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CARICOM Heads visit Jamaica

Guyana President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali is among several CARI-COM Heads of Government who arrived in Jamaica on Monday as part of a high-level Goodwill Mission to evaluate the impact of Hurricane Melissa and support the country's recovery efforts.

The delegation was received by Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness, at the Norman Manley International Airport.

The mission includes the Prime Ministers of Barbados, Mia Mottley; Grenada, Dickon Mitchell; Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Brown; together with senior officials from the CARICOM Secretariat, the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and other regional and international partners.

The visit underscores a strong demonstration of regional solidarity as CARICOM leaders, development agencies, and multilateral partners collaborate to assess the hurricane's damage and identify urgent areas requiring support.

Guyana is one of the first CARICOM Member States to mobilise support for Jamaica since Hurricane Melissa made landfall, bringing widespread flooding, infrastructural damage, displacement, and significant economic disruption.

Even before Hurricane Melissa made landfall, President Ali instructed the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Guyana Defence Force to work with Jamaican authorities.



US warships spotted off T&T

A US news crew filming down the islands (DDI) near Trinidad recorded two American naval vessels moving through the narrow channel between Trinidad and Venezuela.

ABC News correspondent Matt Rivers was on a fishing boat down the islands when the team observed a destroyer and an amphibious assault ship east. The vessels were too distant for identification, according to the report.

Independent satellite analysts later offered more detail. SA Defensa, an unofficial account tracking naval activity, posted imagery from the European Space Agency's Sentinel-2 identifying an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer and a San Antonio-class landing platform dock in the Gulf of Paria. The account said both ships were positioned off the coasts of Trinidad and Venezuela and in proximity to the USS Iwo Jima (pictured above), which it placed north of the area.

Residents in east and parts of west Trinidad reported hearing helicopter activity over their communities on Monday night.

Official details have been woefully lacking on naval and aviation movements or the scope of the "training exercises" involving US forces.

Meanwhile, US Southern Command also posted a video showing AV-8B Harrier II jets conducting live-fire exercises from the USS Iwo Jima in the Caribbean Sea as part of Operation Southern Spear. Southcom did not disclose the location of the drill.



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Global experts on forests and artificial intelligence pose with facilitators of the Live Canopy session at COP30 in Belém, Brazil.

Harnessing AI for the planet: Guyana's forest Innovation takes the stage at COP30

Guyana's pioneering work in applying digital innovation and artificial intelligence to forest conservation took center stage at COP30 in Belém, Brazil, during a high-level panel discussion titled "Live Canopy: Harnessing AI and Digital Innovation for Forest Conservation and Reforestation." The event was hosted by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (TBI) and convened leading experts to explore how digital technologies are transforming forest management, monitoring, and reforestation across the Global South.

The panel featured global voices on forest and AI, including André Aquino from Brazil's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Pradeepa Bholanath from the Ministry of Natural Resources of Guyana, Tasso Azevedo, Coordinator of Mapbiomas, and Raul Protázio Romão, Secretary for Environment and Sustainability of the State of Pará. The session was moderated by Fabro Steibel, Executive Director of the Institute for Technology and Society of Rio de Janeiro (ITS Rio).

Global experts on forests and artificial intelligence pose with facilitators of the Live Canopy session at COP30 in Belém, Brazil. (Yusuf Ali/News Room)

Representing Guyana, Pradeepa Bholanath highlighted the country's progress under President Dr. Irfaan Ali's priority programme on digital innovation, which integrates AI-enabled biodiversity monitoring tools into forest management and conservation systems.

Bholanath showcased how Guyana is leveraging data from digital platforms to expand its Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) system through wall to wall mapping using satellite data, traditionally used for carbon and forest cover monitoring, to now include biodiversity indicators. She explained that this system has now produced 15 consecutive years (since 2009) of monitoring using digital innovation and the sector is at the cutting edge of technological applications such as satellite imagery analysis and cloud-based processing to inform MRV reporting.

These innovations ensure that forest and climate data directly inform public policy and strengthen evidence-based decision-making, while also creating opportunities for communities to benefit from technological progress. "Guyana's approach demonstrates how small states can lead globally by embedding technology within sustainable forest governance and how this then leads to generating climate finance" Bholanath noted, emphasizing the alignment between digital transformation and the country's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS 2030).

The discussion, structured in two rounds, explored how AI and digital technologies can accelerate forest management and conservation, strengthen crosssector collaboration, and ensure that innovation generates benefits for local and Indigenous communities. Speakers stressed the importance of governance, transparency, and sustainable financing mechanisms to scale up technology-driven conservation.

Panelists also emphasized the need for partnerships between governments, civil society, and research institutions to ensure that digital innovation supports equitable, long-term outcomes for people and ecosystems alike.

The Live Canopy session underscored the growing importance of South-South collaboration in advancing AI and digital sustainability. By showcasing leadership from countries like Guyana and Brazil, the panel demonstrated how emerging economies are shaping the global conversation on digital transformation for environmental resilience.

"Artificial intelligence has become a powerful ally in managing and conserving our forests and biodiversity," said Bholanath. "By combining innovation, inclusivity, and strong governance, nations like Guyana are setting an example for sustainable digital progress in the Global South."

As COP30 continues to highlight solutions for climate and biodiversity challenges, Guyana's experience stands out as a model for integrating AI, data, and governance to achieve sustainable forest management. The country's commitment to digital transformation reflects a broader vision of using innovation not only to sustainably manage and conserve its vast forests but also to create knowledge-driven pathways for economic growth, environmental stewardship, and community empowerment.

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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

Who is the real Opposition Leader?

Editorial from the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, November 19 2025

THE INVITATION issued on behalf of Keith Rowley ahead of his November 17 media conference at his home in Diego Martin opened most unusually.

"The Office of the Former Prime Minister cordially invites members of the public and media to a press briefing," it said.

If you've never heard of the "Office of the Former Prime Minister," you are not alone. It doesn't exist.

Under the Constitution there is just a prime minister and an opposition leader. As a private citizen, Dr Rowley is free to employ staff. But the uppercase "O" was a dismaying misnomer.

For, it signals the former PNM

leader's resolve to institutionalise his post-retirement penchant for weighing in, solicited or not, in public discourse.

That's bad news for Opposition Leader Pennelope Beckles. And it's bad news for a democracy that needs a strong opposing party.

Freedom of expression is freedom of expression. A citizen is a citizen. Dr Rowley has a right to say what he wants, when he wants, how he wants. Many issues over the last few months relate to his record and his frequent interventions may well have been unavoidable.

But why is there sometimes a sense of a lack of co-ordination between him and Ms Beckles, who is, as far as we can tell, now in charge of the PNM?

Notably, Dr Rowley has called

press conferences at his residence on November 17, October 10 and July 21, in addition to his frequent Facebook posts, one of which began with the unconvincing claim, "I have been trying very hard to stay out."

If he is trying, we are yet to see. Little that Dr Rowley has contributed since departing public office could not have been voiced by his successor, who appears to be increasingly left by the wayside when fast-breaking developments occur. The former PM comments prolifically; Ms Beckles likes to caucus, even as she endorses what is said by others.

Too many cooks spoil the broth. Having multiple PNM figureheads, each with unique political baggage, addressing the nation simultaneously does not enrich the party's strategy. It dilutes it.

Messaging was not the former prime minister's forte. But he seems unwilling to let it become Ms Beckles' forte, too. His constant interventions hinder her ability to define a new approach to speaking with the public in the wake of April 28. That speaks volumes about Dr Rowley's political judgement or lack thereof. Moreover, it mars his overall governance legacy.

Former US presidents like Barack Obama nowadays stay engaged in public life. Kamla Persad-Bissessar was boisterous after she was voted out in 2015. But Mr Obama is the exception, not the norm. And Ms Persad-Bissessar was opposition leader. Dr Rowley is not. He should let Ms Beckles do her job.

Opinion without evidence is not accountability

Dear Editor,

I HUMBLY request space in the letter column of your highly regarded publication to express my views on commentators to the "letters page." There is a certain type of commentator in Guyana who believes that loud talk and long words automatically translate into credibility.

Week after week they unleash dramatic columns attacking the government — and especially the Vice President — yet when you sift through all the noise, you find nothing but empty assertions. *Plenty storytelling, lil' proof.* That is the trademark.

These writers fling accusations like they in a confetti parade: corruption, conspiracy, secret deals, destruction of democracy — everything under the sun. But when you ask them to produce one solid fact, one document, one piece of evidence that stands up to

scrutiny, the whole show collapses.

Instead of supporting their claims, they shift the goalposts, twist the narrative, and pretend that their imagination is the same as truth. That is not public accountability; that is political mischief with a thesaurus. They also lean heavily on overblown imagery and dramatic comparisons. A routine decision becomes a national crisis.

A disagreement becomes a dictatorship. A budget line turns into an apocalypse. Every critique is dressed in exaggerated language designed to stir panic. As we say in Guyana, 'some people love to bruk down a lil' fence and call it the fall of Rome'. This kind of melodrama attracts attention, yes — but it destroys credibility.

Another convenient tactic is the selective morality. Many of these critics once served in public institutions, benefitted from them, or stayed silent during issues they now pretend to care

deeply about. Yet they present themselves as solitary heroes battling corruption from on top a moral mountain. But if you want to preach purity, you must first clean your own doorstep. Guyanese people are not foolish; they know when someone trying to play clean after years of dipping their cups.

Most telling is how these commentators treat any legitimate government response. The moment the government corrects false claims or calls out inaccuracies, these critics start hollering about "harassment of the press" and "attacks on press freedom." So, in their world, they can say anything — no matter how baseless — but the government must remain silent? Accountability suddenly becomes "intimidation," simply because their narrative cannot survive factual correction.

That is not press freedom, that is press immunity, and no democracy functions like that. And predictably,

they ignore every measurable success the country is experiencing. Roads, hospitals, jobs, investments, growth numbers envied across the region — all dismissed or twisted to maintain a permanent gloom-and-doom storyline.

Their obsession with attacking the Vice President — always without proof — says more about their political agenda than about national interest.

Guyana deserves serious commentary grounded in facts, fairness, and genuine patriotism. What we often get instead are inflated ego, recycled bitterness and a kind of performative outrage that crumbles the second you ask: "Boss, where is your evidence?"

Until that question can be answered honestly, their commentary remains exactly what it is — noise, not nation-building.

Regards, Walter Blair



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Highly skilled immigrants are leaving Canada the fastest: report

By Denise Singh

LJI REPORTER

As Canada grapples with an escalating trade dispute with the United States, a new study is raising doubts about whether the country's immigration system can retain the global talent it urgently needs to strengthen its economy.

A report commissioned by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC) shows that the newcomers Canada most wants to attract — highly educated and highly skilled workers — are also the most likely to leave.

According to the findings, many depart within just five years of arriving.

The study, The Leaky Bucket 2025, released Tuesday, reveals that one in five immigrants exit Canada within 25 years of becoming permanent residents. This pattern of "onward migration" reaches its peak at the five-year point.

The problem is especially pronounced among the most educated newcomers. Immigrants holding doctoral degrees are more than twice as likely to leave as those with only a bachelor's degree. And when job opportunities fail to offer meaningful wage growth, the likelihood of departure triples.

Daniel Bernhard, the ICC's chief executive officer, says mounting public skepticism about immigration is shrinking Canada's talent pool at a time when the country can least afford it. He argues this erosion will undermine Canada's ability to respond to its current economic pressures.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has pledged to double Canada's non-U.S. exports over the next decade. Bernhard warns that losing immigrants with international experience — especially from markets beyond the United States — will weaken Canada's efforts to diversify its trade relationships.

"These are the people who have built the railways, the infrastructure, the housing projects in other countries — and they often do it better, faster and cheaper than we do," Bernhard said. "They're the ones who can help us catch up. When we lose them, we



Immigrants to Canada with degrees are most likely to leave

lose the expertise that helps Canada succeed."

The federal government's 2025 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration set permanent resident admissions at 380,000 a year until 2028. But if current patterns continue, the ICC projects that 20,241 immigrants will leave Canada by 2031.

"The people best positioned to help us meet our own goals are the ones leaving the fastest," Bernhard said. "This isn't just the moral cost of offering skilled immigrants a false promise — it's avoidable self-sabotage."

The report highlights that the occupations with the fastest growth and the weakest retention include management roles in business and finance, information and communications technology, engineering and architectural fields, and manufacturing and processing engineering. ICC data shows that experienced managers and executives leave at almost double the average rate for all immigrants, while internationally trained health-care professionals leave at rates 36 per cent higher than the average.

To generate its findings, the ICC analyzed Statistics Canada's longitudinal database, which connects immigration records with personal tax filings.

The study examined individuals

granted permanent residence between 1982 and 2020, focusing on those who arrived at age 18 or older and filed at least one Canadian tax return.

Bernhard notes that more than 60 per cent of the newcomers captured in the data fall under the economic immigration category — people selected specifically for their potential to contribute to Canada's economic growth.



Murders from domestic violence doubles: a troubling situation

By Donald Ramoutar

FORMER GUYANA PRESIDENT

It was alarming to read that murders due to domestic violence has doubled since 2024. This should alert us to somethings in our society that are in serious crises and need urgent attention.

The cause of this troubling situation would be many and cannot be isolated to just one reason. Here I venture to offer a few ideas as to some of the possible reason for this really unsatisfactory situation and some suggestions which, hopefully, can contribute to minimizing this very unsatisfactory situation.

In the first place it appears that we have got a problem with the consumption of excessive alcohol. Many of the reported cases have to do with persons being under the influence of liquor when these murders occur. The victims are overwhelmingly women.

Added to this is the seemingly increase in substance abuse. The effects of that are similar to the abuse of alcohol but much more harmful to health.

The other new phenomenon that has appeared is gambling. In almost every village that one goes to you will find shops which sell liquor are also well equipped with gambling machines. No restrictions are placed on this, even children are allowed to gamble.

The modern-day technologies that are available have made it possible to gamble online. Many people, most of who have modest income, can be seen gambling on their cell phones with the hope of striking it rich.

When gambling becomes an addiction, it is as dangerous as alcoholism and substance abuse. Often too they are combined and reinforce each other.

These lead to serious domestic problems. Particularly in the homes of working people. It leads to neglect of the homes, depriving children of proper food and other essential things necessary for a healthy upbringing. It contributes to deteriorating marital relations.



The solar farm in Region Two

These cause serious tensions in homes which tend to explode and in the worse case leads to murders.

I am very encouraged by statements made by senior government officials in relation to gambling. The important thing is that the government has recognised this terrible danger which its poses and has expressed its intention to deal with it. I hope it is given urgent priority.

As far as alcoholism and substance abuse are concerned one suggestion is to begin a sustained public awareness programme on the dangers to health, relationships, and to society as a whole.

Moreover, particularly in the rural and interior areas a government led effort to create healthy entertainment in the village may contribute to lessening the disasters which they bring about.

Efforts could be made to create cultural groups to recite poems, have concerts, using the local talents and even helping to create musical bands. These should not be confined to just popular music but begin to teach the classical

Such an effort proved very successful in Venezuela led by Hugo Chavez's government. Classical music was introduced to the depressed communities with very positive effects. Many developed countries have since adopted that programmed with great success.

In a similar light, sports can be an effective way of promoting a healthy lifestyle. Assistance should be given to create sports clubs and organise competition on a country-wide scale to develop the talents of our people. Gyms, swimming pools for public should be encour-

attend swimming competitions there. This should not be confined to

cricket and football, but include

aged. As a youth I remember going to

the "Luckhoo" Swimming Pool and to

weightlifting, body building, table tennis and even lawn tennis, basketball, etc.

These can contribute towards encouraging a more wholesome and rounded lifestyle. It can help us to fight anti-social behaviour while spotting talents in sports and culture.

That may have an impact on lessening the frustration in families and communities which often leads to domestic violence.



BIG SONG: As Guyanese we are proud of our Indian Culture once again Miss Pooja Sutram a Guyanese Canadian here in Toronto and Mr. Vickram Surujpaul a Guyanese American in based in New York collaborate together alongside Mr. Big Rich and D Pungalunks Musical Studio in Trinidad to bring an Evergreen Masterpiece Song that was originally sung by DiDi Lata Mangeskar and Kishore Kumar Bhai [Pardesiya]

Pooja Sutram born in Guyana in the village of Windsor Forest West Coast Demerara, Vickram Surujpaul born in Canal #2 Polder West Bank Demarara.

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Brian Tiwarie, OMC, AA - CEO

Cop docked pay for taking photos of victim's 'intimate' pictures

By Denise Singh

LJI REPORTER

A longtime Toronto police officer has been docked 10 days' pay after admitting he photographed explicit images belonging to a domestic violence victim whose case he was assigned to investigate, according to a recently released disciplinary tribunal decision.

Const. Anthony Persaud, who joined the Toronto Police Service in 2000, was working as a detective constable with the Criminal Investigation Bureau at 55 Division when he was tasked with handling a 2021 domestic assault case.

Tribunal documents state the victim — who has not been indeitifed was attacked by her ex-boyfriend in November 2021. After the assault, the ex-boyfriend stole her iPhone and posted intimate images of her on social

He also sent the pictures to the woman's mother and sister.

Police arrested him on Nov. 26. He ultimately pleaded guilty to assault and to distributing intimate images without consent.

Between Nov. 26 and Dec. 1, Persaud allegedly communicated with the victim through text and email. Due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time, the two met in the front foyer of 55 Division on Dec. 1 so he could take her statement. They agreed she would later provide screenshots showing what her ex-boyfriend had done on her phone.

Months later, on March 7, Persaud reportedly met the victim again — this time outside her workplace in downtown Toronto while he was on duty and driving an unmarked police vehicle. He told her the purpose of the meeting was to collect evidence.

According to the tribunal, the victim got into Persaud's car, and he drove to a parking lot near Lake Shore Boulevard East and Leslie Street. It was about 7:45 p.m. and already dark.

There, the tribunal heard, Persaud asked the victim to display evidence on her phone and used his Toronto Policeissued iPhone to photograph 15 to 20 images from her screen, including explicit and intimate photos. None of the images he captured were ever submitted as evidence.

Four days later, Persaud texted the woman: "Hey... hope you are good, let



Persaud's previously clean record was taken into consideration

me know if you want to grab a coffee sometime... maybe after your work."

The tribunal noted the victim felt "extremely uncomfortable" with the in-

Sometime between March 7 and April 11, Persaud sought advice on how to obtain a warrant for the offence of distributing intimate images and learned that he would need a sworn statement from the victim referencing the images. When he contacted her to schedule the interview, she did not attend — citing discomfort and the fact that they had already reviewed the evidence. Persaud later deleted the photos from his phone, the tribunal heard.

The woman eventually filed a complaint with the Office of the Independent Police Review Director after consulting a York Regional Police officer she knew. The complaint was forwarded to Toronto Police's Professional Standards Unit in May 2022.

Persaud was arrested and charged with breach of trust on July 7. During a search of his apartment, investigators found his service-issued Glock handgun loaded and sitting on a kitchen bar

stool. Additional ammunition was discovered in unsecured locations around the residence.

The tribunal found the firearm and ammunition were not stored according to federal safety requirements. Persaud told investigators he had brought the gun home because he was scheduled to work the following day and did not want to return to the station to retrieve it in the morning.

Persaud later pleaded guilty to careless storage of a firearm, receiving a suspended sentence and 18 months' probation.

He also admitted at the disciplinary tribunal to one count of discreditable conduct and two counts of neglect of duty. The tribunal ordered forfeitures of five, two, and 10 days' pay respectively, though the penalties will run concurrently.

Persaud had no prior criminal or disciplinary history. His lawyer, Sandip Khehra, argued that Persaud's conduct including offering to meet outside the station and inviting the victim for coffee — stemmed from an attempt to be kind during a distressing period for her. The tribunal noted Persaud now acknowledges those decisions were "100 per cent wrong."

According to the documents, Persaud found the disciplinary process humiliating and emotionally taxing.

Defence counsel said he has "paid for it" personally, psychologically, and financially.

In her ruling, Insp. Suzanne Redman pointed to Persaud's previously clean record as a sign he is capable of rehabilitation.

"Past behaviour is generally the best indicator of future behaviour," she wrote, adding she believed the experience had a "significant impact" on Persaud and would serve as a strong motivator for reform.

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Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Susan Rodrigues, speaking during the launch of the agri-tourism policy

New agri-tourism policy to advance food security, rural prosperity

Guyana has launched a national agri-tourism policy aimed at strengthening the link between tourism and agriculture, aligning tourism development with national food security goals.

The initiative is expected to expand tourism markets, strengthen agricultural production and ensure that the benefits of the country's economic transformation reach rural communities nationwide.

The policy was established following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture on July 14, 2021.

It was developed with the technical support from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

The agri-tourism policy, launched at Gobin's Farm and Kitchen on Monday, is designed to guide investment, strengthen food security and promote sustainable agricultural practices, while creating new tourism products rooted in providing authentic local experiences.

Speaking at the launch, Minister of ties. Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Susan Rodrigues, said the policy represents "infinite possibilities" for Guyana.

She explained that agri-tourism means connecting farming with tourism. According to the US Department of Agriculture, it involves businesses that attract visitors to farms or ranches for fun or educational purposes, helping to earn revenue for the operators.

Minister Rodrigues said this definition captures the essence of what the government intends to achieve through the new policy and roadmap.

"It really allows the creatives and those in the tourism and hospitality sector to really experiment with all types of products and services and to use innovation to improve our offerings in the tourism sector and raise the level of awareness and visibility of destination Guyana and our tourism product here locally," she stated.

She further explained that agritourism requires agricultural or processing facilities willing to host guests and engage them in hands-on farm activi-

Visitors will be able to participate in planting, harvesting, food production and full farm-to-table experiences.

"Our agri-tourism visitors will also benefit from cultural exchange by learning firsthand about local traditions and practices, as well as discovering the authenticity of farmers' livelihoods, immersing themselves in rural life and connecting with nature and the environment," she stated.

Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture, Vickash Ramkissoon, said the policy reflects the government's commitment to ensuring that Guyana's rapid economic transformation remains

"This is not just a document. It is a strategic framework that brings agriculture and tourism together in a way that empowers youth and women, promotes food security, and strengthens climatesmart and climate-resilient agriculture," he said.

He added that the policy has a strong potential to create employment across rural and hinterland communities

while preserving traditional knowledge and culture.

Moreover, Minister Ramkissoon noted that the financing strategy includes fiscal incentives, small grants and measures designed to encourage public-private partnerships.

A National Agri-Tourism Committee will oversee technical planning and implementation across the ministries.

IICA Country Representative Wilmot Garnett stated the policy was shaped through nationwide consultations to ensure it reflects the needs of stakeholders across all ten administrative regions.

"It was built on a foundation of inclusivity and active participation. This collaborative approach has produced a holistic and widely supported framework that will open new opportunities for growth, job creation and sustainable development."

Garnett said IICA will support the rollout of several priority programmes, including the establishment of a situation room to provide farmers with realtime agricultural data.

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Gov't to work with rice farmers to convert lands for greater profitability

PRESIDENT, Dr Irfaan Ali has outlined a new diversification initiative aimed at boosting incomes and strengthening resilience within the agricultural sector.

Speaking on the government's broader plan to modernise food production at the opening of GuyExpo 2025 last week, President Ali announced that rice farmers will receive support to convert a portion of their existing lands into complementary livestock and aquaculture ventures.

"We are going to help them, support them in converting two acres in every 10 acres that will allow them to achieve higher value of income, that would allow them to achieve diversification within their existing production frame, that would allow them to achieve resilience and profitability," the President said.

According to President Ali, the shift will allow farmers to tap into higher-value income streams without disrupting their primary rice operations.

"We're going to help rice farmers to convert at least two acres in every 10 acres into livestock farming, swine production, small ruminants, cage-crabbing and aquaculture."

This forms part of the People's Progressive Party/ Civic (PPP/C) administration's wider agricultural transformation agenda, which seeks to expand local food production, encourage innovation, and strengthen long-term sustainability across the sector.

The President announced too that the forthcoming Guyana Development Bank which will be capitalised with a minimum of US\$200 million will place strong emphasis on supporting agricul-



The Government of Guyana has outlined plans to work with rice farmers

ture, tourism, services, and other valuecreating activities, ultimately generating "tens of thousands of business opportunities."

The Guyana Development Bank will also offer loans with no collateral requirement and a zero per cent interest

rate up to a predetermined threshold, which will be unveiled in the 2026 National Budget.

"The bank will focus heavily on the agriculture sector, the tourism sector, the services sector — any activity that deals with value creation," he added.

This financial institution will be operationalised by 2026.

Already, the government has invested \$2 billion in price support, ensuring that farmers receive at least \$4,000 per bag of paddy.

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

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

Key priorities of the WGC include:

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

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To find out more about World Guyanese Congress and our goals and priorities. Scan the QR code, or visit www.wqc-orq.com

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New incentives to support women entrepreneurs be announced soon

UNVEILING a fresh wave of incentives for small businesses, President Dr. Irfaan Ali, last week, announced that over 1,000 women trained under the Women Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) programme will soon be transitioned to entrepreneurship.

Speaking at the opening of Guy-Expo 2025, President Ali explained that the forthcoming initiative will be further detailed in the government's fiscal package for 2026, along will several other incentives to stimulate growth for small businesses.

"We're going to announce a special initiative with the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security that will convert more than 1,000 women we train under the WIIN, the original and only WIIN programme that will convert over 1,000 women into entrepreneurs," President Ali said.

This initiative he stressed will see greater support for women-led enterprises, empowering them to not only be contributors to the economy, but also build sustainable livelihoods.

"When you hear that announcement, the boldness of that announcement, not following anyone, but creating

UNVEILING a fresh wave of inives for small businesses, President sised.

It was reported that during the first half of 2025, government advanced the training programmes earmarked for empowerment of both women and men. In this regard, 6,189 persons, including 4,077 women, completed training through the WIIN programme which was first introduced in 2021.

The programme has since been expanded to offer training to men as well.

As part of the wider push to strengthen the agricultural sector, President Ali also unveiled a series of aggressive incentives to stimulate investment in agro-businesses.

He confirmed that the government intends to introduce a taxation framework that will apply a zero per cent rate on all agricultural, veterinary, and agroprocessing inputs that fall within the existing trade system.

"We will pursue a taxation system, as I said, that will see zero per cent on all agriculture, veterinary input and agro-processing input within existing trade framework," he said adding:

"We'll have special incentive for agro-processing and agri-value chain in-



During the first half of 2025 over 4,000 women were trained under WIIN

vestment, special incentive for large scale cold storage facility, special incentives and a graduated corporate tax regime for agro processing by level of turnover, which will be defined in the 2026 budget."

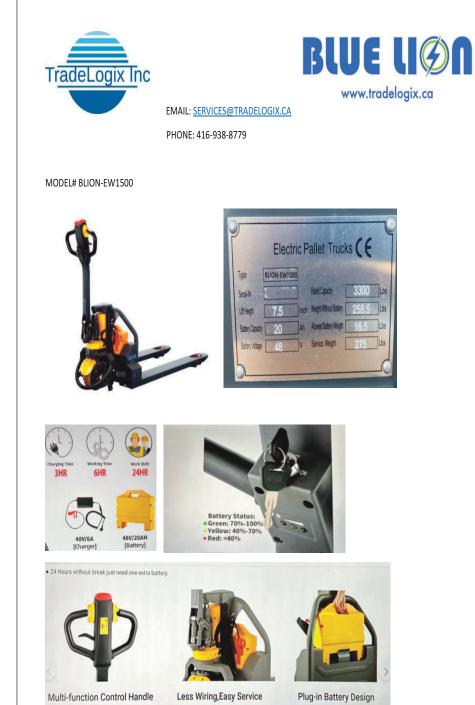
A new, graduated corporate tax regime for agro-processors based on turnover will be defined in the 2026 national budget to provide additional support

According to President Ali, the structure will be designed so that small and medium-sized enterprises in the agri-business ecosystem pay little to no corporate tax. This, he noted, is intended to encourage more businesses to register

formally, comply with tax requirements, and benefit from government assistance.

"This system will be graduated to the extent that small and medium-size enterprises in the agri-business ecosystem would see close to zero or zero in corporate tax," he said adding,

"This will incentivise our agriculture businesses to- be to register themselves so they're not afraid of the taxation system, so they become compliant. So, we can help them to build their standards, and we can help them to adopt the values; a value system that will give them access to regional and international markets."





Agri. Minister outlines gov't's massive developmental agenda for WCB

Agriculture Minister, Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, met with farmers from West Coast Berbice on Saturday, where he reaffirmed the government's unwavering commitment to strengthening Guyana's agriculture sector and improving the livelihoods of farming communities.

While addressing those present, Minister Mustapha outlined the massive, ongoing investments aimed at boosting production, modernizing infrastructure, and positioning the region as a major contributor to national and regional food security.

He explained that extensive works are underway across Region Five to minimize flooding and protect farmlands, noting that the construction of high-level canals is part of a wider drainage and irrigation upgrade.

"We want to make flooding minimal so that you can concentrate fully on your production. This is why we are building these high-level canals throughout the region, so that your lands remain protected and your crops secure," he explained.

Highlighting major initiatives, Minister Mustapha pointed to the prawn project at Onverwagt. He also disclosed that the ministry is currently conducting surveys aimed at developing brackishwater shrimp ponds in the region.

"We've started the production of Vannamei prawns at Onverwagt, and we are now conducting surveys to develop brackish-water shrimp ponds in this region. We already started the production of brackish water shrimp in region six, and that project is doing extremely well," he noted.

Minister Mustapha said that the rapid transformation underway in the agriculture sector is a direct result of His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali's vision and leadership. He also emphasized that government support for farmers continues to grow each year. Last year, farmers received half a bag of fertilizer per acre; this year, that allocation was doubled. He reported that Region Five alone received 150,000 bags of fertilizer, valued at more than G\$970 million.

"All of this development is taking place because we have a President who is passionate about agriculture. Although we may face temporary setbacks, we will overcome them and continue to move this sector forward if we work together. We are making tremendous investments to ensure you have what you need to produce. In addition to the fertilizer support, this crop, we also distributed 500 bags of seed paddy free of cost to help reduce your production expenses," Minister Mustapha explained.

Addressing concerns about fluctuating paddy prices, the Minister reminded farmers that prices are driven by international market conditions and not set locally. He explained that for the first crop of 2025, less than 20 million tonnes of rice were on the world market due to export bans from major producers such as India.



Minister Mustapha with farmers from WCB

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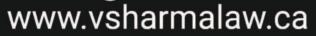


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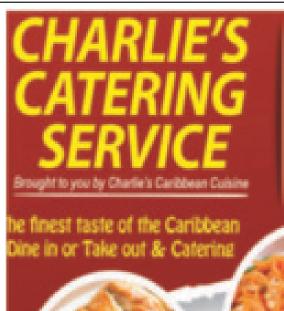
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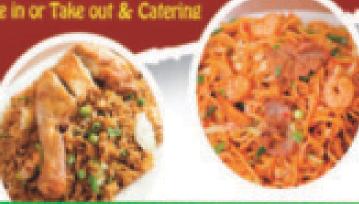
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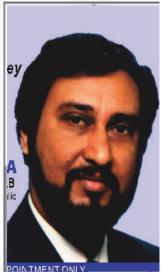
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Government invested over \$80B to accelerate education in 2025

The Guyana government invested \$81.9 billion in the first half of 2025 to advance its goal of delivering world-class education, representing nearly half of the \$175 billion budgeted for the year.

Investments targeted school expansion, cash transfers, digital access, teachers' training, and the rapid transformation of tertiary education.

A total of \$11.2 billion was invested to advance multiple school infrastructure projects. Four new nursery schools – Baitoon, La Bagatelle, Mibicuri and Rockstone – were completed, creating 280 new spaces, with Kako expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Primary school upgrades at Augsburg, Redcreek and 58 Miles are on track for completion, while the construction of secondary schools is advancing at Jawalla, Kopinang, Monkey Mountain, Nismes, Phillipai, Tabatinga and Waramuri.



One of the several newly constructed secondary schools

Dormitory construction continued at Aurora, St. Ignatius, Waramadong and Kwakwani, with additional facilities set to begin at Matthew's Ridge, Monkey Mountain and a female dorm at Kwakwani.

The government invested \$3.5 billion of the \$5.5 billion allocated for the

school meals programme, extending breakfast to 49,841 pupils on the coast and hot meals to 37,829 students in the hinterland. Another 1,000 students from Regions One, Eight, Nine and 10 will be added in the second half of the year.

The Because We Care cash grant

delivered over \$11 billion to more than 203,000 students, supporting school attendance and preparedness to learn.

A total of \$56.2 million was spent on books for nursery schools and textbooks for secondary schools. Nearly 50 new nursery titles were developed, with an additional 70 in progress.

Each primary school will receive 137 new book titles later this year, while secondary schools will increase their collections from 137 to 344 titles. A further \$2 billion in school grants were disbursed for classroom materials.

Guyana recorded a historic improvement at the NGSA, with pass rates exceeding 50 per cent in all four core subjects for the first time.

A Mathematics Intervention Programme for secondary students continues, with all schools receiving geometry sets, calculators and past papers. Mathematics monitors were placed in 59 schools.



PSC energised as President Ali pushes accelerated development agenda

PRIVATE Sector Commission (PSC) Chairman Captain Gerald Gouveia Jr. has commended the Government of Guyana for its exceptional partnership and active support in advancing the country's private sector.

His remarks were made during a recent appearance on the Starting Point podcast, where he unpacked the evolving relationship between government and business, and the rapid transformation taking place across several industries.

"We are also very fortunate to have a government that understands that they have a role to play in private sector development, in the sense that we are not doing it in a silo. We need the government to understand that they have to set the framework, get out of the way, and let the private sector do the work," Gouveia explained.

Gouveia, who has worked in aviation, said the current climate is one where the private sector is not only encouraged to grow but is actively facilitated.

According to him, Guyana is in the midst of a unique window of opportunity, and the government's approach has allowed local businesses to become stronger, more competitive, and more confident in their ability to expand.

He emphasised that: "The government is laying down some challenges for the private sector, and it is exciting for me to motivate my members and their members to answer that call. It really engages the creative side of your brain, because it is not business as usual. You have to be creative; you have to be innovative, you have to think outside the box; otherwise, you are going to miss the boat."

During the podcast, Gouveia noted that President Dr. Irfaan Ali has pledged to accomplish 30 years' worth of development within five years, given that he is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term. "He [President Ali] is upping the pace, and I am saying that the private sector is answering that call. We will keep up. To do so, we must innovate, and we must embrace technology."

He said the most robust response to this call is coming from the very large companies, which he described as the "backbone of the private sector".



PSC Chairman Captain Gerald Gouveia Jr

These include major distributors, leading banks, and members from every regional chamber, all of whom are motivated and delivering. According to him, he is proud to lead a like-minded group that is consistently delivering results

The PSC Chairman said that members are preparing for the explosion in the economy driven by the oil and gas sector because of the Local Content Act. "With the local content legislation, it really gives us the opportunity to partake in oil and gas without being in oil and gas. You're in the periphery industries of oil and gas, whether that is logistics or accommodation."

Gouveia highlighted that the private sector is leading efforts in economic diversification, noting that Guyana's progress was recognised at a recent regional dialogue.

"Guyana stood out as one of the most economically diverse countries, despite having oil and gas. A lot of people think that Guyana is an oil and gas country: No! We are a country with oil and gas. It really speaks to the fact that Guyana is diversifying from oil and gas, using the revenues from oil and gas to develop our tourism and agriculture industries, and eventually our manufacturing and information and communication technology (ICT) industries."

Gouveia noted that many PSC members have seen over the years that

their family businesses and entrepreneurial ideas now have a place, either on the periphery of the oil and gas sector, or in an economy with more disposable income and circulating capital, creating opportunities for restaurants and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

"We have a market that allows young people to innovate. The market is there, and I think Guyanese people are good at taking advantage of opportunities when presented, and we have a plethora of opportunities available," the PSC Chairman said.

The Private Sector Commission of Guyana was established in 1992 by five

private sector associations with the aim of bringing together all private sector organs and business entities under the purview of being one national body.

The Commission is governed by a Council, which is comprised of the heads of all sectoral member organisations and a number of elected corporate members.

The Council is headed by the Chairman, who can serve a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms. Any Chairman who has served two consecutive terms may be eligible for subsequent re-election after a three-year period.





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A member from the forensic team investigates the area where the blast took place

'There was blood everywhere': Delhi residents recount horror of huge car explosion

Monday evening was busy as usual near the Red Fort metro station in India's capital Delhi when the sound of a loud blast broke through the cacophony on the streets.

An explosion in a car killed at least eight people and injured more than 20. It was so powerful that several vehicles nearby almost melted, and people could hear the blast from kilometres away.

The police are still investigating what caused the blast but the fact that it happened in one of the most secure and busy areas of Delhi has shocked people.

On one side is Chandni Chowk - a busy trading and clothing hub that is busier than usual at this time of the year due to the peak wedding season.

And on the other side is the 17th Century Red Fort which attracts thousands of tourists every day.

Sandwiched between the two is the road where the explosion took place. Within minutes, confusion and alarm spread from the scene to the rest of the city.

Some readers may find the details below disturbing

Mohamed Hafiz, who lives less than 200m from the spot, said his house shook and he and others ran out thinking it was an earthquake.

What he saw on the street terrified him: people were running in all directions, cars were on fire, and bodies lay on the road. Some locals were trying to help the injured.

"There was blood everywhere. People were in shock. The scene was too disturbing - I could even see body parts," he said.

As local media broke the news, fear and panic swept through the city. Police declared a high alert, and neighbouring states quickly followed suit.

As we entered Delhi from the neighbouring suburb of Noida, we could see a long queue of vehicles at the border as policemen searched them one by one.

Everyone - the people in the vehicles and the policemen - looked tense as they all appeared to be in disbelief that something like this had happened in their city for the first time in more than a decade.

Beyond the crossing, most roads were deserted as we drove to Lok Nayak Hospital, where the injured had been taken.

Outside, a large crowd had gathered behind police cordons. Confusion hung in the air as people searched for answers, and fellow journalists speculated about what might have caused the explosion.

Onlookers were mystified and even scared. Rajesh Kumar, who works at a tea shop near the hospital, said he always believed the capital was the safest city in the country.

He said that though the blast had shaken him, he still believed that the security forces would soon find out what caused it.

"My family in Uttar Pradesh [state] told me to leave, they panic easily. I am a little worried and shocked but I don't think Delhi has suddenly become unsafe," he said.

Among the crowd were also several people who were looking for missing family members.

One of them was Mohammed Azghar, whose brother was in the area where the blast took place.

"My brother has been missing since the explosion. We haven't had any contact with him," he said

"We've searched around Red Fort, Chandni Chowk, everywhere but we can't find him."

Mr Azghar said his brother used to drive an electric rickshaw. "The police have confiscated the vehicle, which is fine, we don't mind that. But at least help us find my brother.

"I just want some news - good or bad."

Lok Nayak Hospital, where many of the injured have been taken after an explosion near Delhi's Red Fort killed at least eight people

The injured were taken to Lok Nayak Hospital in Delhi

After visiting the hospital, we drove to the site of the blast. It was jarring to see the roads empty here, as the area is usually teeming with people late into the night.

There were only security personnel or journalists around. Officials had relaxed restrictions and journalists could go closer to the site.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): Your financial situation needs seeing to and with Mercury about to move back into the wealth area of your chart the decisions you make had better be right. A lot rests on what your next move is going to be, so give it some very deep thought.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): You may not see eye-toeye with a colleague or friend but what of it? If they want to accompany you on your current journey then welcome them with open arms, but if they have doubts just tell them you will see them later.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): You need to take life at a more leisurely pace. Stop fretting that if you don't surge ahead now, right this very minute, your rivals will leave you far behind, because it isn't true. Go and read the story about the tortoise and the hare.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): If you have something to say that won't go down well with the people you work with then promise yourself right now that you won't sugarcoat it. Get straight to the point and make it clear you are in no mood to be forgiving.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): It may seem as if someone is behaving badly just to get under your skin but according to the planets they have their reasons for being difficult. If you find out what those reasons are you will also find there is some common ground between you.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): Quit worrying and concentrate instead on the things in life that put a smile on your face. That is the message of the stars today and if you follow it then so many of your so-called problems will just fade away. Focus on having fun.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): You can be a bit too laid-back at times and that could be a problem today if you assume that a situation will work itself out for the best. If you refuse to engage with it that problem could very quickly turn into a price.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): You need to make more of an effort to get along with people whose outlook and attitude you don't much admire. As one of the zodiac's "fixed" signs you seem to believe that others should adapt themselves to you, but that's expecting too much.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): If your get up and go abandons you today that's quite okay. If you don't feel like making an effort then don't. This is one of those days when if you kick back and do nothing you will be fired up to take on the world tomorrow.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): If you are working on something as part of a team you must resist the urge to take control and tell everyone else what to do. Have your say by all means but let others have their say as well. Their plan may actually be better than yours.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): What you want to do today and what you are expected to do will be two entirely different things. If you can accept that fact you should be able to fulfil your obligations and still have time to follow your own desires.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): You may want to be on the move today but there is a danger you could head off in a direction that brings problems rather than pleasure. On this occasion it might be better to sit tight and wait for others to make their way towards you.

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Bartlett: Jamaica on track for full tourism recovery by May 2026

Jamaica's tourism sector is pushing ahead with an ambitious recovery plan following the widespread damage caused by Hurricane Melissa, with full operational readiness targeted for May 2026.

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett shared the update during an interview with Fox News on November 13, urging travellers to support the island's reconstruction by visiting and experiencing Jamaica's trademark warmth and resilience. "The best way to give back is to come back," he said.

Bartlett noted that although the western end of the island bore the brunt of the storm, much of Jamaica remains open to visitors. He pointed to rapid mobilisation efforts across government and nonprofit groups, which have been delivering food, clothing and essential supplies to hard-hit communities. International volunteers and Caribbean neighbours have also stepped in with support.

With two-thirds of major tourist destinations already operating, the Minister said the sector is steadily rebuilding. Resorts, attractions and small businesses in the affected zones are repairing damage with what he described as a renewed sense of unity and purpose.

Despite the scale of the impact — an estimated 60 per cent of tourism assets were affected — Bartlett said the country's key gateways are functioning and hotels continue to reopen. "By the

time we get to December 15, more than 70 per cent of our room stock and attractions will be available," he said, noting that about 80 per cent of accommodation is expected to be ready by January 2026.

The western tourism capital, Montego Bay, was among the hardest hit, while Negril, Port Antonio, Kingston and parts of the South Coast experienced far less disruption. As infrastructure stabilises, Bartlett said ongoing efforts are focused on restoring workers' homes and ensuring utilities such as water and electricity are fully reliable.

Tourism accounts for roughly 30 per cent of Jamaica's GDP, provides more than half of the island's foreign-exchange earnings and employs 20 per cent of the labour force — making the speed of recovery critical. But Bartlett stressed that the island's resilience remains its strongest asset. "We're not just building back. We're building back better," he said, adding that reconstruction efforts are incorporating climate-resilient technologies.

A multi-agency recovery task force is meeting daily to coordinate the rebuild, and Bartlett praised the determination of residents who are repairing homes and restoring livelihoods.

As Jamaica prepares for the peak winter season, the Minister is encouraging travellers to rely on official channels, including the Jamaica Tourist Board website, for the latest updates on openings and recovery progress. He reiterated his invitation for visitors to return, describing Jamaica as a

destination defined by hospitality, optimism and a steady march toward full

US pledges long-term support to JA

The United States Government has pledged sustained support to Jamaica as the country undertakes recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Melissa.

Under Secretary of State for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom, Jeremy Lewin, detailed the assistance already provided, including deployment of a disaster response team and specialized search and rescue units that have reached hard-to-access areas. Additional support has been delivered through the World Food Programme and Samaritan's Purse International Relief in partnership with local organizations.

"We also brought in significant military Department of War assets... so we were able to bring in heavy-lift helicopters. So far, and counting, the helicopters have delivered more than half a million pounds of lifesaving assistance," Mr. Lewin said during a tour of the Emergency Field Hospital at Black River High School in St. Elizabeth on Monday (November 10).

He reaffirmed the US commitment to Jamaica, stating that support will continue "not just for the first week, not just for the first day but for the months to come as well." He also offered condolences to those who lost loved ones in the hurricane and encouraged communities affected by the devastation.

Earlier on Monday, Mr. Lewin announced that the United States has pledged an additional US\$10 million to support Jamaica's recovery efforts, bringing the total U.S. contribution to US\$22 million.

Accompanying Mr. Lewin on the tour were Minister of Energy, Transport and Telecommunications Daryl Vaz and Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining Floyd Green. Both ministers expressed gratitude for the US partnership and emphasized the importance of ongoing support to reach isolated communities.

Relief efforts include the establishment of a field hospital, distribution of food packages via the World Food Programme and Food for the Poor, and installation of a water filtration station by Samaritan's Purse, ensuring access to clean drinking water.

Minister Green highlighted that thousands of Jamaicans have been severely affected and noted that continued international and local collaboration will be essential for the nation's rebuilding efforts.

PM Persad-Bissessar assures Trinidad will not be used against Venezuela

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has given a firm assurance that Trinidad and Tobago will not be used as a base for any military action against Venezuela, amid rising tensions in the region.

Her comments came in response to a pointed critique from former Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley, who raised questions about the country's stance on United States-Venezuela tensions during a media briefing at his Glencoe home. Rowley criticized the government's handling of Trinidad and Tobago's position in the face of recent US military activity in the Caribbean.

Persad-Bissessar downplayed the significance of Rowley's remarks, saying, "As a citizen, he has a democratic right to express his opinions. However, the facts remain."

She noted that while Trinidad and Tobago signed an updated Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the US last year under Rowley's administration—which allows cooperation with US military training exercises in the region—this does not permit any offensive action against Venezuela from T&T territory.

"The US has NEVER requested use of our territory to launch any attacks against the people of Venezuela. Trinidad and Tobago territory will NOT be used to launch any attacks against the people of Venezuela. Trinidad and Tobago is a sovereign state and does not blindly follow the US or any bloc such as CARICOM," she said.

Citing the arrival of the USS Gerald R. Ford in the Caribbean and US Marines participating in exercises with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the Prime Minister emphasized that her government's foreign policy prioritizes national interest. "Our foreign policy is Trinidad and Tobago first. As Lord Palmerston said, 'We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow," she added.

While underscoring the country's ongoing challenges with drug and gun trafficking, Persad-Bissessar said her government remains committed to international cooperation in combating these threats. However, she stressed that cooperation does not extend to harming Venezuela or its people.

"Trinidad and Tobago will NOT participate in any act that will bring harm to the Venezuelan people. We continue to have peaceful relations with the people of Venezuela. The Trinidad and Tobago Government supports the selection of leaders through free and fair democratic elections.



Trinidad and Tobago citizens and infrastructure are NOT at risk as we are NOT participants in any aggression against the people of Venezuela," the

Prime Minister said.

32 to contest November 27 polls in SVG

The Supervisor of Elections, Dora James, has confirmed that 32 candidates will contest the St. Vincent and the Grenadines general elections on November 27, including one independent, in what is largely seen as a straight contest between the ruling Unity Labour Party (ULP) and the main opposition New Democratic Party (NDP).

The ULP, led by Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, is seeking an unprecedented sixth consecutive term, while the NDP, headed by Opposition Leader Dr. Godwin Friday, hopes to reclaim government.

The sole independent candidate, Kenna Questelles, will run in the West St. George constituency. A former executive member of the NDP Women's Arm, Questelles has pledged to establish a digital youth service

agency if elected, aiming to train and employ 150 youth in digital marketing, website design, and IT support services for local businesses. Her candidacy also brings the total number of women contesting this election to nine.



Ralph Gonsalves: challenged

News Network.

With high stakes for both the incumbent ULP and the opposition, voters in St. Vincent and the Grenadines will head to the polls on November 27 to determine the next government.

Meanwhile, the ULP has challenged the eligibility of two NDP candidates — Dr. Friday in the Northern Grenadines and Fitz Bramble in East Kingstown — on the grounds that both acquired Canadian citizenship as adults, which the ULP argues places them under allegiance to a foreign power in violation of the Constitution. While the returning officers allowed their nominations, Prime Minister Gonsalves has promised legal action to contest them.

In addition to the main par-

ties and the independent, the elec-

tions will feature candidates from

(NLM), which was established in

highlighted the importance of her

party's participation, noting its on-

going program of political advo-

Belldnation, broadcast via Bayhill

cacy through initiatives like

2022. Former diplomat Charles

smaller groups such as the Na-

tional Liberation Movement

Jamaica plans multi-year overhaul of schools after Hurricane Melissa

The Jamaican Government's recovery plan for the education sector following the devastation of Hurricane Melissa will prioritize building stronger, safer school facilities designed to withstand future storms, says Minister of Education, Skills, Youth and Information, Senator Dr. the Hon. Dana Morris Dixon.

During a tour of affected schools in Trelawny and St. James on Wednesday (Nov. 12), the Minister told JIS News that the long-term strategy goes far beyond basic repairs. The plan includes upgrading building standards, improving drainage systems, and strengthening utility infrastructure to reduce vulnerability and long-term maintenance costs.

"This approach is a shift away from merely restoring what was lost to building back better, with an emphasis on resilience and safer building standards for the future," she said.

Senator Morris Dixon noted that the extent of the damage has underscored the urgent need for a more resilient education system. More than 600 schools sustained some level of damage during the storm, with roughly 200 institutions severely affected.

The destruction, she said, is enough to "change the way we think about our infrastructure and our readiness for future storms."

The Minister stressed that the recovery will not be a quick turnaround, but a phased, multi-year effort. As reconstruction begins, school leaders have been improvising to keep students engaged. Some of the most severely impacted schools are implementing shift systems to maximise instructional time

"Given the extent of the damage, temporary classroom solutions are being considered for the most affected schools. The goal is to keep learning, moving, while reconstruction takes place," she said.

Access to reliable water supply has been another major challenge. The Ministry is working with the National Water Commission (NWC) and trucking partners to ensure affected campuses receive water. The aim is to resume classes at as many schools as possible by the end of the month.

For schools with significant structural damage, there will be phased reopening plans and potential relocations



Minister of Education, Skills, Youth and Information, Senator Dr. the Hon. Dana Morris Dixon

to maintain continuity of learning.

Senator Morris Dixon praised the efforts of school leaders, teachers, parents, and community members who have taken on clean-up work and put interim measures in place to support the return to classes.

She also pledged ongoing transparency as assessments continue and rebuilding plans take shape. This in-

cludes finalising temporary operating models—such as shift systems and makeshift classrooms—to sustain instructional time throughout the reconstruction period.

"Also, we will put together a comprehensive resilience upgrade plan with timelines and budgets and maintain regular updates on reopening timelines, safety standards, and progress," she said

While acknowledging that "the path to full recovery will be long and challenging," the Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment to restoring every child to a safe, modern classroom. "We are committed to returning every child to a safe, modern classroom, stronger than before Hurricane Melissa struck," she said.

WCK serves 1 million meals in JA

World Central Kitchen (WCK) has marked a major milestone in Jamaica, providing more than 1 million meals to families affected by Hurricane Melissa, according to founder and chef José Andrés.

"People of Jamaica! Today we crossed the 1 million meals mark... thanks to all of you and the hundreds of Jamaican volunteers, restaurants, and chefs!" Andrés tweeted on November 15. "By car, by food, by helicopter, by boat... we've been always trying to reach every community! Every day! Nonstop!"

The relief effort focuses on western Jamaica, the region hardest hit by the Category 5 storm. Melissa brought destructive winds, torrential rain, and widespread flooding, leaving towns isolated and cutting power to large areas.

To respond, WCK established two large field kitchens in Montego Bay and Negril. With support from the Sandals Foundation, the Montego Bay Convention Center was con-

verted into a fully operational kitchen capable of producing tens of thousands of meals daily. The organization now delivers nearly 20,000 hot meals each day across Hanover, St. James, Westmoreland, St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon, and Trelawny parishes, with help from more than 30 local restaurants

In remote hillside communities, volunteers deliver meals by land and air. In Bluefields, Belmont, and Mearnsville, families sheltering in damaged schools are receiving daily meals. In Savanna-la-Mar, deliveries by helicopter provided hot food, water, and essentials to communities cut off by storm damage.

WCK also makes door-to-door deliveries for residents unable to reach distribution points. For example, Maurice, an 80-year-old resident of Brighton, Westmoreland Parish, lost the roof of his home during the storm and relies on daily deliveries from WCK volunteers.

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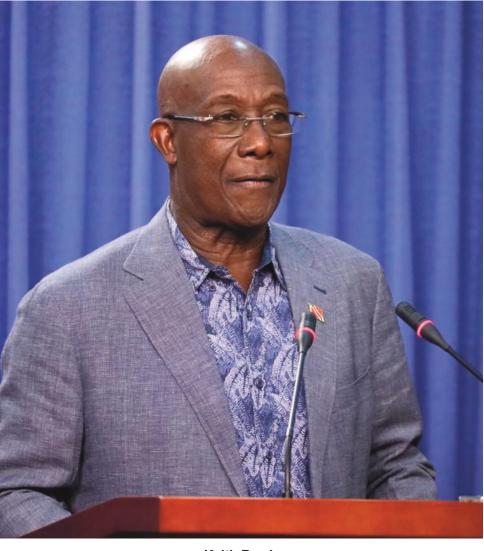
Rowley denies signing agreement to allow US to use T&T as a base

Former Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley on Monday denied that he or his administration ever signed an agreement permitting the United States to use Trinidad and Tobago as a staging ground for military action against neighboring countries, including Venezuela. He reiterated that the Caribbean should remain a zone of peace.

"As the former prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago and chairman of the National Security Council and the person who sat and talked with Americans throughout my term, there is absolutely nothing in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to permit any commitment from Trinidad and Tobago to breach the UN Charter, to intervene militarily in any of our neighbors or anywhere in the world," Rowley said at a news conference.

"Absolutely not so at all. Anybody from the government saying that it is a lie. There is nothing in any document that I am aware of, which prevents the sovereign government of Trinidad and Tobago from saying yes or no to any request coming from any country if we believe that it jeopardizes our sovereignty or puts our vulnerability to the test. So let's get that very clear," he added.

SOFA, first signed in 2007 and updated most recently in December 2024, governs the temporary presence and activities of US military personnel in Trinidad and Tobago. The latest version removed a specific expiration



Keith Rowley

date, making it indefinite unless renegotiated. The agreement facilitates military cooperation, including joint training exercises and security operations.

Rowley said that if Trinidad and Tobago were involved in a future con-

frontation between the US and Venezuela, it would be the result of decisions made by the current government under Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro warned that Port of Spain's joint military drills with the US could "threaten peace" in the Caribbean, adding, "The people of Trinidad and Tobago will see if they continue to tolerate the use of their waters and land."

Rowley criticized what he called an "aggressive posture" by the United States toward Venezuela and the Persad-Bissessar administration. He stressed that previous People's National Movement (PNM) administrations had followed a longstanding policy of non-interference, advocating that the Caribbean remain "friends of all, satellites of none."

"If the United States military is engaged with Venezuela, big or small, it is entirely as a result of decisions taken and actions by the government of Trinidad and Tobago... under the leadership of Kamla Persad-Bissessar," Rowley said.

Rowley warned that the current stance of Port of Spain could make Trinidad and Tobago a target in the event of a military conflict with Venezuela, including potential attacks on oil platforms near the border. He also raised concerns over the potential socio-economic consequences if Venezuela were to limit cooperation on oil and gas development.

"My question today to the government of Trinidad and Tobago: what preparations have you made to protect us in the event your offer is taken up or Venezuela is attacked?" Rowley asked, emphasizing the risks to national security.

T&T PM welcomes arrival of US Marines

Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has welcomed the arrival of the United States Marine Corps' 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) for a week-long joint training exercise with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF), highlighting the strategic security partnership between the two countries.

In a post on her official X account on Sunday, Persad-Bissessar described the collaboration as reflecting the "deep and enduring" security ties between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States, noting that US military involvement has already contributed to a reduction in the trafficking of guns, drugs, and humans into the country.

"The United States' presence in the region has already contributed to a significant reduction in the trafficking of guns, drugs, and humans into our country. As a small nation facing transnational criminal networks, TT benefits immensely from this partnership with the world's leading superpower," the Prime Minister wrote.

Persad-Bissessar condemned gang violence, which she said has escalated into "open lawlessness on our streets,"



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

claiming the lives of law-abiding citizens. She urged citizens to remember the victims and described the joint exercises as a critical step in strengthening the TTDF's readiness, intelligence capabilities, and operational strength.

"Our partnership with the US has already achieved meaningful success, and together we will continue to press forward until we win the war on crime which has plagued TT and threatens stability across our region," she added.

The 22nd MEU arrived on November 16 and will remain in Trinidad and Tobago until November 21. This visit comes just over two weeks after the unit first arrived aboard the USS Gravely on October 26, departing on

October 30. During their stay, the Marines are also participating in outreach initiatives at schools.

However, the deployment has sparked tensions with Venezuela. President Nicolás Maduro accused Trinidad and Tobago of collaborating with the United States to destabilize peace in the region, suspending energy deals with the country and declaring Persad-Bissessar persona non grata. Supporters of Maduro staged protests in Caracas in response to the Marines' return.

Despite the controversy, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs Sean Sobers last Friday dismissed claims that the US military presence in TT is intended for operations against Venezuela.

The United States has increased its military assets in the Caribbean since August, citing efforts to combat narco-trafficking. Since September, the US military has conducted 21 airstrikes in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific, resulting in the deaths of 83 suspected drug traffickers, including three men in the Eastern Pacific on Saturday, according to US Southern Command.

Democratic People's Movement launched as new Grenada party

Grenada now has a new political party following the official launch of the Democratic People's Movement (DPM) on Sunday night near St. George's.

Former Foreign Minister Peter David was unveiled as the party's leader during a packed event at the Grenada Trade Center, with hundreds more attending outside, including diplomats, trade union leaders, independent senators, and former New National Party (NNP) executives.

"This is no longer an idea — it is real, it is alive, it is yours," David told supporters. "Together we move — from division to unity. Together we move from promises to action. Together we move — from stagnation to progress."

David, who has served in various cabinet posts including Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism, and Agriculture and Labour, resigned from the NNP and became an independent MP in January 2025 following a controversial leadership race. He emphasized that the DPM is rooted in grassroots organizing and seeks to break from "politics as usual," focusing on unity, transparency, and policies over personalities.

The party's launch highlighted three core commitments under its Progressive Agenda for Empowerment (PAE):

Work that pays and stays: Initiatives include down-payment grants for first-time homebuyers under 35, a National Human Resource Reset to align skills and opportunities, and streamlining regulatory processes for small businesses.



Peter David is the leader of the new party

focus on agricultural revitalization, support for farmers and fisherfolk, guaranteed pricing for staples, subsidized climate-smart irrigation, and local processing facilities to reduce post-harvest losses.

Healthcare that reaches you: The movement prioritizes accessible, compassionate healthcare, increased support for frontline workers, investments in facilities and equipment, and the introduction of a National Wellness Agenda.

David framed the movement as a

response to decades of entrenched politics, asserting that Grenada's citizens are "the architects of a nation's destiny" and calling for a generation empowered to shape its future. "We are building a movement that upholds dignity and transparency... This movement belongs to you. You own it, and you will shape it," he said.

He stressed the need for economic resilience, particularly in the context of global challenges affecting small island states. "We cannot trade our dignity, believing that it is for survival. Without dignity, there is no survival," David said, linking foreign policy, economic strategy, and national self-reliance.

The DPM's launch signals a new chapter in Grenadian politics, aimed at empowering youth, workers, and small businesses, while promoting unity and long-term national development. David concluded his speech urging citizens to join the movement and participate actively: "First, we question. Then, we organise. Finally, we move forward, together. Let's get to work."





Fetes banned at Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Trinidad due to noise

Fetes will no longer be permitted at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, following mounting concerns about damage to the facility and growing complaints from nearby residents. The Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT) has moved to halt such events immediately.

UDeCOTT chairman Shankar Bidaisee confirmed the decision, saying the board has approved a policy barring fetes at the Academy, its surrounding areas, and all other properties under the corporation's control. "The board has approved a policy that there are to be no fetes at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy and surrounding areas under the purview of UDeCOTT—or at any UDeCOTT premises," Bidaisee said.

He emphasized that the facility was designed strictly for cricket and has suffered significant wear and tear from non-sporting events. "The Brian Lara Cricket Academy is for cricket. That is the purpose of it. It was not built for fetes," he said. "And furthermore, this facility costs a lot of money to maintain and, of course, when we have these activities and so on it causes damage to the premises and that is not in keeping with good practice. It's for cricket and we will use it for cricket only."

According to Bidaisee, the stadium costs between \$10 million and \$15 million annually to maintain, while the fees collected from fetes fall far short of that amount.

"We have costs associated with clean-up, there is significant wear and tear, and damage. There are also security concerns and high maintenance expenses. And of course, it's not good for the stadium's reputation to host fetes," he said. "The sum that they (promoters) pay is quite low... and the revenue generated is nowhere close to that."

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar later weighed in on X, saying the government's stance was driven partly by an upsurge in noise complaints.

"Noise pollution is a nuisance," she wrote. "I instructed that all fetes at the Brian Lara Stadium be stopped as the noise has become unbearable for residents." She added that noise pollution has been "ignored for far too long" and vowed to address the issue more broadly.

Opposition Leader Pennelope Beckles, however, argued that the decision raises broader questions and may signal the start of more restrictions across UDeCOTT-managed properties. At the Opposition's weekly news briefing, she challenged why the Academy was singled out if noise was the primary concern.

"If I recall specifically the document from Udecott, it is now not only going to be Brian Lara, but it is also going to be other facilities for which Udecott has responsibilities," Beckles said. "So we have to assume that the



Hyatt, Invaders Bay, and any other facility that is managed by Udecott will no longer have any fetes."

She also criticized what she described as a lack of respect for event promoters and the public. "Why no consultation? Because these are facilities that are owned by the State, basically owned by the public," she said. "And why would the Honourable Prime Minister say that she will not have a meeting with the promoters when the question was asked?"

Beckles further questioned

whether the government has undisclosed intentions for the venue. "This is not the personal property of the Prime Minister. Brian Lara is not the personal property of the Prime Minister," she said. "But it may very well be that there may be plans for the Brian Lara Stadium... we will wait very much in short order to see whether that is in fact the case."

She added that the Opposition will also monitor how the recent extension of the State of Emergency may affect Carnival Monday and Tuesday in 2026.

Rutherford: WI must be sharper, braver

In the wake of a tense seven-run defeat to New Zealand in Saturday's opening One-Day International, West Indies middle-order batsman Sherfane Rutherford has issued a pointed call: the Caribbean side must be sharper, braver, and more inventive through the middle overs if they hope to tilt the series.

The West Indies bowlers did their part, limiting New Zealand to a manageable 269 for seven from 50 overs. But a sluggish response with the bat, particularly between the 11th and 40th overs, left the visitors chasing the game. A late surge from the lower order narrowed the gap, but the innings closed at 262 for six, just short of the target.

Addressing reporters after the match, Rutherford underscored the team's need to break the stranglehold New Zealand's bowlers impose through their relentless hard-length approach.

"I think, moving forward, it's important for us to rotate the strike," he stressed. "We know that New Zealand is going to keep bowling the ball into the wicket. So I think, as a team, we need to find a way of getting off strike

and once we can do that, I think we're going to be in a winning position."

Rutherford noted that the strategy of saving firepower for the back end too often results in miscalculation.

"Our plan is for us to set it up for the back end, but I think sometimes we miscalculate by leaving too much for the back end," he admitted.

For Rutherford, the middle phase is where West Indies must transform their approach.

"From overs 11 to 40, if we can get more singles and even try to get more boundaries in between, it would definitely help us in the back end," he insisted.

His words carried weight, he topscored with a composed 55 from 61 deliveries, a timely return to form after a difficult stretch.

Rutherford's half-century was his first major score in months. He arrived in the series averaging only 15 in his previous six ODIs and coming off a lean T20I campaign across Bangladesh and New Zealand, where he mustered just two runs in four innings, including three ducks.

Still, he said his belief never wa-



Sherfane Rutherford

vered.

"It was definitely tough. As a player, when you're not performing it can be hard, because your mind can be all over," he reflected. "But it got to a point where, for me, I realised that when things are not going your way, you can use it in two ways; either use it as motivation or you let it break you. And for me it was my biggest motivation."

He credited unwavering discipline and hard work for keeping him anchored through the slump.

"Even the days when I don't feel like doing it, I still turn up to the trainings, still turn up to the nets, still in the gym, and I think being that consistent in my preparation and just having that faith... once you believe, you can achieve anything."



Terry Gajraj among nine to be honoured with Doctorates from UG

THE University of Guyana has unveiled the nine accomplished individuals set to receive its 2025 Honorary Doctorates, a cohort representing exceptional achievement in diplomacy, business, literature, engineering, sport, agriculture, music, and education.

In a statement, the University said the honourees "represent excellence in business, sport, engineering, diplomacy, literature, music, agriculture, and education, embodying the University's commitment to national development, innovation, and cultural pride."

The awards will be conferred across multiple convocation ceremonies from November 20–22, 2025.

Sir Ronald Sanders, Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States and the Organization of American States, will receive his Honorary Doctorate during the Faculty of Social Sciences ceremony on Saturday, November 22 at 09:00hrs.

The University hailed Sanders as "a transformative figure in diplomacy, business, and academia," noting his leadership on constitutional resolution missions, Commonwealth reform, and international governance.

Executive Chairman of Demerara Distillers Limited, Mr. Komal Samaroo, will be honoured at the SEBI ceremony on Friday, November 21 at 16:00hrs.

His five decades of service, the University said, helped shape DDL into "a globally respected enterprise," including the establishment of the World Trade Centre in Guyana.

Samaroo was praised for his regional work, including pioneering the "Authentic Caribbean Rum" mark, and for advancing corporate social responsibility in education, health, and youth development.

Guyana's most decorated female squash athlete, Ms. Nicolette Fernandes, will receive her honorary award on Friday, November 21 at 09:00hrs during the ceremonies for the College of Behavioural Sciences, the College of Medical Sciences, and the Institute for Human Resiliency, Strategic Security and the Future.

Legendary civil engineer Egbert Carter will be honoured on Thursday, November 20 at 9:00 hrs during ceremonies for the Faculties of Agriculture, Earth and Environmental Sciences, En-



Terry Gajraj

gineering and Technology, and IDCE.

Celebrated literary icons Grace Nichols and John Agard — both internationally awarded by the British Government — will receive their honorary doctorates during the Faculty of Education and Humanities ceremony on Saturday, November 22 at 09:00hrs. Agriculture innovator, Mohindra Persaud, Executive Chairman of the Nand Persaud Group, will be honoured on Thursday, November 20 at 16:00hrs during the Faculty of Natural Sciences ceremony.

Iconic Chutney singer and cultural ambassador Terry Gajraj will be honoured at the Faculty of Education and Humanities ceremony on Saturday, November 22 at 09:00hrs. UG noted Gajraj's role in expanding the reach of Guyanese music internationally and his impact through philanthropy in "education, health, and technology."

Professor Clement Sankat, Director of the Guyana Technical Training College Inc., will receive his honorary doctorate on Thursday, November 20 at 09:00hrs during the combined science and engineering ceremonies.

His contributions to engineering education and vocational training, the University said, support Guyana's "future-ready workforce" and the nation's rapid transformation.

The University explained that honorary recipients are chosen through a multi-step, research-driven assessment.



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Member of Provincial Parliament
Scarborough—Guildwood



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

MPP Andrea Hazell to Host Landmark Transportation Mobility Conference at the Toronto Zoo

Toronto, ON — Ontario Liberal Caucus Transportation Critic MPP Andrea Hazell will host a landmark Transportation Mobility Conference at the Toronto Zoo, bringing together transportation agencies, small and medium-sized enterprises, anchor institutions, community organizations, and transit advocates to tackle Ontario's most pressing transportation challenges.

The conference will explore the province's infrastructure gaps, the need for accessible and reliable transit, and new opportunities for innovation and economic growth.

"Transportation is the backbone of our communities and our economy," said MPP Hazell. "When people can move easily and reliably, families and businesses across Ontario thrive."

The full-day program includes presentations, panel discussions, and fireside chats with leading experts who will address the realities facing Ontario's transit systems and propose forward-looking solutions.

"This conference brings together leaders and innovators who are reshaping transportation across Ontario," Hazell added. "Their expertise will strengthen the conversations in the room and help drive meaningful change for our province's future."

Following the event, MPP Hazell's office will publish a comprehensive conference report outlining key insights and recommendations. Stakeholders will also be invited to a follow-up roundtable to continue advancing transportation as a provincial priority.

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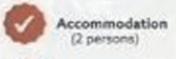




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Day 6 - Esseguibo River Islands Expedition

Day 7 - Departing Destination Guyana and reminisce