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Arms of Comfort

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali on Tuesday delivered a heartfelt tribute to the late former Surinamese President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, describing him as “a brother” and “a true friend.”

The President, pictured here consoling a relative of President Sathoki at his funeral, said of the bond the two South American leaders shared: “...When something passed between us – not spoken, only felt – a chemistry, gentle and real..., untouched by ambition, it was not forced nor fashioned by ceremony. It was simply there, two men who recognised something familiar in one another. That moment did more than bind us as friends.”

The former Suriname President, who died last week at age 67, worked tirelessly with Ali to advance the cause of the two nations. “What began as a murmur between two presidents became a river between two nations,” he said. *Full story on Page 4*



Authors celebrated at Guyana Consulate

THE Consulate General of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in Toronto, Sunday evening, hosted a special book launch and reception for newly-published literary work of four Canada-based Guyanese authors, held at the Consulate at 505 Con-

sumers Rd., Toronto.

Featured were Janet Naidu’s ‘Along Many Roads’; Natalie Scott-Chin’s ‘Spinal Curve – Can I Still Dance’; Nirmala Ramprasad’s ‘All About Guyana’; and Dennis Hosannah’s ‘Kilmanack’.

Honorary Consul, Mr. Mani Singh, offered brief remarks and congratulated the authors on their achievements which he said stemmed from their passion, commitment, dedication and hard work in the literary field.

The Honorary Consul was especially grateful that some of the work provided glimpses into Guyanese history that few had a chance to experience or were aware of certain struggles and events that took place.

He described the presenting authors as the “cream of the crop” in our Canadian diaspora and thanked them for continuing to promote Guyana’s rich history, heritage and culture through their literary works and poetries.

The books are available for purchase by contacting the authors.

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Holness: Jamaica to go hard on criminals

Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness has declared that his Government will continue to "go hard on the criminals" and "eliminate" them from society, arguing that reducing crime is critical for Jamaica to achieve its full economic potential.

Speaking at Sunday night's St Ann Chamber of Commerce Awards banquet at the Cardiff Hotel and Spa, Holness also urged citizens to reject the notion that criminals

are modern-day Robin Hoods, the famous English folk hero who robbed from the rich to give to the poor.

He told business leaders and guests that shifting this mindset could improve Jamaica's tourism product and lead to higher wages for workers in the sector.

"We will continue to go hard on the criminals; we will eliminate them from our society so we can get the full value of Jamaica!" declared Holness to loud applause.

"I want that to be unmistakable in its understanding. I am not ambivalent about it, and I want every Jamaican to be decisive about it; they [the criminals] are the ones that have kept us from realising our full potential," he urged.

Holness argued that some Jamaicans still view criminal elements as protectors of communities or providers of justice.

"No, they're not doing that! They are raping your daughters and killing your sons," the prime minister said.

He pointed to recent crime data, noting that murders declined from 1,147 in 2024 to 673 in 2025 — a 43 per cent reduction in a single year. Holness told business leaders he expects the figure to fall even further in 2026.

"For the first time in 30 years, the murder rate is below a thousand... And we intend to bring the murder

rate down even more, and I can tell you, once the murder rate goes all the way down in a sustained way, the value of Jamaican tourism is going to improve, and the value of production of the Jamaican tourism worker and their pay will improve," Holness stated.

Earlier in his address, Holness compared tourism workers in Jamaica and Barbados, arguing that crime has reduced the value of Jamaica's tourism industry and kept wages lower than those in Barbados.

"The hotel worker in Runaway Bay [St Ann] works just as hard as the hotel worker in Bridgetown [Barbados], but the Barbadian economy generates nearly three times the value per hour as our economy. They are not working three times as hard as us; they are working in a higher value version of the same industry," Holness said.

He added, "The Barbadian worker isn't working harder than persons who I saw serving quite efficiently and professionally here, but they earn more because they have a higher value product than us."

Holness said one key factor behind Barbados' higher-value tourism sector is lower crime levels.

"There are many reasons... I want to focus on one just now; Barbados has less crime than us," he said.



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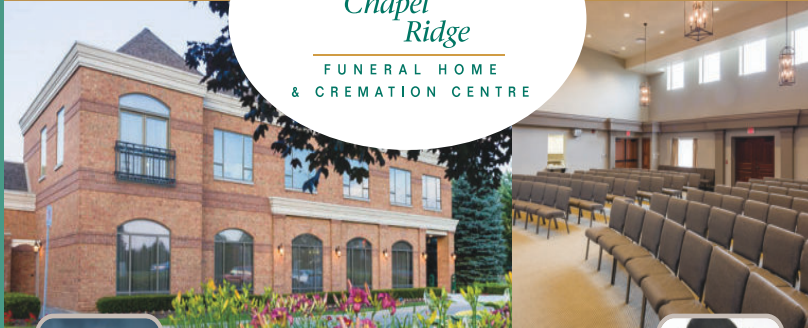
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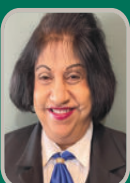
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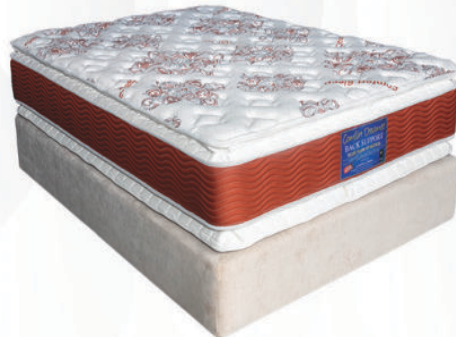
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A bond beyond diplomacy – President Ali honours Santokhi’s legacy

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali on Tuesday delivered a heartfelt tribute to the late former Surinamese President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, describing him as “a brother” and “a true friend.”

Speaking at the funeral service at the De Olifant Foundation, Dr Ali reflected on their close bond and the spirit of cooperation that strengthened relations between Guyana and Suriname.

“...When something passed between us – not spoken, only felt – a chemistry, gentle and real..., untouched by ambition, it was not forced nor fashioned by ceremony. It was simply there, two men who recognised something familiar in one another. That moment did more than bind us as friends”, Dr Ali said.

He added, “What began as a murmur between two presidents became a river between two nations. And what grew between us was not diplomacy alone,... it was fraternity. To me, President Santokhi was like a brother”.

Dr Ali said Santokhi believed the fortunes of Guyana and Suriname were braided together, and had worked to ensure that partnership would live “through people, markets, and the small boats that cross the river connecting us.”

The Guyanese president said the last time Santokhi sent him a message was on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, and he advised him to take a break by visiting Guyana.



President Ali at the casket of President Santokhi on Tuesday

“But he couldn’t make that time. Mellisa, when you are ready after the mourning period, come to Guyana to still take that vacation. We are a family,” the president said, addressing the former First Lady.

The president described Santokhi as a calm and principled leader: “When anger could have flared, he chose stillness. When others might have raised a fist, he opened a door. On sensitive ground, he walked with grace to preserve harmony.”

The president said that Santokhi reminded everyone that small states, standing shoulder to shoulder, can

achieve what neither could alone, stating that he called for mutually beneficial ties.

President Ali reminisced on long, late-night talks shared with Santokhi and Barbados’ Prime Minister Mia Mottley. “Once, during a CARICOM meeting in Suriname, we spoke until 5:30 a.m. When we left, he said, ‘We’ll do a morning run later.’”

Closing his tribute, Dr Ali vowed to continue the vision they shared: “I will press on for the realisation of those dreams and aspirations. May God grant you eternal rest, and may your family find comfort knowing you lived with

humility, honour, and service.”

Under Santokhi’s presidency (2020–2025), Guyana–Suriname relations deepened through the Strategic Dialogue and Cooperation Platform, joint energy and agricultural policies, and the planned Corentyne River Bridge.

Santokhi, Suriname’s ninth president and longtime leader of the Progressive Reform Party, passed away in late March. He was cremated in Uitkijk, Saramacca district, following two days of national mourning.

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Guyana advancing biometric passenger system at CJIA to cut processing times

The Guyana Government is advancing plans to introduce an automated passenger identification system at Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) aimed at reducing processing times for Guyanese travellers.

Minister of Public Utilities and Aviation, Deodat Indar, announced on Monday that the initiative forms part of a broader strategy to position Guyana as a regional aviation hub.

The system will be supported by the country’s national electronic identification infrastructure and will use biometric technology to identify Guyanese citizens upon arrival. Travellers will be able to move through the airport using facial recognition, which will trigger automated gates.

“We want when you come off the plane, you walk straight through. The system must recognise that you are a citizen. Your face will appear on a screen, the system will signal the gate to open, and you will walk through. You don’t have to see anybody as a Guyanese,” Indar explained.

The announcement was made during the opening of the Women in Aviation Conference 2026.

Alongside the digital upgrade, CJIA’s physical infrastructure is also being expanded and modernised as part of the government’s aviation development plans.

“Making Guyana a regional hub, you have to have the infrastructure. That is why you will see we [government] are investing heavily in the Cheddi Jagan International Airport to ensure it is modern-looking and the people of Guyana can boast that we have an airport that is truly international in shape and form,” the minister said.

Indar also disclosed that plans are in place to construct a second terminal



at the airport. Designs have been completed and contractors have already been mobilised.

He added that interest from international carriers continues to grow, following a recent engagement in Brazil.

Guyana currently hosts approximately 16 airlines, a significant increase from four in 2020. These include Copa Airlines, American Airlines, Surinam Airways, and Caribbean Airlines.

“In 2020, we had four airlines. Now we have 16. That means we added 12 new airlines, which is no

easy feat, and more are coming,” Indar said.

Efforts are also underway to re-establish regional routes that were affected by the collapse of LIAT.

Beyond developments at CJIA, the government is also constructing two municipal airports in Berbice and Lethem to support regional development.

The Berbice facility is expected to serve major projects in the region, including oil and gas operations, pipelines, a power plant, and infrastructure developments such as the sta-

dium at Palmyra.

“We need an airport that can accommodate jets for now so that they can land on a 6,500-foot runway and they can leave directly from there so you don’t have to come and then drive,” the minister said.

Meanwhile, the Lethem airport is being developed with a strategic focus on handling passenger and cargo traffic from northern Brazil, further supporting Guyana’s goal of becoming a regional aviation hub.

Guyana, Brazil to explore large-scale agriculture opportunities

Minister of Agriculture Zulkifar Mustapha recently engaged a high-level team of Brazilian investors to explore large-scale agricultural opportunities.

The engagement forms part of a broader national strategy to expand production, attract foreign investment, and enhance Guyana’s contribution to regional food security.

Minister Mustapha underscored the government’s readiness to facilitate investments across key agricultural areas, noting that Guyana’s vast lands and supportive policy environment position the country as an attractive destination for strategic partnerships.

He highlighted opportunities for collaboration between international investors and local farmers to accelerate productivity and scale up agro-industrial development.

This growing interest from Brazil comes at a time when Guyana is under-



Zulkifar Mustapha

taking major transformational projects designed to strengthen cross-border trade and agricultural expansion.

Central to this vision is the ongoing development of the Linden to Lethem corridor, which will create a direct land link between Guyana and northern Brazil.

The upgraded roadway is expected to significantly reduce transportation time and costs, opening a vital trade route that connects Brazilian

markets to Guyana’s ports and, by extension, the Caribbean and North America.

Complementing this corridor is the development of a modern port facility at Parika, which will play a critical role in agro-export expansion.

The new port is being designed with integrated cold storage, packaging, and agro-processing facilities, enabling farmers to preserve produce, reduce post-harvest losses, and access regional and international markets

more efficiently.

These initiatives aim to fully unlock the economic potential between Guyana and Brazil, particularly in the State of Roraima, where agricultural production continues to expand rapidly.

With strategic infrastructure, strong political will, and growing investor confidence, Guyana is positioning itself as a key gateway linking South America to Caribbean markets, creating new opportunities for farmers, investors, and regional partners alike.

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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

A foundation for justice

Editorial from the Guyana Chronicle, April 7 2026

THE Rupununi has long been called the “sleeping giant.” Rich in land, culture, biodiversity, and spirit, Region Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo) was seen as a place of great potential that remained largely untapped for generations.

However, the Rupununi Ranchers Rodeo 2026, held from April 3 to 5 at the Triple R Ground in Tabatinga, Lethem, shared a very different narrative. It showcased a region that has not just awakened; it has risen with a clear purpose, energy, and momentum that cannot be ignored.

Minister of Amerindian Affairs Sarah Browne perfectly captured the spirit of the moment when she noted that the Rupununi “has not only awakened, but is actively taking its rightful place as one of Guyana’s leading regions for growth, culture, and opportunities.”

These are not hollow words of celebration. They reflect the real changes taking shape across the savannah. Every paved road in Lethem,

every new power plant, and every school and health centre in once-remote villages confirm that the promise of the Rupununi is finally being fulfilled.

Look at what has happened in just the recent years. The government has invested over \$110 billion in Region Nine across various sectors in the last five years, showing significant increases in housing, energy, and transportation spending.

The 1.5-megawatt Kumu Hydropower Station was commissioned in Lethem, joining a growing renewable energy network that has already powered the town entirely through hydropower for a full 24-hour period. Plans are moving forward for a regional airport in Lethem, rooted in 2,000 hectares of agro-development.

This investment will enhance access and stimulate commerce at a level that was previously unimaginable for this part of the country. Furthermore, with 83% of the US\$190 million Lethem corridor road project already completed, the distance between Georgetown and the savannahs is decreasing—not only in kilometres, but

also in economic and social integration.

The Rupununi Ranchers Rodeo itself symbolises this transformation. What began in the 1960s as informal cattle roundups has grown into one of Guyana’s most popular cultural events, this year themed “Wild and Bold, Rupununi Stories Unfold!” Beneath that theme lies a significant truth: the stories of this region are being rewritten, and they are indeed bold. The rodeo now attracts visitors from across Guyana and beyond. For the first time, the Ministry of Tourism has a seat on its planning committee, marking a new era of national support for what was once solely a local event.

Minister Browne’s remarks at the rodeo carry weight not just because of what she said, but also because of who she represents. As a member of a Cabinet charged with fostering inclusive development and as the minister for Amerindian communities throughout Guyana, her presence at the rodeo reminded everyone that the people of Region Nine are active participants in development.

They are partners in it. President

Ali’s vision of “One Guyana” finds its most powerful expression here, where cattle ranchers, Indigenous communities, tourism entrepreneurs, and government ministers come together under the same sky, united by shared hopes.

The Rupununi’s growth also brings environmental and economic benefits to the nation. The South Rupununi’s remarkable biodiversity—including the rolling savannahs, Kanuku Mountains, and rivers of the Guiana Shield—is being positioned as a global example of sustainable development. Agro-processing initiatives such as the “Mango Madness” project and efforts to create a food and livestock processing hub linked to Brazil show that Region Nine isn’t waiting for oil wealth to find its way. It is forging its own diverse and sustainable economic identity.

The sleeping giant has awakened. If the energy at the Rupununi Ranchers Rodeo 2026 is any indication, the best of what this incredible region has to offer is not in the past, it is still unfolding, bold and wild, across the Rupununi horizon.

Not all struggles are visible

Dear Editor,

MENTAL health is not always visible, but it is always present. Many individuals carry emotional pain, stress, and personal struggles behind smiles, achievements, and everyday conversations.

What we see on the outside often does not reflect what someone may be experiencing internally. This is why awareness, compassion, and understanding are more important now than ever before.

At Humanitarian Mission Guyana Inc., we recognise that mental health challenges affect people from all walks of life, regardless of age, background, profession, or status. Too often, individuals who are struggling remain silent. Not because they don’t want help, but because they fear judgment, criticism, or being misunderstood. That silence can become overwhelming, and in many cases, it prevents people from reaching out until it is too late.

We are living in a society where it has become easier to speak than to listen. Opinions are shared

quickly, but understanding is often delayed. Many individuals who are hurting are labelled, criticised, or dismissed instead of being supported. This approach only deepens the challenges they are already facing.

Mental health challenges are not a sign of weakness. They are a part of the human experience. Stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, and emotional fatigue can affect anyone. However, with the right support, encouragement, and access to resources, individuals can recover, rebuild, and move forward with strength and resilience.

As a humanitarian organisation, we believe that compassion must come before criticism. Instead of asking, “Why did they do that?” we should be asking, “What are they going through?”

Instead of turning away, we should be reaching out. Sometimes, the most powerful thing we can offer someone is simply our time, our patience, and our willingness to listen.

I also want to acknowledge that many people who are struggling do not always ask for help. Some

suffer quietly while continuing to fulfil their responsibilities to family, work, and community. These individuals often carry heavy burdens alone, and it is our collective responsibility as a society to create an environment where people feel safe enough to speak openly without fear of judgment or victimisation.

At Humanitarian Mission Guyana Inc., we remain committed to promoting awareness, compassion, and support for mental health. We encourage open conversations, understanding, and kindness in our communities. We believe that when we support one another, we strengthen not just individuals, but families and communities as a whole.

If you or someone you know is struggling, please know that you are not alone. Reach out to someone you trust, a friend, family member, mentor, or community member. Sometimes, a simple conversation can provide comfort, clarity, and hope. And if needed, seek professional support. There is strength in asking for help.

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Ontario to expand healthcare access by recruiting more physicians

By Milan Maharaj

LJI REPORTER

The Ontario government has announced additional measures aimed at expanding access to primary care services, including steps to recruit more physicians, strengthen team-based care and connect more residents to a regular healthcare provider.

The announcement builds on the province's plan to ensure every Ontario resident is connected to a family doctor or primary care provider by 2029. The initiative is part of Ontario's Primary Care Action Plan, which outlines a series of investments and system changes intended to improve access to care across the province.

According to the Ministry of Health, the province is continuing to implement its 2024–28 Physician Services Agreement, which includes changes to physician compensation and incentives designed to attract and retain more family doctors. The agreement is intended to support physicians in taking on additional patients and expanding access to services.

Ontario reports that it is investing billions of dollars in primary care as part of the plan. Recent budget figures indicate that total funding for the Primary Care Action Plan is expected to reach up to \$3.4 billion between 2025 and 2029, with the goal of connecting up to two million additional people to primary care services.

As part of the initiative, the province is expanding the number of interprofessional primary care teams. These teams tend to include a range of health professionals such as family physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, social workers and other specialists working together to provide care.

Government data indicates that more than 300,000 patients were connected to a primary care provider during the 2025–26 period, surpassing earlier targets. Officials say additional teams are expected to connect hundreds of thousands more patients in the coming years.

Ontario has also identified workforce recruitment and retention as a central component of the plan. Measures include increasing training opportunities for new physicians, expanding medical school capacity and supporting internationally trained professionals entering



the Canadian health system.

The province has reported that thousands of new healthcare workers have been added in recent years, including physicians and nurses. Efforts to streamline licensing processes and expand scopes of practice for certain regulated health professionals are also part of the broader approach to addressing workforce shortages.

In addition to expansion of the healthcare system, the government is advancing the development of a provincewide primary care medical record system. The system is designed to allow healthcare providers to securely access patient information across different settings, with the goal of improving coordination, security, and reducing administrative duplication.

Electronic medical records are already used by most family physicians in Ontario, but current systems are often not fully integrated. The proposed system is designed to address these gaps by enabling more consistent sharing of patient information among providers.

The Primary Care Action Plan also includes investments in teaching clinics and training programs to increase the number of primary care providers that are available at any given time. Budget documents show that up to \$300 million is being allocated to support the creation and expansion of teaching clinics across

the province.

Additional funding is being directed toward the creation and expansion of primary care teams, with plans to establish hundreds of new and enhanced teams. These efforts are expected to prioritize those who are currently without a regular healthcare provider, including people on the Health Care Connect waitlist.

Provincial data shows that the waitlist for Health Care Connect has declined significantly since the launch of the Primary Care Action Plan, with reports suggesting a reduction of more than 80 percent as of 2026.

The government has also highlighted the importance of alternative care models, including expanded responsibilities for pharmacists and nurse practitioners, as a part of efforts to increase access to services and reduce pressure on physicians.

Primary care is usually considered the first point of contact within the healthcare system, providing services such as routine checkups, diagnosis and management of common conditions, and referrals to specialists. Access to primary care providers has been identified as a key factor in overall health outcomes and system efficiency.

Ontario's approach reflects other trends in health policy across Canada, where governments have introduced a

range

of strategies to address physician shortages and improve access to frontline care. These strategies often include a combination of funding increases, workforce expansion and system integration efforts.

The announcement does not give specific timelines for all elements of the plan, but the government says progress will continue through investments and program expansions over the coming years.

Additional details on the expansion of healthcare services, including the introduction of new teams and digital systems, are expected soon as the province continues to work on its primary care strategy.

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Major US companies showing interest in Guyana: US Envoy

THE United States Ambassador to Guyana, Nicole Theriot, has disclosed that a growing number of major American companies are turning their attention to Guyana, deepening economic ties that will stretch well beyond the oil and gas sector.

Speaking in a recent interview on the 'Sources' programme about US-Guyana trade relations, Ambassador Theriot said more and more US firms are 'waking up to the opportunities' in Guyana and are actively seeking Guyanese partners.

She stressed that Washington's focus is on partnership, with the United States Department of Commerce office opened inside the US Embassy, Guyana, in September 2023, acting as a "matchmaker" between American investors and local businesses here.

While she did not have an exact figure at hand, Theriot said the number of partnerships has grown exponentially since the office was established.

"One of the things that I think is very important to mention is that it's not just happening in the oil and gas sector, it's happening in agriculture, it's happening in security, it's happening in IT. US companies have really woken up to Guyana," she said.

According to Theriot, this diversification aligns with the Guyana Government's own priority of broadening the economy to secure long-term, sustainable growth.

Pressed on whether rising prices triggered by conflict in the Middle East, specifically the US-Israeli war in Iran, could disrupt US-Guyana trade, Ambassador Theriot said she did not expect the current relationship to be significantly affected.

She noted that each country would feel shocks differently and argued that higher oil prices could actually place Guyana in a relatively strong position, given that it now exports around 1.3 million barrels of oil per day.

Ambassador Theriot acknowledged that US investors have expressed concerns about transparency, regulatory certainty and the overall business environment in Guyana.

She noted that every country faces similar issues, but said Guyana's rapid transformation over the past five years has exposed the need to revisit



United States Ambassador to Guyana, Nicole Theriot

and modernise laws and regulations, many of which are considered outdated, but are also actively being addressed.

"There is concern there, but I think it's being addressed, and it's making US companies much more comfortable as they see the attention being paid to those issues."

She suggested that the presence of US and other international companies is in fact, pushing Guyana to move forward with reforms, making foreign investors more comfortable.

One of the most pressing issues raised by US companies, the ambassa-

dor said, is double taxation, given that the United States and Guyana do not yet have a bilateral tax treaty.

However, she noted that Guyana has maintained a competitive edge, especially as an emerging oil producer.

Theriot added that Guyana is in a "beautiful situation" and well placed to maintain its momentum as an attractive destination for energy investment.

"You have some advantages that other countries just simply don't have, including emerging oil and gas countries. One is the quality of your oil. It is extremely high, sweet crude is [sic]

it's incredible," she said.

The Ambassador was also questioned about the 38 per cent reciprocal tariff initially imposed by the United States on Guyana's exports, which was later reduced to 15 per cent.

Theriot explained that the original rate was determined by the US Trade Representative and the Department of Commerce and was largely driven by the scale of oil and gas exports from Guyana to the US. Outside of the petroleum sector, however, the trade balance runs in the opposite direction, prompting a rethink in Washington.

Following "careful and very thoughtful discussions" with the Guyana Government, the tariff was cut to 15 per cent, and she confirmed that further reductions are under active consideration.

The US Trade Representative is expected to visit Guyana as part of those ongoing talks.

"So, they realised that, and through careful and very thoughtful discussions with your government, they decided to reduce it to 15 per cent and there are, absolutely, discussions ongoing to reduce it further," she disclosed.

It is anticipated that there could be a further reduction to 10 per cent.

Bilateral trade between Guyana and the United States of America (USA) surpassed S\$4.7 billion in 2024.

Caribbean Airlines refutes closure 'rumours', working towards sustainability

NOTING that it is aware of recent public discussions following a media report, Caribbean Airlines on Tuesday reassured customers, partners and stakeholders that operations continue as normal.

"The airline's Board of Directors categorically rejects any rumours suggesting that Caribbean

Airlines is facing closure. There has been no discussion regarding the closure of the airline.

"Caribbean Airlines continues to actively review its operations as part of on-going efforts to strengthen the business and position the airline on a more stable and sustainable footing.

"These efforts are focused on ensuring the delivery of reliable service and maintaining strong connectivity across the airline's network," a release from the airlines said.

It said that work on the airline's audited financial statements is well underway.

Additionally, the airline is progressing the recruitment of key senior management positions to further strengthen leadership and support long-term strategic direction.

"Caribbean Airlines thanks all customers and stakeholders for their continued confidence and assures that every effort is being made to ensure the airline's long-term sustainability and continued service to the region," the release added.

For the latest updates and announcements relating to the operations of the airline, customers are encouraged to check the Caribbean Airlines website and official social media channels.

Caribbean Airlines



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Guyana building smarter, future-ready security system

PRIME Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, on Tuesday declared open the National Defence Institute's Certificate in Defence Studies Programme and underscored the need for a forward-looking and people-centred approach to national security.

While delivering the feature address at the launch of the certificate programme, the Prime Minister said the initiative represents a significant shift in how Guyana prepares for emerging threats.

"Today is not simply the launch of a new programme; rather, it marks a meaningful step forward in our country's development and how we prepare for the future of Guyana's national security broadly defined," he said.

The Prime Minister noted that while military preparedness remains critical, national security must be understood in broader terms, with emphasis on human development and resilience.

"Security, as envisaged... is not only about national security defined in terms of armed capabilities... our grand strategy must be comprehensive," Phillips stated.

Highlighting the complex global environment, he pointed to ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises, noting that "the world we live in today is a violent one and warning that both conventional warfare and slow violence continue to claim millions of lives annually.

It was against this backdrop that he noted that the new programme is geared towards building a cadre of professionals capable of responding to a rapidly evolving threat landscape.

"It reflects the deliberate forward-looking investment in our people aimed at developing strategic thinkers, more confident and capable leaders and a security system better prepared to respond to challenges," he said.

To this end, the PM emphasised the central role of human capital in national defence, noting that at its core, national security is not defined by equipment, infrastructure or technology alone, but is also defined by the people who stand behind them.

Meanwhile, PM Phillips also outlined the growing importance of technology, particularly artificial intelligence, in modern security operations, while cautioning that such tools must be guided by trained professionals.

He reiterated that the country is moving beyond a model that focuses only on maintaining operations and is instead investing in transformation through modernisation, intelligence strengthening and education.

"We are building a security system



Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips

that is smarter, more adaptive and ready for the future," he affirmed, while adding that the programme represents a long-term investment in human capital development.

Meanwhile, Chief of Defence Staff, Brigadier Omar Khan, described the launch as a pivotal moment in strengthening Guyana's strategic capacity.

"There are moments in a nation's

life when progress is not only measured in what we build or what we acquire, but by the minds we shape. Today is one of those moments," Khan said.

Caribbean tourism arrivals reached 35 million in 2025

Caribbean tourism continued its steady recovery in 2025, with international stay-over arrivals rising 2.5% to an estimated 35 million visits, according to the Caribbean Tourism Organization.

The increase — approximately 900,000 more visitors than in 2024 — pushed arrivals beyond pre-pandemic 2019 levels, underscoring the region's ongoing recovery despite global economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions and weather-related disruptions, including the passage of Hurricane Melissa.

"Caribbean tourism in 2025 demonstrated continued resilience and adaptability even as the global landscape presented a number of challenges," said Aliyyah Shakeer. "Strategic investments in tourism infrastructure, sustained marketing efforts, and incremental gains in airlift connectivity helped support growth and maintain the region's competitiveness."

Tourism performance varied throughout the year. The first quarter recorded a slight contraction of 0.3%, reflecting early-year uncertainty. However, arrivals rebounded in the second and third quarters, with growth of 5% and 5.6%, respectively.

The fourth quarter remained stable, posting marginal growth of 0.2% as momentum softened toward year-end.

Monthly arrivals ranged between 2.1 million and 3.5

million visitors, with peak travel periods occurring in March, July and December. Notably, every month in 2025 exceeded corresponding 2019 levels, highlighting the strength of the region's post-pandemic recovery.

Destination performance was mixed. Strong growth was recorded in Guyana, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Curaçao, supported by product development and diversification efforts.

Some destinations, however, experienced declines due to economic pressures, airlift constraints and localized disruptions. Despite this, most Caribbean destinations have now surpassed pre-pandemic benchmarks.

The United States remained the Caribbean's largest source market, with arrivals increasing 0.5% to approximately 17 million visitors. Demand remained relatively stable but uneven across the year.

Arrivals from Canada declined 5.3% to an estimated 3.1 million visitors, remaining below pre-pandemic levels as higher travel costs and competition from other destinations influenced travel patterns.

Similarly, arrivals from Europe decreased 3.3% to about 5.1 million visitors, with recovery continuing at a slower pace. In contrast, South America recorded the strongest growth, with arrivals increasing 23.7% to 2.4 million visits, supported by improved air connectivity.



Finance Minister Dr Ashni Singh and World Bank's Country Director for the Caribbean, Lilia Burunciuc, during a recent meeting in Georgetown

World Bank commends Guyana's tangible investments in climate-resilient infrastructure

WORLD BANK'S Country Director for the Caribbean, Lilia Burunciuc, has commended Guyana for its tangible investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, highlighting the country's efforts to preserve the gains it has made.

Speaking during a recent discussion on Guyana's economic transformation on the National Communication Network, Burunciuc said investments made in building resilience have already demonstrated their value during recent episodes of intense rainfall across Guyana's capital and other regions.

She recalled being warned of widespread flooding in Georgetown shortly before her arrival in the country.

"When I was preparing to fly to Guyana, the country office here called me and said, 'Guyana is flooded. Georgetown is flooded because there are heavy rains. Make sure you take appropriate shoes,'" she said.

"So I land in Guyana, I come to Georgetown, and I asked people,

'Where is the flooding? Where is the water?' And they said the Liliendaal pumping station worked so well that it actually pumped out the water faster than we thought. So the water receded much faster than we expected."

She stressed that such investments remain crucial to economies as they preserve assets and gains that countries have made.

"You can build a lot of infrastructure. You can put in place new buildings, new roads, new houses, but if they are flooded, then you have to start building everything from scratch. So investing in resilience is very important."

The Liliendaal "bullet" drainage pump which Burunciuc references, is located on the East Coast of Demerara, and forms part of a wider programme to strengthen drainage and irrigation systems and flood-risk management infrastructure across Guyana.

Joining the discussion, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with

Responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, noted the facility has become an "invaluable" asset in protecting Georgetown and its environs.

Dr Singh explained that, for decades, Guyana's low-lying coastal plain, much of it below sea level, has been highly vulnerable to flooding due to the combination of heavy rainfall and high tides. Successive Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) governments have invested heavily in sea defences, drainage canals and irrigation structures, but progress was constrained by limited fiscal space.

"In particular our vulnerability to climate change was for a long time because of our topography, because of the fact that we have a low-lying coastal plain below sea level. Any combination of heavy rainfall and high tides make this low lying coastal plain very, very susceptible to flooding," he said adding:

"Any combination of heavy rainfall and high tides makes our low-lying

coastal plain, very, very susceptible to flooding. And so for decades, in fact, perhaps for centuries, those parts of our population, the greater part of our population, which reside on this low-lying coastal plain, successive generations, have had to deal with the challenge of flooding, and we've recognised this for a long time."

The pump station was constructed in partnership with the World Bank as part of a broader effort to reinforce the East Demerara Water Conservancy and upgrade drainage and irrigation networks along the coast. The Government is also using climate revenues from the sale of carbon credits under Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy to fund further improvements, including upgrades to critical drainage structures and the construction of new canal systems. Burunciuc further stressed that investment in resilience is essential to safeguarding Guyana's recent development gains.

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Visitor arrivals soar to historic levels, new record set with 34,923 arrivals in a month

GUYANA'S tourism sector is experiencing record-breaking growth, with visitor arrivals surging to their highest levels in the country's history as the nation prepares to celebrate its 60th Diamond Jubilee of Independence.

Delivering remarks at the launch of the Homecoming – Guyana's 60th Diamond Jubilee Independence Anniversary, Tourism, Industry and Commerce Minister Susan Rodrigues on Thursday revealed that in January 2026 alone, Guyana welcomed 34,923 visitors, representing a 17.2 per cent increase over January 2025, setting a record for the highest number of arrivals in a single month.

2025 marked a watershed year for the industry, with over 453,000 visitors recorded. This represents a 22 per cent increase when compared with the previous year.

That momentum, she noted, has not only been sustained but strengthened in 2026.

Minister Rodrigues said these figures speak to far more than simple numerical growth.

She pointed out that the surge in arrivals has coincided with a wave of international media attention, which has helped to reposition Guyana on the global tourism map.

Features in Bloomberg, Time Magazine and The New York Times, she said, have showcased Guyana as a premier destination defined by authenticity, sustainability and meaningful experiences. This international exposure has complemented the government's strategic efforts to promote the country as a unique blend of eco-tourism, cultural heritage



Tourism, Industry and Commerce Minister Susan Rodrigues

and adventure.

Minister Rodrigues stressed that the growth is no accident, but the result of deliberate policy measures, targeted marketing and improved tourism infrastructure, backed by a clear vision from President Dr Irfaan Ali.

“This observance reinforces something equally important, national pride and unity as Guyana continues to grow, we must remain grounded in who we are,

our culture, our heritage and our diversity are not just part of our past, they are central to our identity and to our future,”

she said, linking the visitor arrival surge to the broader calendar of national celebrations.

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

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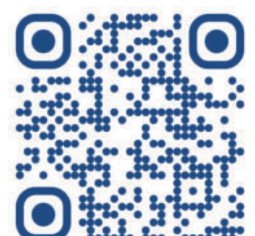
- Build a globally cohesive community with a focus on youth and women in business and civic leadership worldwide.
- Support social entrepreneurship and civic engagement in communities around the world.
- Engage diaspora communities in the social and economic development of Guyana.

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

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\$1.53B Karasabai runway commissioned to boost hinterland connectivity

PRESIDENT, Dr Irfaan Ali on Saturday commissioned a new 3,000-foot runway at Karasabai, Region Nine, marking a major investment in hinterland infrastructure, aimed at improving connectivity and unlocking economic opportunities.

The project, valued at approximately \$1.53 billion, includes the construction of two taxiways and is expected to significantly enhance access to transportation, healthcare, education and commerce for residents of the community and surrounding areas.

The new facility will accommodate larger and more frequent aircraft, allowing for more reliable movement of goods and passengers, particularly during emergencies and adverse weather conditions.

President Ali underscored that the investment forms part of a wider government strategy to modernise infrastructure in remote and underserved communities, thereby ensuring more equitable national development. He noted that improved air-transport links will not only benefit residents, but will also open up greater opportunities for tourism, trade, and local enterprise.

The addition of the two taxiways is



The new 3,000-foot runway at Karasabai, Region Nine

also expected to improve operational efficiency and safety at the airstrip, allowing for smoother aircraft movement on the ground. Overall, the project marks a major step forward in strengthening transportation networks in Karasabai and advancing development in Guyana's

hinterland regions.

Highlighting long-standing challenges faced by residents, he noted that poor landing conditions during the rainy season often left the community isolated.

“During the heavy rains when you have flood here, many times Karasabai is cut off from Lethem or will take you hours upon hours to get to Lethem, so if you have a medical emergency, it would have been detrimental,” the President said.

He further explained that in the past, medical evacuations could take hours, with additional delays if flights could not land before nightfall.

“And if by the time the three hours come you land in Lethem by the night, you have to wait until the next morning,

today day or night a medivac can land here and take you to Lethem where we have major facilities and anywhere else in Guyana,” he added.

The President disclosed that discussions are ongoing to establish a scheduled weekly flight to Karasabai, following calls from residents for a more consistent air service.

“We know that we also have to invest and get the private sector to invest in the infrastructure that would allow us to optimise the value of this airstrip,” he said, noting that in the coming months a 20-tonne freezer will be installed to support the transportation of produce to Georgetown. To further develop the community, President Ali said the government will be working with residents to expand coffee and food production.

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CDB approves US\$50M loan to boost Guyana's climate resilience

THE Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) has approved US\$50 million in financing for Guyana under its Second Environmental Sector Policy-Based Loan (PBL), in a move that sharpens the country's climate response and strengthens its natural-resource management architecture.

The funding, secured by the Government of Guyana, forms part of a broader US\$175 million programme, following an initial US\$125 million disbursement in July, 2025.

The facility is being financed through the Bank's Ordinary Capital Resources and is positioned to support fiscal stability as Guyana accelerates investments in climate-resilient infrastructure and environmental systems.

At its core, the second PBL is designed to translate policy into execution, backing tangible interventions that advance resilience while, sustaining economic expansion. It supports a suite of reforms aligned with national priorities, including biodiversity protection, climate adaptation and improved water governance.

The CDB's Director of Projects, L. O'Reilly Lewis, underscored the importance of the financing, noting that as Guyana continues its rapid economic transformation, the additional support will help to institutionalise environmental sustainability within national planning frameworks.

"As Guyana continues to experience rapid economic expansion, this additional financing deepens our support for the country's efforts to embed environmental sustainability into national policy and planning, ensuring that key reforms in biodiversity management, climate resilience and water governance are adequately resourced," Lewis said.

The programme is also anchored in a people-centred approach to climate finance, targeting enhanced community resilience and livelihood opportunities.

It strengthens national institutions through improved data systems, modernised environmental monitoring and tighter inter-agency coordination, key gaps that have historically constrained implementation capacity.

On the ground, the reforms are expected to scale up restoration of carbon-rich ecosystems, while expanding early warning systems that integrate public-health considerations.

The initiative also prioritises climate-resilient water-supply systems for



The loan is set to advance Guyana's climate response

vulnerable coastal communities, designed to withstand both flooding and prolonged drought conditions.

Importantly, the loan aligns with Guyana's Low Carbon Development

Strategy (LCDS) 2030, reinforcing the country's commitments under the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity. It also dovetails with the CDB's Strategic Plan 2026-2035,

which places climate action and natural capital protection at the centre of regional development.

From a policy standpoint, the financing signals a deliberate shift towards embedding climate resilience within the country's economic growth model, ensuring that expansion is not only rapid, but sustainable and shock resistant.

The initiative further supports the bank's Country Engagement Strategy for Guyana, with a clear focus on reducing poverty and strengthening national capacity to absorb and adapt to climate-related risks.

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Minister Mustapha rallies to protect threatened rice crops

AGRICULTURE Minister, Zulfikar Mustapha, has moved swiftly to address mounting anxieties among rice farmers whose crops face serious threats from adverse weather conditions, convening an urgent meeting to reassure farmers and outline the government's response measures.

The minister's engagement formed part of a broader pattern of proactive outreach by the Ministry of Agriculture, which has consistently prioritised direct consultation with farming communities in times of crisis.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Mustapha drew attention to the landmark UPL Crop Insurance Scheme, a first-of-its-kind initiative for the Caribbean, developed in collaboration with UPL Costa Rica, Philip Morris International, and the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB), and underscored its significance in the current climate.

Registered farmers under the scheme will be eligible for compensation in the event of crop losses arising from extreme weather events such as flooding and drought, providing a critical financial safety net at no premium cost to the farmer.

"From now, you will be covered," the minister told farmers, reaffirming that over 5,600 rice farmers have already enrolled in the programme.

Beyond financial protection, Minister Mustapha said that the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) are taking active, on-the-ground measures to safeguard acreage under threat.

The minister has called on all re-



Agriculture Minister, Zulfikar Mustapha, has moved swiftly to address mounting anxieties among rice farmers

sponsible agencies to intensify monitoring of drainage infrastructure, with special teams of engineers and technical personnel deployed nationwide to ensure that sluices, pumps, and canals remain fully operational.

"We are closely monitoring the water levels and infrastructure to protect as much acreage as possible," the

minister said, as drainage systems continue to be assessed amid significant rainfall and water accumulation affecting agricultural lands across several regions.

Reaffirming the government's unwavering solidarity with the farming community, Minister Mustapha told the gathering that the administration is

committed to ensuring farmers have the resources and support needed to navigate this difficult period.

"Our rice farmers will never be neglected by this government," the minister reiterated, pledging continued investment in infrastructure, technology, and farmer welfare.

PSC laments Suriname's Corentyne river fees as threat to trade

GUYANA'S Private Sector Commission (PSC) has issued a forceful denunciation of Suriname's newly enforced fees on vessels traversing the Corentyne River, declaring the charges anti-trade, in violation of the spirit of CARICOM's regional integration framework, and directly harmful to the livelihoods of thousands of Guyanese citizens who depend on the waterway for their economic survival.

The PSC, in a strongly worded statement released on April 4, condemned "in the strongest terms" the imposition of fees by the Government of Suriname on vessels using the Corentyne River.

The commission warned that the unilateral charges will "disrupt trade, increase costs for operators, and place Guyanese businesses and communities at an immediate disadvantage."

The controversy centres on fees that Surinamese authorities have begun enforcing for vessels using the Corentyne River, which borders both coun-

tries, but falls under Suriname's jurisdiction.

Business operators at Crabwood Creek report being required to pay approximately US\$2,500 per trip under what Suriname classifies as a "pilot licence" requirement. On top of that, operators must engage Surinamese brokers at costs ranging between US\$1,000 and US\$1,500, with additional charges applied based on vessel tonnage.

The financial shock is being felt most acutely in river-dependent communities such as Orealla and Siparuta in Region Six (East Berbice-Corentyne), where economic activity is almost entirely tied to sand mining, loam extraction, and timber production.

"That will greatly affect my community because Orealla depends on sand, loam mining and timber... this is where the majority of our revenue comes from and we don't want that economic activity to slow down," said Stuart Peneux, an Orealla resident.

The Upper Corentyne Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UCCCI) has warned of "catastrophic repercussions" for the local economy, noting that the added costs would inevitably be passed on to purchasers, rendering operations less competitive in the open market.

The PSC argued that Suriname's actions go beyond a bilateral commercial dispute; they represent a fundamental breach of the ethos underpinning CARICOM and, more specifically, the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

The CSME, established through the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas in 2001, is built on the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, with the explicit objective of removing fiscal, legal, and administrative barriers to trade, not creating new ones.

"These actions directly contradict the spirit of CARICOM and are fundamentally at odds with the principles of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, which are intended to pro-

mote the free movement of goods, fair treatment, and the removal of barriers to regional trade," the PSC stated.

The commission characterised the move as "regressive" and "disruptive to business certainty," at a time when the Caribbean region should be deepening integration and building confidence in cross-border commerce.

The rebuke carries particular weight, given that CARICOM leaders had only recently reaffirmed their commitment to addressing non-tariff barriers hindering the movement of goods across the region, making Suriname's imposition of new charges a visible step in the opposite direction.

The PSC's condemnation forms part of a growing chorus of alarm from Guyana's business community. The Shipping Association of Guyana (SAG) warned that the proposed fees could have "adverse implications for trade and commerce" between the two countries, urging Surinamese authorities to refrain from introducing new charges.



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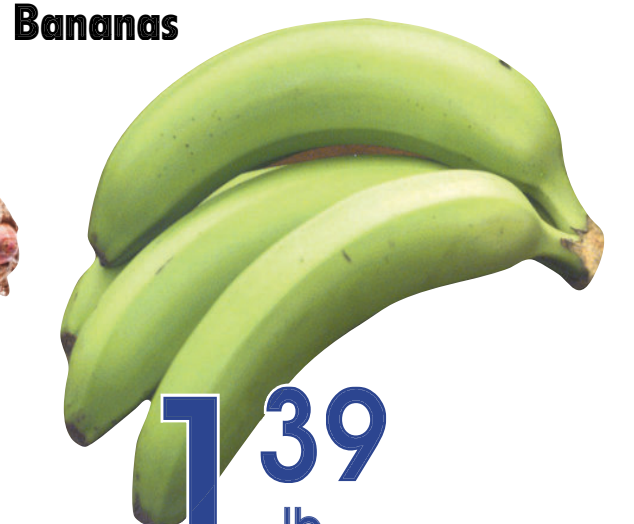
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Healthcare revolution taking shape in Region One

REGION One is setting new standards in health-care delivery, with significant progress in infrastructure, staffing, and community outreach, as highlighted during the region’s 2025 Health Sector Review and Leadership Meeting.

The session brought together regional leaders and senior officials from the Ministry of Health to assess achievements, address challenges, and plan for continued improvements across the region.

Director General of the Ministry of Health, Dr Vishwa Mahadeo, along with a ministry team that included Dr Bheri Ramsarran, Adviser to the Minister of Health; Chief Medex Carleen Howard-Mohabir and programme representatives, engaged regional leadership at the RDC boardroom. Regional representation included Chairman Brentnol Ashley, Vice Chairman Paul Pierre, Regional Executive Officer Mr Seewchan, Regional Health Officer Dr Steven Cheefoon, and other health officials.

Detailed presentations outlined the region’s performance throughout 2025, as part of a nationwide review process, allowing health authorities to identify gaps, celebrate achievements, and resolve challenges, some immediately while others earmarked for follow-up.



The health sector leadership team of Region One

During the engagement, the Director General commended Region One for its remarkable progress, noting that in some areas, the region has surpassed services available along the coast.

“Chairman, allow me to make one correction. You are actually providing, in some cases, a better service than the people on the coast. On the coast, you can’t get a specialist coming to your vil-

lage to provide service with ultrasound, heart machine, lab tests, and all of that. In Region One, Dr. Cheefoon has successfully been doing that for at least three years. So you have actually surpassed what is happening on the coast.”

Reflecting on past challenges, the Director General highlighted the limited infrastructure and staffing shortages the region once faced.

“I remember the first time I came to Region One, there were facilities that literally had one or no staff there permanently. And one of the biggest challenges was training and getting qualified personnel.”

Through targeted investments and collaboration between the ministry and regional administration, these challenges have been addressed. A key milestone has been the establishment of a dedicated training facility, making Region One the first to institutionalise the development of healthcare workers.

“This is the first region that had a school set up physically, not that we are doing it in a boardroom or somewhere, but a building dedicated to training, and you also produced the first set of trained staff.”

The initiative has already produced tangible results, including the graduation of 62 Community Health Workers trained from within their own communities.

“You had 62 community health workers that [sic] graduated... trained from Baramita, for Baramita. So we are leaving no community behind.”

Infrastructural upgrades were also underscored, particularly the transformation of Mabaruma Hospital into a fully functional regional institution.

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Guyana pitched as strategic destination for Qatari investments

PRESIDENT, Dr Irfaan Ali has positioned Guyana as an important destination for Qatari investment, citing the country's geographic advantage and market potential during an official telephone conversation with His Highness, Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, on Monday.

"The President also offered Guyana as an important destination from a geographic and market position for Qatar, noting the long-term damage to infrastructure and the impact on their economy caused by the ongoing conflict," a press statement posted to President Ali's official Facebook page said.

President Ali conveyed the full solidarity of the people of Guyana to Qatar and strongly condemned all attacks against the Gulf nation and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

According to the release, President Ali also noted that the ongoing conflict has caused significant damage to infrastructure and had adversely affected economic activity, while underscoring the importance of forging resilient and forward-looking partnerships.

For his part, His Highness the Amir thanked President Ali and the people of Guyana for their continued support and solidarity with the people of Qatar.

The Amir also expressed Qatar's keen interest in broadening co-operation with Guyana in several priority areas, including investment, human-capital development, technology, food security and other critical infrastructure.

Recently, President Ali disclosed that Guyana has been promoting itself as a strategic hub for storage and logistics in the Western Hemisphere.

"The war in the Middle East and the closing of the Strait of Hormuz have given us an important piece of history lesson. You have a situation now where marine transportation; global insurance; movement of food; movement of fertiliser; movement of petrochemicals; all of these things can come to an almost instant halt. Right now, most countries are operating from strategic reserves," Dr Ali said recently.

The situation, he emphasised, has underscored the fragility of global supply chains.

He had further pointed to the possibility of establishing large-scale storage facilities in Guyana with the



President, Dr Irfaan Ali and Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

capacity to hold several months' worth of critical supplies, including fertiliser, which could serve regional and international markets during periods of disruption.

According to President Ali, Guyana's geographic location, which offers a direct access to the Atlantic and proximity to major markets such as Brazil, places the country in a unique position to support global supply chains.

He added that the country's trade arrangements within the Region, coupled with its natural resource base oil, gas and gold could further strengthen its potential as a strategic logistics centre.

"I want to present Guyana as that location, that geographic location that

can be a strategic storage location," he said, adding: "And why Guyana, our geographic location; our access to the Atlantic; our access to large markets in Brazil and the trade arrangement we have within our region. But importantly, our ability also to add our natural assets, which includes gold, that includes crude oil [and] natural gas as part of that portfolio, in building out a strategic geo-positioning for this entire industry."

Last month, Dr Ali had condemned recent strikes on energy facilities in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, stressing that the damage would not be quickly reversed.

Much of the pressure, he noted, centres on the Strait of Hormuz, which

he described as "an important trading location," especially for petroleum products and natural gas.

Here is where about 20 to 25 per cent of the world's total sea-borne oil trade passes through.

Attacks and disruptions in the Gulf have already led to sharp price movements and supply shortfalls.

According to President Ali, 17 per cent of energy capacity had been affected, dismantled and could be considered lost.

He pointed too to a 25 per cent jump in fertiliser prices and rising fuel and freight costs, warning of cascading consequences for food security and global manufacturing.



Bhaduri recreating one of his iconic roles for a documentary film

The man who became one of India's greatest stage queens

In mid-20th Century Bengal in eastern India, some of the biggest female stars on stage were actually men.

Foremost among them was Chapal Bhaduri - better known as Chapal Rani - the reigning "queen" of jatra, a travelling theatre tradition that once drew vast, fervent crowds.

Male actors playing female roles were a familiar trope across global theatre, from Europe to Japan and China.

In Bengal, the form flourished in jatra - a rural, open-air spectacle of music, myth and melodrama that often rivalled cinema in reach, though not in rewards. Rooted in epic and devotional storytelling, it played out on all-sided stages, driven by heightened voice, gesture and costume.

In a new book, *Chapal Rani: The Last Queen of Bengal*, writer Sandip Roy traces Bhaduri's journey from stardom to obscurity - and, in doing so, captures a vanishing world where gender itself was an act.

For decades, female roles in jatra were played by men known as purush ranis, or male queens.

But even at its height, the form carried a certain stigma.

Colonial-era urban elites in Calcutta, influenced by European tastes, often dismissed jatra as rustic or unsophisticated. A 19th-Century Anglo-Indian journal derided the voices of boys playing women as "discordant", comparing them unfavourably to "howling jackals".

By the time Bhaduri entered the stage in the 1950s, that world was already shifting. Women had begun to take up acting roles. The space for female impersonators was narrowing. Still, Bhaduri stood out.

Born in 1939 in north Kolkata to stage actress Prabha Devi, Bhaduri grew up around performers. He began acting at 16. "I had girlish manners, a girlish voice," he would later say.

On stage, he transformed. He played queens, courtesans, goddesses and brothel madams with a studied grace.

His costumes were carefully assembled and sometimes improvised. Early on, he used rags to

shape the silhouette of his bosom. Later, he turned to sponge. His beauty routine included creams, small rituals in pursuit of an illusion he took seriously.

His performances were not comic turns or caricatures. They were immersive, often deeply felt. In a theatrical culture where queer-coded characters were frequently played for ridicule, Bhaduri's work carried a different weight.

Roy writes, "In Indian performing art where playing gay or queer was in the form of characters who are ridiculed, Chapal morphed into a woman and played his roles with honesty and an act of bravery."

Off stage, Bhaduri's life was more complicated.

He did not openly identify as gay given the complication of social life in middle class Bengal in the times he lived in. Admiration was not lacking though. He received letters proffering affection and proposals for affairs and offers of relationships came from fans and lovers alike.

Bhaduri was picky and proud but emphatically said, "I refuse to apologise for love."

His one long relationship lasted over three decades, even as his partner married and had children.

Debarshi Sarkar for Parama Calcutta Chapal Rani in goddess costume Debarshi Sarkar for Parama Calcutta

Bhaduri played queens, courtesans, goddesses and brothel madams with a studied grace

Bhaduri remained on the margins, present, but never fully acknowledged and in the end more of a housekeeper.

The decline of his career came not with a single event, but a series of shifts.

As women became more common on stage, audiences began to reject male actors in female roles. The very convention that had once sustained jatra began to unravel.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the "moustachioed queens of jatra" were pushed out, writes Roy.

Bhaduri experienced that rejection first hand.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): The Sun in your sign does wonders for your enthusiasm but not much for your patience and if someone you work with is a bit slow today you will let them know about it. They may move faster but will they produce better results?

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): Life is too short to worry what other people think about the choices you've made, so ignore any criticism that comes your way today and keep pushing ahead as if everyone else is wrong and you are right. It may even be true.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): If you get dragged into a dispute between friends or family members today it may be a very long time before you can wriggle your way out of it again, so it's better not to get involved in the first place. Let them sort it out for themselves.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): Anyone who thinks you don't have what it takes to compete at the highest level will be proved wrong today. Hopefully you won't make too many enemies along the way but even if you do it's a small price to pay for success.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): You seem to be in one of those moods when you refuse to believe what other people are telling you. No doubt you are right and they are keeping something from you, but on this occasion it may be safer not to know what it is.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): As an Earth sign you tend not to believe things unless you can see them with your own eyes, and that trait will work in your favor today. While others may be happy to accept what they are told you will refuse to take anything on trust.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): This is not a good time to take risks for the fun of it. Cosmic activity in your opposite sign means important people are watching you closely and if they see you are reckless it could damage your career prospects. A safety first approach is a must.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): You are rarely half-hearted about what you do in life and that's good because what you are working on now will require your full attention and your total commitment. Your passion for excellence will bring the rewards you both desire and deserve.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): Cosmic activity in the most dynamic area of your chart means you now have the confidence to try things that previously you might have backed away from. They say all is fair in love and business, so go all out for success.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): The pressure is beginning to rise and you won't be able to escape it, so don't waste time trying. Instead, head directly towards the challenges coming your way and make it your business to overcome them. Self-belief is your number one weapon.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): You seem to be in two minds about what you should be doing, but with your ruling planet Uranus about to be energized by Mars you won't be confused for long. Once you have fixed on a target you must commit yourself 100 percent.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): A task of some kind is taking up an increasingly large slice of your time and energy and you don't know what to do about it. On this occasion the smartest move might be to just forget about it. Sometimes giving up is the only sensible option.

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Barbados recognized as one of safest destinations in Americas

The chief executive officer of Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc, Andrea Franklin, says the international recognition of Barbados as one of the safest destinations in the Americas and Caribbean for 2026 is both welcomed and reassuring.

“This recognition comes at a particularly significant time in the global tourism environment, as travellers are increasingly discerning and mindful of their choices amid a complex geopolitical landscape,” Franklin said in a statement following the announcement by Travel & Tour World.

She added, “This recognition helps to further position Barbados as a destination that offers a safe, stable, and reliable experience. As a destination, we must remain committed to maintaining the standards that continue to earn the trust of those who travel here.”

Franklin noted that the achievement reflects years of deliberate investment in building and promoting a destination that is safe, secure, and centred on delivering exceptional experiences. “At the heart of this achievement are the people of Barbados, whose warmth, professionalism, and unwavering hospitality define the Barbadian experience and continue to set us apart on the global stage,” she said.

“This recognition is therefore one



that all Barbadians should take pride in—particularly those across the hospitality and wider tourism sector who contribute daily to ensuring that every visitor feels safe, respected, and genuinely welcomed,” Franklin added.

She stressed that safety is “not a static achievement—it is a shared and

ongoing responsibility. It extends beyond our visitors to the well-being of our citizens and communities.”

Looking ahead, Franklin said the focus remains on maintaining the highest standards, from well-regulated experiences and strong community partnerships to world-class hospitality

frameworks, supported by effective governance frameworks that benefit both Barbadians and visitors alike.

Barbados achieved a record-breaking tourism year in 2025, welcoming over 729,000 long-stay visitors, a 3.3 per cent increase over 2024, with significant growth driven by the UK.

Patterson knocks Caricom’s response to Cuba fuel blockade

Former Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson has criticised the Caribbean Community for what he described as a missed opportunity to demonstrate strong regional solidarity in response to the United States fuel blockade affecting Cuba.

Patterson made the remarks while delivering the keynote address at the Norman Manley Law School Distinguished Lecture on Wednesday, where he also called for renewed Caribbean integration and institutional reform.

The issue of Cuba’s fuel crisis was raised earlier this year during the 50th CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting, where regional leaders agreed to send humanitarian assistance to the island as it grapples with ongoing supply challenges.

However, Patterson suggested that the bloc’s response lacked the level of unity and urgency required. He also questioned what he described as CARICOM’s silence regarding recent United States strikes on vessels in the Caribbean Sea.

“CARICOM will flounder unless there is an effective machine and binding mechanisms to implement and en-

force the solemn decisions of heads and ministerial organs,” Patterson said.

Delivering a lecture titled “Constitutional Renewal, Caribbean Integration and the Rule of Law: Charting the Region’s Next Chapter,” Patterson urged the regional bloc to reposition itself as a force for transformation.

“A reignited CARICOM must become a catalyst for change. We need a seismic shift to be more cohesive – not more divided and supine. We have to formulate our own road map for resilience, prosperity and self-determination in a world that too often marginalises our interests,” he said.

Referencing Jamaican National Hero Norman Manley, Patterson highlighted his vision of building “a community that provides a wider field for individual ambition.”

He noted that despite decades of integration efforts, the region continues to face challenges in areas such as trade, free movement of people and coordinated policy action. Patterson also referenced regional successes, including athletics at the CARIFTA Games, while acknowledging criticism surrounding regional cricket governance.

Patterson argued that the next phase of CARICOM must deliver concrete benefits to Caribbean citizens, including improved mobility for professionals, expanded opportunities for entrepreneurs and greater access to justice.

“The next chapter of our community must achieve that wider ambition, centred on the Caribbean people,” he said.

He also renewed his call for full adoption of the Caribbean Court of Justice as the region’s final appellate court, more than two decades after its establishment, replacing the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Patterson further stressed the need for stronger public communication about CARICOM’s work.

“CARICOM will not matter to the average citizen who has little or no information as to what is available through the community without an information arm, adequately staffed and equipped to disseminate its work and achievements,” he said.

Invoking Caribbean intellectual George Lamming, Patterson called for Caribbean identity to be placed at the

centre of regional education systems.

“The time is overdue for the Caribbean to be at the centre of the curriculum at all levels of the region’s education system – not simply as a matter of geography, but as an organic path in understanding who we are as one people,” he said.

Turning to Jamaica’s constitutional reform process, Patterson questioned the current legislative stalemate and urged transparency in the process. He also warned about declining voter turnout, particularly among younger citizens, saying it threatens democratic legitimacy.

Patterson said it was regrettable that Jamaica’s 65th anniversary would pass with the British monarch still serving as head of state, the Privy Council remaining the final appellate court and the Constitution still rooted in an Order in Council.

“It is time to repatriate our Constitution and turn the final page,” he said.

Patterson also raised concerns about the state of international law, referencing what he described as growing military activity in the Caribbean Sea.

interCaribbean Airways, Air Canada launch agreement linking region and Canada

interCaribbean Airways has announced the launch of an interline agreement with Air Canada, strengthening travel connections between the Caribbean and Canada through key hubs in Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda.

The partnership expands travel options for customers seeking access between the Caribbean region and Air Canada's extensive North American and international network.

Under the agreement, customers will be able to book connecting flights on a single ticket, enabling travellers to and from the Caribbean region to access Air Canada's flights to Toronto, Montreal and other destinations, while also benefiting from interCaribbean Airways' comprehensive Caribbean network. Ticket sales are already underway.

Travel under the agreement will also allow through check-in of customer baggage, with full customer through check-in services expected to launch in the next few weeks.

The partnership is aimed at addressing the needs of Canada's substantial Caribbean community, concentrated primarily in Toronto and Montreal, by offering enhanced travel options. At the same time, Canadian travellers will gain improved access to explore destinations throughout the Caribbean.

Both airlines said the agreement reflects their commitment to service quality and improved connectivity for customers travelling between the Caribbean and Canada.

interCaribbean Airways is a privately owned airline headquartered in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The UK-flagged airline operates Embraer

4,000 housing units earmarked for tourism workers

Jamaica's tourism boom is now being channelled into housing for sector workers, with plans underway to deliver nearly 4,000 units in and around Montego Bay — the nation's tourism capital.

Portfolio Minister, Edmund Bartlett, announced that arrangements are being finalised for the construction of 2,250 housing units at Grange Pen, St. James.

He explained that, together with Godfrey Dyer, Chairman of the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF), he will meet with the Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ) and China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) to finalise details ahead of the project's ground-breaking.

"That will be added to a 1,500-unit housing programme in Barrett Hall, St. James, that is currently [underway, for which] we broke ground... with the National Housing Trust (NHT). So just within your space, we will have pretty



interCaribbean and Air Canada are now linked

ERJ145 and Bombardier CRJ900 aircraft, along with a fleet of turboprops including the ATR 72, ATR 42, Embraer EMB120, and De Havilland Twin Otter.

With a network spanning Georgetown in the south, Barbados to the east, Havana to the west, and Nassau to the

north, interCaribbean connects 24 cities across 18 countries in the Caribbean.

Air Canada is Canada's largest airline, serving domestic and international destinations across six continents. The airline is a founding member of the Star Alliance, providing

a worldwide air transportation network.

Air Canada's predecessor, Trans-Canada Air Lines, inaugurated its first flight on September 1, 1937. By 1964, the airline had grown to become Canada's national carrier and changed its name to Air Canada. The airline became fully privatized in 1989.

close to 4,000 houses for the workers of the industry," Mr. Bartlett outlined.

He was speaking during the re-opening ceremony for the Eclipse at Half Moon Resort in Rose Hall, St. James, on Thursday (April 2).

Mr. Bartlett indicated that, going forward, any tourism development of 500 rooms or more will be required to incorporate a housing component for industry workers.

He said this measure is intended to reinforce the principle that the people who serve Jamaica's visitors should have a stable place to call home.

In the meantime, the Minister noted that the sector's pension programme — the first of its kind globally — has, in just two and a half years, accumulated over \$6 billion in savings. At the current pace, he projected that the fund will reach \$10 billion by the end of 2027.

"At that time, we're going to establish a Health Maintenance Organisa-

tion (HMO) for the workers. We're going to take \$2 billion from the fund to create the seeding money for that

health facility and create a health scheme for every worker of the tourism industry," Mr. Bartlett informed.



Antigua and Barbuda PM invites international observers ahead of election

Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne has written to regional and international organizations requesting election observers ahead of general elections that he is expected to announce later this week.

In letters sent to the Caribbean Community Secretariat, the Organization of American States, and the Commonwealth Secretariat, Browne indicated his intention to announce the election date on Tuesday, April 7, 2026.

“It is my intention, on Tuesday, 7 April 2026, to announce the date for the holding of general elections to elect a new government,” Browne wrote.

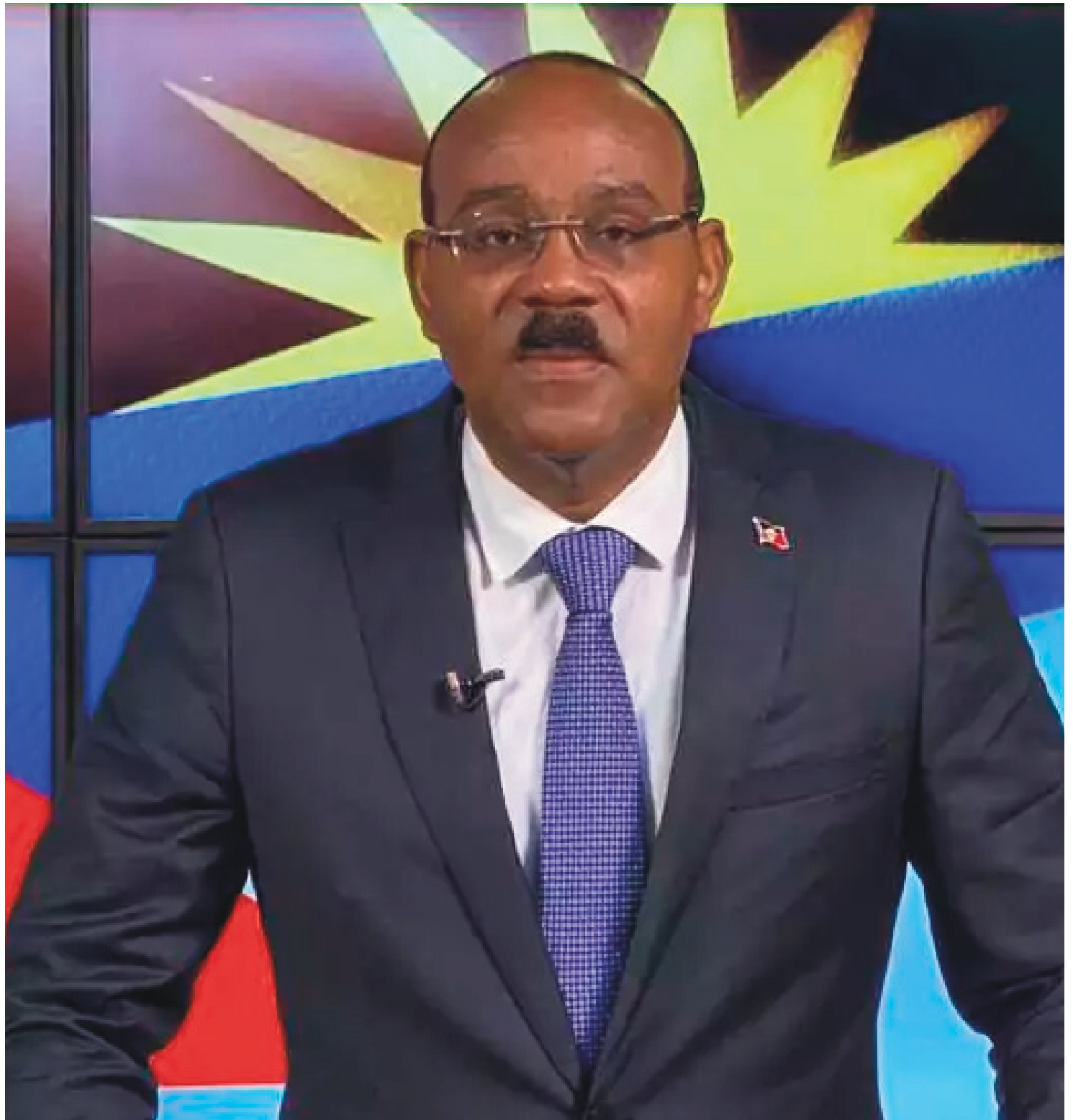
Browne, who is seeking a fourth consecutive term as prime minister, said the Antigua and Barbuda government would welcome the presence of Electoral Observer Missions.

“In these circumstances, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda would welcome the presence of an Electoral Observer Mission,” he stated, adding that “all customary facilities and courtesies accorded to previous Electoral Observer Missions will be extended.”

The move follows the dissolution of Parliament by Governor General Sir Rodney Williams, who acted under Section 60(1) of the Constitution and on the advice of the prime minister. The dissolution paves the way for general elections to be held approximately five months ahead of the constitutional deadline.

The upcoming election is expected to be a direct contest between the ruling Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party and the main opposition United Progressive Party.

Meanwhile, the Democratic National Alliance has already announced that it will not field candidates in the



Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

election.

In the last general election held on January 18, 2023, the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party secured nine of the

17 seats in Parliament. The remaining seats were won by the United Progressive Party and one independent candidate.

The upcoming polls are expected to draw significant regional and international attention as voters prepare to choose a new government.

Jamaican government hands over land titles to Rastafari group

Horace Chang, Jamaica's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security and Peace, on Good Friday (April 3), formally handed over land titles to the Rastafari Coral Gardens Benevolent Society (RCGBS) as restitution by the State for the Coral Gardens Incident in St. James involving the Rastafari community.

Dr. Chang was joined by Olivia Grange, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, during the annual Commemorative Anniversary of the Coral Gardens Atrocity Against Rastafari, held on the plots of land in Albion, for which the titles have now been for-

mally transferred.

In his address, Dr. Chang, who is Member of Parliament for St. James North Western, explained that the titles for Lots 84A and 84B confer full legal ownership to the RCGBS, thereby securing Rastafarians' right to occupy, manage and develop the property as they deem appropriate.

He noted that the land is intended to serve as a safe, structured space for Rastafari elders, thoughtfully tailored to meet the cultural and social needs of the community.

“This is a step forward. We're not forgetting history... we're not rewriting

the history. Indeed, we have to know history... but move on as well and build on it to another level. That's what we're doing... by providing these [land titles],” Dr. Chang outlined.

He credited the leadership of the RCGBS for sustaining the push for justice over the years, recognising members Lewis Brown (Ras Brown) for his advocacy and organisational leadership, as well as Pamela Rowe-Williams (Sistha Nanny) for her steadfast communication and unwavering focus on the group's objectives.

The Minister also highlighted the critical role of the National Land Agency

(NLA), under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer and Commissioner of Lands, Cherieese Walcott, in ensuring that the legal processes were properly completed, thereby making the transfer secure and sustainable. “We look forward to working more with the RCGBS community,” Dr. Chang added.

For her part, Minister Grange noted that the occasion reflected a growing understanding as the Government continues to address the concerns of the Rastafari community.

She further indicated that more than \$130 million has already been disbursed to the RCGBS Trust Fund for survivors.



Kamla renews calls for transparency after Caricom Secretary General re-appointed

Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, has renewed calls for transparency from CARICOM over the reappointment of Secretary-General Carla Barnett, warning that her government will continue to challenge what it describes as an improper process. She has also threatened to withhold funding from Trinidad and Tobago for the regional organisation.

In a Facebook post, Persad-Bissessar said that Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to CARICOM but will not relent until what she termed a “surreptitious and odious” process is fully explained. She argued that the appointment carries implications for the country’s economy, security, regional integration, and foreign affairs over the next five years.

The Prime Minister stated that the government has formally objected to the reappointment, maintaining that it was not conducted in accordance with Article 24 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, which requires formal consideration by the Conference of Heads of Government.

She referenced correspondence sent on March 25 by Sean Sobers, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, to CARICOM Chairman Terrence Drew, outlining Trinidad and Tobago’s objection.

According to the Prime Minister, the proposed reappointment was not included on the provisional agenda of the Fiftieth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, held in Saint Kitts and Nevis, and was not addressed during plenary discussions. She claimed the matter was instead raised during a Heads of Government retreat, from which some Member States, including Trinidad and Tobago,



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

were excluded through their authorised representatives.

Persad-Bissessar said that further letters were dispatched on March 31 to both Drew and Barnett, seeking details on how the matter was introduced, what communications were shared with Member States, and whether any decisions were circulated after the re-

treat.

Additional correspondence from the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs to CARICOM officials also sought documentation on the process, noting that previous reappointments followed established procedures and reflected the views of all Heads of Government.

The Prime Minister stated that no responses have been received to date. She added that Trinidad and Tobago, which contributes a significant share of CARICOM’s budget, is entitled to accountability and adherence to agreed rules governing regional decision-making.

Former PNP MP charged with incest involving teen daughter

Jamaican police have charged a former Member of Parliament with incest following allegations that he sexually assaulted his young teenage daughter in January.

The man, who previously represented the People’s National Party, was arrested on Monday, according to reports.

The name of the former lawmaker is being withheld to protect the child’s identity.

Reports are that the alleged incident occurred on January 23 while the man was assisting the child with a passport application, during which he took her to verify photographs.

It is further alleged that the child was later taken to the man’s home, where he engaged in sexual intercourse with her.

Investigators later carried out an operation at the accused man’s home, where he was arrested and taken into

custody.

The police area commander declined to comment immediately on Monday evening, saying he first needed to make certain checks.

In a statement issued April 6, the People’s National Party said it had noted reports that a former Member of Parliament had been charged with a serious sexual offence.

“Our thoughts are first and foremost with the young victim and all those affected by this deeply distressing case. The protection of children and all vulnerable persons must always be our absolute priority.”

The party said that upon learning of the charges, it acted without delay.

“Upon learning of the charges, the Party has acted without delay. The accused’s membership in the People’s National Party has been referred to the appropriate internal processes for immediate action. We respect that the



matter is now a legal one, and as such, we will limit our comments. We trust

that the judicial process will be fair, thorough, and expedient.”

Passenger gives birth on Caribbean Airlines flight from Jamaica to NY

A passenger traveling from Jamaica to New York gave birth over the weekend aboard a Caribbean Airlines flight just as the aircraft was preparing to land.

In a press release, Caribbean Airlines confirmed that Flight BW005 was on its final approach from Norman Manley International Airport to John F. Kennedy International Airport shortly before noon on Saturday when the mother went into labor.

When the aircraft landed, both the mother and the newborn were attended to by medical personnel. The airline said its crew followed established procedures throughout the incident.

“The airline commends the professionalism and measured response of its crew, who managed the situation in accordance with established procedures, ensuring the safety and comfort of all on-board,” Caribbean Airlines said in the press release. “Caribbean Airlines also confirms that no emergency was declared during the flight.”

According to air traffic control audio, after the plane landed, a ground controller jokingly suggested that the child be named “Kennedy,” referencing the airport where the birth occurred.

The exchange between the pilot and air traffic control captured the moment:

Pilot: “We have a passenger, a pregnant passenger, who’s going into labor at this time. Requesting direct detail.”

Controller: “Caribbean 5, roger that. And Caribbean 5, would you like the medical personnel at your gate?”

Pilot: “Yes sir, thank you.”

Ground control: “Caribbean 5, ground?”

Pilot: “Yes sir, go ahead.”

Ground control: “Is it out yet?”



Pilot: “Yes sir.”
 Ground control: “All right, tell her she’s got to name it Kennedy.”
 Pilot (laughing): “Ah, Kennedy, will do.”
 Both the mother and baby safely landed in New York and were treated by a medical team upon arrival. The airline again commended the professionalism and support provided by the crew.

There was no word on whether the mother decided to name the baby Kennedy.
 According to a March 2020 study by the National Library of Medicine, between 1929 and 2018, 74 infants were born on 73 commercial flights, with 71 surviving delivery.
 Caribbean Airlines’ policy allows pregnant passengers to travel without

medical clearance up to the end of their 32nd week of pregnancy but does not accept passengers after the 35th week.
 Meanwhile, reactions online ranged from congratulatory to humorous. One commenter, Winston George, wrote: “Amen. That child’s nationality is ‘International’ having born in the air or it depends parents nationality or which country owns the airspace.”



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Mottley calls for Barbados to chart its own cricket destiny

In a candid statement that has stirred conversations across the Caribbean cricket community, Prime Minister Mia Mottley emphasized that Barbados will no longer depend solely on Cricket West Indies (CWI) to secure cricketing opportunities for the island.

Her remarks come on the heels of CWI's controversial decision to exclude the iconic Kensington Oval from hosting any regional or international fixtures in 2026.

Kensington Oval, affectionately known as "The Mecca" of West Indies cricket, will see none of the marquee matches scheduled for the upcoming home series against Sri Lanka, New Zealand, and Pakistan.

A total of four Tests, six One Day Internationals, and six T20 Internationals, slated between June and August, will instead be staged across Jamaica, Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana.

The move has ignited criticism in Barbados. Both Calvin Hope, president of the Barbados Cricket Association (BCA), and the chairman of Kensington Oval Management Inc (KOMI) voiced their disapproval of CWI's decision.

Mottley framed the exclusion as an opportunity for Barbados to broaden its cricketing reach beyond traditional governance.

"It was clear to us that we could not only rely on Cricket West Indies for cricket in this country," Mottley said, "and that is why we made a deliberate



The West Indies women huddle before their match against Australia

decision to go after the CPL finals here and to be also able to see what else we can do to boost the opportunities for Bajans in the entire game of cricket, not just as players, but as umpires and as persons who are involved in the ecosystem period."

By securing the Caribbean Pre-

mier League (CPL) finals at Kensington Oval, Barbados aims to create a platform not just for players but for the full spectrum of cricketing professionals. Mottley's comments underscore a strategic push for cricket development across the island. She envisions a more inclusive ecosystem, providing oppor-

tunities for officials, support staff, and administrators, rather than relying solely on matches sanctioned by CWI.

Her position signals a shift toward greater autonomy in Barbados' cricketing future, one that balances tradition with proactive initiatives to sustain and grow the game locally.

Gibson to power next era of fast-bowling dominance

Cricket West Indies has made a decisive move to reinforce one of its most storied strengths, appointing Otis Gibson as Fast-Bowling Consultant on a one-year assignment.

The decision comes at a pivotal stage, with the regional side preparing for an intense stretch of international competition. It signals a deliberate effort to safeguard performance standards within a unit long regarded as the backbone of West Indies cricket.

Gibson's appointment is not a new chapter, but rather a continuation of an enduring relationship with West Indies cricket.

Having previously served as Head Coach and, more recently, as a specialist consultant during the team's series against Nepal in 2025, he brings both historical insight and current familiarity with the squad.

His immediate focus will be the upcoming home series against Sri Lanka, set to begin in June, a campaign that marks the starting point of his latest tenure.

"I'm looking forward to working with the various coaches and the very talented group of bowlers in the

Caribbean, to assist in their development across all formats of the game," Gibson said following confirmation of his role.

For Director of Cricket Miles Bascombe, the appointment is rooted in both tradition and forward planning.

He underscored the enduring value of fast bowling within the region's cricketing identity, while emphasizing the need for structured support as workloads increase.

"Fast bowling has always been central to West Indies cricket and remains one of our greatest competitive advantages on the global stage."

"As we prepare for an extended and demanding period of international cricket, it is critical that we invest in the strength, depth, and durability of this group."

Bascombe pointed to Gibson's track record as a key factor in the decision, noting his ability to guide bowlers toward sustained elite performance.

"Otis brings a wealth of experience, insight, and proven success at the highest level of the game, and his presence will be invaluable in guiding and supporting our fast bowlers to perform consistently at an elite level."



Otis Gibson



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Breakout League in jeopardy as CWI awaits crucial sponsorship lifeline

The future of the Breakout T20 League now hangs in a delicate balance, with Cricket West Indies (CWI) conceding that the tournament's return this year depends entirely on securing external financial backing.

CWI President Kishore Shallow acknowledged that while the inaugural staging proved its value, the organization simply does not have the financial capacity to independently fund a 2026 edition.

The league, introduced as a platform to identify and elevate emerging regional talent, specifically players under 30 with limited professional exposure, had generated optimism after its debut.

Yet earlier this year, CWI announced a pause, citing an overcrowded cricket calendar and the need to prioritize preparations for major global tournaments, including the ICC Under-19 and senior men's T20 World Cups.

Now, the conversation has shifted from postponement to potential cancellation.

"Earlier in the year we were forced to reschedule it... and we thought of cancelling it altogether for this year, but we decided to explore that decision and explore the option of having it," Shallow revealed.

At the heart of the uncertainty lies a pressing need for partnership. CWI is actively seeking corporate sponsors willing to share the financial burden of staging the tournament.

"Of course, we are open to exploring partnerships. If we find someone in the corporate space, whether in the region or internationally, who would be willing to meet us halfway to host that



The West Indies team — future of Breakout League unknown

tournament, because we understand how critical it is to host the Breakout League to expose our young talent," Shallow said.

His remarks underscore the league's strategic importance, not merely as a competition, but as a developmental bridge for the region's next generation of cricketers.

With uncertainty looming, CWI is weighing alternative approaches to preserve the initiative, even if it cannot be staged annually.

"So we're still exploring those op-

portunities. Hopefully we find a partner, but in the absence of that it will be difficult to have it this year. What we have also explored and discussed is that it may be a case of tactically hosting the Breakout League every other year or so."

The governing body is also engaging regional governments and key stakeholders in an effort to unlock support.

"But we are really exploring the possibility, talking to key partners like governments to see how possible it is to host this Breakout League later this year,

but if not, then next year," Shallow added.

What began as a promising pathway for untapped talent now faces a defining test. Without timely investment, the Breakout League risks stalling just as it begins to establish its identity within Caribbean cricket.

For CWI, the coming months will determine whether the competition evolves into a sustainable fixture, or becomes an idea paused by financial reality.

Discipline issues plague Guyana's Harpy Eagles

After days of speculation and mounting public debate, Guyana Cricket Board (GCB) has offered a detailed explanation for several high-profile omissions from the 2026 Guyana Harpy Eagles squad, placing discipline, not ability, at the center of its decision-making.

At a press conference held at the Georgetown Cricket Club, chief selector Ramnaresh Sarwan addressed concerns surrounding the exclusion of key players, most notably Kevin Sinclair, whose absence had sparked intense discussion across social media.

Sarwan made it clear that Sinclair's omission was not tied to performance.

"I think it is very important for him to understand what we are trying to do for our group. I don't think it is viable for him to be disobedient to the captain, disrespectful to the coach and abuse his teammates verbally. Those are the things Kevin has to change... we have spoken to him about these things. Kevin is fully aware of these things and people around Kevin knows about this."

The former West Indies captain emphasized that the decision was the result of a pattern of behavior rather than a single incident, noting that concerns date back to 2024.



Ramnaresh Sarwan

According to Sarwan, the tipping point came during a recent practice match at Everest.

"Since 2024, we have had disciplinary issues with Kevin. His most recent actions at Everest in the second practice match was the reason he was not selected. He walked off the field and was disobedient towards the captain."

Guyana Harpy Eagles captain Tevin Imlach offered further context, revealing that Sinclair's departure from the field raised immediate concerns.

"We had to get about three wickets when he went off and changed into his casual clothes and went into the stand. It looked as if he did not plan to come back on the field."

GCB Cricket Operations Officer Anthony D'Andrade outlined a timeline of disciplinary issues, painting a broader picture behind the selector's decision.

"The first official incident occurred in 2024 in the Super50 in Trinidad. The GCB received a report from the head coach on Kevin's disruptive behaviour on and off the field."

He detailed missed meetings, failure to return with the squad, and continued concerns during training camps and subsequent engagements.

Despite these issues, D'Andrade stressed that the board had made efforts to support Sinclair's development.

"Kevin was selected for the breakout league in January. So this was not a case of him being victimised... Following that meeting, the GCB was comfortable with the progress Kevin had made. He admitted to all of his misdemeanours."

However, further reports in February and during recent practice sessions suggested the problems persisted.



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MAY 17
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MAY 20
TOUCHDOWN

MAY 20
PARATROOPING, HORSE/CANINE DISPLAY, BAND DISPLAY

MAY 21
EL DORADO STINGINGNETTLES

MAY 22
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MAY 23
MAGNUM BADERATION

MAY 24
SOCA & WINE

MAY 24
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MAY 25
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MAY 25
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MAY 25
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MAY 25
NIGHT ON LAKE CAPOEY

MAY 26
GUYANA CARNIVAL INDEPENDENCE ROAD PARADE

MAY 27
PAN & SOCA

MAY 28
STREET FOOD ON THE TERRACE - AC MARRIOTT

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