ICE statistics show that over 1,000 people were removed or repatriated on Thursday, the fourth day of the Trump administration.

Border czar Tom Homan has vowed that the deportations would increase steadily going forward.

Over the weekend, Trump's deportation flights caused a brief diplomatic spat after Colombia's government barred two military planes carrying Colombians deported from the US from landing.

The country's president, Gustavo Petro, said that "the US can't treat Colombian migrants like criminals" and that they need to be "treated with dignity".

His government, however, appears to have agreed to accept the flights after the Trump administration threatened Colombia with punitive tariffs.

Trump has also moved to expand the scope of expedited deportations of undocumented migrants, reviving a policy under his first term that Biden had discontinued.

Expedited removals were previously limited to areas within 100 miles (160km) of US international borders, and applied to those who did not request asylum or failed to show a legitimate case for asylum.



**ARIES (March 21 - April 20):** You may have to make some kind of adjustment today, most likely because you aimed a bit too high and now realize you won't hit your target unless you make changes. Don't get angry with yourself: mistakes are how we learn and grow.

**TAURUS (April 21 - May 21):** You may want to make a good impression on employers and people in positions of power but don't push yourself too hard or too fast or the impression could be the opposite of what you intended. Avoid making plans that clearly won't work.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21):** You will be in an argumentative mood today but the planets warn if you go looking for a fight you could find yourself up against someone who is better informed than you are. You may think you are smart but there is always someone with a bigger brain!

**CANCER (June 22 - July 23):** Is what you think you are seeing what is actually there or are you fooling yourself into believing that your opinions are based on fact when in reality they are mostly illusions? It's probably the latter, so look again and see the bigger picture.

**LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23):** If you listen to what a friend or loved one tells you today it could stop you from making a serious mistake. You will, of course, have to admit that you made the wrong call but rather than falling flat on your face and looking stupid!

**VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23):** There seems to be a wide gulf between what you want to be doing and what you are actually doing on a daily basis. The only way to close that gap is to admit that you made a wrong turn and then make the effort to change direction.

**LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23):** Amazing ideas will flood into your head over the next few days, leading you to believe that you are on the verge of something great. That may be true but you cannot possibly do justice to all those ideas, so be ruthless and junk most of them.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22):** You may not be thinking straight at the moment, which could be dangerous. Put your feelings on hold for the next 24 hours and proceed only on the basis of facts and figures that cannot be denied either by you or by other people.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21):** You have some pretty big projects lined up but it would be unwise to launch yourself at them without serious planning. Energy and enthusiasm can take you a long way but success is more likely to come when you add intelligence to the mix.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20):** It is inevitable that you will disagree with what you are expected to do today and it is just as inevitable that you will have to do it anyway. Once you accept that simple fact you can focus on finding ways to make your responsibilities less of a chore.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19):** You always expect a lot of yourself and it has become obvious of late that in one or more areas you are expecting too much. Be kind to yourself today and do something that doesn't challenge you so much. You're allowed to take a break!

**PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20):** Avoid getting pulled into other people's disputes, which are sure to be petty and cannot benefit you in any way at all. No matter how much friends and colleagues beg you to sign up to their side you can and you must stay neutral.

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# US Coast Guard deployed to stop illegal migrants from the Caribbean

The U.S. Coast Guard has launched immediate actions to strengthen maritime border security in response to executive orders issued by the White House on January 21.

Acting Commandant Adm. Kevin Lunday announced a surge in Coast Guard assets across key maritime regions, including the Florida Straits and Caribbean waters, to deter illegal activities and curb maritime migration from Haiti and Cuba.

“The U.S. Coast Guard is the world’s premier maritime law enforcement agency, vital to protecting America’s maritime borders, territorial integrity, and sovereignty,” Adm. Lunday stated. “Per the President’s Executive Orders, I have directed my operational commanders to immediately surge cutters, aircraft, boats, and deployable specialized forces.”

The enhanced measures focus on several regions:

**The Florida Straits and Caribbean Waters:** To deter maritime mass migration from Haiti and Cuba.

**The Bahamas-South Florida Maritime Border:** To address illicit activities in a key trafficking route.

**U.S. Territories in the Pacific and Caribbean:** Including Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam.

**The Gulf of Mexico and Texas-**



**The US Coast Guard will be employing enhanced measures in the Caribbean**

**Mexico Maritime Border:** Addressing illegal migration and trafficking, referred to as the “Gulf of America” in the announcement.

Adm. Lunday emphasized collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense, stating, “Together...we will detect, deter, and interdict illegal migration, drug smuggling, and other terrorist or hostile activity before it reaches our border.”

The Florida Straits have been a hotspot for migration from Haiti and

Cuba, but maritime arrivals have declined in recent months. Land arrivals have dropped from near-daily occurrences to fewer than one per month. While Haitian arrivals surged between 2022 and 2023, the journeys were less frequent but involved larger vessels and groups.

Despite ongoing turmoil in Haiti, including escalating violence by armed gangs, maritime migration from the country has significantly decreased. The most recent large arrival in South Florida occurred in June when a sail-

boat carrying about 120 Haitian migrants landed in Key West.

The Coast Guard’s bolstered presence aims to address these migration trends while targeting other illicit activities, such as drug smuggling, across the region.

This move underscores the administration’s focus on securing U.S. maritime borders, particularly in areas vulnerable to mass migration and transnational crime.

## Jamaica to welcome more European tourists this year

Jamaica is preparing to welcome thousands of European travelers in 2025, thanks to new agreements with Switzerland’s Edelweiss, Portugal’s World2Fly, and Germany’s TUI Group, according to Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett. The minister and his team have been working to secure additional flight routes, with some new services set to begin as early as June 2025.

These announcements were made at the 45th International Tourism Fair (FITUR) in Madrid, Spain, where Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett, Senior Adviser and Strategist Delano Seiveright, and Director of Tourism Donovan White engaged with global tourism leaders. FITUR, a prominent event for tourism professionals worldwide, provided the perfect platform for these discussions.

Starting in June, World2Fly will launch weekly non-stop flights from Lisbon, Portugal, to Montego Bay, with over 50% of seats already sold. The airline will operate the route using a new Airbus A350, which has a seating capacity of 432.

Meanwhile, Swiss leisure and charter airline Edelweiss will increase its flights from Zurich, Switzerland, to Montego Bay to two per week, starting in November. These flights will be operated using an Airbus A340, which seats 314 passengers. Edelweiss, a subsidiary of Germany’s Lufthansa Group and the sister company of Swiss International Air Lines, is expanding its presence in the Jamaican market.

TUI Group also revealed plans to expand its flight operations from Italy and Spain, with a special focus on the Caribbean and Jamaica. This announcement came after a meeting with TUI executives, including CEO Sebastian Ebel. TUI Group, a key player in global tourism, operates multiple travel agencies, hotel chains, cruise lines, and five European airlines.

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett highlighted the significance of the expansion, stating, “An increase in flights from Europe and additional investment from this longstanding partner is a positive development for Jamaica. We will be able to use this to boost arrivals and drive higher earnings for our economy.”

Bartlett noted that Jamaica’s participation at FITUR marks the beginning of the ministry’s strategy for 2025. With the mantra ‘Thrive in 2025’, he said Ja-



**Jamaica is known for its lovely beaches**

maica is aiming to attract five million visitors and generate US\$5 billion in earnings this year, reinforcing the country’s position as a leading global destination.



# CTO SG Calls for Caribbean Unity and Innovation at Tourism Summit

The Caribbean must leverage more than just its natural beauty and focus on strategic partnerships, innovation and sustainable tourism to remain globally competitive, Dona Regis-Prosper, Secretary-General and CEO of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), declared in a thought-provoking keynote address at the 2025 Virgin Islands Tourism Summit, held at Peter Island Resort in the British Virgin Islands this month.

The event was hosted by the BVI Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, in partnership with the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board and the British Virgin Islands Yachting, Hotel and Tourism Association (BVIYHTA).

Addressing an audience of over 300 tourism stakeholders on “Strategic Partnerships for Sustainable Caribbean Tourism Services”, Regis-Prosper challenged the region to rethink its approach to tourism development, emphasizing that dialogue alone is not enough.

“This is not a talk shop,” she asserted. “It’s important that we get together as professionals and talk about the future of tourism.”

Her speech, delivered in the British Virgin Islands – a place she fondly referred to as “home” due to her past years of living and working in the territory – set the stage for an ambitious vision of a collaborative, resilient and innovation-driven Caribbean tourism industry.

Regis-Prosper posed a pointed question to the audience: “Is our beauty enough to guarantee our future?”

“At this critical juncture, while our natural beauty is undeniable, we must not for one minute believe that



**Dona Regis-Prosper, Secretary-General & CEO of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) (right) with British Virgin Islands Premier Dr. Natalio Wheatley and Junior Minister of Tourism Luce Hodge-Smith**

it’s enough to secure the future of the Caribbean,” she warned, emphasizing the need for strong, innovative and sustainable tourism models.

Highlighting the CTO’s Five Ps of Sustainable Tourism – People, Planet, Prosperity, Purpose and Partnership, Regis-Prosper stressed that tourism must go beyond resilience and become restorative.

At the heart of her address was a call for greater regional and international collaboration. Regis-Prosper highlighted the CTO’s expanding network, which now includes 25 member countries and 65 private-sector partners, spanning airlines, cruise lines, travel and marketing agencies.

She emphasized the power of public-private sector partnerships, which allow governments and businesses to pool resources, expertise and knowledge.

“The CTO, for example, is a real-world example of the power of partnerships,” she said, citing joint efforts to tackle issues such as sustainable infrastructure, waste management, and eco-friendly technologies.

She also underscored the importance of local communities in shaping the region’s tourism future, especially in the area of product development. “Residents must be included in the discussions,” she said. “These are the people, the stewards of our culture, our environment, and our resources.”

The tourism leader identified people as the Caribbean’s greatest asset and urged the industry to invest in workforce development.

“Tourism is ultimately about people,” she said, pointing to CTO’s 192 training courses (developed in partnership with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association), online learning platforms, and tourism eBooks for primary school students aimed at encouraging young people to see tourism as a viable career. She also gave the audience an exclusive preview of CTO’s 2025 training calendar, reinforcing the organization’s commitment to skills development and capacity building.

## No end in sight to trade war between A&B, USA

Antigua and Barbuda has expressed that it may take “another generation” to resolve the longstanding dispute with the United States regarding the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling that favored the Caribbean island. The country acknowledged that any hope for a near-term settlement appears to be fading, with progress on the matter remaining elusive after many years.

Antigua and Barbuda had taken its case against the US to the WTO in 2003 regarding its online gambling industry following Washington’s efforts to prosecute foreign-based suppliers of online gambling services.

St John’s had argued that the North American country had violated its General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), a WTO treaty that governs international trade in services and was established in 1995 as part of the Uruguay Round negotiations.

The WTO ultimately ruled in favor of Antigua and Barbuda and awarded the country the right to suspend US\$21 million annually in intellectual property rights held by US firms.

In 2018, Antigua and Barbuda’s Ambassador to the United States, Sir Ronald Sanders, said his country had lost US\$315 million so far, equivalent to more than a quarter of its annual gross domestic product and less than 0.1 per cent of the US economy.

Although the WTO awarded Antigua and Barbuda the right to use trade sanctions to recoup its losses, it opted for a settlement and to date has not received any payment from the United States.



**Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne**



# St. Kitts and Nevis PM meets with King Charles III, discuss mutual benefits

St. Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Dr. Terrance Drew met with His Majesty King Charles III on Friday, January 24, at Sandringham Estate in Norfolk, the private country retreat to the king and Queen Camilla.

The bilateral meeting focused on key issues of mutual interest, including sustainability, environmental stewardship, youth advocacy, and education.

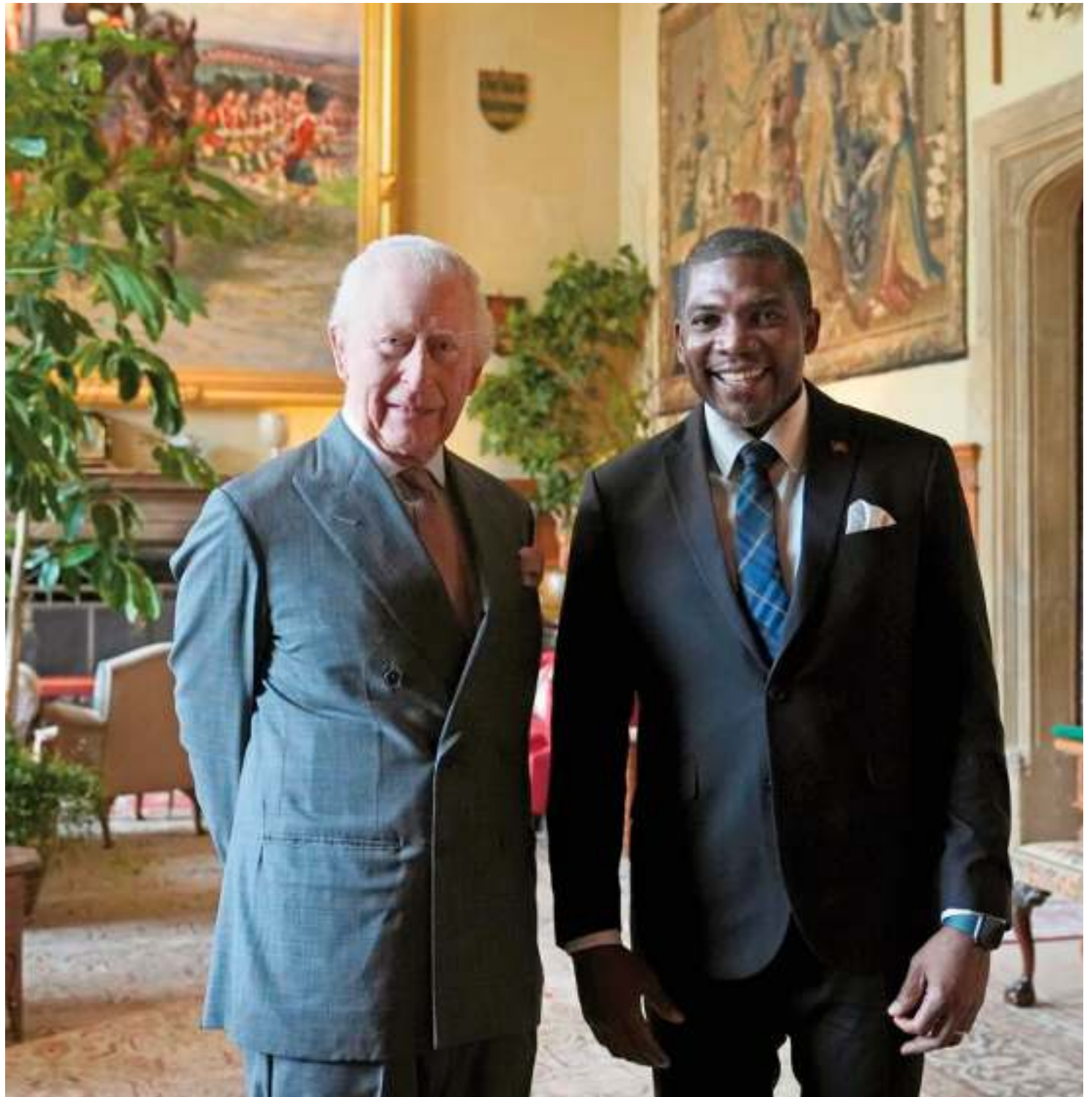
In a statement shared on social media, Prime Minister Drew highlighted the productive nature of the discussion. "His Majesty's passion for advancing all of the discussed issues is evident. We pledged to continue working together for a better and more sustainable world. I wish him and his family well," he wrote.

The meeting marked a significant milestone as it was the first time during King Charles III's reign that he hosted a foreign official at Sandringham House rather than the traditional venues of Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle.

Prime Minister Drew expressed enthusiasm for enhancing the partnership between St. Kitts and Nevis and the United Kingdom, emphasizing the importance of collective action on international challenges.

The visit coincided with Prime Minister Drew's attendance at a high-profile dialogue in London from January 20 to 22 on the future of Citizenship by Investment (CBI) programs. During the event, leaders from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) discussed the integrity, sustainability, and strategic vision of CBI initiatives across the region.

St. Kitts and Nevis and the United Kingdom share a robust diplomatic relationship, with the UK maintaining an



St. Kitts and Nevis PM Dr Terrance Drew meets with King Charles III

embassy in the Federation and St. Kitts and Nevis operating a high commission in London. These missions play a pivotal role in fostering cooperation on

trade, security, and cultural exchange while addressing the concerns of citizens residing in both nations.

Both countries remain committed

to strengthening bilateral relations and advancing shared goals, ensuring a prosperous future for their citizens and the broader global community.

# Plane missing between Dominica, Martinique

The Dominica Air and Sea Ports Authority (DASPA) announced on Monday that rescue efforts were underway for a plane that went missing after departing from Douglas Charles Airport on Sunday afternoon. The aircraft was en route to the nearby French island of Martinique when it lost contact. Authorities are actively working to locate the missing plane.

In a brief statement, DASPA said that the four-seater Cessna 172 aircraft had lost communications after departing at around 3.46 pm (local time), and all relevant local and French emergency response teams are currently working to locate it.

"Rescue efforts are in progress and we confirm that the safety of the passenger and crew is paramount at this time. Further updates on the situation will be provided once they become available," DASPA said.

It gave no details as to how many people were on board the aircraft, which is described as a single-



An aircraft like the one that went missing on a flight between Dominica and Martinique

engine, fixed-wing aircraft and is the most-produced aircraft in history as well as being a popular choice for flight training.

One resident told reporters that she heard when

the plane passed over her house saying, "That plane has an engine problem and it fell down between Riviere Cyrique and La Plaine. Circle around there, they might get the plane there."



# Diaspora concerned about crime in JA after returning resident killed

Tragedy struck the quiet community of Pyramid Heights in Ocho Rios, St. Ann, when the body of a 72-year-old returning resident, Luris Murray, was discovered in her home on Saturday morning, January 25.

Murray, who had returned to Jamaica after years of working in the United States as a nurse, was reportedly killed after criminals broke into her house, sexually assaulted her, and robbed her.

According to Senior Superintendent of Police Dwight Powell, head of the St. Ann Police, Murray's body was found by her helper in the living room with an electric cord wrapped around her neck. Two vehicles belonging to the deceased were stolen but later recovered in different areas of Ocho Rios. The horrific crime is believed to have occurred sometime on Friday.

Murray had returned to Jamaica with hopes of enjoying a peaceful retirement, investing in farming, and raising chickens on her property. Her daughter, speaking with CVM TV, expressed deep anguish over the circumstances of her mother's death.

"She had a genuine love for Jamaica and its people," her daughter said, describing how her mother purchased a home and neighboring lots to fulfill her retirement dreams. "It's just unbelievable that after working, leaving your country to search for the American dream, and finally achieving it, this is what happens when you come back to your own birthright country."

The daughter added that the crime



**Murray had hoped to retire in Ocho Rios after spending years living abroad, sparking concerns in the Diaspora**

has left her and others in the diaspora wary about returning to Jamaica. "It makes somebody like me not want to return," she said while cautioning those in the diaspora that they are "taking a risk by coming back" to Jamaica due to the crime rates.

Murray's murder has reignited fears within the Jamaican diaspora about the safety of retiring on the island. Many retirees and returning residents have shared similar concerns about being targeted due to their perceived wealth after spending years abroad.

In 2022, Senior Superintendent

Wayne Joseph, head of the Westmoreland Police, sought to reassure members of the diaspora that Jamaica remains safe for returning residents. He argued that victims of crime are often targeted by individuals within their inner circles. However, these assurances are at odds with longstanding warnings from the Jamaica Association for the Resettlement of Returning Residents.

The organization's president, Percival LaTouche, has been vocal in discouraging retirees from returning. "Jamaica has become a fertile place to commit murder," he said in prior years, empha-

sizing the risks faced by those who come back to settle.

While the government has implemented measures to address crime, incidents like this highlight the challenges in ensuring the safety of returning nationals.

The tragedy of Luris Murray underscores the tough realities facing Jamaicans abroad who dream of returning to their homeland. For many, the risk of becoming a victim of crime outweighs the hope of retiring in peace.

The investigation into Murray's murder is ongoing.

## Scholar "Mr CXC" passes at age 100

University of the West Indies Professor Emeritus of History, Sir Fitzroy "Roy" Augier, a towering figure in Caribbean academia, passed away on January 27, 2025, at the age of 100.

Renowned as a scholar, educator, activist, World War II veteran, and administrator, Sir Roy's life was one of unparalleled contribution to the development of Caribbean history and education.

Born in Castries, Saint Lucia, Sir Roy's journey from an RAF gunner during World War II to one of the region's most influential historians was extraordinary. After completing his service, he pursued an MA and PhD in History at St. Andrews University in Scotland, eventually settling in Jamaica, where he devoted more than 70 years to academia and regional development.

Joining the then University College of the West Indies (UCWI) in 1954 as a Research Fellow, Sir Roy became a cornerstone of the Department of History, later ascending to the role of Professor in 1989. His efforts, alongside colleagues like Douglas Hall and Rex Nettleford, were instrumental in establishing Caribbean History as a distinct discipline. His co-authored publications, such as *The Making of the West Indies* and the UNESCO-sponsored *General History of the Caribbean*, reshaped global perspectives on the region's history.

Sir Roy's contributions extended beyond academia. As Chairman of the Caribbean Examinations



**Sir Fitzroy Augier**

Council (CXC) from 1986 to 1996, he championed the acceptance of CXC and CAPE examinations, he led the way in gaining acceptance by regional stakeholders for the CAPE examinations as a replacement for the British A-levels, revolutionizing the region's educational standards and earning him the affectionate title "Mr. CXC."

During and after his years at The UWI, Roy taught, advised, or mentored several generations of Caribbean historians and academics. Verene Shepherd, Brian Moore, Swithin Wilmot, and Kathleen Monteith are some of the academics who benefitted

from engaging with Roy and other greats such as Elsa Gouveia and Douglas Hall. Hilary Beckles, the current Vice-chancellor of the University of the West Indies, also benefitted from his counsel during his early years in the Department of History at the UWI Mona Campus.

In 2014, Sir Roy was one of a handful of Jamaicans who received the Order of Jamaica, the nation's fourth-highest honor.

Jamaica's Prime Minister, Andrew Holness, described Sir Roy as "a true giant in academia" and praised his pivotal role in shaping Caribbean education and culture.

"Professor Augier was beyond a historian; he was a visionary and a pioneer. His work as a researcher, educator, and Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies inspired countless scholars and leaders. His book, *'The Making of the West Indies'*, is a cornerstone of education in Jamaica and across the region. We honour his life's work; his dedication to preserving our history, advancing knowledge, and building our nation. Professor Augier's legacy will live on through the generations he has impacted," Holness said in a tribute.

Sir Fitzroy Augier's remarkable life exemplified a commitment to education, regional unity, and the advancement of Caribbean civilization. His passing marks the end of an era, but his legacy continues to inspire.



# 'Coast Guard has embarrassed Trinidad and Tobago' after 'ghost boat sinks: MP

Opposition T&T MP Dr Roodal Moonilal is demanding a full-scale independent investigation into the “bungling of the Coast Guard” after a boat with human corpses aboard, which a Coast Guard vessel was towing ashore, somehow separated from it and is believed to have sunk off the east coast of Trinidad on January 26.

Speaking at the UNC's cottage meeting at the Chaguanas South Secondary School on the evening of January 27, he said this was a major embarrassment to the “hapless” Rowley government and all of Trinidad and Tobago, especially after an extensive amount of taxpayers' money had been allocated to the Coast Guard.

He said even with two vessels' recent return to full duty, this maritime security agency could not land a drifting vessel with corpses.

“This disaster would deny the authorities the opportunity to effectively co-operate with international agencies to trace the origins of this wandering boat and its occupants,” Moonilal said.

The shadow national security minister said this was not a joking matter, as it could have serious international implications, and hence the need for an international investigation.

“Those men and women on board must have come from somewhere, and the US DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigations) and Interpol would have an interest.”

He also had choice words for Minister of National Security Fitzgerald Hinds and prime minister-designate Stuart Young, saying this was an indictment of their “pathetic” leadership of that ministry.

Young, the Energy Minister and a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, was national security minister from August 2018-April 2021.

“Only in TT, under Hinds and



The boat with the bodies was photographed by a social media user before it sank

Young, could the CG tie a boat and then lose it.”

Tongue-in-cheek, he wondered how this small vessel could survive crossing the Atlantic Ocean along the same route across the Kala Pani (black waters) used by Indian-born indentured labourers – including those on the first ship, the *Fatel Razack* – only to disappear once in the custody of the Coast Guard.

He questioned where the Coast Guard crew was when the vessel disappeared from sight.

“There were 16 men on board, so what were they doing? Playing all fours downstairs, and then somebody come upstairs and ask where the boat gone?

“This is the only country where a coast guard could lose a boat with dead people in it. You could imagine if it was living people on board?”

Moonilal said whether or not the people on board were involved in illegal activity, the incident spoke to criminal activities.

“The Coast Guard has previously been inept with respect to drug and human trafficking, illegal migration, and illicit importation of contraband goods.”

He said the continuous bungling by the Coast Guard was yet another reflection of Hinds' gross incompetence, which was also on display with the bloody crime crisis even amid a state of

emergency. “The prime minister's steadfast refusal to dismiss the inept Hinds makes him a direct accessory to the failure of national security agencies and incidents such as the Coast Guard's latest botch,” Moonilal added.

At 2.22 pm on January 25, authorities received a report about the vessel, which appeared to have five corpses onboard. A patrol boat was dispatched. On January 26, at 12.45 am, a towline was secured.

But hours later, that connection separated; the boat vanished.

According to the Coast Guard, this was because of the object's “severely deteriorated” state and “prevailing sea conditions.”

## T&T football administrator on gun charges in US

A Trinidadian football administrator, Shem Wayne Alexander, has been charged in the U.S. with multiple gun trafficking offenses. The indictment against Alexander was unsealed by the U.S. Justice Department on January 22.

According to a statement from U.S. Attorney Roger Handberg, Alexander allegedly led a group that illegally exported firearms, firearm components, and related items from Florida to Trinidad and Tobago between 2019 and 2022. The charges highlight a significant international gun trafficking operation.

The firearms involved in the traf-

ficking operation, which included pistols, rifles, and related equipment, were concealed within boxing gear, speakers, and other household items to evade detection by law enforcement and customs authorities. According to U.S. Attorney Roger Handberg, conspirators also engaged in straw purchases, acquiring firearms from various sellers in the Tampa area by falsely representing the identities of the actual buyers and their intended recipients.



Shem Alexander

Evidence presented in court revealed that on April 7, 2021, Alexander directed his conspirators to ship a package containing firearms, including a Taurus G2C 9mm pistol, a SAR Arms SAR-9 9mm pistol, a Taurus G3 9mm pistol, and a Ruger Security-9 9mm pistol, from Miami to Trinidad and Tobago. However, on April 22, 2021, authorities at Piarco International Airport in Trinidad intercepted the shipment and seized the firearms and other related items hidden inside

the package.

In 2023, U.S. District Court sentenced Tevin O'Brian Oliver and Jameal Kaia Phillip to four years and nine months in federal prison for their involvement in the gun trafficking operation. Shem Wayne Alexander, who was allegedly the leader of the group, was arrested in Jamaica on November 15, 2024, and extradited to the United States on December 20, 2024.

Currently, Alexander is being held in a U.S. prison as he awaits his trial. If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney David Chee.



# Imlach backs Windies to pull off rare win away to Pakistan

FOURTEEN wickets fell on day two of the second Test at the Multan Cricket Stadium between the West Indies and Pakistan on January 26, with the regional team setting the Pakistanis a victory target of 254 after being bowled out for 244 in their second innings.

By the end of the day's play, the West Indies were sensing their first Test win on Pakistan soil in over 30 years, after reducing the hosts to 76 for four – leaving them still needing 178 runs to sweep the series 2-0.

Playing in his second Test, West Indies wicket-keeper/batsman Tevin Imlach made 35 off 57 balls and shared in a 51-run stand for the seventh wicket with his Guyanese countryman Kevin Sinclair (28).

Imlach said the Windies need to improve their efforts in the field after putting down a few chances on day two. However, he's confident the Windies can make further inroads on day three to grab a win to level the series.

"Hopefully, tomorrow we can be a lot better in the field and that will put us in a better position to win the game," Imlach told the media.

"I'm very hopeful of a West Indies win. We're in a good position...Once we start well, I think we can get over the line and get them out. We're very confident looking ahead to tomorrow and seeing where the Test match goes."

West Indies made just 163 in the first innings, but Imlach said a more focused approach led to their improvement in the second innings.

"In this innings, we were a lot more confident in our defence. We played the ball a lot more on its merit. In the first innings, we would have seen some of our batsmen playing shots and trying to create shots instead of playing the ball on its merit."

Taking a nine-run lead into the second innings, which started at the be-



West Indies batsman Kraigg Brathwaite plays a shot

ginning of day two, the Windies batting effort on the turning track was led by a gutsy innings by skipper Kraigg Brathwaite, who made 52 off 74 balls.

Debutant Amir Jangoo (30 off 52) also played a solid hand, while the lower order once again showed resistance as the Windies pushed their lead past the 250-run mark before Jomel Warrican (18) was dismissed by off-spinner Sajid Khan (four for 76) to bring an end to the innings.

Khan and left-arm spinner Noman Ali were the biggest threat to the Windies batsmen, with the latter grabbing figures of four for 80 to seal a ten-wicket haul in the match after ripping through the visitors with six for 41 in the first innings.

In their second turn at the crease, the hosts got off to a terrible start as they slipped to five for two in only the third over, after captain Shan Masood (two) and Mohammad Hurrira (two) were trapped lbw by Sinclair and Gu-

dakesh Motie respectively.

Warrican got in on the act at the end of the 14th over, as the left-arm spinner had Kamran Ghulam (19) caught by Jangoo as Pakistan slid to 48 for three.

Just before the close of play, West Indies got another key scalp when Sinclair (two for 41) removed star batsman Babar Azam (31) to leave the hosts on 71 for four.

The Pakistanis added five more runs before stumps, with Saud Shakeel (13 not out) and night-watchman Kashif Ali taking them to the end of play without further loss.

Imlach said the regional men had to adapt quickly on the tricky surface. And after suffering a heavy 127-run loss in the first Test, the Windies are now poised to exact revenge.

"We took the learning from the previous innings and it was much better. We applied ourselves as batsmen and as bowlers. We obviously have

some quality spinners in our team as well...we'd cause some challenges for the Pakistani batsmen."

The third day's play is expected to commence at 12.30 am (TT time) on January 27.

This story was originally published with the title "Windies make inroads as Pakistan chase 254 for victory in 2nd Test" and has been adjusted to include additional details.

Summarised Scores:

WEST INDIES – 163 (Gudakesh Motie 55, Jomel Warrican 36, Kemar Roach 25; Noman Ali 6/41, Sajid Khan 2/64) & 244 (Kraigg Brathwaite 52, Tevin Imlach 35, Amir Jangoo 30; S Khan 4/76, N Ali 4/80) vs PAKISTAN – 154 (Mohammad Rizwan 49, Saud Shakeel 32; J Warrican 4/43, G Motie 3/49) & 76/4 (Babar Azam 31, Kamran Ghulam 19; Kevin Sinclair 2/41).

## Windies women steamrolled out of WC by Aussies

West Indies under-19 women's team crashed to a heavy seven-wicket loss against Australia at the YSD-UKM Cricket Oval in Bangi, Malaysia on January 25 in their first Super Six game at the International Cricket Council (ICC) Women's Under-19 Twenty/20 World Cup.

The Windies sit at the bottom of group one in the Super Six phase with no points, with both India and Australia already booking their spots in the semifinals with six points, after carrying forward points from the previous group stage.

West Indies have one more game to play but have no chance of progressing.

Batting first, West Indies were bowled out for a paltry score of 53 in 16.3 overs – their third score below three figures in the tournament. Skipper Samara Ramnath (14 off 19 balls) and Brianna Harricharan (17 off 29) were the only Windies players to score in double digits, as the Aussie bowlers put on a dominant display.

Left-arm seamer Eleanor Larosa grabbed figures of two for six from three overs, with Caoimhe Bray (two for nine) and Tegan Williamson (two for ten) also among the wickets.

Australia needed all of 65 balls to chase down the modest target, with captain Lucy Hamilton hitting

28 off 29 to steer her team to the comprehensive win. Both Bray and opener Kate Pelle made 11 apiece. Three Windies bowlers took a wicket each.

The Windies will play their last Super Six match against Bangladesh (two points) from 10.30 pm on January 27 at the Bayueamas Oval in Kuala Lumpur.

Summarised Scores: WEST INDIES U-19s – 53 from 16.3 overs (Brianna Harricharan 17, Samara Ramnath 14; Eleanor Larosa 2/6, Caoimhe Bray 2/9) vs AUSTRALIA U-19s – 57/3 from 10.5 overs (Lucy Hamilton 28, C Bray 11 not out; Erin Deane 1/5). Australia won by seven wickets.





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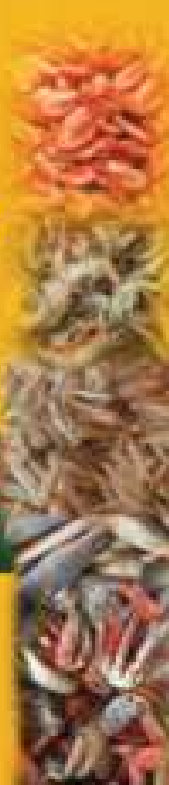
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