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Gayle acquires EU franchise

In a move that extends his influence beyond the boundary, Chris Gayle has stepped into cricket ownership, joining the leadership group of a Glasgow-based franchise set to compete in the inaugural European T20 Premier League (ETPL).

The franchise, operating under the name Glasgow Mugafians, represents both a new venture for Gayle and a broader push to establish elite T20 cricket within emerging European markets.

Gayle's involvement comes through a collaboration with the Mugafi Group, an India-based entertainment enterprise that has secured rights to the Glasgow franchise.

For Gayle, whose career spanned more than two decades and redefined the possibilities of T20 batting, the transition into ownership signals a new phase, one centered on growth and legacy. *Full story, Page 28*



Families see significant rise in property value

Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali has noted that the government's investments in infrastructure are not only transforming communities, but also delivering tangible financial benefits, with property values in many areas increasing drastically over a short pe-

riod.

The President pointed to real examples to demonstrate how public investments are translating into private wealth.

"I asked the Minister of Finance to contact the Chief Valuation Officer and to get for me the latest transactions in this community," he said, before outlining the figures.

"In 2021, there was a piece of land bought here along this highway for five million Guyana dollars. In 2026, that same piece of land was sold for \$38 million... the net value of every family here has gone up, in this case, by more than 700 per cent," President Ali highlighted.

He added that another property, purchased in 2017 for \$23 million with minimal upgrades, was sold in 2026 for \$112 million, representing a gain of more than 500 per cent.

"These are real families, real individuals, real Guyanese, who saw their net asset grow by more than 500% in just five years," the President said.

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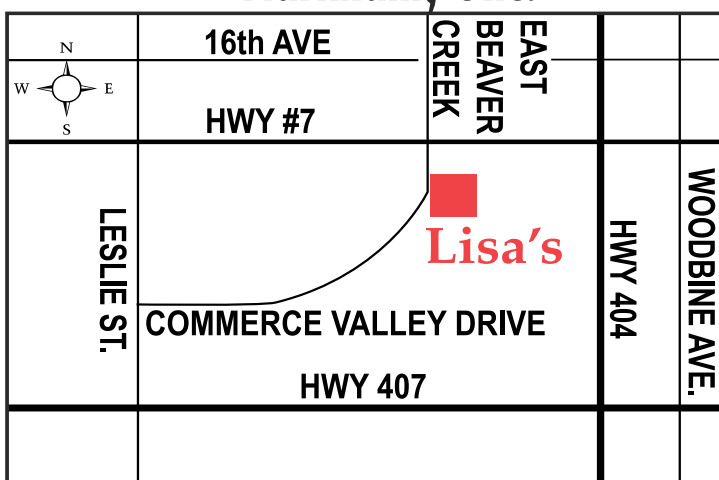
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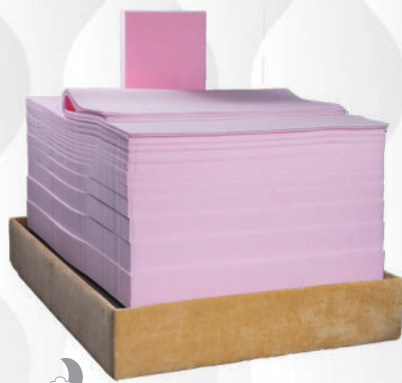
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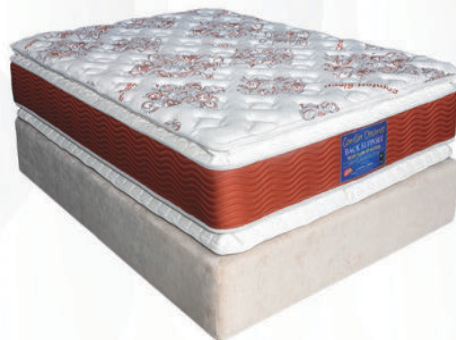
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Investors wanted: Guyana seeks bids for energy projects in West Bank Demerara

The Office of the Prime Minister of Guyana has issued a preliminary call for investors to support key energy projects at Wales, West Bank Demerara, signalling continued momentum in the country's gas-to-energy initiative.

In a notice released on April 14, the Government of Guyana invited expressions of interest for investments in two major projects to be located near the Wales Gas-to-Energy Combined Cycle Power Plant and Natural Gas Liquids facilities.

The projects include the Guyana Ammonia and Urea Plant Inc. (GAUP), valued at US\$300 million, and the Guyana Gas Bottling and Logistics Company (GGBLC), estimated at US\$40 million.

According to the notice, the government is targeting investments of up to US\$5 million per investor for the GAUP project, while the GGBLC initiative has a cap of US\$1 million per investor. However, interested parties may indicate higher investment amounts.

Both ventures will operate as private companies and offer a government-guaranteed annual return of 10 per cent. Authorities also indicated that while all investors are encouraged to apply, priority will be given to Guyanese investors, including members of the diaspora.

Interested investors are required to submit detailed information as part of



the expression of interest process, including ownership structure, identification details, and proposed investment terms. Submissions must be made to

the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board, located at Main and Urquhart Streets, by May 15, 2026.

The government noted that the

current call is preliminary and will help inform the structuring of final investment terms ahead of a formal invitation.

Pilot project of onion cultivation yields 40,000 kg

AGRICULTURE Minister Zulfikar Mustapha, on Monday, announced the successful local cultivation and harvesting of approximately 40,000 kilogrammes of onions, describing the achievement as a significant milestone in Guyana's push to strengthen food security and diversify its agricultural sector.

The onions were produced under a pilot project spanning just four acres, demonstrating the crop's viability under local conditions.

Building on this success, Minister Mustapha revealed that the Ministry of Agriculture is preparing to expand production on a much larger scale, with plans to cultivate approximately 200 acres in the next planting cycle.

He noted that the project has already generated widespread interest among farmers across the country, particularly in Regions Two, Five, Six,

and Nine. President Irfaan Ali had previously visited Region Nine during the early stages of harvesting, and since then, more farmers have indicated their willingness to allocate land for onion cultivation.

In a further boost to the initiative, approximately 2,000 bags of onions harvested in Region Nine were transported to Georgetown last Thursday, where the first shipment was purchased by local distributor Abdul Wahab of A. Wahab Imports.

The ministry facilitated market access for the produce, underscoring its commitment to supporting farmers beyond production.

The onion project forms part of the government's broader strategy to enhance food security both locally and across the Caribbean through targeted investment, innovation, and expanded agricultural participation.



Successful harvest amounted to some 40,000kg, says Minister Mustapha

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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

A Frontier Transformed

Editorial from the Guyana Chronicle, April 21 2026

FOR years, the story of healthcare in Guyana's hinterland areas, especially Region Nine, was one of lack, dependence, and distance.

People who lived in Lethem and the nearby towns often had to go outside of the country to get even basic medical care.

Because it was close by and needed, Brazil became the default choice, while Georgetown was the backup for more complicated procedures.

That reality, which people have long thought was unavoidable, is now being fundamentally questioned.

President, Dr Irfaan Ali's recent comments about how healthcare is changing in Region Nine point to what may be one of the most important but overlooked changes in Guyana's public-service delivery in the last few years.

The reported drop in medical evacuations to less than two percent, along with the surprising change in patient flows, with thousands of Brazilians now going to the Lethem Hospital for treatment, shows more than just small improvements.

It points to a change in the structure of capacity, confidence, and direction.

This change didn't happen in a

vacuum. It is the result of planned investments in infrastructure, people, and service growth.

For years, hinterland healthcare had problems with chronic underfunding, a lack of specialists, and logistical problems that made it hard to provide consistent service.

Not only were medical evacuations common, they were also expected. Patients had to deal with long trips, high costs, and delays that often made things worse.

Lethem is now developing a new model in which care is brought closer to communities, facilities are better equipped to handle more complex cases, and healthcare workers are given more power to provide better care.

The rise in yearly patient visits from about 20,000 to almost 30,000 is more than just a number; it shows that people are starting to trust the system more.

The number of surgeries done, which includes hundreds for Brazilians, is even more telling.

This shows that the hospital has more capacity and can attract patients from other countries.

These gains are important, but they also need to be looked at closely and kept up with.

A decrease in medical evacuations is a good sign, but it needs to be backed up by good care, enough staff,

and dependable supply chains.

Hinterland regions have always had trouble keeping skilled medical professionals, and any long-term success will depend on fixing these systemic problems.

Also, the new trend of cross-border healthcare brings both chances and duties. Lethem as a regional healthcare hub for people from Guyana and northern Brazil opens up the possibility of a new "health economy" on the border.

This could create jobs in the area, get more businesses involved, and strengthen the economic and social ties between communities on both sides of the border.

But we need to be careful when we think about this kind of vision. The main job of the public health system is still to help the people of Guyana, especially those who live in areas that don't get enough care.

Any growth into medical tourism or cross-border services must not make it harder or more expensive for people in the area to get care. Fairness must always be at the heart of policy.

The President's bigger plan to make Guyana a place where people can come for specialised medical care, from tests to elective surgeries and wellness care, fits with the country's overall development goals.

There is a unique chance to invest in public goods that will change the

world now that the oil and gas industry is making more money. Healthcare is one of the most important ones.

But you have to follow through on your plans. It's important to build modern hospitals and get the latest equipment, but these things alone won't be enough. Whether these investments lead to long-term improvements will depend on training, governance, maintenance, and accountability.

The change in Lethem is a great example of what can happen when policy, investment, and implementation all come together.

It questions long-held beliefs about what healthcare in the hinterland can do and makes way for a stronger, more connected national system.

The goal now is to make sure that this progress isn't just a one-time thing, but part of a long-term, nationwide effort to change how healthcare is delivered in Guyana.

If the lessons learned in Region Nine are used wisely and consistently, the country could go from being a net exporter of patients to a provider of care. This is something that seemed unlikely not too long ago.

In that way, Lethem is no longer just a border town that is changing to fit the times.

It is becoming a symbol of change, showing both the hope and the duty of a nation that is changing.

The case for a Guyanese oil refinery

Dear Editor,

I WRITE to underscore, with renewed urgency, the strategic imperative for the establishment of a domestic oil refinery in Guyana. Recent developments, both globally and within our own energy sector, have laid bare a structural vulnerability that can no longer be managed through temporary measures or external arrangements.

Guyana today stands at a paradoxical crossroad, we are a rapidly emerging oil-producing nation, yet we remain dependent on external refining capacity to meet our domestic fuel needs. This disconnect be-

tween production and processing is not merely an economic inefficiency, it is a national vulnerability.

As recent geopolitical tensions have demonstrated, exogenous shocks—particularly those emanating from instability in the Middle East in which can swiftly disrupt global supply chains, inflate prices, and threaten the reliability of refined fuel imports.

The government's swift response to the recent gasoline supply concerns was commendable and necessary. However, such interventions, while effective in the short term, do not address the underlying structural gap. Reliance on imported refined products

leaves Guyana exposed to volatility in international markets, and constrains long-term planning across key sectors of the economy.

It is within this context that President Irfaan Ali's renewed engagement with regional and international partners must be viewed with a sense of urgency. While refining partnerships may offer interim relief, they should not substitute for a clear and deliberate national policy aimed at establishing domestic refining capacity.

Yours Respectfully,
Dr. Tilokie Depoo,
Economist

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Federal government opens 2026 job programme for youths

By Milan Maharaj

LJI REPORTER

The federal government has opened the hiring period for the 2026 Canada Summer Jobs program, with up to 100,000 job opportunities expected to be available for young people across the country.

According to an announcement from Employment and Social Development Canada, this program provides paid work opportunities for individuals between the ages 15 to 30, with positions posted on the federal Job Bank website beginning April 20. The hiring period will run until July 20, with job placements continuing through Aug. 29.

The Canada Summer Jobs program is a federal wage subsidy initiative that supports employers in creating short-term employment opportunities for youth. Positions are offered across a range of sectors, including recreation, food service, marketing and tourism, as well as industries experiencing labour demand such as construction, environmental service and digital technology.

The program is intended to provide early work experience while helping young people develop skills that can support long-term employment. Jobs funded through the program are typically full time and run for a period of six to 16 weeks during the summer months.

The 2026 program represents an increase in available positions compared with previous years. Government figures indicate that approximately 70,000 jobs were funded in 2025, while the current intake is expected to support up to 100,000 placements.

The program operates as part of the federal government's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, which includes multiple initiatives designed to improve employment outcomes for young Canadians. In total, federal programs are expected to support approximately 175,000 jobs and work opportunities for youth in 2026, including placements through Canada Summer Jobs and other initiatives such as work-integrated learning programs.

Under the Canada Summer Jobs program, employers receive wage subsidies to hire eligible youth. Non-profit organizations may receive funding covering up to 100 per cent of minimum wage costs, while public and private sector employers may receive partial subsidies depending on program criteria.



The jobs programme is expected to find opportunities for 100,000 young people

Eligibility for participants generally requires that applicants be Canadian citizens, permanent residents or individuals with refugee status, and are legally entitled to work in Canada. Positions are intended to provide meaningful work experience, including opportunities to develop transferable skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving.

The program is designed to respond in part to ongoing challenges in the youth labour market. Statistics Canada data indicates that the unemployment rate for people aged 15 to 24 was approximately 13.8 percent as of March 2026, higher than the national average for all age groups.

Youth unemployment rates tend to be more sensitive to economic fluctuations, as younger workers often have less job experience and may be more likely to work in sectors affected by seasonal demand. Entry level positions, including summer jobs, are often considered a key pathway for gaining initial work experience.

Government data also suggests that participation in employment programs can have longer term impacts. An audit by the Office of the Auditor General

found that participants in Canada Summer Jobs earned higher average incomes several years after completing the program compared with individuals who did not participate.

The program also includes targeted priorities that guide funding decisions. For 2026, these priorities include job placements related to housing and construction, environmental sustainability and technology related fields, reflecting areas identified as having growing labour demand.

Employers across Canada, including nonprofit organizations, small businesses and public sector institutions, applied for funding during the program's application period in late 2025. Approved employers are now posting available positions for the summer hiring season.

The federal government encourages youth to regularly check the Job Bank platform for new postings, as positions are expected to be added throughout the hiring period. Job availability may vary by region, depending on local employer participation and labour market conditions.

The Canada Summer Jobs program has operated for several decades and re-

mains one of the largest federally funded youth employment initiatives. Since 2020, the program has supported hundreds of thousands of job placements across the country.

The federal government says the 2026 intake is intended to expand access to employment opportunities for youth while helping employers address seasonal staffing needs during the summer months.



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The recognition came from the Q1/ 2026 Airport Service Quality (ASQ) results. The ASQ is the aviation industry's most respected passenger service and bench-marking programme. Managed by the Airports Council International (ACI), ASQ is entirely independent of any government or airport influence. It relies on a



The Cheddi Jagan International Airport in Guyana

scientific methodology that collects data directly from passengers while they are at the terminal, evaluating over 50 specific touchpoints—including check-in efficiency, security wait times, and restroom cleanliness.

Minister of Public Utilities and Aviation, Deodat Indar, commended the management and staff of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport Corporation for this historic milestone.

"I want to personally commend the CEO of CJIA, Ramesh Ghir, his dedicated staff, and all industry stakeholders for their excellent work in achieving this ranking. This success is not an accident; it is a direct result of President, Dr Irfaan Ali's mandate to drive radical efficiency across all government agencies.

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Guyana, T&T in ongoing talks on possible supply of crude for refining

THE possibility of regional collaboration on oil refining has resurfaced, with Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat confirming that Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago are engaged in ongoing discussions regarding the potential reopening of a refinery in the twin-island republic.

Speaking during Wednesday's edition of *The Guyana Dialogue*, the minister revealed that Trinidad and Tobago's refinery, which has been shuttered for several years, is now being considered for revival, with interest from potential investors and preliminary engagement with Guyana on crude supply.

"The refinery has been closed for a number of years now. I think it's about probably about four to five years now... the refinery has been closed," Bharrat said.

He noted that Trinidad is actively exploring options to restart the facility, but emphasised that significant financial input would be required before any concrete steps can be taken.

"However, Trinidad is looking at opportunities to, or the possibility rather, to reopen that refinery, to put it back into operation. It requires some amount of investment, capital investment," he said.

According to Bharrat, at least one international company has already conducted a technical assessment of the refinery to determine the scope of work needed for its reactivation.

"I think they would have had a few companies, one from Africa that I know about, that did technical assessment of the facility to determine what is needed to put it back into operation," he disclosed.

Central to those discussions is the issue of feedstock, specifically whether Guyana would be in a position to supply crude oil to support the refinery's operations if it is successfully brought back into operation.

"They too have been in talks with us, more in particular to guarantee the feedstock, that is the crude," the minister said.

The 140,000-barrel-per-day Pointe-à-Pierre refinery, formerly operated by state-owned Petrotrin, was closed in 2018 after becoming economically unviable. By early 2026, Trinidad and Tobago had been exploring a potential partnership with Guyana to revive the facility, with efforts focused on securing a reliable crude-oil supply and restoring the idle plant, which has deteriorated after years out of operation.

Despite these engagements, Bharrat made it clear that both countries remain in the preliminary stages of dialogue, with no commitments made on either side.



The Point-a-Pierre Refinery in Trinidad — in the process of being restored

"No decision yet by either Guyana or Trinidad. It is just at a stage where we are still in talks," he stressed.

He further underscored that any firm agreement from Guyana would depend on Trinidad and Tobago first securing the necessary investment and completing the process of restoring the refinery to operational status.

"But of course, we cannot make a decision until Trinidad can put the refinery back into operation or have the investor investment to put the refinery back into operation. Only then we can make a firm decision that yes, we can supply them with crude or not," Bharrat explained.

"But as it is now, there is no decision by Guyana or Trinidad. But yes, that was part of the discussion, or as part of the ongoing discussion rather, between the two countries," he added.

The minister also addressed separate reports regarding potential refinery development in Guyana, particularly in relation to discussions involving the Dominican Republic.

Providing context, Bharrat pointed to a previous call by the Government of Guyana for expressions of interest (EOIs) to design, finance, build, and operate a small-scale local refinery.

"If you can recall, a few years ago, we had an EOI out for expression of interest to build, to design basically, design, build, finance, and to operate a 30,000-barrel refinery in Guyana," he said.

That initiative attracted attention from several international players, including the Dominican Republic (DR), which has since reaffirmed its interest in partnering with Guyana.

"So, we had a number of companies and countries expressing an interest. One of those countries would have been the Dominican Republic. And they would have shown that they are serious about investment. They are serious about building a partnership between Guyana and the DR," Bharrat noted.

He added that Dominican officials have recently reiterated their willingness to pursue such collaboration with the Government of Guyana.

"So, they would have indicated to President, Dr Irfaan Ali and the Government of Guyana that they are still interested in doing so," he said.

Nevertheless, Bharrat cautioned that no decision has yet been taken on establishing a refinery within Guyana, as several critical infrastructural requirements must first be addressed.

"Again, we haven't made a decision on building a refinery as yet. It's still being examined," he stated. Among the most significant challenges identified is the absence of a suitable deep-water port, which is essential for handling large oil tankers.

"In order to build a refinery in-country, it must be supported by a port, a deep-water port in particular. It is difficult right now to bring ships into Guyana, large ships, large vessels,

mainly because of the draft for the depth of our river," Bharrat said.

He acknowledged that while Guyana's rivers were once believed to be sufficiently deep, recent assessments have highlighted their limitations.

"We always thought that the Demerara and Berbice rivers were deep. But today... we realise that that is one of the greatest hindrances that we are facing, the depth of our river," he said.

"The most you can get is probably eight to nine metres. That is a high tide. And to bring in a tanker with a million barrels of crude, you would definitely need at least minimum 15 metres to get that in," Bharrat added.

As a result, plans for a refinery in Guyana are being closely linked to broader infrastructural development, particularly in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne).

Moreover, the minister pointed to ongoing plans for the development of the Crab Island area in Berbice, which has been identified as a strategic location for multiple large-scale projects.

He said the area has been identified for the development of a deep-water port, a refinery pending a final decision, and the landing site for a second gas pipeline.

Bharrat said that this integrated development approach would allow Guyana to maximise its offshore resources while creating a hub for industrial expansion.



Minister Kwame McCoy (2nd from left) with the Guyanese delegation at the IPU Assembly in Istanbul, Turkey

AI now a present governance reality, says Guyana at IPU Assembly in Istanbul

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is no longer a distant policy debate but a “present governance reality” demanding urgent legislative action, Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister Kwame McCoy has said, warning that the window to shape AI governance is rapidly narrowing.

Delivering high-level remarks at the 152nd Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Istanbul, Turkey, McCoy underscored that governments must move decisively to ensure that technological advancement is matched by responsive and accountable legislative frameworks.

“Artificial intelligence is no longer a future policy issue; it is a present governance reality shaping how citizens access information, services and opportunities,” the minister stated, while urging parliaments globally to “close the gap between technological advancement and legislative responsiveness, ensuring innovation is an-

chored in democratic accountability”.

He stressed that Guyana has already positioned itself to participate meaningfully in the global digital economy through sustained investments in connectivity and digital infrastructure over the past five years.

These include the establishment of three fibre optic submarine cable connections, expansion of high-speed broadband nationwide, and the licensing of low-earth orbit satellite services to reach remote communities.

According to McCoy, these developments have shifted connectivity from a long-standing constraint to a strategic enabler for economic growth and AI integration.

Beyond infrastructure, he highlighted the government’s aggressive push to digitise public services, noting that approximately 70 services are now available Online, including tax systems, citizen registration, and public benefit programmes. This, he said, reflects

growing public trust and engagement with digital governance systems.

“Our model is clear: AI must be built on strong, inclusive digital public infrastructure, ensuring that innovation translates into real, everyday improvements in citizens’ lives,” he told the assembly.

However, the minister cautioned that alongside opportunity comes risk, pointing to the growing threat of misinformation, data privacy breaches, algorithmic bias, and emerging harms such as AI-generated non-consensual intimate imagery (NCII).

He described these as urgent issues requiring targeted legislative responses grounded in human rights and adaptable to rapid technological change.

“Parliaments must move beyond general AI discussions to establish specific legal protections, and ensure victim-centered remedies and enforcement mechanisms,” McCoy said, particularly noting the disproportionate impact of

such harms on women and public figures.

He further said that for developing countries like Guyana, international cooperation remains critical.

This includes access to technical expertise, capacity-building for legislators, and greater inclusion in global AI governance frameworks, which, he warned, should not be dominated by major powers or private sector interests.

Looking ahead, McCoy outlined Guyana’s next phase of digital transformation, including accelerated 5G deployment, strengthened cybersecurity architecture, expanded digital skills training, and deeper public-private partnerships to drive innovation.

“These priorities reflect a deliberate shift, from expanding access to leveraging digital infrastructure for productivity, innovation, and AI integration, ensuring that adoption is inclusive, secure, and development-oriented,” he noted.

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Doobay Medical Centre opens Latchmin Kissoon Eye Clinic at Annandale

The Doobay Medical and Research Center, today commissioned the Latchmin Kissoon and Family Eye Clinic at the centre located in Annandale, East Coast Demerara.

Speaking on behalf of his mother and her seven children, all of whom were in Guyana together for the first time in decades, Dhaman Kissoon, explained that his family, who migrated from Canada in the early 1980s, felt compelled to give back after achieving their personal, professional, and family goals. He said “After spending years and having achieved our goals in studies or work, we decided that it’s time to give back to the community,”

He noted that his mother’s name, Latchmin, means light, vision and so after learning that a previous undertaking to provide funding for equipment was not fulfilled, the family stepped in to support the project in their mother’s honour.

Latchmin Kissoon, in brief remarks herself, expressed gratitude at being able to participate in the outstanding initiative. She pointed out that she and her children were living in Canada for 47 years and that they were honoured to have the opportunity to contribute. She said “I thank Dr Doobay for choosing me and my family for this occasion,” and added that, “the goal is to help people achieve good health.”

Dr Doobay expressed appreciation to the Kissoon family and to the many donors and supporters who keep the facility operating and expanding.

He noted that diabetes and high blood pressure are the leading causes of eye disease and blindness in Guyana. Many Guyanese with these conditions



DR Doobay unveils the new eye clinic in front of the Kissoon family

cannot afford private eye care, and without early detection and treatment, vision loss can be permanent. The burden of managing chronic disease is already heavy for families struggling to make ends meet and adding the cost of specialized eye care often becomes impossible.

The new Eye Clinic addresses this crisis by offering comprehensive eye services at approximately 70 percent below private sector costs. The clinic provides cataract surgery, retinal care for diabetic and hypertensive patients, complete eye examinations, and vision

restoration treatments. Most importantly, patients unable to pay are still treated.

The Doobay Medical & Research Centre operates on a non-profit model where no one is turned away due to financial constraints. The Centre has a long history of serving those who cannot afford expensive medical treatment.

The Center's dialysis program began with just six machines operating from a modest space and has expanded to serve over 250 patients across Guyana, many of whom would otherwise have no access to life-saving care. Patients who

cannot afford the full cost of dialysis are never turned away. The same commitment to affordable, accessible healthcare now extends to eye care.

The new eye-clinic is led by the country's best ophthalmologists who have volunteered their expertise because they understand that quality eye care should not be a luxury reserved for the wealthy. These dedicated professionals are committed to providing the same standard of care they would offer in any private facility, but at a price that working families can afford.

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.

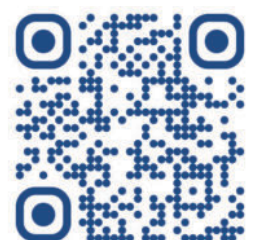
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To find out more about World Guyanese Congress and our goals and priorities. Scan the QR code, or visit www.wgc-org.com

If you have any questions feel free to get in touch:
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Telephone: [1-800-317-0804](tel:1-800-317-0804)





Community members discuss ON 2026 budget

On Friday, April 10, 2026, our community came together for a Community Town Hall on Ontario's 2026 Budget to break down what it means for

Scarborough.

We looked at what the budget is missing and who it leaves behind: families and young people.

Thank you to everyone who attended, shared their stories and perspectives, and contributed to such an important conversation about the challenges facing Scarborough.

I also want to sincerely thank our panelists for speaking powerfully to the realities facing our community and for sharing their lived experiences, from healthcare and education to housing and affordability:

Dr. Nasra Warsame, Founder of Ajax Family Practice & Walk-In Clinic
 Waleed Khoghali, Regent Park Tenants Rights Association

Nancy Crawford, TCDSB Ward 12 Scarborough Trustee

Zakir Patel, TDSB Ward 19 Scarborough-Guildwood Trustee

Kowmitha Satkunaranjan, Executive Director, Toronto Youth Cabinet

Samson Pitan, Student, City Studies Major

Scarborough-Guildwood, and all of Scarborough is stronger because the people who show up, speak out, and work to build a better future for our community. Thank you for being part of that work. Please continue to email me and share your stories so I can bring your voices and experiences back to Queen's Park and demand real change.

— Andrea Hazell, MPP, Scarborough-Guildwood

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World Bank joins Guyana-led Global Biodiversity Alliance

The Government of Guyana has welcomed the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) as a formal partner in the Global Biodiversity Alliance, marking another significant milestone in Guyana's leadership in global environmental and sustainable development initiatives.

The partnership was formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on April 17, 2026, between the Government of Guyana and IDA, outlining collaboration to strengthen global action for the conservation, protection, restoration, and sustainable use of biodiversity through the Global Biodiversity Alliance.

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance Dr. Ashni Singh signed the MOU on behalf of the Government while World Bank Group Director for the Environment, Dr. Valerie Hickey, signed on behalf of the IDA.

President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali's leadership has been instrumental in positioning Guyana at the forefront of innovative global solutions that align biodiversity protection with sustainable economic development. The Global Biodiversity Alliance builds on Guyana's pioneering Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and its globally recognised forest climate services model, which has demonstrated that standing forests can generate value while supporting livelihoods and national development.

During the signing ceremony, Dr. Singh emphasised that the World Bank's participation reflects growing international confidence in Guyana's leadership.

"This partnership represents a major step forward in mobilising global action and financing for biodiversity. Under President Ali's leadership, Guyana has demonstrated that countries rich in natural capital can pursue development while safeguarding ecosystems. The World Bank's participation further expands the Global Biodiversity Alliance and enhances our ability to scale impact globally," Minister Singh stated.

The collaboration between Guyana and the World Bank will focus on knowledge sharing, joint initiatives, research collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and mobilising financing to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. These areas of cooperation reflect a shared commit-



Dr. Ashni Singh signed the MOU with IMF's Dr. Valerie Hickey

ment to expanding access to financing and strengthening global ambition to address biodiversity loss.

This partnership builds on a long-standing and productive relationship

between Guyana and the World Bank, including support for sustainable development, climate resilience, forest conservation, and institutional strengthening. The Government of

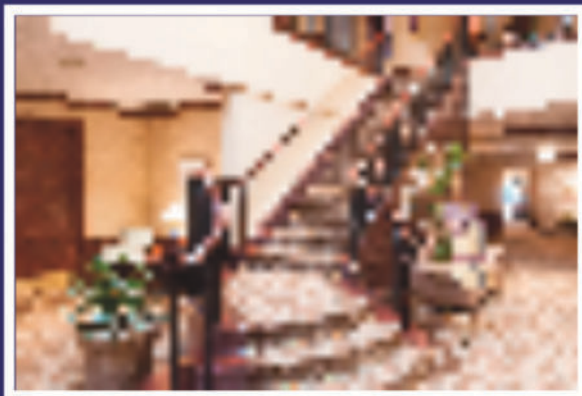
Guyana and the World Bank will work together to leverage resources, expertise, and global partnerships to advance biodiversity protection and sustainable economic opportunities.

The Global Biodiversity Alliance, launched by Guyana, complements international efforts under the Convention on Biological Diversity and aligns with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It seeks to raise global awareness of the biodiversity crisis, expand financing options, and promote collaborative action among countries, development partners, and the private sector.

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Guyana hosts key CARICOM health summit amid rising regional challenges

THE Ministry of Health Guyana, on Monday, successfully hosted the 34th Meeting of Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at its boardroom in Georgetown, bringing together regional health leaders to address pressing public health priorities and strengthen collaboration across the Caribbean.

The meeting, according to information from the ministry, saw participation from Chief Medical Officers and health representatives from across the region, both in person and virtually, as part of ongoing efforts to align regional health strategies and responses.

Chief Medical Officer of Guyana, Dr Narine Singh, who assumed chairmanship of the meeting, officially welcomed delegates and led discussions focused on advancing the regional health agenda.

In his opening remarks, Dr Singh underscored the importance of unity, collaboration, and shared responsibility in safeguarding the health and well-being of Caribbean citizens.

He noted that while leadership of the forum rotates, the collective mission remains unchanged, which is to improve health outcomes across the region through sustained co-operation and dialogue.

The meeting was convened at a critical juncture, as Caribbean nations continue to navigate the lingering impacts of global health threats, including pandemics, while confronting rising incidences of non-communicable diseases, mental health challenges, and climate-related health risks.

Dr Singh also highlighted the need for open dialogue and regional



The Ministry of Health Guyana successfully hosted the 34th Meeting of CMOs of the Caribbean Community

solidarity in addressing these complex and evolving issues, emphasising that coordinated action is essential to building resilient health systems.

Throughout the engagement, participants deliberated on several key priority areas, including disease surveillance, health system strengthening, workforce development, and the integration of technology in healthcare de-

livery.

Particular attention was given to addressing the “innovation access gap,” with calls for more equitable access to new and life-saving medical advancements across CARICOM member states.

The forum served as an important platform for knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and evidence-based deci-

sion-making, all aimed at improving public health outcomes and ensuring that no citizen is left behind.

The Ministry of Health reaffirmed its commitment to working alongside regional partners to build stronger, more responsive, and sustainable health systems for the people of the Caribbean.

Two discharged, one to stand trial in gas station bombing

TWO of the accused in the October 2025 gas station bombing case have been discharged, while another has been committed to stand trial following the conclusion of paper committal proceedings in related matters at the Leonora Magistrate’s Court.

On Monday, Principal Magistrate Alisha George discharged Guyanese nationals Wayne Correia, 44, and Ramesh Pramdeo, 51, after upholding a no-case submission filed by their attorney-at-law, Bernard DaSilva.

In contrast, their co-accused, 33-year-old Venezuelan Jennifer Rodriguez, was committed to stand trial after the magistrate ruled that the prosecution had established a prima facie case against her.

In her assessment of the evidence against Correia and Pramdeo, Magistrate George found that the material presented by the prosecution was

insufficient to sustain the charges.

In relation to Correia, the court noted that the evidence showed that Venezuelan national Alexander Bettencourt, 44, who is also charged in connection with the bombing, contacted him regarding a boat engine and later requested the contact of a taxi driver, which Correia provided for Pramdeo.

The prosecution also relied on alleged inconsistencies in Correia’s account, including the absence of call records.

However, Magistrate George found that there was no evidence that Correia knew of any plan to commit terrorism, nor any indication that he intended by his actions to assist or encourage such an offence. She further stated that there was no evidential basis upon which guilt could be the only reasonable inference. At its highest, she concluded, the evidence raised only sus-

picion and was equally consistent with innocent conduct.

With respect to Pramdeo, the court noted that he was contacted by Correia and collected Bettencourt and Venezuelan national Daniel Alexander Ramirez Poedemo, 33, the prime suspect, from Parika before transporting them to a hotel. He also assisted in the sale of gold on their behalf and initially paid for their accommodation, which was later reimbursed.

Despite these actions, Magistrate George found no evidence that Pramdeo knew of any planned criminal activity or that he intended to assist or facilitate terrorism.

The court further noted that his conduct was consistent with that of a service provider operating in ordinary circumstances, and equally compatible with him being an innocent agent or an unsuspecting participant.

Magistrate George, in her independent evaluation of the evidence against Rodriguez, noted that although no formal no-case submission was advanced on her behalf, the court nevertheless examined the material presented. The court placed particular reliance on the statement of Parmanand Persaud and a video and audio interview of Rodriguez dated October 28, 2025.

From that evidence, the magistrate found material capable of supporting an inference that Rodriguez assisted Poedemo after the alleged offence, at a time when she was aware he was being sought by police in connection with the bombing.

She ruled that, taken at its highest, the evidence was sufficient to establish knowledge and intentional assistance after the fact, meeting the threshold required at the paper committal stage.



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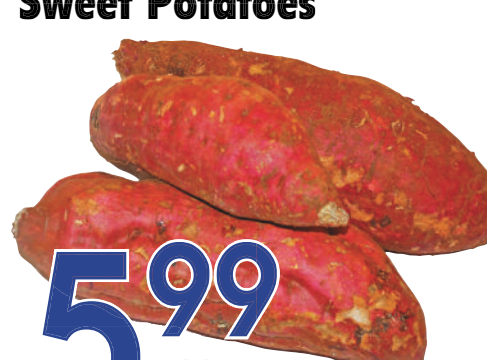
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SCAN ME

‘We are governing, not grandstanding’, says Ali to Georgetown

PRESIDENT Dr Irfaan Ali has made it clear that the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) will lead Georgetown to progress and prosperity, and transform the capital city into its glory.

The Head of State made this known while speaking at the commissioning ceremony of the Aubrey Barker four-lane road, during which he stated that he is interested in seeing strong leadership for the city.

“And yes, I’m interested in seeing a People’s Progressive Party/Civic-led City Council. I’m interested in seeing strong government, strong leadership at the City Hall,” President Ali said.

He added, “We want the chance to run this city because the city deserves better than what it has today, and it’s time the people rise up and give the People’s Progressive Party/Civic that opportunity to lead this city and to continue to lead the city in progress, prosperity and to deliver good governance, for the people of Georgetown.”

The President underscored that the government’s approach to development is rooted in responsibility and not politics, especially in relation to infrastructural upgrades.

Referring to ongoing interventions, the President pointed to the designation



President Irfaan Ali

of Aubrey Barker Road as a public road, noting that it means it will be maintained and managed by the Ministry of Public Works and will not be allowed to drift into neglect that has affected many streets in the city.

He said, “We are designating roads as public roads in the cause of progress. We have no political interest in disposing any entity. We are not playing politics with potholes. We are not campaigning with congestion. We are not grandstanding with gridlock. We are

governing, and governance requires responsibility.”

Dr Ali went on to note that if Georgetown is to become the finest city in the Caribbean, then the infrastructure must match that ambition.

He added: “A modern city cannot run on broken roads.”

The President further assured citizens that his administration stands ready to address long-standing issues affecting the city, including drainage.

“If they don’t want to open the

koker and if they don’t want to maintain the drain, we will show the people of the city we are ready to do it, and with their support, we will do it continuously,” he affirmed.

Minister of Public Works Juan Edghill echoed similar sentiments, pointing to ongoing development efforts across Georgetown under the PPP/C administration.

He stated, “The myth that Georgetown does not develop under the PPP/C is dispelled, whether it’s north Georgetown, south Georgetown, central Georgetown, or Sophia, everywhere you go, visionary leadership is bringing development to all communities throughout the length and breadth of Georgetown.”

Against this backdrop, the minister added that real development is being delivered and the PPP/C administration will continue to work with the people of the city to further advance it.

“So, I say to all those of you who believe that you have a transport that had Georgetown people written as your property, that transport is fake. The real title is being delivered. The people of Georgetown are seeing who really develops Georgetown and who will really work with them, thanks to the People’s Progressive Party/Civic,” he said.

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Guyana calls for urgent Gaza aid, lifting of blockade at IPU meeting

The Government of Guyana has renewed its call for an immediate increase in humanitarian assistance to Gaza and for the lifting of Israel's blockade, warning that armed conflict continues to have a disproportionate and devastating impact on women and girls.

Speaking at the second meeting of the Group of Parliaments in Support of Palestine during the 152nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Turkey on Wednesday, Minister of Human Services and Social Security Dr. Vindhya Persaud said the crisis in Gaza reflects a troubling global pattern in which women and girls bear the brunt of war.

She noted that as conflicts intensify worldwide, women and girls are increasingly subjected to violence, exploitation, and severe hardship, often facing the worst conditions of displacement and deprivation.

Persaud described the situation in Gaza as one of the most severe humanitarian crises in recent history, pointing to widespread destruction and the breakdown of essential services since October

7, 2023. She said the weaponisation of aid and the scale of human suffering represent a profound failure of the international community.

She also reiterated Guyana's longstanding support for Palestinian self-determination, emphasizing the country's commitment to a two-state solution and its continued backing of United Nations resolutions calling for peace and justice. Guyana formally recognised the State of Palestine in 2011 and continues to support its bid for statehood on the global stage.

Drawing parallels with domestic reforms, Persaud highlighted Guyana's efforts to strengthen access to justice for women affected by violence, including updated family violence and sexual offences legislation, specialised courts, digital reporting systems, and the creation of "hope and justice" centres offering support services.

She stressed that empowering women — particularly through economic independence — is essential both during conflict and in post-conflict recovery efforts.



Minister of Human Services and Social Security Dr. Vindhya Persaud.

Guyana to mark 60 with commemorative gold medallion

The Guyana government on Wednesday announced plans to mark the country's 60th anniversary of political independence from Britain with a limited-edition commemorative gold medallion.

In a statement, the Ministry of Natural Resources said the Guyana Gold Board (GGB) "is proud to announce a historic national initiative that will honour the nation's journey, achievements and future ambitions through the production of a limited-edition commemorative gold medallion."

"This medallion, issued in recognition of Guyana's Diamond Jubilee, will stand as a symbol of national pride, paying homage to Guyana's rich mining legacy, an industry that has been integral to the country's economic and social development for more than 150 years and which continues to play a vital role in shaping our nation's transformation," the ministry said.

According to the ministry, the initiative also highlights the importance of Guyana's natural resources sector.

"By anchoring this commemorative piece in gold, the government is reinforcing the value of our natural resources sector," the ministry said, adding that in "a historic first, the commemorative gold medallion will be minted in Guyana, using Guyanese gold, marking a significant milestone as the country seeks to advance the gold and jewellery value chain in the country."

The commemorative medallion will be pro-



duced by the GGB and will feature national symbols reflecting the country's identity, heritage and aspirations.

"The commemorative medallion will be produced by the GGB and feature national symbols that reflect our identity, heritage and aspirations as a people while capturing the vision of a modern and prosperous Guyana," the ministry stated.

To maintain its exclusivity, the ministry said the medallion will be issued in limited quantities and made available for public purchase.

"To preserve its significance and exclusivity, the medallion will be released in limited quantities, and

made available for sale to the general public, with pricing designed to remain competitive and responsive to fluctuations in the international gold market while maintaining its intrinsic value."

The ministry added that the initiative will be launched under a distinct national brand, "further underscoring the government of Guyana's commitment to economic transformation, value creation and the responsible management of our natural resources."

Guyana will celebrate its 60th anniversary of political independence on May 26, 2026, marking six decades since the country gained independence from Britain on May 26, 1966.

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Ties between India and Canada have improved after Mark Carney (L) took office as Canada's PM

Canada was once a dream destination for Indian students. Is that changing?

At an overseas education consultancy in the Indian capital, Delhi, students sit with their parents, flipping through brochures from universities in Italy, Germany and Australia.

But one destination, once the top choice, is now largely absent.

"Until 2023, most of our applications were for Canada," says Shobhit Anand, who runs the consultancy, which helps students navigate the admission process, including visa applications.

Now, he says they have seen a drop of nearly 80%.

"People don't want to apply to Canada anymore. We are also seeing a very high visa rejection rate."

According to a report submitted by Canada's auditor general to parliament last month, the share of Indians in the country's incoming international student population was just 8.1% in September 2025 - a sharp drop from 51.6% in 2023.

There are a number of reasons: visa and immigration restrictions, high living costs and, in 2023, a diplomatic crisis that damaged ties between the two countries (the situation is better now).

For years, Canada held a strong appeal for middle-class Indian families. Its private colleges offered a seemingly reliable pathway - even for average students - to study abroad and eventually settle there.

The route was mostly straightforward: enrol in a two-or three-year vocational course, find a job after graduation and, within a few years, apply for permanent residency. The process typically took around five years, experts say.

It worked - until it didn't.

The shift has been driven by a mix of policy changes and economic pressures.

In early 2024, Canada announced a two-year restriction on how many international students could be admitted to its undergraduate and diploma programmes - capping it at around 350,000 study permits per year (postgraduate courses were unaffected).

This was a big blow for many Indian students.

At the same time, living costs surged and jobs became harder to find. Rents climbed sharply across major cities, while financial requirements tightened.

The Guaranteed Investment Certificate (GIC) - proof of funds required to study and live in Canada - was doubled from C\$10,000 (\$7,227; £5,378) to more than C\$20,000 in 2024.

"For many families, securing that amount is difficult - and with the risk of visa rejection, they hesitate," says Sushil Sukhwani of consultancy Edwise Overseas Education. "That became a major barrier."

As consultants note, getting a study visa has also become harder.

Study permit rejections rose from 38% in 2023 to 52% in 2024 in Canada, according to ICEF Monitor, which focuses on international student mobility. In price-sensitive countries like India, where studying abroad depends on careful financial planning, families are now far less willing to take that kind of risk.

So the question has shifted from how to go to Canada to whether to go at all.

"There's real fear. Even if you get there, can you make it work?" Anand says.

The Canadian auditor general's report also mentions concerns around a now-scraped fast-track visa system known as the Student Direct Stream (SDS). Popular among Indian applicants, it allowed quicker processing for those who met certain financial and language requirements.

Approval rates under SDS for Indians rose from 61% in 2022 to 98% in 2024, even as officials flagged risks such as fraudulent applications, students not attending classes and rising asylum claims. By the end of 2024, the scheme was scrapped and scrutiny has since tightened.

The report said the scheme was being "targeted by non-genuine students seeking entry to Canada". While it did not name countries, it noted that almost all approved SDS applications were from India.

As diplomatic relations improve, there are signs of hope.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): Now that the Sun has left your sign you need to pay more attention to how much your goals and objectives are going to cost you, not just in terms of cash but also in terms of friendship. Success isn't just about making stacks of money.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): The Sun in your sign will give you a more positive outlook on life as the week progresses. There will still be problems to deal with but they will no longer seem to be such a challenge. Your can-do attitude will take you far.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): Don't worry if you feel a bit down over the next 24 hours because not even a Gemini can be happy every minute of every day. Just remember that whatever it is that's worrying you is probably no big deal in the greater scheme of things.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): Anyone who thinks you are too set in your ways to do something out of the ordinary will be surprised by your actions over the next few days. You know you must either start taking chances or risk getting less from life than you put in.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): With the Sun now moving through the career area of your chart you won't be slow to push your own agenda and take advantage of opportunities to move up in the world. Second best isn't good enough — shoot for first place every time.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): As one of the zodiac's Earth signs you may not seem too adventurous but over the next few weeks you will show the doubters that you can be a real whizz-kid when you feel there is something worth going after. Amaze the doubters.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): Your aim today, and for the rest of the week, must be to look at what is going on in your life through a lens of total honesty. Don't try to ignore the bad bits, because those are the bits you can learn from and profit from.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): It may not be easy having to accept that partners and colleagues know more about what is going on than you do but if you are smart you will let them call the shots for a while. The alternative is being independent but also being wrong.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): You may have a mountain of work to get through but if you approach it in a structured way you can eat into it big time over the next 24 hours. The other attribute you will need is patience. You won't get it all done in one mad rush.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): All things are possible now the Sun is moving through the most dynamic area of your chart but you must be aware that your rivals will do whatever they can to disrupt your plans. They will only succeed if you allow yourself to get angry.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): Don't be afraid to let loved ones know how you feel today, especially if you feel a little bit down. Once they realize you are struggling they will go out of their way to cheer you up, but don't forget they can't read your mind!

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): Social invitations will come thick and fast today but you must be smart about which to accept and which to reject. Not every event deserves to be graced with your presence, so give less of yourself and keep the world wanting more.

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UK Party proposes visa restrictions on Caribbean over reparations demands

Amid a declaration by the United Nations that the transatlantic slave trade ranks among the gravest crimes in human history, Caribbean reparations advocates are renewing calls for justice, even as a controversial response emerges from the UK's political fringe.

Nigel Farage's right-wing Reform UK has proposed imposing visa restrictions on nationals from countries that continue to press the United Kingdom for reparations over its historical role in the slave trade.

The party argued that such demands are "divisive and counterproductive," adding in a recent interview: "If governments choose to pursue policies that unfairly target Britain for historical grievances, we should reconsider the privileges we extend — including visa access."

The proposal has drawn strong criticism from Caribbean leaders and reparations campaigners, who say it reflects growing resistance in parts of the UK to confronting its colonial past. Advocacy groups across the region, including those aligned with the CARICOM Reparations Commission, have intensified calls for compensation, formal apologies, and development support tied to the enduring impacts of slavery.



Economists and historians have long debated the scale of potential reparations, with some estimates suggesting the United Kingdom's liability could exceed £18 trillion when accounting for the economic gains derived from slavery and the long-term damage inflicted

on enslaved Africans and their descendants. The renewed push comes after the UN reaffirmed the transatlantic slave trade as a crime of unparalleled magnitude, a characterization campaigners say strengthens the moral and historical case for reparatory justice.

However, Farage's position reflects a broader strand of opinion within parts of UK society that rejects financial reparations, arguing instead for forward-looking partnerships rather than what they describe as punitive historical accounting.

Jamaica could begin offshore oil drilling within two years

Jamaica could move to drill for oil off the coast of St Thomas within the next two years following encouraging early findings from a recent geo-chemical survey.

The study, conducted by independent oil company United Oil and Gas, confirmed the presence of hydrocarbons in offshore soil samples — a key indicator of potential petroleum deposits.

Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport Minister Daryl Vaz said the results represent an important step forward but cautioned that Jamaica remains some distance away from actual production.

"The results are very positive, but they are positive scientifically. They have seen traces; they haven't seen or touched the real deal," Vaz said during Wednesday's post-Cabinet press briefing.

He noted that while the findings have generated interest, significant investment will be required to move to the next phase of exploration.

Drilling a single well is estimated to cost between US\$60 million and US\$80 million, with at least 14 wells likely needed. The Government is now

seeking international partners to help finance the venture.

"It's big money for us, but in the oil business that is not big money," Vaz said.

He added that representatives of United Oil and Gas have already begun engaging potential investors and are seeing growing interest from major drilling companies.

"These are companies that would not have answered their calls a year ago," he noted.

Even if funding is secured, Vaz said drilling would not begin before late 2027 or early 2028. He stressed that any move toward drilling would be subject to environmental and social impact assessments, stakeholder consultations and Cabinet approval.

United Oil and Gas currently holds only an exploration licence, meaning further negotiations with the Government will be required before any drilling agreement is finalised.

"I remain cautiously optimistic but definitely encouraged," Vaz said, pointing to the potential for the project to provide a much-needed boost to the country.



Minister of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport, Hon. Daryl Vaz

Trinidad PM says no curfew needed after officer killing, firearms theft

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar says there is no need for a curfew following the killing of a municipal police officer and the theft of dozens of firearms from a police facility in Trinidad and Tobago.

In a statement issued Sunday, Persad-Bissessar said she had been advised that the incident at the San Fernando City Corporation Municipal Police Station on King's Wharf was not an external attack on the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) or other national security agencies.

Instead, she described the incident as an "internal betrayal" within the Trinidad and Tobago Municipal Police Service (TTMPS).

The Prime Minister emphasized that the TTPS is separate from the municipal police service and confirmed that TTPS officers were not involved in the incident.

She said the Ministry of Homeland Security and the TTPS will provide full support to the municipal police, Robert Parris, and the San Fernando City Corporation as authorities investigate the matter, recover the stolen weapons, and bring the situation to closure.

The body of Acting Corporal Anushka Eversley, 42, was discovered at the Municipal Police Headquarters on Lady Hailes Avenue in San Fernando around 4:40 a.m. Sunday.

Authorities reported that 62 firearms and approximately 4,000 rounds of ammunition were stolen from the station's armoury. Eversley, a mother of three children aged 18, 15 and seven, had more than 19 years of service. Officials said she was fatally shot in the upper body.



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

In her statement, Persad-Bissessar also addressed a separate incident involving bodies discovered at the Cumuto Cemetery, noting that authorities had determined the remains were unclaimed bodies that had been improperly disposed of, and not homicide

victims.

She said both matters are being actively investigated and are expected to be resolved in the coming days.

"There is no need for any curfew," Persad-Bissessar stated, adding that law enforcement continues to make

progress in addressing crime. She encouraged law-abiding citizens to continue their normal activities.

The Prime Minister also thanked Commissioner of Police Guevarro and TTPS officers for their swift response to both incidents.

T&T to exempt pension from tax from 2026

Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has announced that the Government will move to exempt pension payments and approved deferred annuity income from income tax, describing the measure as a key reform aimed at improving financial security for retirees.

Speaking in the House of Representatives on Friday afternoon, Persad-Bissessar said the proposal will be included in the upcoming Finance Bill, 2026, as part of a wider effort to reduce the cost of living and deliver on campaign commitments.

The exemption will apply to income received from approved pension fund plans and approved deferred annuity plans under the Income Tax Act, Chapter 75:01.

"This Government was elected on a clear promise: to put people first, to ease the burden on working families and to ensure that after a lifetime of contribution, our citizens can retire

with dignity and peace of mind," she said.

Under the proposed policy, pension income from approved schemes will be exempt from income tax effective January 1, 2026, covering both existing and future qualifying plans.

The Prime Minister said the reform is intended to reward long-term savings and ensure retirees retain more of their retirement income.

"A pension is not a windfall. It is not a bonus. It is the result of years, sometimes decades, of sacrifice, discipline and commitment," she said. "This Government believes that such responsibility should be rewarded, not penalised."

Persad-Bissessar added that the measure is expected to benefit thousands of citizens, particularly middle-income earners who rely on pensions and annuities as their main source of retirement income.

Citing tax data, she said more than

39,000 taxpayers claimed annuity contributions in the 2024 income year, though most were modest savers.

The Government also confirmed that early withdrawals from pension or annuity plans will remain taxable.



Antigua Government rejects Opposition claims over US visa restrictions

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has rejected as “false and misleading” claims by Opposition Leader Jamale Pringle that recent United States visa restrictions are the result of government actions or could be reversed by local political intervention.

In a statement issued Saturday, the government said decisions regarding U.S. visas are made solely by United States Department of State and are based on American national interests, not policies implemented by Antigua and Barbuda.

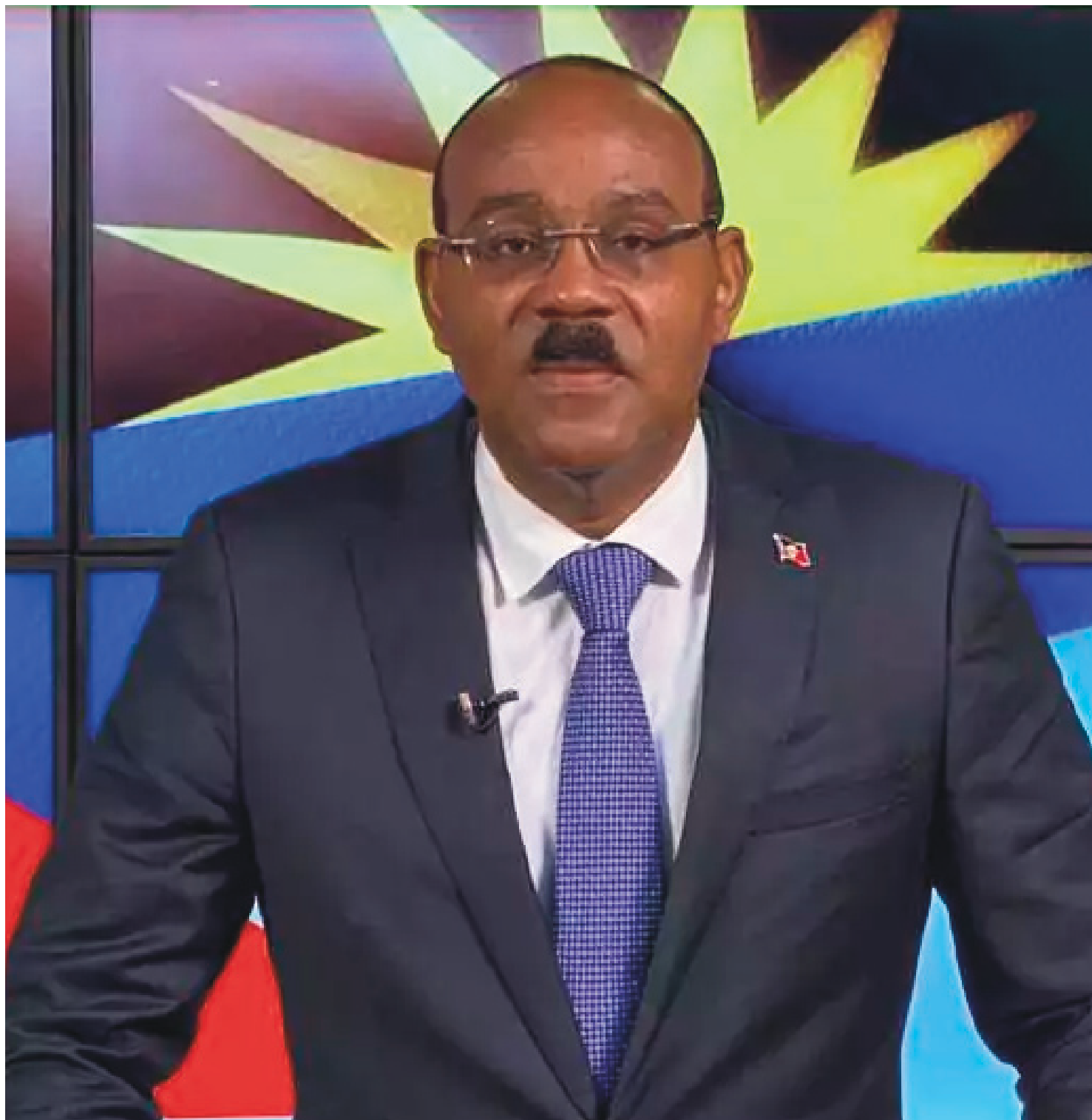
The statement referenced comments from U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who recently announced an expansion of visa restrictions targeting individuals believed to be working on behalf of U.S. adversaries in ways that could undermine regional security and democratic governance.

Rubio also emphasized that obtaining a U.S. visa is “a privilege,” not a right, and that such decisions rest entirely with the United States government.

Officials in St. John’s stressed that Antigua and Barbuda is not the only country affected, noting that similar visa denials occur across the Caribbean and the wider Western Hemisphere under existing U.S. immigration policies.

The government also defended its diplomatic approach, stating that it has been actively engaging U.S. officials on the issue. According to the statement, Prime Minister Gaston Browne recently discussed visa-related concerns directly with U.S. lawyer and diplomat Christopher Landau as part of ongoing diplomatic efforts.

Officials said such engagement reflects responsible governance and con-



Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

trasted that approach with what they described as political rhetoric from the opposition.

The statement argued that Pringle’s comments either reflect a mis-

understanding of international relations or an attempt to mislead the public for political gain, adding that visa policy decisions are made in Washington, not St. John’s.

Government officials concluded that while diplomacy can help improve arrangements, no local political leader has the authority to alter U.S. visa policies unilaterally.

Former NBA star Rick Fox enters Bahamian political race

Former National Basketball Association (NBA) star Rick Fox is among a list of millionaires vying for political office when voters head to the polls in The Bahamas on May 12 general election, according to financial disclosures submitted to the Parliamentary Registration Department.

Prime Minister Phillip Davis, leader of the ruling Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), has declared a net worth of \$4.5 million.

Fox, who also holds Canadian citizenship, played 13 seasons in the NBA between 1991 and 2004, winning three consecutive NBA championships from

2000 to 2002 with the Los Angeles Lakers. He also played for the Boston Celtics.

Fox is the opposition Free National Movement (FNM) candidate for the Garden Hills constituency. According to his filings, he has US\$469,876,479.25 in assets, an annual income of US\$4,816,689.16, and liabilities totaling US\$124,388.83.

His disclosures show US\$432 million in securities investments, US\$14.5 million in accounts receivable, and US\$11 million in real estate holdings.

According to the Parliamentary Registration Department, 54 millionaires

have been nominated to run in the election.

The PLP’s candidate for Fort Charlotte, Sebas Bastian, reported a total net worth of US\$28.9 million. The bulk of his assets includes US\$17.3 million in real estate, US\$4.9 million in securities, and US\$3.9 million in other personal property.

Bastian also disclosed that he is a discretionary beneficiary to a number of Bahamian trusts with an estimated aggregate value of \$160 million.

Deputy Prime Minister Chester Cooper, who is seeking reelection as parliamentary representative for Exumas

and Ragged Island, reported a net worth of US\$28 million, an annual income of US\$324,000, and total liabilities of US\$560,000. The majority of his assets are held in investments and real estate.

Former Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis, who is contesting the Killarney seat as an independent, reported a total net worth of US\$19 million. Meanwhile, Dr. Veronica McIver, the Coalition of Independents (COI) candidate for Killarney, disclosed a net worth of US\$12 million.

COI leader Lincoln Bain reported a net worth of US\$1.5 million.

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IMF warns Caribbean tourism economies may be hardest hit by Middle East conflict

Nigel Clarke, Director of the Western Hemisphere Department at the International Monetary Fund, says Washington is “very concerned that tourism-dependent Caribbean economies are likely to be the hardest hit” as a result of the ongoing Middle East conflict that has driven up global oil prices.

“Their debt is high, their fiscal space is small, and they’re quite large net energy importers, despite investments that have been made in these countries in shifting towards renewables,” Clarke said.

“We also don’t know what the potential impact of this war and the shifts in energy prices may have on flights and on tourism. And so, that’s another thing that we’re keeping an eye on,” he added.

Last Friday, the IMF said that Caribbean Community countries will register mixed economic growth over the next two years, ranging from 3.1 per cent among tourism-dependent countries to 19.1 per cent among the region’s commodity exporters.

The IMF projects overall regional growth of 5.7 per cent in 2026 and 8.6 per cent in 2027. Caribbean tourism-dependent countries are expected to record growth of 0.9 per cent and 2.5 per cent over the same period.

Non-tourism-dependent countries are projected to grow by 7.9 per cent in 2026 and 11.3 per cent in 2027, according to IMF forecasts.

Among tourism-dependent economies, Jamaica is expected to register minus 1.2 per cent growth this year, improving to 3.1 per cent in 2027. Grenada is also projected to record 3.1 per cent growth.

Antigua and Barbuda is expected



Nigel Clarke

to record growth of 2.6 per cent and 2.4 per cent over the next two years, while The Bahamas is projected to grow by 2.1 per cent this year, declining to 1.9 per cent in 2027. Barbados is expected to grow by 2.5 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively.

Belize is forecast to register economic growth of 2.2 per cent this year, easing slightly to 2.1 per cent in 2027, while Dominica is projected to grow

by 3.1 per cent this year before slipping to 2.8 per cent the following year.

The twin-island Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis is expected to record growth of two per cent this year, rising slightly to 2.5 per cent in 2027. Saint Lucia is projected to grow by two per cent this year before declining to 1.7 per cent next year.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is also expected to see a decline in eco-

nomical growth to 2.7 per cent in 2027, down from three per cent this year.

Clarke said several Caribbean countries have already begun implementing measures to cushion the impact of higher oil prices.

“I think several countries in the Caribbean already have mechanisms in place that smooth energy price increases so that not all of that energy price increase is passed through immediately,” he said.

“But what we don’t want is for countries to permanently increase subsidies to energy. Those subsidies are untargeted; they benefit the rich more than they benefit the poor.”

Clarke warned that oil price volatility could make subsidies costly and unpredictable.

“So, the size of the subsidies you may be creating over time could be quite large and quite unpredictable. So, we think trying to let the market mechanism work... will allow individuals and firms to make decisions to reduce their demand for energy.”

On migration trends to the United States, Clarke said the IMF does not foresee a downturn in the region that would trigger increased migration.

“We actually feel this region is quite well placed with decent fundamentals and some fiscal space. So, we don’t see an economic downturn in our forecasts,” he said.

He noted, however, that migration pressures remain for certain countries.

“There are important issues related to migration for particular countries. We can think of Venezuela and Haiti, but I don’t think that sort of a sudden push of migration flowing northwards seems likely at this point,” Clarke added.

Jamaica Senate approves casino gaming regulations

The Jamaica Senate on Friday (April 17) approved the Casino Gaming (General) Regulations, 2025, marking a key step toward the formal rollout of the country’s casino gaming industry.

The regulations were developed by the Casino Gaming Commission under powers granted in Section 72 of the Casino Gaming Act, 2010. They establish the operational framework for the sector, including administrative procedures, licensing requirements, record-keeping and reporting obligations, regulatory fees, inspection powers, enforcement measures, and broader compliance standards.

Leader of Government Business and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator Kamina Johnson Smith, said the regulations are intended to ensure the industry operates in an orderly, transparent and internationally compliant manner.

She said the framework is designed

to safeguard patrons, protect the integrity of operations, and uphold Jamaica’s reputation while also supporting efforts to prevent financial crime.

“At the heart of these regulations is the drive to provide a further boost to Jamaica’s economy by diversifying and enhancing our tourism industry which is a major contributor to Jamaica’s GDP,” Johnson Smith said.

She noted that casino gaming forms part of Jamaica’s broader strategy to expand tourism offerings, describing it as an area of untapped potential.

The Minister said the Government has been working to strengthen tourism competitiveness through Integrated Resort Developments (IRDs), which combine hotels, entertainment, shopping, and other amenities.

“IRDs including luxury hotel rooms, luxury shopping, entertainment facilities and casinos in particular... have great potential to diversify, enhance and

further expand Jamaica’s attractiveness and sought-after tourism product,” she said.

Johnson Smith emphasised that the Casino Gaming Act is not intended to create standalone casinos, but rather to support IRDs where gaming is one component of a wider tourism offering.

She also outlined the regulatory role of the Commission in ensuring strict oversight of the sector, including protections for vulnerable groups and safeguards against criminal activity.

“The commission is also the designated competent authority in respect of casino gaming under the Proceeds of Crime Act, under the Terrorism Prevention Act, and under the UN Security Council Regulations Implementation Act,” she said.

The Minister added that operators will be required to maintain strong internal controls and meet minimum standards set by the Commission to ensure

accountability and transparency.

She also highlighted collaboration with Rise Life, a non-governmental organisation that supports individuals affected by gambling addiction, noting that the organisation already works with the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Commission and is now engaging with the Casino Gaming Commission.

Johnson Smith said additional support is being provided through the Responsible Gambling Council of Ontario to help strengthen the wider support system for responsible gambling.

She added that the regulatory framework has been carefully designed to ensure the Commission can effectively evaluate and grant licences.

The Casino Gaming Commission received its first application for a gaming licence last year. With the regulations now approved, the process can move forward toward issuing licences once applicants meet all requirements.

Barbados tourism industry issues strong warning over rising gun violence

The tourism sector in Barbados has issued its strongest warning yet over the island's worsening gun violence, following a deadly shooting near Thunder Bay Beach Bar in St James on Sunday that left three men dead and pushed the national murder toll to 23.

Chairman of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association, Javon Griffith, strongly condemned the killings and urged urgent national action to address the growing violence.

"Barbados cannot afford to normalise gun violence. We cannot allow fear, lawlessness and indiscipline to gain further ground in our communities. Nor can we sit idly by while the image and integrity of our island are placed under increasing threat," Griffith said.

He warned that the recent pattern of violence should alarm both residents and visitors, stressing that what was once considered rare is beginning to feel routine.

"What is perhaps most alarming is that these violent episodes are now beginning to feel like a regular weekend occurrence in Barbados. That is a reality which should concern every Barbadian, every visitor, and every stakeholder with an interest in the safety, stability, and reputation of this country."

Griffith emphasized Barbados' long-standing global reputation as a safe tourism destination and the importance of protecting it.

"Barbados has long distinguished itself as a peaceful, welcoming and civilised destination. Our tourism industry and indeed our wider national economy depends heavily on that reputation. Visitors choose Barbados not only for its beauty, hospitality and culture, but also



Barbados can suffer harm to its reputation as a sage tourist destination

because they believe they are travelling to a destination that is safe, orderly and well-managed," he said.

He warned that continued violence could damage confidence in the island as a travel destination.

"If this growing pattern of gun violence is not confronted expeditiously, decisively and effectively, it has the potential to erode confidence in our destination and place the future strength of

our tourism industry at serious risk."

Griffith extended condolences to the families of the victims and praised law enforcement efforts, but said a broader national response is urgently needed.

"This is not solely a policing matter. It is a societal issue that calls for leadership, enforcement, intervention, community engagement and sustained action at every level. Barbados cannot afford to

normalise gun violence," he said.

He urged authorities and national stakeholders to act swiftly.

"The time for decisive action is now. We urge the relevant authorities and all national stakeholders to treat this matter with the urgency it demands. The safety of our people must come first, and the protection of Barbados' reputation as a safe and desirable destination must remain a national priority."



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Chris Gayle expands empire with European T20 franchise ownership

In a move that extends his influence beyond the boundary, Chris Gayle has stepped into cricket ownership, joining the leadership group of a Glasgow-based franchise set to compete in the inaugural European T20 Premier League (ETPL).

The franchise, operating under the name Glasgow Mugafians, represents both a new venture for Gayle and a broader push to establish elite T20 cricket within emerging European markets.

Gayle's involvement comes through a collaboration with the Mugafi Group, an India-based entertainment enterprise that has secured rights to the Glasgow franchise.

The ownership landscape, however, has shifted along the way. A group led by Rahul Dravid and Ravichandran Ashwin had initially been linked to the Glasgow team but is now expected to redirect its focus toward the Dublin-based outfit instead.

For Gayle, whose career spanned more than two decades and redefined the possibilities of T20 batting, the transition into ownership signals a new phase, one centered on growth and legacy.

"Stepping into the role of co-owner of Glasgow Mugafians marks an exciting new chapter for me," Gayle said.

His vision extends beyond competition to cultivation.

"Europe represents cricket's final frontier, and the ETPL has the potential



Chris Gayle — now a franchise owner

to unravel promising local talent and nurture future heroes who will strengthen the sport in that region. I can't wait to get started on this new journey."

The ETPL is designed as a multi-nation collaboration, organized in partnership with the cricket boards of Ireland, Scotland, and Netherlands.

Franchises will be based in key cities including Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Belfast, Dublin, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, reflecting an ambitious geo-

graphic footprint aimed at expanding cricket's reach across the continent.

Financially, the league has already demonstrated significant backing, with franchise rights reportedly sold for £11.1 million over a 10-year cycle, a signal of long-term intent.

The tournament is scheduled to run from August 26 to September 20, marking the first full staging of a competition that seeks to blend established cricketing talent with emerging European prospects.

For Gayle, the timing aligns with a broader shift from player to stakeholder, from dominating games to shaping the environments in which they are played.

Having amassed 103 Tests, 301 One-Day Internationals, and 79 T20 Internationals between 1999 and 2021, Gayle's reputation as one of cricket's most recognizable figures is firmly established. Now, through the Glasgow Mugafians, he enters a new contest, not for runs, but for influence.

SVG signs on rising NASCAR star Caruth as brand envoy

In a move celebrating Vincentian pride and Caribbean excellence, NASCAR rising star Rajah Caruth has been officially signed as a brand ambassador for the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Tourism Authority in a six-month partnership that also includes TEMPO Networks.

The collaboration will see Discover SVG and TEMPO branding featured across Caruth's racing assets during the NASCAR O'Reilly Auto Parts Series season, delivering high-visibility exposure at events broadcast to millions worldwide. As the primary media and storytelling partner, TEMPO — currently marking its 20th anniversary — will use its multi-platform reach across the Caribbean and global diaspora to showcase both Caruth's journey and the appeal of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The initiative aims to connect the destination to new audiences and markets, while also highlighting Caribbean culture through TEMPO's regional storytelling platform.

Caruth welcomed the partnership, emphasizing both cultural pride and broader outreach.

"It means a lot to officially be able to represent St. Vincent and the Grenadines and TEMPO, and hopefully drive not just tourism to the country but awareness to the Caribbean diaspora and community," he said. "I am proud of my heritage and exude it daily with my practices and core values."

Frederick A. Morton Jr. described the collaboration as a natural evolution for the network.

"For 20 years, TEMPO has been amplifying Caribbean culture to the world, and this partnership reflects exactly where we're going next," Morton said. "Rajah is an extraordinary young talent whose rise is inspiring a new generation, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines is one of the Caribbean's most breathtaking and dynamic destinations. Through this partnership, we are connecting the Caribbean to new audiences, new markets, and new possibilities."

Tourism Minister Dr. Kishore Shallow also expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration, calling it a milestone for the destination's global visibility.

"We are proud of Rajah's journey thus far as an emerging force..."



Rajah Caruth



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Not guilty plea in murder of Canadians in DR

Two United States nationals charged in connection with the 2023 killing of Canadian animation pioneer Daniel Langlois and his partner Dominique Marchand pleaded not guilty when they appeared in court on Tuesday in Dominica.

Jonathan Lehrer, 57, and 62-year-old Robert Snider Jr. entered their pleas before High Court Judge Sejilla McDowall.



Daniel Langlois and Dominique Marchand

During the hearing, defense counsel Tiyania Behanzin unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the indictment from being read to the accused. The defense argued that documents alleging “abuse of process” had already been filed on behalf of the men and that it would be improper to

proceed with reading the charges.

However, the prosecution, led by Director of Public Prosecutions Sherma Dalrymple, objected, telling the court that the indictment had been properly filed and that there was no reason to delay reading the charges so the accused could enter their pleas.

Judge McDowall agreed with the prosecution and ruled that the indictment should be read and that the defendants be required to plead guilty or not guilty. The court, however, granted the defense time to properly file and serve its “abuse of process” application, which the prosecution will then be required to respond to.

Prosecutors allege that between November 29 and December 2, 2023, the two Americans murdered Langlois and Marchand. The couple’s bodies were later found in a burned vehicle near Gallion, Dominica, close to where they owned a resort. The pair had been reported missing for several days before the discovery.

The killings reportedly followed a long-standing dispute over access to a public road. Lehrer owned the 53-acre Bois Cotlette Inc. Estate adjacent to the couple’s eco-luxury resort, Coulibri Ridge.

The matter has been adjourned to May 1, 2026.



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