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Mottley's BLP delivers clean sweep in Barbados

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley robustly defended her new 23-member Cabinet, insisting its size is a deliberate design to boost government delivery, accountability, and performance, days after her Barbados Labour Party swept the February 11 polls on the island.

Speaking at Monday's swearing-in ceremony at CARIFESTA House, Waterford, where ministers and senators took their oaths of office before President Jeffrey Bostic, a former cabinet minister, Mottley dismissed concerns over the line-up's scale.

In total, there are 26 appointments, including three ministers of state (*photo of new Cabinet above*).

"The Cabinet that is being sworn in today is not just a list of names," she said. "It is a structure that has been deliberately balanced, carefully chosen and repurposed to face the current realities of our moment today with strategic focus."

Anticipating public debate, Mottley said the configuration was intentional, directly tied to execution and accountability.

She said the Cabinet's structure was shaped by the need to push beyond stabilisation towards competitiveness.

"If you ask me why economic affairs must have a dedicated focus and structure to improve our national

competitiveness, it is because stabilising the economy was not our destination," she said. "Yes, we have stabilised and we're proud of it and we're proud of the fact that we have 18 straight quarters of growth, but the work, my friends, continues."

Mottley's BLP won all 30 seats for the third time, unseating opposition leader Ralph Thorne, who ran for the BLP in the last campaign, in an election that pitted her more global-facing approach against the opposition's focus on Barbadians' domestic needs.

"Our mission first and foremost is to stop poor people from being poor and to remove injustice wherever it exists to create opportunities for people," Mottley, 60, said in a victory speech. She is the second leader to serve more than two consecutive terms.

Surrounded by supporters dressed in red, she pledged to strengthen efforts on issues such as infrastructure, healthcare and road safety.

"We did not come simply to hold office. We have come to make Barbados better and to make your lives better," she said. Friday will be a public holiday in Barbados, she added.

Mottley has been a leading voice on reforming debt for climate-vulnerable nations, including through debt-for-climate swaps.



Ali highlights Guyana's ambition to leverage oil, gas resources at Energy Conference. Story on Page 35

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Students upset over OSAP changes

By Milan Maharaj

LJI REPORTER

The Ontario government announced a new funding plan totaling \$6.4 billion to support the province's publicly assisted postsecondary institutions, the government said in a release on February 12. The funding is intended to be paid out over four years under a revised long-term funding model.

According to the government, the plan will raise annual operating funding for universities, colleges, and Indigenous institutes to around \$7 billion, which is an increase of approx-

imately 30 percent over current levels. The announcement said the overall funding allocation includes new operating grants tied to a long term formula covering sector priorities.

Under the revised funding model, the Ontario government said it will finance 70,000 additional seats in programs that align with current labour market demand in Ontario such as nursing, skilled trades and science, technology-related fields, and engineering programs.

The announcement outlines changes to the financial support structure of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Ontario students will



Ontario Education Minister
Paul Calandra

be eligible to receive a maximum of 25 percent of their OSAP funding as grants and a minimum of 75 percent as loans, the government stated. The release said this change is intended to align Ontario's loan system with similar models in other provinces. This change is receiving extensive backlash from students and their families, with many students stating that low-income and marginalized persons are the ones who will be affected by this the most,

with others saying Ontario is not comparable to other provinces due to its population and number of postsecondary institutions in comparison to other provinces.

Along with the investments and changes to OSAP, Ontario is ending the tuition freeze after seven years. Starting in September, postsecondary institutions will be allowed to increase their tuition rates by 2 percent per year for three years, by which they can switch to a model based on inflation, or stick to the 2 percent annual hike.

The funding plan by Ontario also includes targeted allocations for specific needs within the sector. According to provincial documentation, the province intends to direct a portion of the funds toward addressing the unique requirements of small, rural, northern, and French-language institutions.

The government release said the funding model is meant to provide "predictable" long-term support for postsecondary institutions, although it did not provide details on how it will measure outcomes tied to the new funding formula.

The changes to provincial postsecondary funding are expected to take effect in the fall 2026 academic year, with individual institutions adjusting budgets and planning under the new framework.



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Guyanese DIASPORA DIGEST

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PRESIDENT ALI CONFERRED BRAZIL'S HIGHEST RORAIMA HONOUR FOR CROSS-BORDER LEADERSHIP

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- RECORD SPENDING PLAN TARGETS BETTER LIVES FOR ALL GUYANESE



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FROM BAYROC TO CAMPBELLVILLE, NEW FACILITIES BRING SPORT AND OPPORTUNITY CLOSER TO HOME

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MOUS SIGNED AS GUYANA, BELIZE EXPAND PARTNERSHIP IN SECURITY, EDUCATION AND TOURISM



The signing of the MoU between Guyana and Belize



The signing of the MoU between Guyana and Belize

Guyana and Belize security, education, have strengthened tourism, digital bilateral ties with transformation and the signing of several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) aimed at expanding cooperation in key sectors, including

education, digital transformation and investment. The agreements were concluded during President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali's recent three-day State Visit to

Belize, reflecting both countries' commitment to regional solidarity, peaceful collaboration and sustainable development.

The MoUs establish frameworks for defence and security cooperation focused on capacity-building, training, information-sharing and dialogue to address challenges such as transnational crime, drug trafficking, terrorism and other emerging threats.

Officials noted that the cooperation is defensive in nature and intended to support peace and stability across the wider Caribbean.

In education, the two governments committed to expanding scholarships, academic exchanges and skills development initiatives, including greater access to digital learning platforms.

Tourism cooperation will promote joint initiatives, sustainable development and multi-destination travel

opportunities, while a separate agreement on digital transformation and artificial intelligence aims to improve government efficiency and implementation capacity.

In a significant economic step, Belize and Guyana issued a Joint Statement of Intent to begin negotiations toward a Bilateral Investment Treaty, signaling readiness to deepen trade and investment relations.

Belize also confirmed its intention to join the Global Biodiversity Alliance, launched by President Ali in July 2025, which seeks to raise awareness of the biodiversity crisis and expand financial opportunities linked to climate resilience.

As part of the visit, President Ali engaged with Belize's productive sector, touring major agricultural operations including Quality Poultry and Santander Sugar, which is partnering with



The visit to Quality Poultry Products in Belize



The visit to Santander Sugar, one of the biggest sugar companies in the Cayo District of Belize

Guyanese investors to Briceño.

Both governments expressed optimism that the agreements will further strengthen relations and advance shared Caribbean priorities in the spirit of friendship, solidarity and regional integration.

PRESIDENT ALI URGES CARICOM COLLABORATION TO SECURE FOOD AND ENERGY FOR SMALL STATES



President Ali addressing the special sitting of the Parliament in Belize

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali used his address to a joint sitting of Belize's National Assembly to call for stronger regional collaboration on food security, trade, and climate action, emphasising that the Caribbean must work together to protect farmers, reduce dependence on imports, and build resilient food systems. The address was part of his three-day State Visit to Belize, where he met with government officials to advance political, economic, and environmental cooperation.

"Global hunger,

supply chain disruptions, and climate shocks continue to put small states like ours under pressure," President Ali told members of the House of Representatives and Senate. "We must champion the cause of removing barriers to trade, especially in food. For too long, our farmers and food systems have been taken for granted. Together, we can ensure that our food becomes the region's food."

Highlighting the shared strengths of Belize and Guyana, he noted the countries'

rich natural resources, including forests, freshwater reserves, and biodiversity. Both nations have preserved much of these assets, which perform critical roles such as carbon sequestration and climate regulation. "It must be our resolve to win this battle of monetisation now, so that successive generations inherit the same rich

value we have today," he said, citing Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy, which uses jurisdictional carbon credits to place economic value on forest conservation.

President Ali also

stressed the need to adopt modern agricultural technologies, climate-resilient farming practices, and value-added agro-processing. He welcomed CARICOM's target to reduce the region's food import bill by 25 percent by 2030, describing it as "ambitious, but achievable," and said Belize and Guyana are well-positioned to lead the effort.

Energy security was another focus, with President Ali warning that volatile global energy prices threaten economic growth and public finances. He urged diversification, renewable energy



President Ali addressing the special sitting of the Parliament in Belize

adoption, improved efficiency, and stronger regional collaboration to ensure stability.

The president called on the private sector to play a central role in deepening bilateral relations, encouraging investment in capital, technology, land, talent, and markets. "The private sector is integral to the expansion of this relationship. Together, we can transform challenges into opportunities and offer our peoples not only security and stability, but confidence in the future they are building," he said.

Reflecting on the shared history of resilience, President Ali highlighted how Belize and Guyana have endured colonialism, economic hardship, and external shocks, yet remained determined to secure prosperity. He concluded by reaffirming Guyana's commitment to strengthening ties with Belize and advancing CARICOM-led regional development.

"Guyana's growth will contribute to the development of Belize and the wider Caribbean," he said, calling for a united approach to safeguard resources, support farmers, and create a sustainable future for all.



President Ali addressing the special sitting of the Parliament in Belize

\$1.558T BUDGET 2026 PASSED- RECORD SPENDING PLAN TARGETS BETTER LIVES FOR ALL GUYANESE

After several days of intense debate inside the National Assembly, Guyana's 2026 National Budget, valued at a record \$1.558 trillion, has been approved, setting the stage for another year of major investments aimed at improving everyday life for citizens across the country.

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, successfully piloted the legislation through Parliament, marking the first budget under the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government's new term and the sixth presented by Dr. Singh since the party's return to office in August 2020.

When he presented the budget on January 26, Dr. Singh stressed that the plan is rooted in the PPP/C's 2025 Manifesto, the platform that secured the party

a decisive victory in last year's general and regional elections.

He said Budget

which outlined what the Government described as an "exciting future" for all Guyanese.

and communities. "Budget 2026 is entirely and fundamentally about

citizens' lives or create new opportunities for Guyanese nationals.

Like previous budgets since 2020, the 2026 plan introduces no new taxes, maintaining Government's commitment to easing burdens on families while supporting rising disposable income and expanding social protection.

The budget also continues strong investment in infrastructure and essential services, positioning economic growth to translate into broader national and household prosperity.

Among the largest allocations are \$196.1 billion for roads and bridges, aimed at strengthening connectivity across the country. Education will receive \$183.6 billion, while the health sector is set for a major boost with \$161.1 billion to advance modernization

and technology.

Housing development has been allocated \$159.1 billion, supporting the expansion of homeownership opportunities. Government's energy strategy will receive \$119.4 billion, including upgrades to the transmission and distribution network.

Agriculture and food security, central to Guyana's resilience strategy, will benefit from \$113.2 billion, while \$100.3 billion has been set aside to build a stronger and better-equipped public security sector.

As the debates closed, Dr. Singh pledged that Government will work tirelessly over the next five years to prove to every Guyanese, supporters and critics alike, that the PPP/C remains the strongest choice for the country's future.



Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, successfully piloted the legislation

2026 reflects the administration's vision for the country, shaped by President Dr. Irfaan Ali's inaugural address in September and his Presidential Address in December, both of

At the heart of the spending plan is the theme "Putting People First," a focus Dr. Singh said is meant to ensure that national development is felt directly in households

the Guyanese People," the minister told the Assembly, explaining that every programme, initiative and investment is designed to bring measurable improvements to

OIL AND GAS TRAINING COLLEGE OPENS IN PORT MOURANT AS REGION SIX GAINS NATIONAL HUB STATUS



The Guyana Technical Training College Inc. (GTTCI) in Port Mourant

The opening of the Guyana Technical Training College Inc. (GTTCI) in Port Mourant represents a major economic and industrial milestone, positioning Region Six at the forefront of national oil and gas workforce development.

President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali formally declared the institution open, describing the US\$120 million facility as one of the most strategic investments Guyana has made in the energy sector.

With this major development, Region Six has been designated

foundation for sustained long-term growth.

Built with world-class, state-of-the-art facilities, the GTTCI is expected to mould a highly skilled Guyanese workforce capable of securing high-income careers in technical and other advanced industries.

overseas, particularly to Canada, to access specialised oil and gas programmes.

"This is an investment in our workforce, an investment in the future of our people," President Ali said during his keynote address at the commissioning

will also be available to trainees from Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and other countries pursuing deep-sea drilling and offshore development.

He further explained that the investment is intended to transform the institution into one of the world's leading oil and gas training centres over the next century, anchoring Guyana's growing role in energy services and technical innovation.

The commissioning ceremony was attended

by dozens of young Guyanese currently undergoing technical and practical training, reflecting the college's immediate impact on skills development and employment creation.

Notably, even before its formal opening, the centre had already commenced training. Two cohorts of students have completed the institution's 18-month programme, earning globally recognised certification and successfully securing employment.



GTTCI is expected to mould a highly skilled Guyanese workforce

Thousands of Guyanese are set to benefit from hands-on

technical and practical training



Thousands of Guyanese are set to benefit from hands-on technical and practical training

FINANCE MINISTER PILOTS \$18.8B FINANCIAL PAPER TO KEEP NATIONAL PROJECTS ON TRACK

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, secured approval in the National Assembly for Financial Paper Number 2 of 2025, clearing \$18.8 billion in advances from the Contingencies Fund that supported developmental works and key initiatives across Guyana during the latter part of last year.

The approval signals Government's push to ensure that communities continue to see progress on the ground, even as national plans expand under the renewed mandate given to President Dr. Irfaan Ali and the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) at the September 1, 2025 elections.

President Ali has repeatedly emphasised that his administration's



Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh

vision for Guyana over the next five years is not just ambitious, but rooted in service to the people. However,

he has also stressed that "vision without action is only words," which is why Government has moved

The \$18.8 billion

paper reflects that rely on these payments. urgency.

A major portion, \$10.5 billion, was directed to the Ministry of Public Works to expand its programme of highway upgrades along the East Coast of Demerara, improve roads and drainage networks, strengthen hinterland connectivity, and advance sea and river defence works. Resources were also provided for improvements to stellings and government buildings.

Support for vulnerable citizens was also a priority. Under the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, \$5.4 billion was approved for Old Age Pensions and Public Assistance, ensuring continued support for thousands of senior citizens and families who

PARLIAMENT APPROVES FISCAL CHANGES AIMED AT REDUCING COST OF LIVING

With the close of Budget 2026 debates in the National Assembly, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, has successfully piloted the Fiscal Enactments (Amendment) Bill, paving the way for a wide range of tax relief measures designed to put more money back into the hands of citizens and reduce the cost of living.

The legislation gives effect to the fiscal measures announced in the \$1.558 trillion Budget 2026, amending

several key laws including the Income Tax Act, Corporation Tax Act, VAT Act, Property Tax Act and Customs Act. Once assented to by President Dr. Irfaan Ali, many of the changes will begin taking effect from January and February 2026.

The amendments are aimed at increasing disposable income, encouraging local production, stimulating investment and providing targeted relief for households and businesses.

Among the measures expected to

directly benefit working Guyanese is the increase in the monthly income tax threshold from \$130,000 to \$140,000. This change will remove approximately 5,000 people from the tax net while adding more than \$2 billion in disposable income to workers.

Another significant move is the removal of net property tax on individuals, a step projected to return over \$1.4 billion to citizens through increased take-home resources.

The Bill also includes

Corporate taxes on agriculture and agro-processing businesses will be removed, allowing farmers and producers to reinvest more into expanding output and productivity. VAT will also be removed from locally made furniture and jewellery, easing costs for consumers while strengthening local manufacturing and value-added forestry activities.

To support safer communities, Government will eliminate duty and VAT on security equipment such as cameras and

alarm systems. In addition, vehicle ownership is expected to become more affordable through the removal of VAT on new vehicles below 1500 cc and hybrid vehicles under 2000 cc, reflecting Guyana's low-carbon development goals. Taxes and duties will also be eliminated on all-terrain vehicles and on outboard engines up to 150 horsepower, easing transportation burdens for hinterland and riverain communities.

Support for families is also built into the fiscal package, with

corporate taxes removed for companies providing childcare and elderly services, alongside \$1.5 billion set aside for co-investment in care facilities.

Beyond households, the measures have received strong backing from private sector and labour groups. As President Ali has underscored, the driving philosophy behind Budget 2026 remains simple: people come first, always.

PRESIDENT ALI CONGRATULATES PRIME MINISTER MOTTELEY ON HISTORIC THIRD-TERM VICTORY

President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali extended congratulations to Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley of Barbados following her decisive win in the country's general elections. Mottley and the Barbados Labour Party secured a third successive mandate, winning all 30 seats in Parliament.

In a Facebook post,

President Ali praised the Prime Minister's leadership and the renewed trust placed in her by the Barbadian people. He said Guyana looks forward to deepening the strong fraternal ties between the two nations, noting their shared history and common aspirations across the Caribbean.



President Ali with Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley of Barbados

BUDGET 2026 'DELIVERS FOR ORDINARY GUYANESE' DESPITE OPPOSITION ATTACKS - PRESIDENT ALI

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali has continued to mount a sustained defence of the government's \$1.558 trillion Budget 2026, using a series of morning social media addresses to counter criticism from political opponents and to highlight what he described as measurable gains in employment, wages, diversification and household support since 2020.

Across three consecutive days of statements between February 3 and February 5, President Ali argued that Guyana's rapid economic expansion is not confined to oil and gas, nor driven simply by government spending, but reflects increased production across multiple sectors and a budget strategy aimed at delivering tangible benefits to ordinary citizens.

UNEMPLOYMENT CUT BY MORE THAN HALF SINCE 2020

In his February 3 address, the President pointed to the latest Labour Force Bulletin from the Bureau of Statistics, reporting that Guyana's unemployment rate declined from 12.8 per cent in 2020 to 6.8 per cent by the fourth quarter of 2024.

"That reduction by itself is a fact that must be analysed," President Ali said, adding that even within the remaining unemployment figure are individuals who may be selective about the work they accept.

"But the undeniable fact is that unemployment has reduced by more than half between 2020 and 2024," he told viewers.

He also highlighted improved labour market outcomes for women, noting that female unemployment fell from 14.4 per cent to below nine per cent over the same period.

The President rejected claims that job creation is concentrated only in urban areas, stating that employment gains are now more evenly distributed across the country.

"When you

examine the analytics, you see that employment opportunities are evenly distributed between rural and urban areas," he said, describing this as evidence of "equity and balanced development."

Between the first quarter of 2020 and the fourth quarter of 2024,

have not been accompanied by runaway inflation, and we continue to maintain one of the lowest inflation rates, because of sound policies and clear priorities," he said.

President Ali also referenced labour assessments suggesting Guyana is now facing

are producing more, not because the government is spending more."

He accused critics of advancing politically motivated narratives without an understanding of economic fundamentals.

"Now the parrots will continue. The parrots have their political agenda,

significant share of total expansion.

"The view expressed... that government spending is responsible for economic growth and not the strong performance of the non-oil sector is therefore not only false, but frankly, comical," President Ali said.

Because We Care grant that was taken away from your children," he said.

The President also pointed to job recovery in the bauxite sector, particularly in Region Ten.

"We lost more than almost 800 jobs under the APNU and AFC government. We brought back almost 1,000 new jobs in bauxite," he said.

President Ali dismissed opposition claims that the budget offers little for working families.

"To say that the budget has nothing for the ordinary Guyanese is to ignore the measures that are clearly outlined in the budget speech," he said, suggesting critics were either uninformed or "deliberately misleading our nation."

He outlined housing support measures, including an increase in the low-income mortgage ceiling and a \$7.5 billion housing and home improvement subsidy for vulnerable households.

Transfers to children were also emphasised, including a new annual transportation allowance.

"When you add that to the Because We Care grant, it's close to \$18 billion of transfer to our children," he said.

Support for pensioners featured prominently, with President Ali noting that old-age pensions and transportation grants will total more than \$54 billion in direct transfers.

"These are measures that will cost hundreds of billions of dollars," President Ali said. "Who benefits? It is the Guyanese people."

He concluded by warning against efforts he believes are intended to undermine national confidence and development.

"Together, we are stronger," he said. "Your government is pleased to once again deliver a budget that will meet the aspirations and build on greater prosperity for every Guyanese."



PRESIDENT DR MOHAMED IRFAAN ALI

President Ali said more than 104,000 new jobs were created, with total employment rising from approximately 264,000 to nearly 370,000 people.

WAGES RISING ACROSS MULTIPLE SECTORS

Beyond employment growth, the President said average earnings have increased significantly throughout the economy, not only in petroleum-linked industries.

He cited increases in wages ranging from 50 per cent to more than 100 per cent between 2020 and 2024 across most sectors, including agriculture, construction, trade, communications, and professional services.

"These trends follow the diversification of the economy and the changing structure of our employment over the last four years," President Ali said.

He added that wage growth has not been matched by runaway inflation.

"Rising wages

worker shortages rather than widespread unemployment.

"These studies don't speak about unemployment; they speak about labour shortages," he said, pointing to projections that the country will require tens of thousands of additional workers to meet its development trajectory.

"This is not a story about oil and gas," he emphasised. "It is a story about a country on the rise, with a diversified economy that is creating jobs, building wealth, enhancing prosperity and delivering for the Guyanese people."

REJECTS CLAIMS GROWTH IS DRIVEN BY GOVERNMENT SPENDING

In a separate address on February 4, President Ali pushed back sharply against arguments that Guyana's non-oil growth is largely the product of state expenditure.

"GDP measures production, not payment," he said. "If non-oil GDP is growing, it is because businesses

but it is important for us as a people to understand the reality," he said.

The President argued that government spending does not automatically count toward economic output unless it generates real activity through employment, services or production.

"Government spending is not a production sector. It does not appear in GDP unless a contractor builds, a supplier produces, a worker is employed, or a service is delivered," he stated.

He pointed to major infrastructure projects, including the new Demerara River Bridge and expanded hinterland road networks, as long-term investments intended to reshape economic efficiency.

"Saving time is saving money," he said, arguing that improved connectivity supports both growth and job creation.

Official figures cited by the President show non-oil economic growth expanding from 4.6 per cent in 2021 to 14.3 per cent in 2025, with those sectors accounting for a

BUDGET 2026 DELIVERS DIRECT BENEFITS TO HOUSEHOLDS

On February 5, President Ali again defended Budget 2026 as a people-centred plan delivering broad-based support, while accusing the APNU-AFC opposition of misrepresenting its measures.

"Let's look at every single Guyanese and how successive People's Progressive Party Civic budgets would have benefited you," he said.

He noted that the government removed more than 200 taxes introduced under the APNU administration.

"It is a PPP Civic budget that removed more than 200 taxes from your lives that were imposed by the APNU and AFC government," he said.

Among the measures highlighted were the removal of VAT on electricity and water, reduced water rates, and the restoration of the Because We Care cash grant for schoolchildren.

"It was the PPP who returned

BUDGET 2026 DEBATES: MINISTERS AND MPS DEFEND "PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST" PLAN - Cont'd on pages 7,8 & 9

Government ministers and Members of Parliament wrapped up five days of debate on Budget 2026, a \$1.558 trillion plan themed "Putting People First," presenting it as a people-centred roadmap designed to deliver tangible benefits across Guyana.

Across the sittings, government speakers emphasised that the budget is grounded in inclusion, long-term development, and direct support for households through investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, housing, social services, and regional development.

DAY 1 - SOCIAL PROGRAMMES AND INFRASTRUCTURE TAKE CENTRE STAGE

The first day opened with detailed outlines of social support measures and transformative infrastructure projects targeting women, children, seniors, and Indigenous communities.



Minister of Public Works Bishop Juan Edghill set the tone, describing the theme as more than symbolic: "This is a social contract of inclusion." He outlined his ministry's \$227 billion allocation, including \$212 billion for capital works, highlighting projects such as the Bharrat Jagdeo River Bridge, the Heroes Highway, and the Ogle-to-Eccles interlink.

"Ask the people of Region Three who travel to Georgetown how the new Bharrat Jagdeo River Bridge has transformed their lives... investment

in infrastructure is making a difference in their lives," he said.

Minister Edghill also detailed support for hinterland and riverine communities, including new ferries for Regions One and Two and subsidies for river and harbour services. Cost-of-living relief measures include a \$500 per gallon fuel subsidy, electricity subsidies covering 30 per cent of household bills, and expanded free laboratory tests and medication for senior citizens.

"While \$71 billion is expected from personal income tax, about \$60 billion will be returned to citizens through cash grants, subsidies, and social support," he said.



Minister of Human Services and Social Security Dr. Vindhya Persaud said her ministry's \$78.3 billion allocation will deliver \$70 billion directly to vulnerable groups.

"Pensions for senior citizens will reach \$46,000 per month, supplemented with transportation, electricity, and healthcare support," she said, highlighting home-based care programmes and new vaccines.

Minister Persaud also pointed to women's empowerment initiatives, noting that more than 21,000 women have benefited from the Women Innovation Investment Network (WIIN).

"\$330 million has been allocated for training, with \$70 million directly for women's empowerment," she said, adding that Guyana has climbed four places on the Global Gender Gap Index.



Minister of Education Parag Sonia

outlined major investments in education expansion, noting universal primary education and expected universal secondary access in 2026. Since 2020, the government has constructed dozens of schools nationwide, including new hinterland secondary schools creating 6,760 student spaces.

"This government does not take away; we add value to people's lives," she said, defending GOAL scholarships and calling opposition criticism a "clear double standard."



Minister within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport Steven Jacobs defended the \$6 billion sports allocation, noting the reduction reflects the completion of major infrastructure projects.

"That is how we expand sport tourism... that is how we give opportunities to our athletes," he said.



MP Mischka White-Grieffith

highlighted the \$183.6 billion allocation for education, supporting infrastructure, teacher training, digital learning, and access to education nationwide. She stressed the sustainability of government programmes, saying, "We are investing in sustainable development. We're not investing in glossy promises, nor short-term fancy glare."

upgraded airstrips in hinterland regions that improve access to healthcare, education, and emergency services.



Parliamentary Secretary and MP Bhagmattie Veerasammy

said the budget continues to place billions directly into household budgets, while ensuring children are healthy, educated, and prepared for the future.



training for 160 specialist doctors and over 5,000 healthcare support staff, strengthening services at facilities including the newly commissioned Diamond Hospital.

Quoting President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, she said: "Guyana is being built as a country that rises not for a few but for all, where the future is not feared, but confidently claimed."

DAY 2 - AGRICULTURE, AMERINDIAN DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPARENCY IN OIL REVENUES



Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha

on the second day, celebrated growth in rice, shrimp, and fisheries. Calling the budget "a strategic, people-centred" plan, he announced \$2.3 billion for fisheries and a US\$100 million capitalisation of the Guyana Development Bank to provide zero-collateral loans to farmers.

"We value people... and we will continue to support them," he said, defending sugar workers and outlining GuySuCo's renewed production gains.

"This is a contract... your food will be affordable... your children will have a career in the most noble of all industries," he added.



MP Dr. Jennifer Westford

noted that the budget fulfils electoral promises and addresses citizens' needs, highlighting expanded opportunities for women in agriculture and public works. She noted that more than 35 registered female contractors benefit from state projects. On healthcare, Dr Westford emphasised the completion of

underscored the government's commitment to Indigenous communities, sustainable housing, and preserving culture. She noted improvements in water, healthcare, education, roads, and economic opportunities, with 15 villages demarcated and 17 certificates of title issued, securing land for over 16,000 Amerindians.

"Honourable Member Dawn Hastings... land tenure was dormant for five years. When her colleague Mr. Keith Scott said Amerindians were avaricious... where was her voice then?" she asked.



Minister of Tourism, Industry, and Commerce Susan Rodrigues

highlighted housing delivery, tourism infrastructure, and economic diversification. She noted that 53,000 house lots have been delivered since 2020, 46 per cent to single women, contrasting this with the former administration's record of 7,000 lots.

Minister Rodrigues also detailed tourism initiatives, including duty relief on ATVs and outboard engines, infrastructure investments, and support for eco-lodges and small businesses.

"These are real organisations representing real people... that also commended the government for its responsiveness to feedback and recommendations," she said.



BUDGET 2026 DEBATES: MINISTERS AND MPS DEFEND "PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST" PLAN - Cont'd on pages 8 & 9

Minister within the Ministry of Local Government Pauline Sukhai announced \$2 billion for the reconstruction of Stabroek and Bourda markets. She stressed the importance of political will and love for the people in delivering development that truly improves lives.



Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat defended the government's transparent management of oil revenues, noting that US\$22 million in signing bonuses from petroleum agreements were deposited immediately into the Natural Resource Fund.

He said production is monitored through FPSO vessels with full-time state oversight and underscored local content engagement, with over 1,200 Guyanese businesses supplying the petroleum sector.

"This is what putting people first looks like. Every cent is declared, accounted for and placed where it belongs," Minister Bharrat said.



Minister within the Ministry of Public Works Madanlall Ramraj defended the budget's infrastructure investment, citing over 12,000 projects executed in 2025, including roads, bridges, and airstrips across hinterland and coastal regions.

Projects in Region Two totalled \$11.7 billion; Region Three \$49 billion; Region Four

\$65.3 billion; Region Five \$11 billion; Region Six \$72.1 billion; and Region Ten \$16.6 billion.

"Every dollar spent on infrastructure increases tenfold the economic dollar value... this is progress felt in everyday life, shorter travel times, stronger connectivity, new business opportunities, and improved livelihoods," Minister Ramraj said.



MP Zamal Hussain highlighted land allocation and irrigation projects in Berbice, with 20,000 acres surveyed and made available to cattle farmers, while modernisation projects including a new stadium, a Centre of Equity, Opportunity and Innovation for Persons with Disabilities, and upgraded roads and drainage demonstrate tangible development in the region.



MP Alister Charlie reinforced Budget 2026's inclusivity, citing continued investments in Amerindian and hinterland communities, social grants, scholarships, land titling, and education infrastructure.

DAY 3-DIGITAL GOVERNMENT, HEALTHCARE EXPANSION AND HOUSING DIGNITY

Day three featured digital transformation, workforce development, healthcare, and housing expansion.



Minister of Public Service Zulfikar Ally, outlined digital initiatives such as the Citizen Connect App, Ask Gov AI chatbot, and My Guyana Citizen Portal, integrating with the national e-ID system for faster, more accessible government services.

He also stressed improvements in public servant wages, employment, and skills training, noting a 46 per cent increase in minimum wages and a reduction in unemployment, including female unemployment dropping from 14.4 per cent in 2020 to nine per cent in 2024.

"We will never back down from serving the people," he pledged. "We will defend the things that make their lives easier and bring dignity and respectability to every hard-working citizen of this nation," he added.



Minister of Labour and Manpower Planning, Keoma Griffith, highlighted the inclusive skills development initiatives under Budget 2026, highlighting the graduation of over 16,300 individuals from technical and vocational programs since 2020.

He emphasised programmes targeting women in traditionally male-dominated fields and persons with disabilities, stating, "We have undoubtedly enhanced the capacity, efficiency and resilience of our national workforce."



Minister of Foreign Affairs Hugh Todd defended Guyana's foreign policy, asserting that Guyana's global reputation has strengthened under the PPP/C Administration.

"We, as a party in Government, have represented this country for decades.

We have kept the flag flying high. We have done all the heavy lifting and we have convinced the people of Guyana, election cycle after election cycle, that we are capable of representing each and every individual citizen at home and abroad," he stated.

He noted that international cooperation has translated into tangible agreements and strategic alliances, while \$100 million has been allocated to safeguarding Guyana's borders.

Minister Todd emphasised that foreign policy is driven by substance and coordinated governance, contributing directly to national development and citizen welfare.



Minister of Health Dr. Frank Anthony detailed expanded healthcare initiatives targeting women, children, and families.

Programmes include free health screenings for 98,500 students, early autism testing, maternal homes, and the Newborn Cash Grant of \$100,000. Over 160,000 citizens have benefited from subsidies for spectacles, and expanded medical services across the country are strengthening preventive care and maternal-child

health.

"This budget unifies rather than divides," the minister stated. "This budget does not discriminate, does not exclude, and does not hesitate to put the people of Guyana first," he added, noting that the budget was grounded in "fairness, guided by compassion, and anchored in the simple but powerful belief that every single Guyanese matters."



Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister, Kwame McCoy, underscored

measures to ease the cost of living, noting \$307.2 billion in fiscal relief through foregone revenues and \$203 billion in tax reversals and subsidies. He linked large-scale infrastructure programmes, housing, and economic initiatives to tangible benefits for citizens, citing examples of young entrepreneurs who leveraged improved roads and infrastructure to expand businesses.



Minister of Housing and Water, Collin Croal, recounted the government's people-centred housing programme.

He emphasised the dignity that comes with ownership, stating, "Housing is deeply personal... all they want is a key, a title, a home, a future, and this is what this Government is

delivering."

Plans for Budget 2026 include 8,000 new homes and at least 7,000 land titles, highlighting continued investment in housing infrastructure nationwide.



Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water Vanessa Benn added that initiatives such as the Low Carbon Credit Development Strategy and Forest Carbon Credit Funds are benefitting communities directly, with equipment, stipends, and infrastructure investments supporting village development and self-determination.



MP Anand Persaud shared human-interest examples of government impact. He recounted the story of a 19-year-old civil engineering student who benefited from mixology training, scholarships, and GOAL initiatives, exemplifying the tangible opportunities created by Budget 2026.



MP Suresh Singh showcased transformative projects

BUDGET 2026 DEBATES: MINISTERS AND MPS DEFEND "PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST" PLAN - Cont'd on page 9

along the East Coast of Demerara, including the construction of an industrial estate at Enmore/Foulis, 30 kilometres of railway embankment expansion, and 442 community roads completed in 2025. He highlighted electricity upgrades with a planned 50 per cent reduction in bills, development of 50 recreational grounds, and job creation for small contractors, women, and youth. Singh stressed that these initiatives demonstrate inclusive, broad-based development that directly improves residents' daily lives and long-term economic resilience.

DAY 4 - CULTURE, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND HINTERLAND TRANSFORMATION

Day four of the Budget 2026 debates saw government ministers and MPs spotlighting the practical outcomes of the \$1.558 trillion plan, emphasising the human stories behind policies in infrastructure, education, health, and social support.



Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Charles Ramson Jr., turned attention to culture and sports, accusing the Opposition of "trivialising culture" and exposing "complete unreadiness" to govern. He recalled that the stand-alone Ministry of Culture had been dismantled by the APNU+AFC coalition but restored by the PPP/C government to drive nation-building and economic development.

Minister Ramson highlighted concrete achievements: the Guyana Prize for Literature, accreditation of the Institute of Creative Arts, the

"Write to Stage" theatre programme, and \$120 million in cultural and creative industry grants. He also noted continued support for African-Guyanese communities, with \$100 million allocated in Budget 2026.

On sports, he pointed to over 1,000 international and regional medals won by Guyanese athletes in the past five years, crediting the establishment of a national sports academy, enhanced training opportunities, five state-of-the-art stadiums, and investments in more than 600 community grounds. The ministry also hosted 62 international sporting events over two years, including cricket World Cup fixtures and CPL semi-finals and finals at no cost to the treasury, demonstrating broader economic and tourism benefits.



Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture, Vikash Ramkissoon, highlighted billions of dollars allocated to GuySuCo and workers, noting the historic importance of sugar in national development.

Ramkissoon also outlined measures to reduce costs and increase productivity for farmers, including fertiliser assistance, crop insurance, cash grants, and the promotion of nano-fertiliser technology.

He stressed that modern cultivation techniques, partnerships with research institutions, and distribution of plantlets are further enhancing agricultural productivity.

"We are continually working for the people, because development must translate into better lives for our citizens,"

he said.



Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Priya Manickchand, announced a major expansion of waste management systems across Guyana, including new landfill sites, garbage trucks, bins, shredders, and compactors, complemented by public education and youth-led initiatives.

She revealed that every neighbourhood democratic council and municipality will receive at least one garbage compactor truck for the first time. Beyond waste management, Minister Manickchand highlighted allocations exceeding \$2 billion to NDCs and \$500 million to municipalities for community-driven projects, alongside nearly \$5 billion for the construction and rehabilitation of markets.

She also underscored the Pathway Workers Programme and Community Enhancement Workers Programme, which have benefited thousands, many of them women.

"If we want to build Guyana, if we want to make people's lives better, we have to begin with political will... a love for people and the willingness to work hard," she said.



Minister of Public Utilities and Aviation,

Deodat Indar, rejected opposition claims that 58 per cent of Guyanese live in poverty, describing the figures as misleading and based on outdated data. He defended the use of the Natural Resource Fund, noting that \$495 billion, or roughly one-third of the budget, supports national spending priorities.



Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry, Thandi McAlister, outlined ongoing efforts

to modernise the maritime sector, including legislation, infrastructure, safety measures, and institutional capacity.

She reported a 67 per cent increase in vessel traffic and port calls between 2020 and 2025, and noted that Guyana will host two major Caribbean maritime conferences in 2026.

McAlister also highlighted the New Building Society's role in expanding homeownership and lowering mortgage burdens. "An exciting future beckons for all Guyanese for which Budget 2026 sets the tone," she noted.



MP Peter Ramsaroop stressed that Budget 2026 goes beyond short-term handouts to ensure long-term improvements in quality of life.

"Our people of this country deserve this budget," Ramsaroop

said, highlighting significant investments in health, education, and social services.

He praised initiatives such as new hospital constructions, noting, "Dr Anthony is building hospitals across this country, and that is what our people have asked for. Whether it's \$10,000 more in the threshold, whether it's money for the pensioners, it is not all about the giveaways."

Ramsaroop also highlighted infrastructure developments in communities such as Victory Valley in Region 10 and Kwakwani, where paved roads and improved connectivity have transformed daily life. He pointed to education and skills development initiatives, including free university education and technical training programmes in welding, heavy-duty equipment operation, hospitality, and oil and gas, as critical to empowering citizens to participate meaningfully in the economy.

He further cited Guyana's growing international engagement, including partnerships with Belize in the refined sugar industry, and reinforced the importance of the oil and gas sector in supporting the broader economy, noting that the upcoming 300-megawatt power plant will create opportunities for local producers. Ramsaroop concluded, "When there's confidence in our economy, our country gets better, people get better, that means we have delivered as a government for our people."



MP Sanjeev Datadin emphasised that Budget 2026 benefits all regions and demographics without introducing new taxes, and he urged support for the plan as a "people-first" initiative.

He stressed that the budget reflects the vision of President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and the PPP/C, guided by citizen consultations and manifesto commitments. "Putting people first means everyone, those who voted for the PPP/C, those who didn't... it means

the government's telemedicine programme, which has expanded from four to 130 sites, improving healthcare access, particularly in hinterland and riverine communities.

He reported major gains in dental care, blood storage, and health worker training, noting that free dental services alone have saved citizens over \$1 billion in out-of-pocket expenses.



MP James Bond recounted his upbringing in Maburuma, Region One, to illustrate the transformative impact of government investment in hinterland education, healthcare, and connectivity.

He highlighted six secondary schools built or under construction, enhanced maternity services, improved Wi-Fi connectivity, and scholarship programmes enabling youth access to higher education.

"Education is not a privilege... Education is a tool to take you out of poverty," Bond said.



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"Putting people first means everyone, those who voted for the PPP/C, those who didn't... it means

BUDGET 2026 DEBATES: MINISTERS AND MPS DEFEND "PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST" PLAN

everyone," Datadin said.

DAY 5 - SECURITY, LEGISLATION AND SUSTAINING DEVELOPMENT

The final day reinforced the government's message of inclusion, stability, and long-term growth.



Minister of Home Affairs Oneidge Walrond strongly condemning what she described as divisive and inflammatory rhetoric from opposition figures, particularly APNU MP David Hinds. She argued that attempts to weaponise ethnicity for political gain undermine national cohesion.

"This government is about true

empowerment. It is not dependent. It is access. It is inclusion. It provides an environment for the talents and ambitions of our people so that they can rise. That is how dignity is built," Minister Walrond said.

She highlighted gains in public security, including a 25.5 per cent reduction in crime over the last five years and a recidivism rate of 14 per cent, the lowest in the region.

She further emphasised continued investment in the Guyana Police Force and Guyana Prison Service, underscoring the role of intelligence-led policing, community partnerships, and modernised surveillance infrastructure.

The minister also reaffirmed the government's commitment to enforcing anti-money laundering regulations, cautioning that lapses could jeopardise investor confidence and the country's financial sector.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs Mohabir Anil Nandlall S.C. detailed



an ambitious legislative agenda tied to Budget 2026, which includes more than 40 bills and regulations spanning finance, business regulation, security, justice, healthcare, agriculture, energy, and social services.

Key highlights include the Fiscal Enactments Bill, Development Bank Fund Bill, Guyana Natural Gas Bill, Companies Bill, Evidence Bill, Telehealth Bill, Food Security Bill, and the establishment of a regional law school at the University of Guyana's Turkeyen Campus.

"This budget provides the first capital injection for the construction of a law school in 2026, which will serve Guyanese and Caribbean students, (and) provide affordable

legal education while generating economic activity," Minister Nandlall said.

He also updated the Assembly on Guyana's ongoing case before the International Court of Justice regarding the 1899 Arbitral Award, noting that hearings are scheduled to begin on May 4, 2026.



Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance Gail Teixeira countered opposition claims of widespread suffering, citing improvements in electricity, clean water access, and asset ownership across Guyana. She highlighted that between 2021 and 2025, vehicle ownership and productive assets rose sharply, mobile phone subscriptions increased

to over 1.12 million, and per capita income reached approximately US\$24,023.

"No one is saying that we have fixed all the problems," Minister Teixeira said, "but consistently and sustainably, we are moving this country forward."

She stressed that government programmes, including free education, scholarships, cash grants, and subsidised housing, continue to open doors for Guyanese to improve their lives.



Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, affirming that Budget 2026 is designed to benefit all citizens, regardless of political affiliation. He highlighted major investments in energy, digital connectivity, and disaster preparedness,

with particular emphasis on the landmark Gas-to-Energy project in Wales.

"We will have electricity from that project... reliable and low-cost electricity, enabling heavy manufacturing, anchoring the Wales Development Zone, and attracting local and foreign investors," PM Phillips said. He also noted renewable energy initiatives, expanded digital connectivity to 253 hinterland villages, and the construction of 172 ICT hubs nationwide.

On disaster preparedness, the Prime Minister reported that \$73 billion has been allocated to ensure emergencies do not disrupt development gains. "If you're talking about development, you have to plan for disasters," he said.

Across all five days, ministers and the Government MPs repeatedly framed Budget 2026 as a national programme of inclusion, resilience, and practical investment, one they argued is designed to ensure that development is not abstract, but felt in the daily lives of Guyanese in every region.

BUDGET 2026 DELIVERS FOR CITIZENS - FINANCE MINISTER



Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh wraps up the debates

In a fiery finale to five days of Budget 2026 debates, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, told the National Assembly that the government's plan is firmly rooted in improving the lives of all Guyanese. He used his closing presentation to defend the administration's record, highlight economic achievements, and call out opposition claims as misleading and divisive.

Minister Singh described Budget 2026 as a defining blueprint for the government's new term in office. "Budget 2026 was going to be an extremely important budget, because it was going to define the path that we will traverse over the course of the next five years and set out our government's agenda for this current term of office," he said.

He praised the government's parliamentary team, highlighting the depth, experience, and diversity of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). Minister Singh emphasised the strong performance of younger MPs over the week of debate, saying it reinforced his confidence in both the party and the country's future. "What we saw over the course of the past week was... why the People's

Progressive Party remains Guyana's only truly national, multi-ethnic party," he stated.

The minister did not hold back in his criticism of the opposition, describing them as fragmented, weak, and incapable of presenting a credible alternative government.

the people who want to present themselves as an alternative government, incapable of working together even on simple matters," he said.

On policy, Dr Singh defended the government's engagement with stakeholders, noting



He accused some members of engaging in "vile, personalised... vulgar, vicious, vitriolic behaviour" that lowered the standard of parliamentary discourse. "These are

that consultations with the private sector, community groups, and other organisations are continuous and far-reaching. He rejected claims that private sector bodies are politically

aligned, calling such remarks dismissive of institutions representing national interests.

The finance minister also addressed economic criticisms, pointing to robust macroeconomic indicators. At the end of 2025, Guyana's debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 28.6 per cent, while the debt-service-to-revenue ratio was 5.5 per cent, among the lowest in the Western Hemisphere.

"It is this People's Progressive Party/Civic government... that brought Guyana back from bankruptcy," Minister Singh told the House.

He further clarified that lower percentage growth rates in recent years are a natural result of expanding from a larger economic base. "It is not rocket science... It's basic arithmetic," he said, while noting growth across oil and non-oil sectors including construction, agriculture, mining, and

services.

Dr Singh defended the use of oil revenues from the Natural Resource Fund, emphasising compliance with the law, and highlighted gains in the mining sector, particularly in Linden, while criticising job losses under previous administrations.

Throughout the presentation, exchanges with opposition members punctuated the minister's presentation, but Singh remained steadfast in defending the government's record and vision. He concluded by reaffirming that Budget 2026 lays the foundation for sustained economic growth, improved public services, and broad-based national development.

"These are different times," he said. "The government remains focused on improving the lives of all Guyanese."

ON THE SIDELINES OF BUDGET 2026: MINISTERS PUSH BACK ON OPPOSITION CLAIMS



Member of Parliament Lennox Shuman speaking in an interview on Budget 2026

Several matters beyond the general Budget presentations dominated discussions in and around the National Assembly as deliberations on Budget 2026 were occurring, with ministers and government Members of Parliament using the opportunity to address public concerns, correct misinformation, and outline ongoing state interventions.

Ministers Detail Support Following Regent Street Explosion

Government ministers provided updates on the emergency and continuing response following the October 26, 2025 explosion at the Regent Street service station, after an Opposition MP raised questions in the Assembly.



Minister of Health Dr. Frank Anthony

Meanwhile, Minister of Health Dr Frank Anthony reported that seven patients arrived at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation within two hours of the incident. Three were treated and discharged, while four were admitted, including two children requiring surgery. He confirmed that a six-year-old girl arrived deceased.

Authorities have since described the explosion as a terror act, with investigations and support efforts continuing.

Minister Rodrigues Highlights Indigenous Training and Community-Based Development

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Susan Rodrigues, responding to Opposition MP Juretha Fernandes, informed the Assembly that

government support in Indigenous communities has shifted from traditional grants toward sustainable, community-driven initiatives.

"While grants have played an important role... community-based projects provide a more structured, sustainable and impactful model for development,"



Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Susan Rodrigues

Minister Rodrigues said. She reported that more than 200 individuals benefitted from technical training in hydroponics, shade house crop production, apiculture, hive management, and aquaculture across several hinterland communities.

In addition, 413 Indigenous residents received entrepreneurial and business development training in marketing, record-keeping, financial management, and business planning.



Speaker Nadir Rejects Claims of Reduced Media Access

National Assembly Manzoor Nadir dismissed reports that media access to Parliament has been restricted, stating instead that private media representation in the Chamber has expanded.

"We have actually expanded from five to seven members of the private media," the Speaker said, describing contrary claims as "totally inaccurate."

He explained that evolving reporting practices prompted Parliament to convert two camera operator slots into two additional reporter seats.

Speaker Nadir also addressed public gallery limitations, noting that seating capacity has been reduced due to the expanded composition of the Thirteenth Parliament.

"What we have left in the Dome is the top two rows," he explained, adding that Parliament had already received more than 52 written requests for access.

He further cautioned against cheering, jeering, and unauthorised livestreaming by visitors, stressing that revised protocols are also tied to heightened security concerns.

Minister Teixeira Clarifies Opposition Leader's Entitlements

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance Gail Teixeira moved to correct what she described as misinformation advanced by Opposition Leader Azruddin Mohamed regarding his benefits as a constitutional office holder.

"Mr Azruddin is not a former president and therefore is not entitled to the things that a former president would be entitled to," Minister Teixeira stated.

She explained that benefits under the Former Presidents (Benefits and Other Facilities) Act apply only to former heads of state, which is why Dr Bharat Jagdeo received those entitlements while Opposition Leader



Ministers and government Members of Parliament

between 2015 and 2020.

Minister Teixeira noted that Mohamed receives the salary and allowances accorded to ministers, including home security, but is not entitled to personal close protection, duty-free vehicles, or assigned security personnel.

"He has no entitlement to a vehicle assigned to him, no entitlement to close men. If he wishes to have that, he can hire them himself," she stressed.

She also disclosed that Mohamed is receiving his salary in cash, contradicting a campaign pledge not to take a salary.

Minister Browne-Shadeek Rejects Opposition Remarks on Amerindian Investments

Government MP Lennox Shuman also criticised Opposition commentary on Amerindian development programmes, calling it "interesting and very distasteful."

He rejected claims of wasteful spending, arguing that investments in roads, aviation, education, and basic services are essential for inclusive development.

"The mortuary is functioning as we speak, and only in December there was a post-mortem done there," she clarified.

She said she immediately contacted the Regional Health Officer to verify the assertions and cited evidence of running water at hospitals in Mabaruma and Port Kaituma.

"In Mabaruma, I have video evidence of the water flowing," she stated.

The minister highlighted improvements in hinterland healthcare

PRESIDENT ALI CONFERRED BRAZIL'S HIGHEST RORAIMA HONOUR FOR CROSS-BORDER LEADERSHIP



President Ali conferred with the State of Roraima's highest award—The Order of Merit Fort São Joaquim

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali was conferred the Order of Merit Fort São Joaquim, Roraima's highest accolade, for his pivotal role in building stronger economic and diplomatic links with the northern Brazilian state.

The award was presented by Governor Antonio Denarium on February 9 during a one-day official visit to Boa Vista, Roraima's capital. Only 20 individuals have received this prestigious recognition for their significant contributions to Brazil. President Ali was accompanied by Foreign Secretary Robert Persaud and several members of the business community.

In a video posted on his official social media page, President Ali highlighted the growing partnership between Guyana and Roraima. **"This relationship has been growing from strength to strength... we are now**

looking to remove all the bureaucracies, all the bottlenecks to create a seamless relationship, expand trade and continue the wonderful partnership," he said.

Over the past five

on regional integration, infrastructure, and energy cooperation. Roraima has emerged as Guyana's largest trading partner in the north, reflecting increased investment and cross-border collaboration.

During his visit, President Ali toured the Jaguatirica II Thermoelectric Power Plant in Boa Vista, a 141-megawatt natural gas facility supplying 70 to 80 per cent of the state's electricity. The tour provided insights into Brazil's use of natural gas for power generation, informing Guyana's own first Gas-to-Energy (GTE) plant in Wales. The GTE project, with over \$10



President Ali meeting with Antonio Denarium, Governor of the Brazilian State of Roraima, along with senators and private-sector representatives

annually for Guyanese.

President Ali also met with Governor Denarium, senators, and private sector representatives to discuss investment opportunities, boost private sector



President Ali conferred with the State of Roraima's highest award—The Order of Merit Fort São Joaquim

years, President Ali has led high-level bilateral discussions with Brazil, including Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's 2024 visit to Georgetown, which advanced talks

billion approved by Parliament, is on track for completion by year-end and is expected to halve electricity costs from \$0.22 to \$0.11 per kilowatt-hour, saving at least US\$100 million

engagement, and deepen cross-border collaboration. The discussions focused on expanding economic cooperation and fostering shared growth and sustainable development.



President Ali was given a guided tour of the Jaguatirica II Thermoelectric Power Plant



President Ali was given a guided tour of the Jaguatirica II Thermoelectric Power Plant

The award and visit underscore Guyana's economic growth, energy innovation, and commitment to regional integration and highlight President Ali's proactive leadership in driving

PANAMA TO OPEN EMBASSY IN GEORGETOWN



President Ali meeting with His Excellency José Raúl Mulino Quintero, President of Panama

Panama has announced plans to open an embassy in Georgetown, a move that underscores the deepening diplomatic and economic ties between the two countries. The announcement came during a high-level meeting between

President Dr Irfaan Ali of Guyana and His Excellency José Raúl Mulino Quintero, President of Panama.

The leaders discussed opportunities for collaboration across key sectors, including oil and gas, logistics, agriculture, climate action, and security. Panama also accepted Guyana's invitation to join the Global Biodiversity Alliance as a founding member, further strengthening cooperation on regional environmental and climate initiatives.

President Ali and President Mulino Quintero emphasised the importance of continued engagement to promote

prosperity, enhance private-sector partnerships, and expand connectivity and energy integration in the region.

The new embassy is expected to serve as a hub for diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagement, signaling Panama's commitment to stronger bilateral relations and multilateral support for Guyana. Observers say the development marks a significant milestone in the growing partnership between the two nations, with benefits expected for businesses, communities, and regional cooperation.



President Ali meeting with His Excellency José Raúl Mulino Quintero, President of Panama

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Mailaoda Mushroom Egg 麥老大香菇蛋面 Reg:\$4.99	W Fun Instant Rice Noodle 快食面 Reg:\$3.99	Ajinomoto Aji-Ngon Seasoning 900g 味精 Reg:\$8.99
2.99 ea	2.99 ea	5.99 ea
Sazon Goya Seasoning 180g 調料 Reg:\$9.99	Maria Biscuits Cookies 600g 餅乾 800g Reg:\$3.99	M.Y.San Sky Flakes Crackers 餅乾 800g Reg:\$9.99
6.99 ea	2.99 ea	7.99 ea
Jack'n Jill Piattos Cheese Flavored Potato Crisps 212g 芝士薯片 Reg:\$3.99	Monde Eggnog Cookies 蛋餅乾 130g Reg:\$1.99	Savoria Delizio Caffino 500g 咖啡 Reg:\$6.99
2.59 ea	9.99 ea	4.99 ea
China Green Tea 200g 中國綠茶 Reg:\$3.99	Foodiejoie Instant Honeyed Ginger Drink 324g 福字蜂蜜姜晶 Reg:\$3.99	Royal Original 2ply 6 Boxes 紙巾 Reg:\$8.99
2.59 ea	2.59 ea	4.99 ea

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22.00 case	24.00 case	33.00 case	37.00 case	45.00 case	52.00 case
Napa 紹菜 Reg:\$2.99	Green Bean 青豆仔 Reg:\$2.99	Celery 西芹 Reg:\$2.99	Avocados 36s 牛油果 Reg:\$3.99	Blue Jay California Citrus 藍鳥橙 Reg:\$3.99	
52.00 case	75.00 case	78.00 case	55.00 case	55.00 case	
Frozen Panga Basa Fillet Headless White Shrimp 魚柳 8x3.5Lb Reg:\$2.99	Frozen Banana Leaf 20bags 凍香蕉葉 Reg:\$2.99	Extra Large Egg 箱裝大鵝蛋 Reg:\$2.99	Pork Intestine 豬大腸 10kg Reg:\$2.99	Chicken Breast 鷄胸肉 25kg Reg:\$2.99	Gold Plum Dried Black Fungus Strips 5Lb 木耳絲 Reg:\$2.99
65.00 case	220.00 case	40.00 case	56.99 case	50.00 case	260.00 case
Mr. Goudas Long Grain Rice 黃米 20kg Reg:\$2.99	Long Grain White Rice 20kg 優質絲苗米 Reg:\$2.99	P.R.B Monosodium Glutamate 50Lb 珠江橋牌味精 Reg:\$2.99	ADM All Purpose Flour 20kg 麵粉 Reg:\$2.99	Capri Vegetable / Canola Oil 16L 菜油/芥菜籽油 Reg:\$3.99	Carnation Evaporated Milk 三花淡奶 48x354ml Reg:\$3.99
29.99 bag	29.99 bag	58.00 bag	19.99 bag	33.99 case	90.00 case
Redpath Sugar 20kg 白糖 Reg:\$2.99	EP-6 Hinged 250pc 餐盒 Reg:\$2.99	BBR 28 / BBR 38 150pc 一次性餐盒 Reg:\$2.99	NG-18 New Gen Eco-Friendly Packaging 一次性餐盒 Reg:\$2.99	E-Pack Wrap 914 保鮮膜 450mmx600m Reg:\$2.99	Convenience Rolls 包裝袋 10.5x15 13Lb Reg:\$2.99
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Mr. Goudas Long Grain Rice 黃米 20kg Reg:\$2.99	Long Grain White Rice 20kg 優質絲苗米 Reg:\$2.99	P.R.B Monosodium Glutamate 50Lb 珠江橋牌味精 Reg:\$2.99	ADM All Purpose Flour 20kg 麵粉 Reg:\$2.99	Capri Vegetable / Canola Oil 16L 菜油/芥菜籽油 Reg:\$3.99	Carnation Evaporated Milk 三花淡奶 48x354ml Reg:\$3.99
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FROM BAYROC TO CAMPBELLVILLE OPPORTUNITY

REGION 10 ATHLETES GAIN NEW TRACK AND FIELD HOME

For the young athletes standing on the fresh synthetic track at Bayroc Stadium, the opening was more than a ceremony, it was the promise of a future where their talent can be nurtured right at home.

Under the lights in Wismar, Linden residents gathered in celebration as President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali officially commissioned the new Bayroc Track and Field Stadium, describing it as an investment not only in sport, but in opportunity, unity, and economic growth for Region Ten.

"This represents opportunity... opportunity for moving forward," the President told the gathering, noting that modern sports infrastructure is intended to support youth development and inspire national pride.

He said the facility forms part of a wider national effort to invest in communities across Guyana, emphasising that sports development can play a powerful role in uniting and empowering citizens.

The Head of State reiterated plans to establish a National Sports Academy, which would nurture athletes from a young age and provide structured pathways for training and growth.

"We are not a government that orients itself around promises. We deliver," President Ali said. "We deliver every single day... for every Guyanese, every family, every region, every community."

Beyond athletics, the President highlighted the stadium's potential to generate economic benefits for Linden. He explained that sporting and entertainment events hosted at the facility could create opportunities for businesses, job creation, and expanded services in the region.

"The next part of the journey is to bring world-class events... to create opportunities for your local economy," he said, adding that surrounding activity could support restaurants, hotels, and entertainment ventures.

President Ali assured residents that the government remains committed to partnering with the people of Linden and Region Ten, promising continued investment in the area.

"I speak to you with an open heart... on the foundation of love," he said, stressing unity and national development as key priorities.

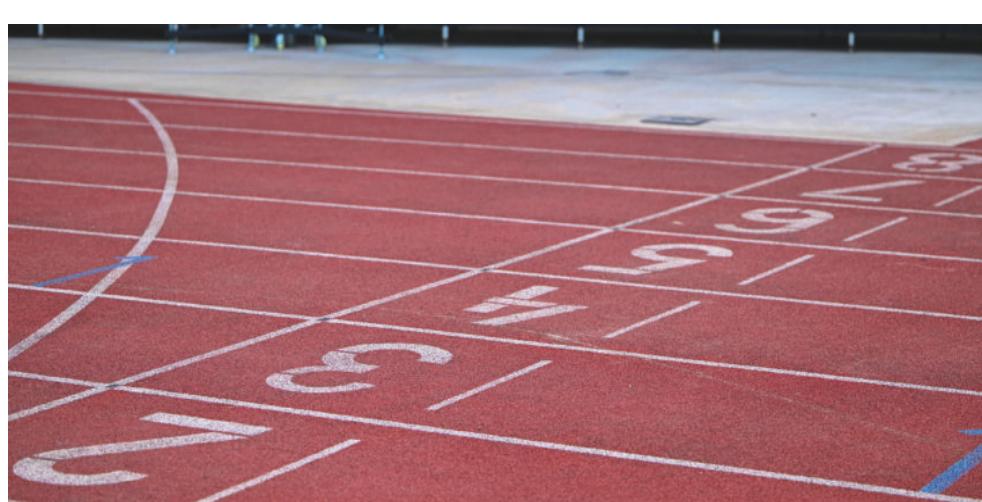
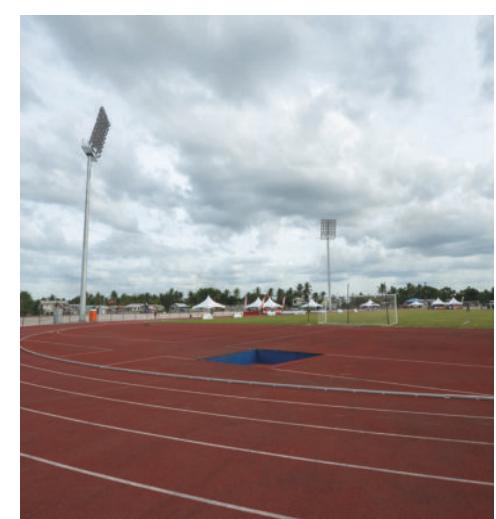
He also addressed critics, defending the government's record in infrastructure and community advancement.

"Those who say they cannot see the development... the lights are shining across Guyana," he said, pointing to new facilities and projects as evidence of progress.

The Bayroc Track and Field Stadium features a modern synthetic track, an integrated football field, volleyball space, an aquatic centre, a recording studio, and spectator stands.

Its opening forms part of a broader programme of sports infrastructure development, including the Anna Regina Stadium, Mackenzie Stadium, the New Amsterdam Synthetic Track, and new multipurpose facilities in hinterland regions.

President Ali said these investments are aimed at ensuring young people across the country have access to modern facilities and real opportunities to develop their talent.



NEW FACILITIES BRING SPORT AND DSER TO HOME

CAMPBELLVILLE WELCOMES GUYANA'S FIRST ALL-WEATHER BASKETBALL COURT

The community of Campbellville in Georgetown has a new reason to celebrate: Guyana's first PVC plastic all-weather basketball court, a \$39 million facility designed to improve player safety and make sport more accessible year-round.

The project fulfills a government commitment made during the construction of the Conversation Tree four-lane road, which displaced the previous community court used by local athletes. The new facility is now set to become a hub for sports and community engagement.

At the commissioning ceremony, athletes expressed their excitement for the long-awaited upgrade. Brandon Bento, a local player, described the new surface as a "big upgrade" from the old concrete and asphalt courts, which often caused injuries.

"For many years, we played on concrete or asphalt, and that caused a lot of injuries," Bento said. "This surface is something we have been asking for a long time. It allows for proper drainage and better protection for players."

Alafam Joseph, another athlete, added that the facility was unlike anything he had seen in Guyana. "It was done well. Because it is an all-weather court, even when rain falls, we can still come out and play," he said, visibly excited.

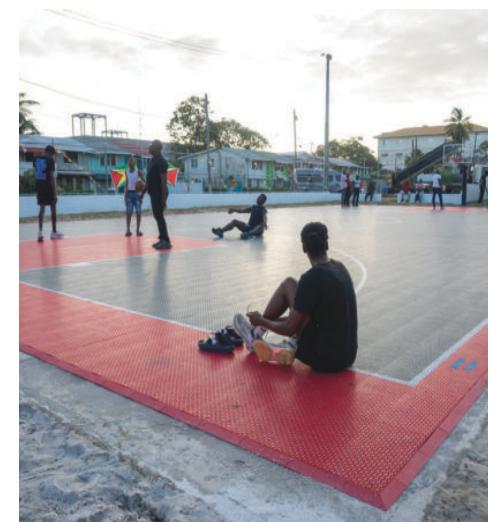
Minister of Public Works Bishop Juan Edghill said the project's success was driven by community satisfaction. "Cost was secondary. Community satisfaction was number one. We gave the people of Campbellville what they asked for and what they deserved," he said. He also highlighted the court's additional features, including lighting, a pavilion, fencing, and one of the most sophisticated playing surfaces currently available.

Minister within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport Steven Jacobs announced that more courts like Campbellville's will be rolled out across the country, including multipurpose turfs in schools and the rehabilitation of community grounds to encourage participation and nurture talent.

A major 3x3 basketball tournament is scheduled at the new court in the coming days, and the Ministry of Public Works will sponsor a yearly game for the next three years to support athletes and foster community spirit.

Both ministers urged residents and players to care for the facility to ensure its long-term sustainability. Rawle Tony, representing the Guyana Basketball Federation, was also present at the ceremony, underscoring the significance of the project for national sports development.

With this new court, Campbellville athletes now have a safe, modern space to play, train, and grow their love for basketball, rain or shine.



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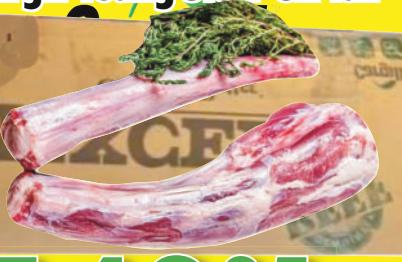
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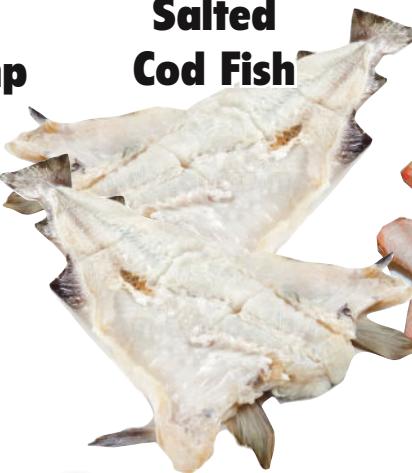
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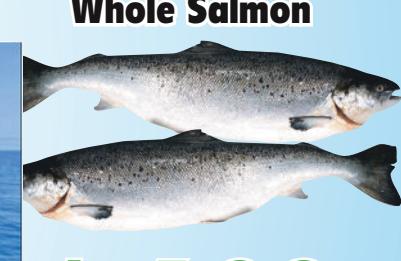
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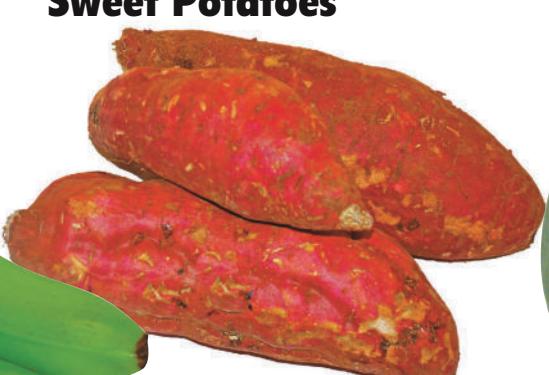
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YOUNG POLICE OFFICER'S \$55M HOME REFLECTS HOUSING EXPANSION SUCCESS



President Ali with Officer Bowlin, a member of the Guyana Police Force

At just 29 years old, Police Officer Bowlin has achieved something he once thought was out of reach: owning his own home.

From having no assets to holding property now valued at an estimated \$55 million, Bowlin's story has become one of



President Ali interacting with some of the families benefiting from the new Cummings Lodge housing development

the clearest examples of how Guyana's expanding housing drive is reshaping lives, particularly for young working families.

The officer is one of nearly 1,600 families benefiting from the new Cummings Lodge housing development, where more than \$3 billion has been invested in housing construction and supporting infrastructure.

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali highlighted Bowlin's journey during the first episode of *Tea on the Terrace*, a newly launched podcast designed to engage citizens directly while showcasing development projects and their impact on everyday lives. The president hosted the

episode at Bowlin's home, using the setting to underline the human reality behind national investment figures.

"From where I came from, I owned nothing, and to where I am now, I am truly grateful," Bowlin said. **"Owning my own home has allowed me to improve my life, and I now also own a vehicle."**

When the community was established less than five years ago, homes in the area were priced at \$7.5 million. In just two years, Bowlin was able to refinance, expand his house, and see its value grow significantly.

"That is what this investment by this government... is doing, changing real lives at 29 years old," President Ali said. **"Owning his own home... refinancing it, expanding it, developing it, buying a car, and having an asset at bank value of \$55 million."**

President Ali noted that Bowlin's experience is not unique. According to the president, more than 100 members of the Guyana Police Force now own homes in Cummings Lodge.

"That is a story

of empowerment... hundreds of families who now own their own homes, hundreds of families who are now empowered," he said.

Spanning roughly 700 acres, the housing scheme has transformed what was once swamp and forest into a modern community complete with new homes, commercial zones, medical space, and light industrial areas. A police station has already been built, and recreational facilities are under construction.

"All of this development... was not here less than five years ago," President Ali said. **"This entire area... was all swamp and forested land."**

Infrastructure works include 16 kilometres of roads, reinforced concrete upgrades, water pipelines, and full street lighting. The project includes hundreds of two- and three-bedroom homes and has created employment for more than 2,000 people through contractors and subcontractors.

President Ali said the development is about more than housing. It is about long-term wealth creation, stronger



President Ali interacting with some of the families benefiting from the new Cummings Lodge housing development



President Ali interacting with some of the families benefiting from the new Cummings Lodge housing development



President Ali interacting with some of the families benefiting from the new Cummings Lodge housing development

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BISHOP FINDLAY LAID TO REST



The home-going service for the late Chairman of the Police Service Commission

Though Bishop Findlay held some of the nation's most respected responsibilities, President Dr Irfaan Ali said his greatest impact came from the virtues he practiced daily, sincerity, generosity, and faith. The Head of State delivered remarks at the home-going service for the late Chairman of the Police Service Commission, held at Promenade Gardens.

President Ali hailed

a posture but a disposition. He made others feel seen, heard, and valued," the President said.

Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, Cabinet Ministers, and other government officials

Appointed Chairman of the Police Service Commission in 2022, Bishop Findlay oversaw the country's police service with fairness and dignity. Beyond his official duties, he was a devoted Christian and family man



The home-going service for the late Chairman of the Police Service Commission

were in attendance, paying tribute to a man whose calm leadership and dedication left a lasting mark on the nation.

whose patience, faith, and integrity guided every interaction. His daughter, Suelle Findlay-Williams, Head of the Press and Publicity



The home-going service for the late Chairman of the Police Service Commission



The home-going service for the late Chairman of the Police Service Commission

Unit in the Office of the greatly missed for his President, described kindness and enduring his passing as sudden, faith. noting that he would be

Guyana to engage regional stakeholders in push for transshipment hub

GUYANA will intensify engagement with regional and international partners in the coming days as it moves to position itself as a transshipment hub and fast-track the building of a deep-water port and other gas infrastructure projects, President Dr. Irfaan Ali has said.

Speaking at the weekend, during the commissioning of the Guyana Technical Training College Inc. (GTTCI) at Port Mourant, he told stakeholders that decisions are expected before the end of the first quarter on key infrastructure to strengthen the country's oil and gas sector.

"In the next coming days, you'll hear us talking about phase two gas, and we have to get that done before 2030, before the end of this first quarter; all the critical decisions will be made as to what we're doing," the President said.

Today, Guyana's Energy Conference Supply Chain Expo will see global leaders converging under the theme 'Building Tomorrow's Future Today'. It is anticipated that many discussions here will foster tangible outcomes and investments.

"Right now we have finalised with one of the top international companies, Bechtel, and they are now doing the financial feasibility for that port, and that, of course, will lead into the opportunities for investment and financing," he explained further.

President Ali also revealed that a delegation led by the governor of Brazil's state of Roraima is expected shortly to begin formal discussions on transshipment, with Guyana being positioned as a logistics gateway for northern Brazil. He said these talks form part of a broader master plan to transform the country into a regional trade and energy hub.

"We have a team led by the governor of the state of Roraima coming in to kickstart conversation on transshipment and Guyana becoming a transshipment hub for the state of Roraima. So, a lot of things will be happening in the coming days," he said, adding: "We want all of these things to be on point by 2030 for no other reason but that I feel this responsibility is on my shoulder as President; I do not want to pass this burden or this weight on

to someone else. I would rather they inherit the fruits of the collective hard labour of all of us in this country."

Emphasising the urgency of the timeline, he underscored the government's commitment to having key infrastructure and development pillars firmly in place by 2030.

He further pointed to the need for a deeper national understanding of development planning and economic transformation, noting that effective policymaking requires an appreciation of long-term strategy, regional integration, and the complex processes that drive national growth.



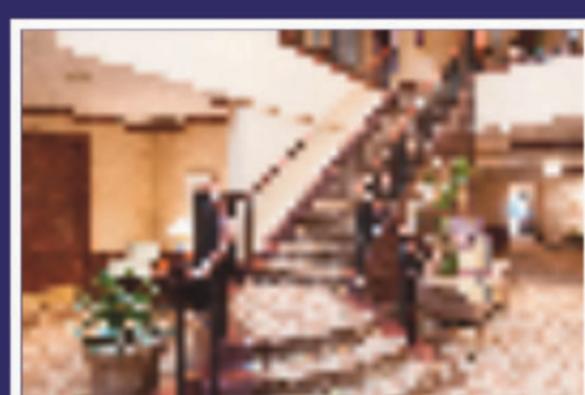
President Dr Irfaan Ali addresses stakeholders at a recent meeting

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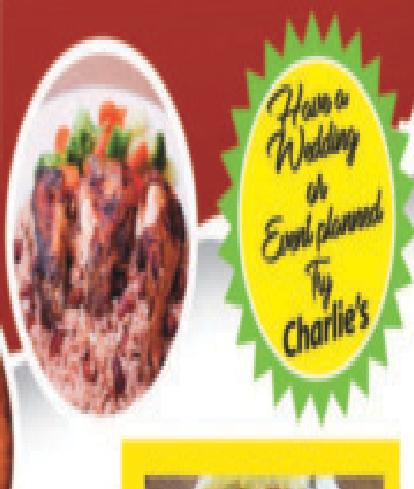
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GUYANA MUST RELY ON ITS OWN DEFENCE, PRESIDENT ALI TELLS GDF OFFICERS



Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, delivering the charge to senior officers at the Annual Officers Conference

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali has urged members of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) to prioritise national self-reliance in safeguarding the country's sovereignty, stressing that external actors cannot substitute for a strong, vigilant defence.

Speaking to senior officers at Base Camp Ayanganna during the GDF's Annual Officers Conference,

the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces emphasised the enduring responsibility of Guyanese personnel to secure the nation's territory, borders, and resources.

"We cannot subcontract our defence, and we cannot assume that any fairy godmother or godfather will always appear at a decisive moment," President Ali told the gathering. He added, **"Guyana must not drop its guard. Guyana must not blink. We must be prepared. We must be ready. We must be ever vigilant."**

While underscoring the importance of readiness, the President clarified that preparedness should not be

interpreted as hostility. **"Preparedness is not provocation. Readiness is not aggression. Vigilance is not hostility. They're simply the duties of a sovereign state that takes itself seriously,"** he said.



Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, with senior officers at the Annual Officers Conference

President Ali highlighted the value of international partnerships, describing them as **"force multipliers, not substitutes for**

national strength." He stressed that cooperation with other countries should enhance capacity while respecting Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Pointing to regional security challenges, including the ongoing

activity across land, air, and sea. **"The Guyana Defence Force must see itself clearly and unapologetically as a guardian of the nation's resources, and not simply as only safeguarding our borders,"** he stated.

The President also highlighted the government's significant investment in modernising the military. GDF

expenditure increased from \$13.9 billion in 2019, largely recurrent, to \$36.2 billion in 2025, with capital expenditure rising tenfold to \$10.35 billion, reflecting efforts to restructure, retool, and equip the Force for evolving responsibilities.

Closing his address, President Ali reaffirmed that while partnerships are important, the ultimate duty to defend Guyana rests with its own people.



Senior officers at the Annual Officers Conference



Chief of Defence Staff, Brigadier Omar Khan

In a year marked by both domestic and regional challenges, the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) strengthened its readiness with specialised training for more than 1,200 personnel. Chief of Defence Staff Brigadier Omar Khan said the initiative ensures the Force is prepared, not only to safeguard national security, but also to support broader development priorities.

Addressing officers at the opening of the GDF's 2026 Annual Officers' Conference, Brigadier Khan detailed the extensive training undertaken in 2025, covering military, technical, academic, and leadership disciplines. **"These efforts reflect the evolving role of building a modern military, both as a guardian of sovereignty and as a partner in national**

OVER 1,200 GDF PERSONNEL TRAINED AS FORCE PREPARES FOR FUTURE CHALLENGES

development and resilience," he said.

Beyond training, the GDF played a pivotal role in maintaining Guyana's territorial integrity and supporting national security operations. Joint efforts with the Guyana Police

boosting economic activity through improved air transport. Regionally, GDF personnel were deployed for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, and Jamaica,

"This is to uplift their personal stature and add more value in their service to our nation," he said.

Commander-in-Chief President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, speaking at the conference, charged

focused on partnership, priority, position, and policy to guide the Force's evolution. Highlighting the protection of critical national assets, including telecommunications, undersea cables, and environmental resources, he stressed that the GDF's mandate now extends beyond traditional defence. **"Our defence architecture goes beyond the tradition. We must demonstrate how our system aligns with national and international priorities,"** he said.

He further underscored the importance of technology, intelligence, and domain awareness, calling for enhanced

capabilities in artificial intelligence and the protection of strategic assets, while warning that defence personnel must anticipate future challenges rather than react to past ones.

The conference, held under the theme "Transforming the Force to Better Confront the Nation's Present and Future Challenges by Enhancing its Awareness, Adaptability and Agility Capabilities", was attended by Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, Senior Minister in the Office of the President Dr Ashni Singh, Minister of Home Affairs Oneidge Walrond, Commissioner of Police Clifton Hickens, and other senior officials.



Over 1,200 GDF ranks trained in strengthening readiness, national security

Force and other security agencies contributed to what Brigadier Khan described as the **"safest and most secure environment for the conduct of Guyana's national and regional elections since independence."**

The Force's role in national development also expanded in 2025, including support for strategic infrastructure works, rehabilitation of hinterland airstrips, emergency response capabilities, and

helping restore homes and support displaced families, while reinforcing CARICOM solidarity.

Brigadier Khan also highlighted academic achievements among the ranks, noting that personnel increasingly access tertiary and postgraduate programmes, including the Government Online Access Learning (GOAL) Programme, University of Guyana courses, and training through the Guyana Digital School.

the GDF to continue its strategic transformation to meet modern security threats while safeguarding national development. **"Yes, we celebrate our accomplishments, but we now must define the next phase of this journey,"** he said, emphasising that defence must remain flexible, nimble, and relevant in an evolving security landscape.

President Ali outlined a forward-looking framework



Officers at the GDF's Annual Officers' Conference for 2026

BUDGET 2026 ESTIMATES REVEAL MAJOR INVESTMENTS



Government ministers during the examination of the 2026 Budget estimates

- **GLSC moves to open new lands nationwide**

The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC) is moving to open new lands nationwide to support housing and agriculture. With an allocation of \$190 million in Budget 2026, the commission will clear and survey areas for development, supporting cadastral and occupational surveys aimed at expanding opportunities for families and farmers.

Communities such as Wauna and Sugar Hill will see approximately 200 acres developed, while Region One will benefit from the modernisation of the Mabaruma settlement at Quarry Hill. Further subdivisions at Golden Fleece, Onderneeming, Naamryck, Yarrowkabra, and Loo Creek will open thousands of acres for farming. Most sites are new developments, though Prosville Village is slated for regularisation before June 2026.

- **Local government elections get green light with new allocation**

Local government elections have received the green light with a significant new allocation. As Guyana prepares for polls later this year, the Elections Commission has been grant-

ed over \$6.9 billion to ensure the process is properly staffed and supplied. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance Gail Teixeira confirmed the funding covers temporary Election Day staff, ballots, transportation, printing, and training.



Government ministers during the examination of the 2026 Budget estimates

While the 2026 allocation is slightly lower than the previous year, the government noted that local government elections are less costly than general elections and allow for the reuse of certain materials.

- **Over 716,000 Guyanese to receive 100k cash grant under Budget 2026**

Over 716,000 Guyanese are set to receive \$100,000 cash grant. Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips announced that the grant serves as disaster response and social support for families in need. The Ministry of Finance is preparing the disbursement process following the budget's passage. Most beneficiaries will

not need to re-register as the government is utilising an existing database, which will be updated to include 14,000 additional eligible individuals. Furthermore, \$120 million has been earmarked for unplanned disaster response, including home repairs and potable water distribution, as part of a broader \$111.3 billion allocation for the Office of the Prime Minister.

- **National e-ID to modernise everyday access**

The National e-ID system is set to modernise

not need to re-register as the government is utilising an existing database, which will be updated to include 14,000 additional eligible individuals. Furthermore, \$120 million has been earmarked for unplanned disaster response, including home repairs and potable water distribution, as part of a broader \$111.3 billion allocation for the Office of the Prime Minister.

is currently optional, it is expected to become a standard convenience over time. Importantly, citizens without the card will not be denied essential services like healthcare or education during the transition period.

- **New investigative officer to monitor orphanages and childcare centres**

A new investigative officer will be hired to monitor orphanages and childcare centers, strengthening the protection of children in care. This move addresses a previous shortfall in inspections by the Indicators for the Rights of the Child Commission. The new officer, alongside commission members and Childcare and Protection Services, will conduct visits, outreach, and monitoring. This combined effort aims to ensure that all relevant institutions are effectively supervised in 2026, maintaining a high standard of oversight for the nation's most vulnerable youth.

- **\$900M MoM housing initiative strictly monitored to**



Government ministers during the examination of the 2026 Budget estimates

with the government more efficiently. Minister Teixeira clarified that the system will operate under the Data Protection Act with a dedicated commissioner to safeguard information. While the e-ID

prevent duplication

The \$900 million for the Men on Mission (MoM) housing 2026 initiative will be strictly monitored to prevent duplication of benefits. This programme sup-

ports the elderly, single parents, and MoM participants. Minister Teixeira explained that applicants are cross-checked against Central Housing and Planning Authority records to ensure fair delivery. Beyond construction, the MoM initiative focuses on community change, addressing issues like gender-based violence and providing workshops. The programme involves collaboration across multiple ministries to provide safe and accountable housing support to those in greatest need.

- **Guyana's first law school on the horizon**

Guyana's first law school is on the horizon, with \$100 million earmarked for architectural designs. To be located within the University of Guyana compound, the project aims to provide world-class legal training locally through a collaboration with the Council of Legal Education. Attorney General Mohabir Anil Nandlall also highlighted that the broader \$1.9 billion Legal Affairs budget will advance land regularisation. This initiative grants legal titles to families on ancestral lands, expanding from Cotton Tree to villages like Melanie and No. 46, providing both professional opportunities and residential security.

- **New Two-Storey Amerindian Hostel to Be Built**

- **No Layoffs as GUYSUCO Moves Toward Mechanisation**

No layoffs are planned at the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO) as the entity moves toward increased mechanisation. Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha emphasised that modernisation is designed to address labour shortages rather than reduce the workforce. To support this transition, workers are

receiving upskilling opportunities to operate heavy-duty machinery. The 2026 budget allocates \$8.4 billion to GUYSUCO, with 81 percent dedicated to wages and salaries. The corporation projects a production of 100,000 tonnes of sugar for the year, supported by factory upgrades and new machinery such as billet cutters and planters.

- **Flood Mitigation Efforts to Expand with 40 Additional Pumps**

Flood mitigation efforts will expand with the acquisition of 40 additional hydroflo and mobile pumps. These units offer a flexible alternative to fixed stations, providing faster relief to flood-prone communities during heavy rainfall. Minister Mustapha noted that procurement will begin immediately following budget approval. While several pump stations have been completed in areas like Anna Regina and Liliendaal, the ministry has taken firm action against under-performing contractors at other sites, blacklisting roughly 30 companies to ensure future projects are delivered on time.

- **New Two-Storey Amerindian Hostel to Be Built**

A new two-storey Amerindian Hostel will be built to accommodate up to 350 residents. The government has approved \$500 million for the project, with several possible sites currently under evaluation. In addition to the new construction, \$31 million was approved for the maintenance of the existing Princes Street hostel. These funds are part of a \$7.5 billion allocation for the Ministry

FAMILIES, HOUSING, CHILDREN, AND PUBLIC SERVICES



Government ministers during the examination of the 2026 Budget estimates

of Amerindian Affairs, which includes \$5 billion for the Amerindian Development Fund to support stipends, education on the Amerindian Act, and community income-generating projects.

- Guyana Investing in Advocacy Services to Boost Global Presence**

Guyana is investing \$269 million in advocacy services to boost its global presence and navigate complex international political environments. Minister of Foreign Affairs Hugh Todd explained that these registered lobbying firms help secure partnerships with global powers and provide access to key decision-makers. Additionally, the Foreign Service Institute is nearing completion, with an expected finish



Government ministers during the examination of the 2026 Budget estimates

date in May. The ministry's total \$10.03 billion budget also focuses on a digitisation drive to cut costs and improve diplomatic efficiency on the world stage.

- “Guyana Gold” Set for**

Preparing for Fifth FPSO, Oil Oversight and Local Content Plans being strengthened

As Guyana prepares for its fifth FPSO vessel in

late 2026, the government is strengthening oil oversight and local content plans. Budget 2026 includes funding for demurrage expenses and costs associated with increased production scales. Minister Bharrat noted that the Natural Resource Fund ended 2025 with a balance of US\$3.25 billion. The allocation also supports the Local Content Secretariat as it reviews

- \$150 Billion Housing Programme to Expand Homes and Support Families**

The \$150 billion housing programme aims to expand homes and support families through new projects, land acquisition, and utility infrastructure. Minister



Government ministers during the examination of the 2026 Budget estimates

laws to expand opportunities for Guyanese businesses, ensuring that the petroleum sector's growth translates into tangible national benefits through transparency and rigorous monitoring.

- River Travel and Hinterland Roads to Benefit from \$6.8B in Upgrades**

River travel and hinterland roads will benefit from \$6.8 billion in upgrades to make transportation safer and more reliable. A total of \$2.74 billion is dedicated to improving stellings, including the transformation of the Parika Stelling into a modern terminal with expanded parking and administrative facilities. Additionally, \$10 billion has been allocated for hinterland road upgrades, focusing on the Linden to Lethem Road and routes connecting remote communities like Maruca and Orealla. These infrastructure projects are expected to create jobs and support local businesses across the regions.

Collin Croal highlighted that \$48.2 billion is earmarked for new housing, while other funds will go toward upgrading existing areas and regularising informal settlements. The initiative includes \$7.5 billion in direct assistance for vulnerable families for home repairs and construction subsidies. Hinterland communities will also receive \$2.5 billion, reflecting a comprehensive commitment to sustainable housing and land ownership across the country.

- Free Tertiary Education Drives 16,000 Students to UG, Hybrid Model Eases Access**

Free tertiary education is driving a surge in enrollment at the University of Guyana, which now accommodates over 16,000 students. Education Minister Sonia Parag explained that the university is utilising a hybrid model of in-person and virtual learning to manage the increased demand. UG has also expanded regional delivery, training

engineering and medical students at various technical institutes and regional centers. This expansion, including a new pre-medical programme, ensures that high-quality instruction remains accessible to students across Guyana regardless of their physical proximity to the main campus.

- Anna Regina Set to Welcome State-of-the-Art National Stadium**

The Anna Regina state-of-the-art national stadium is expected to be opened in March 2026.

This facility is part of a broader government effort to decentralise sports infrastructure, providing modern amenities to athletes on the Essequibo Coast. Minister Charles Ramson Jr. announced that five stadiums are scheduled for commissioning this year. The completion of the MacKenzie Sports Complex in Linden and the new Anna Regina stadium underscores the commitment to making high-quality sporting venues accessible to all Guyanese, fostering community engagement and athletic development.

- Historic Stabroek and Bourda Markets to Be Restored Under Georgetown Revamp**

The historic Stabroek and Bourda Markets are slated for resto-

ration as part of a \$2.84 billion Georgetown restoration initiative. Minister Priya Manickchand announced that approximately \$2 billion will be spent on these iconic landmarks to revitalise the capital. The project also includes the development of green spaces in the Ruimveldt areas and upgrades to city drainage and streets. These efforts are designed to transform Georgetown into a more comfortable and beautiful environment, ensuring that the city's historic character is preserved while improving the daily lives of its residents.

- Region Four Communities Set for Cleaner Streets and Better Flood Protection**

A \$15.8 million drainage and irrigation maintenance programme will ensure Region Four communities have cleaner streets and better flood protection. This initiative involves manual weeding and cleaning of trenches across numerous communities in Demerara-Mahaica. To ensure the work meets high standards, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development will deploy rangers and supervisors to oversee the quarterly maintenance. These upgrades aim to enhance sanitation, boost living conditions, and create safer, healthier environments for residents throughout the region.



Government ministers during the examination of the 2026 Budget estimates

SIR RONALD SANDERS TAKES HELM AS UG CHANCELLOR



President Ali greeting Sir Ronald Sanders, the new Chancellor of UG

Sir Ronald Sanders has officially been installed as the 11th Chancellor of the University of Guyana, stepping into the role at a moment President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali described as one of major transformation for both Guyana and the wider world.

The inauguration ceremony was held at the George Walcott Lecture Theatre on the Turkeyen Campus, where the

atmosphere reflected both celebration and high expectations for the university's future.

In his address, President Ali said Sir Ronald brings a rare combination of experience and insight, shaped by decades of work in diplomacy, academia, research and public service across the Caribbean and beyond. The head of state noted that Sanders is no stranger to the

region's development journey and is uniquely positioned to help guide the nation's premier tertiary institution into its next chapter.

Dr Ali expressed confidence that the new Chancellor's international reputation and diplomatic network will help strengthen the university's global connections and ensure it remains aligned with international academic and policy developments.

"I believe that it is extremely important that the alignment of this national outlook and university be pursued in a way in which both the university, the graduates from the university, and the country would benefit," the President

said. While acknowledging the importance of traditional qualifications such as degrees and diplomas, President Ali stressed that the University of Guyana must continue evolving to meet national development priorities and global standards.

He placed strong emphasis on the need for research excellence, noting that any university seeking world-class status must produce research capable of withstanding international scrutiny.

The President also pointed to the growing importance of pairing academic programmes with professional certifications to ensure graduates are competitive beyond Guyana's borders. He



Sir Ronald Sanders is the new Chancellor of UG

highlighted examples such as aligning project management degrees with the Project Management Institute certification and accountancy programmes with ACCA qualifications.

"This must be the direction that institutions undertake," President Ali said, underscoring the need for graduates to gain a stronger edge in the labour market.

The President reminded those gathered that the Office of the Chancellor is far from ceremonial. Citing the University of Guyana Act, he described the Chancellor as the guardian of the institution's standards, heritage and leadership.

Dr Ali also paid tribute to outgoing Chancellor Professor John Edward Greene for his contributions and service.

GUYANESE BUSINESSES GET FASTER, EASIER ACCESS TO OIL AND GAS OPPORTUNITIES WITH NEW DIGITAL PORTAL



Local Content Portal launched to streamline oil and gas supplier registration

Guyanese businesses seeking to participate in the country's booming oil and gas industry now have a faster, simpler, and more transparent way to register and certify their services. The Ministry of Natural Resources, through

the Local Content Secretariat (LCS), has launched a new digital Local Content Registration Portal, designed to streamline processes and cut down on administrative delays.

The portal allows

sole proprietors to submit applications online, eliminating the need for manual paperwork. Users can now track the status of their applications in real time, seeing whether they are under review, awaiting additional information, or approved. Clear timelines are built into the system: sole proprietors can expect new applications processed within five working days, while 100% Guyanese-owned companies receive approvals in 15 working days.

Minister of Natural Resources, Hon. Vickram Bharrat, said the portal strengthens transparency and accountability, giving suppliers clarity and predictability in planning their operations. Director of the LCS, Michael Munroe, added that automation and real-time tracking ensure that Guyanese businesses can engage the oil and gas sector with confidence and efficiency.

The system also improves internal operations, allowing staff

to focus on substantive reviews rather than administrative work. For the private sector, the digital portal makes compliance with Local Content requirements faster, simpler, and more reliable, supporting investment and business growth in Guyana.

The Ministry encourages all prospective and existing suppliers to take advantage of the portal, which marks a significant step forward in making the oil and gas sector more accessible and business-friendly for local companies.



Local Content Portal launched to streamline oil and gas supplier registration

REGION FIVE RESIDENTS BENEFIT FROM NEW GOVT SERVICE CENTRE



New Government of Guyana Service Centre launched at Fort Wellington

Region Five residents benefit from new Govt service centre

Residents of Mahaica-Berbice no longer have to travel far or spend hours in long lines to access key government services, following the opening of a new Government of Guyana Service Centre at Fort Wellington.

For many families in

Region Five, simple but essential tasks - applying for a passport, collecting a birth certificate, securing a marriage licence or obtaining a police clearance, often meant taking time off work, finding transportation and making repeated trips to Georgetown. Now, those services are available closer to home, in one central location.

The centre forms part of President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali's drive to decentralise public services, improve efficiency and make government support more accessible to citizens, while pushing forward the country's digital transformation

Minister of Public Service, Government Efficiency and Implementation, Zulfikar Ally, described the initiative as part of a wider strategy to ensure all Guyanese are served **"with dignity and with respect."**

He noted that the centre is not only about convenience, but also about modernising the way citizens interact with government.

"We're bringing every service directly into your home," Minister Ally said, explaining that digital tools will allow residents to access many services through mobile devices or computers without

the need to physically visit offices.

He also highlighted



New Government of Guyana Service Centre launched at Fort Wellington

guaranteed response timelines.

Minister of Education Sonia Parag said improving access to services is just as important as building schools and hospitals.

"We also have to make the services... easier for you to

access, and make your life easier," she told residents.

The government plans to establish similar service centres in other regions, bringing essential support even closer to communities nationwide.



New Government of Guyana Service Centre launched at Fort Wellington

PANIC ALERT SYSTEM PLANNED TO PROTECT AT-RISK WOMEN AND SCHOOLS

For women living in fear of domestic violence and teachers struggling to keep schools safe, help may soon be only a button away.

President Dr



The Annual Police Officers' Conference

made the announcement at the opening of the Annual Police Officers' Conference at the Police Officers' Mess Annex on Camp Street, Georgetown.

"We are working now...on a technology that we can share with at-risk women, at-risk schools... which include a panic system that

groups, parents and school administrators point to an alarming surge in student violence and possible gang activity.

For many educators and families, the President said, enforcement alone cannot solve the problem. Instead, communities must work together to prevent

including clearer understanding of what constitutes rape.

President Ali noted that women account for more than 40 per cent of the Guyana Police Force and over 90 per cent of teachers, underscoring the need to invest in tools that support those who protect and nurture society every day.

Alongside these initiatives, the President highlighted progress in public safety, reporting that serious crimes have declined by almost 50 per cent since 2020. Robberies and break-and-enter offences have dropped sharply, which he attributed to major government investments in policing, including \$141 billion spent between 2020 and 2025.

Still, he warned against complacency, urging officers to further reduce murders and confront emerging threats such as domestic violence and school gangs.

The government is

also advancing reforms in modern policing through body cameras, speed cameras, digital reporting platforms and legislative changes to expand e-ticketing into e-prosecution and



The Annual Police Officers' Conference



The Annual Police Officers' Conference

Mohamed Irfaan Ali announced that the government is working with technology providers to develop a dedicated alert and panic system designed to give at-risk women and schools an added layer of protection, as Guyana confronts rising concerns over domestic abuse and school-related gangs.

The Head of State

would allow for more effective support," President Ali told senior police officers.

The proposed system would allow faster intervention and support for women, teachers, parents and students, particularly as reports from faith

young people from being pulled into crime.

"We have to deal decisively with domestic violence and every crime against women," he stressed, while calling for a massive public education campaign on sexual violence,



The Annual Police Officers' Conference



The new surgical theatre at the district hospital in Kamarang, Region Seven

Bartica and the wider Region Seven are experiencing a remarkable transformation, with major government investments significantly improving healthcare, highlighted that targeted projects have cut medical referrals to Georgetown by approximately 50 per cent in recent years.

"Faster treatment, less disruption to families, millions

BARTICA'S PEOPLE-CENTRED GROWTH SHOWS TANGIBLE RESULTS

facilities, including the expanded Bartica Regional Hospital, which treated over 15,000 patients and conducted nearly 3,000 surgeries in 2025. The Kamarang District Hospital also played a vital role, serving more than 3,300 patients and performing 28,000 laboratory tests.

President Ali revealed that the development of a new level-four hospital in Bartica is underway, ensuring specialised care is available locally. **"These are direct benefits... translated benefits from the investment we are making from our budgets,"** he said, emphasising equitable access to healthcare in hinterland regions historically challenged by distance and transportation costs.

Economic growth is equally evident. Region Seven contributed 41 per cent of Guyana's total gold production in 2025, with small and medium-scale miners declaring over 105,400 ounces, equivalent to

\$88 billion in revenue, and supporting more than 20,000 jobs. President Ali outlined initiatives to strengthen the sector, including access to capital, standardised contracts, security measures, and the creation of mining consortia to ensure predictability and infrastructure support.

Beyond mining, Bartica has seen 10 new quarries established over the last five years, and the forestry sector now includes 95 small and 11 large concessions spanning 4.3 million acres. Oko West alone has become a major employer, with nearly 900 workers as of December 2025 and projects to employ 2,200 by October 2026.

The president described Bartica as **"what real investment looks like,"** pointing to sweeping improvements in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and enterprise across the town and region. Plans to position Bartica as a regional service and transport hub include

a municipal airport, new and rehabilitated hinterland roads, upgrades to stellings and ferry services, and expanded housing developments.

"Here, it's remarkable. You can see all across Bartica, the changing landscape, the changing skyline, the changing infrastructure. But importantly, a people on the rise," President Ali said.

He noted that these investments translate

into lower household costs, better access to services, and stronger local economies.

Looking ahead, Bartica is set to continue its development as a regional capital, with reliable power, clean water, improved roads, enhanced hospitals and schools, faster internet, and expanded economic opportunities.

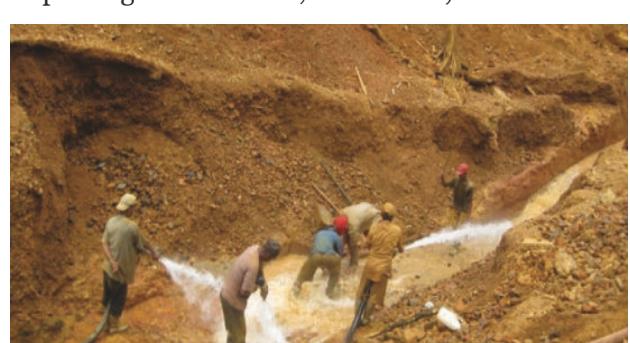
"Bartica's transformation isn't accidental. It is deliberate, it is planned, and it is people-centred,"



President Ali interacting with residents during his recent visit to Bartica

the president stated. **"Development is not about statistics alone. It's about whether life feels better, fairer and more hopeful."**

Over the last five years, the government has invested more than \$150 billion in Region Seven, impacting healthcare, mining, housing, public works, and human services for the region's approximately 20,000 residents. The coordinated approach demonstrates a clear commitment to equitable development, with tangible benefits improving daily life for hinterland communities.



Mining in Guyana

infrastructure, and economic opportunities for residents.

Speaking during the second episode of his podcast *Tea on the Terrace*, recorded in Bartica, President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali

saved annually in medivacs and travel costs, and you are closer to your families for that supportive care," the president said, describing the impact of upgraded health

e-warrants.

Ultimately, President Ali said, technology must serve a deeper purpose: helping citizens feel safer in their homes, children feel safer in their schools, and communities feel supported before violence strikes.

GUYANA SECURES THIRD CONSECUTIVE ART TREES CARBON CREDIT ISSUANCE

Guyana's forests are once again drawing global attention, with the country issuing more than nine million internationally certified carbon credits, proof that conservation can deliver real value in the fight against climate change.

The Government announced the issuance of 9,085,923 high-integrity TREES carbon credits for 2023 under the Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART). Notably, the credits have been labelled CORSIA-Eligible, meaning they meet some of the world's most rigorous environmental and transparency standards.

This marks the third

consecutive year since 2021 that Guyana has secured ART TREES issuances, reinforcing its reputation as a leader in sustainable forest management, jurisdictional-scale carbon markets, and low-carbon development.

The achievement reflects years of steady investment, strong national policies, and the active stewardship of forest-dependent communities who continue to protect the country's vast rainforest resources.

"This issuance is both a validation of Guyana's long-term vision and a signal of confidence to global markets," the Government said.



Aerial view of Kako Village

"It demonstrates that countries and communities can benefit from making forests worth more alive than dead."

Guyana's forests cover more than 85 per cent of the country's landmass, forming one of the largest

intact tropical forest systems in the world. Under the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), launched in 2009, the country has strengthened forest governance, expanded Indigenous land titling, and invested in national monitoring systems to

ensure credible reporting of emissions reductions.

For Indigenous and hinterland communities, these efforts represent more than climate policy. They provide opportunities for development, livelihoods, and recognition of their role as guardians of the forest.

The 2023-vintage credits build on earlier issuances and reflect the continued maturation of Guyana's forest protection systems. The CORSIA designation, linked to the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, confirms the credits can be used by international airlines and other compliance-

driven buyers, placing Guyana's emissions reductions among the most credible globally.

At home, the credits strengthen Guyana's ability to mobilise results-based climate finance for national priorities, including climate-resilient infrastructure, Indigenous community development, forest conservation, and biodiversity protection.

As global demand grows for credible and equitable climate solutions, Guyana continues to show how forest-rich countries can translate conservation into tangible benefits for both people and planet.

Ten Guyanese entrepreneurs are preparing to take their innovative products and services to a regional stage, thanks to sponsorship from the Small Business Bureau (SBB). The initiative highlights the Bureau's ongoing commitment to supporting small businesses, expanding market access, and promoting economic growth for local enterprises.

The entrepreneurs, representing sectors ranging from agro-processing and crafts to personal care products, will showcase their offerings at AgroFest 2026 in Barbados, a premier agricultural and cultural exhibition held from February 27 to March 1 at Queen's Park, Bridgetown. For the participants, the event is more than an exhibition. It is an opportunity to attract new customers, forge strategic partnerships, and expand their presence across the Caribbean.

During a brief handover ceremony at the SBB's head office, CEO Mohamed Shazim Ibrahim encouraged the entrepreneurs to make the most of the experience by exploring distribution and retail partnerships in Barbados. He emphasised the importance of quality packaging, proper labelling, and strong product presentation, key factors for success in competitive export markets. "You will be ambassadors

GUYANESE ENTREPRENEURS SET TO SHINE AT AGROFEST 2026 IN BARBADOS



CEO of the Small Business Bureau Mohamed Shazim Ibrahim alongside the entrepreneurs who received their sponsorship packages

not only for your businesses and the Small Business Bureau, but for Guyana as a whole," he reminded them.

In preparation for the event, the entrepreneurs

also completed exposition-readiness training, covering booth management, customer engagement, and post-expo follow-up. The training aims to ensure participants are fully equipped to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the festival.

and exhibitors from across the region. For these Guyanese entrepreneurs, participation represents a strategic step toward entering new markets and strengthening their regional footprint.

Through this sponsorship initiative, the SBB continues to empower local entrepreneurs by providing access to resources, exposure, and capacity-building support, helping Guyana's small businesses reach audiences far beyond its borders.

HOSTING SOTIC SIGNALS GUYANA'S RISE AS REGIONAL TOURISM LEADER

For the first time ever, Guyana will play host to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation's (CTO) flagship State of the Tourism Industry Conference (SOTIC), welcoming hundreds of regional and international tourism leaders to the country from October 5-9 this year.

"The tourism sector continues to exceed expectations and is now firmly established as a main pillar of Guyana's national development agenda," Minister Rodrigues said.

SOTIC is the CTO's premier annual gathering, bringing together Caribbean tourism stakeholders to share insights, forge

partnerships, and chart the future of the industry. For Guyana, hosting the conference represents more than just a week of high-level discussions. It positions the country as an emerging tourism

leader in the region and showcases its potential to host major international events.

The conference also dovetails with the government's strategy to expand meetings,

incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) tourism, a high-value segment that drives business travel, investment, and knowledge exchange.

Beyond the immediate economic benefits, the event is expected to boost Guyana's international visibility, foster stronger regional collaboration, and pave the way for future meetings and large-scale tourism initiatives.



A first for Guyana, hosting CTO's flagship tourism conference

33 GOAL SCHOLARS EARN DOCTORATES

For decades, earning a PhD was out of reach for many working Guyanese. That barrier has now been broken, as 33 GOAL scholars have successfully completed fully online, tuition-free doctoral programmes through Texila American University (TAU) in Guyana.

The group represents the first cohort of GOAL scholars to attain doctoral-level qualifications. Of the 33 graduates, 28 earned PhDs in Management, while five completed PhDs in Public Health. The cohort comprises 19 men and 14 women, all of whom completed

the rigorous three-year programme while balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

GOAL Director Professor Jacob Opadeyi credited the programme's flexible online delivery for making advanced study possible for working professionals. **"These graduates have reached the highest level of academic study through structured online programmes,"** he said. **"Their knowledge and research can now support development in their workplaces,**



33 GOAL scholars have successfully completed doctoral programmes through Texila American University (TAU)



33 GOAL scholars have successfully completed doctoral programmes through Texila American University (TAU)



33 GOAL scholars have successfully completed doctoral programmes through Texila American University (TAU)



33 GOAL scholars have successfully completed doctoral programmes through Texila American University (TAU)

education.

Doctoral enrolment under GOAL continues to expand, with 657 scholars currently pursuing PhDs through partner universities in Guyana, India, Malawi and Zambia. At JAIN ARKA University in India, 193 scholars are enrolled in doctoral

programmes in fields including sustainability, innovation, education management and psychology. UNICAF Malawi and UNICAF Zambia host 416 and six doctoral scholars respectively, while TAU currently has 42.

GOAL has extended

congratulations to the 33 doctoral graduates, recognising their perseverance and commitment to applying their advanced skills and expertise toward Guyana's ongoing development.

ITEC MARKS 60 YEARS IN GUYANA



Minister of Public Service, Government Efficiency and Implementation, Zulfikar Ally, delivers remarks at the launch of a special documentary

The relationship between Guyana and India spans nearly two centuries, but six decades ago, it took a formal shape with the launch of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme.

Recently, a special documentary commemorating this milestone highlighted the programme's profound impact on Guyana's public service and national development.

The event, held at Amazonia Mall on the East Bank of Demerara, brought together government officials, diplomats, and beneficiaries of the programme. Minister of Public Service, Government Efficiency and Implementation, Zulfikar Ally, delivered remarks emphasising ITEC as a "crucial driver" in building capacity within the

Guyanese public sector.

Minister Ally reflected on the long-standing friendship between the two nations. **"The six decades of formal diplomatic relations reflect an enduring friendship that has remained unbroken and continues to strengthen over time,"** he said. Both Minister Ally and President Ali have personally benefited from the programme, gaining experiences in India that continue to influence governance and national development in Guyana.

"We're all very grateful for that hospitality, for that show of support the people and

Government of India have extended over the last 60 years," Minister Ally added. **"Many Guyanese have returned with rich experiences and a deeper understanding of Indian culture, which they continue to apply in their work at home."**

Beyond cultural exchange, Minister Ally proposed that the two countries expand collaboration in areas such as agriculture, security, defence, and information and communications technology. **"Our friendship will only grow stronger,"** he said, **"and the bonds that people of Guyana have with India will**

continue to deepen."

Indian High Commissioner to Guyana, Amit Telang, echoed these sentiments, noting that capacity building has been the backbone of Guyana-India relations since the ITEC Programme's launch in 1964. He also traced the deeper historical connection between the countries, dating back to 1838 when the first Indian indentured labourers arrived in Guyana. **"Those early settlers have been the real architects of the relationship that we see today,"** he said.

High Commissioner Telang conveyed a message from India's Vice Minister responsible for development cooperation, highlighting the continued relevance of



Indian High Commissioner to Guyana, Dr Amit Telang

ITEC in strengthening bilateral relations.

The documentary showcased personal stories from Guyanese public servants who benefited from the programme, sharing how their training and professional exchanges in India enhanced their skills and contributed to national development. From governance to technical expertise, the experiences have left a lasting imprint on both individual careers and the broader public service.

GOAL AWARDS OVER 14,000 SCHOLARSHIPS



GOAL scholarship is open to every Guyanese

From school leavers who never wrote CSEC to working adults returning to study after years away, thousands of Guyanese are getting a second chance at education through the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) scholarships awarded for 2026.

This year, a record 14,064 citizens received GOAL scholarships, pushing the total number of awards since the programme's launch in 2021 to 54,627. The steady growth reflects rising demand for flexible, online education, with annual awards increasing each year, from 6,280 in 2021 to more than double that figure in 2026.

The 2026 scholarships span a wide range of academic levels, from vocational certificates to postgraduate degrees. Thousands of recipients are enrolled in the Get Ready for Opportunities to Work (GROW) programme, a pre-university foundation designed for persons who did not complete secondary school or did not obtain the required Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) passes. After completing the six- to nine-month programme, scholars are automatically placed into bachelor's degree programmes

through GOAL's partner institutions, offering a clear and supported pathway to higher education.

Women continue to make up the majority of awardees, accounting for 10,520 recipients, while 3,544 men were awarded scholarships. The reach of the programme extends across all

regions, with Region Four recording the highest number of awardees, followed by Regions Three and Six. Importantly, every region recorded an increase compared with 2025, highlighting the programme's expanding national footprint.

GOAL's Director Professor Jacob Opadeyi said the continued

growth demonstrates how Guyanese are responding to expanded access to education. **"Each year we see more Guyanese stepping forward to upgrade their qualifications,"** he said. **"These figures show that people are using the opportunities that GOAL provides to move ahead in their studies and careers."**

The 2026 cycle also saw the addition of seven new partner institutions, increasing the total to 28 local and international partners. This expansion broadens programme options and strengthens GOAL's ability to meet

the diverse educational needs of scholars.

Since 2020, GOAL has been a core component of the government's education agenda. Scholarships are now unlimited, with the stipulation that each individual may hold only one at a time to ensure fair and widespread access.

For those who missed the current application period, another opportunity is coming. The GOAL scholarship portal is expected to reopen in May 2026, giving more Guyanese a chance to pursue education and transform their future.

STAFF OF DHB AND NEW MACKENZIE-WISMAR BRIDGE ASSURED OF JOB SECURITY AMID MAJOR UPGRADES



Drone shot of the current Wismar-Mackenzie Bridge, Region Ten

Change can be unsettling, but for employees of Guyana's major bridges, the government is making it clear that progress will bring opportunity, not uncertainty.

Staff at the Mackenzie-Wismar bridge in Region 10 were reassured that they will retain their jobs when the US\$35 million toll-free bridge opens in June 2026. During a meeting at Watooka Lodge, Minister of Public Works Bishop Juan

Edghill emphasised that the Ministry is focused on hiring and retaining workers, not letting anyone go. "Staff should not panic," he said. "You will transfer with no loss of salary or benefits, and each person will be placed in a role suited to their skills and experience."

The announcement brought relief to many. Alyiah, one of the employees, said she believes the transfer will go smoothly,

allowing her to work more efficiently, while Abigail described being "elated" at the prospect of joining the ministry when the new bridge opens. Minister Edghill also encouraged staff to explore roles matching their qualifications to



[From right to left] Alyiah and Abigail

ensure opportunities for professional growth.

The new bridge promises to improve traffic flow, enhance commuter safety, and strengthen regional connectivity. For staff

who have long kept the existing crossing running, the transition represents continuity and recognition of their dedication.

Workers at the old Demerara Harbour Bridge (DHB) were similarly assured that their jobs remain secure amid plans to relocate parts of the bridge structure to new locations. Employees will be reassigned across the ministry based on their skills, with no one demoted or placed in roles below their expertise. "This is not finding work for people; this is about putting people where they are best suited," Minister Edghill said.

Under the new arrangements, several DHB employees will join the Ministry's Works Services Group (WSG), while others

will be assigned to the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD) or the Guyana National Shipping Corporation (GNSC). Technical staff, including welders, will form part of a special projects unit (SPU), while teams will oversee operations at the Sand Hills-Timehri bridge and the Leguan-Wakenaam link, where components of the old DHB will support new alignments.

Minister Edghill also confirmed that

Wayne Watson will remain director general of the DHB, overseeing operations at the Bharat Jagdeo Demerara River Bridge with a technical team responsible for maintenance and upkeep.

For employees of Guyana's major bridges, these plans promise job security, recognition, and the chance to continue contributing to projects that connect communities across the country.



Minister of Public Works, Bishop Juan Edghill, with representatives of Linden

SOESDYKE JUNCTION SET FOR MAKEOVER, VENDORS PROMISED A PLACE



Minister of Housing and Water Collin Croal

For years, the Soesdyke Junction along the Soesdyke/Linden Highway has been a familiar weekend stop, bustling with vendors, heavy traffic and commuters navigating their way through an often-congested

stretch of road. Now, the government says change is coming, with plans aimed at bringing order to the chaos while protecting the livelihoods that depend on the junction.

The plans were outlined by Minister of Housing and Water Collin Croal during the launch of the Hyde Park Homestead Project, where he announced that the junction will be regularised and redeveloped into a centralised economic hub. The goal, he said, is to create a safer, more organised space for commerce without displacing the vendors



Overhead shot of the Linden-Soesdyke highway

who currently operate there.

According to the minister, unregulated vending and traffic congestion, especially on weekends, have long posed challenges for both vendors and motorists. Under the new plan, vendors will be relocated

into a consolidated area designed to allow them to continue their businesses in a structured and supportive environment.

"We are not displacing or removing persons from their business," Minister Croal said. "We are putting them in

a consolidated area so they can operate in a more organised and supportive environment."

For vendors who rely on the junction for their daily income, the promise of security and stability is key. The redevelopment is expected to improve traffic flow along the busy highway, enhance safety for vendors and shoppers, and provide better services for commuters and visitors travelling the corridor.

The Soesdyke Junction project forms part of a broader \$7.5 billion government investment along the

Soesdyke/Linden Highway. That wider initiative includes new housing developments, infrastructure upgrades, improved water supply and preparatory works for emerging communities in the area.

Minister Croal said the junction upgrade is about balancing economic opportunity with long-term planning. Rather than removing informal activity, the government aims to integrate it into a sustainable framework that supports small businesses while accommodating growth along the corridor.

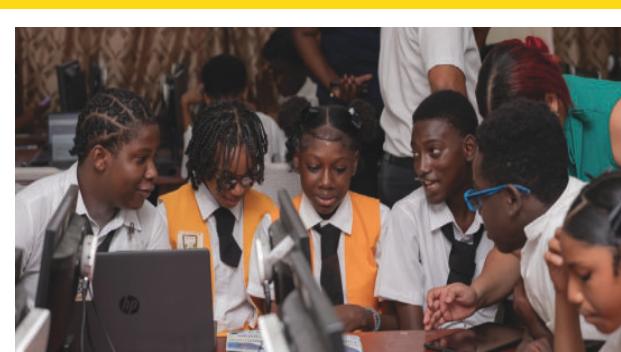
GUYANA DIGITAL SCHOOL TAKES LEARNING ON THE ROAD TO BOOST STUDENT REGISTRATION AND DIGITAL ACCESS

The Guyana Digital School (GDS) is taking learning beyond the screen and into classrooms across the country, as it rolls out a national outreach programme aimed at helping students better understand the platform and the opportunities it offers.

The initiative is designed to meet students where they are, answering questions, clearing up concerns, and making it easier for

those not yet registered to sign up on the spot.

One of the most recent stops on the outreach tour was Cummings Lodge Secondary School, where students participated in an interactive session with members of the GDS team. The visit sparked lively engagement as students explored how digital learning can support their studies, strengthen academic performance, and open new pathways



The exercise at the Cummings Lodge Secondary School

for success.

For many students, the session provided not only information, but practical support, with step-by-step

guidance offered to help them complete the registration process and begin accessing online learning resources.

The outreach aligns

with the Ministry of Education's wider push to expand access to quality education through modern, flexible learning models that encourage student development and academic achievement.

The GDS team is expected to continue visiting schools across Guyana in the coming weeks, building stronger connections with students, teachers, and school administrators while promoting the

benefits of digital education.

The Guyana Digital School, a flagship initiative conceptualised under the leadership of His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, was created to provide accessible, high-quality learning through technology. By complementing traditional classroom instruction, the platform continues to play a growing role in shaping a more inclusive and innovative education system for students nationwide.

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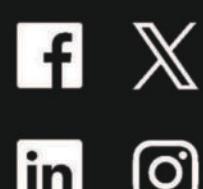


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MINERS CAN PROSPER, BUT MUST OPERATE LEGALLY - PRESIDENT ALI TELLS REGION SEVEN MINERS



The meeting in Bartica

In Bartica and Puruni, miners who spend their lives chasing opportunity in remote camps heard an unusual message from the Head of State: success is welcome, once it is built on legality and stability.

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, engaging small and medium-scale miners in Region Seven recently, assured operators that his government wants "every single one" of them to prosper in the long-term, even as new reforms are being introduced to end long-standing land-use disputes within the sector.

"I want every single one of you to be successful. I want you to get wealthy. I want you to get prosperous," the President told miners. "But I also want you to do what is right in accordance with the law. That's all we're asking."

Speaking first in Puruni Landing, President Ali encouraged miners to declare gold legally through the Guyana Gold Board, stressing that proper

declarations can unlock financing and business growth.

"When you declare your gold legally... those declaration slips will help you to get loans... We want you to be empowered," he said.

To support operators, he announced that teams will be deployed to assist miners with documentation, digital identification, bank account registration and the regularisation of operations. He also outlined investments planned for Puruni, including the expansion of healthcare services, the establishment of a police outpost, improved firefighting capacity, youth recreational facilities and the introduction of the Guyana Digital School.



The meeting at Paruni Landing

loans of up to \$3 million without collateral.

Shortly after, at a similar engagement in Bartica, President Ali turned his attention to the disputes that have long plagued the sector. He said informal and inconsistent arrangements for working another party's land have fuelled uncertainty and conflict, and must now come to an end.

"This complaint and this tug-of-war must come to an end," he urged, calling on the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association to meet with small miners and finalise an agreement within two weeks.

To address the issue, the President announced plans for a single, standardised contract that would govern all land-use agreements across mining. Whether compensation is structured as a fixed monthly fee or a percentage of production, he said the terms must be clearly defined and

consistently applied for small, medium and large operators alike.

He warned that miners who attempt side deals outside the agreed framework would have no grounds for complaints.

Beyond disputes, President Ali also highlighted inefficiencies in land use, arguing that it makes little economic sense for hundreds of small miners to operate in scattered locations. He outlined plans to bring miners together into groups or consortia, allocating block lands to those groupings so government support, including roads and access works, can be delivered more efficiently.

Region Seven, he noted, remains a clear example of mining's economic importance. Small and medium-scale miners accounted for 41 per cent of total gold declarations last year, producing more than 105,000 ounces and generating approximately \$88



The meeting at Paruni Landing



The meeting at Paruni Landing



The meeting at Paruni Landing

billion in economic activity. Direct employment exceeds 7,600 people, with total jobs linked to the sector approaching 15,000.

"These are real numbers," the President said, pointing to the many businesses mining supports, from transportation and retail



The meeting at Paruni Landing



The meeting at Paruni Landing

MABARUMA AND MORAWHANNA GET MODERN FERRY FACILITIES



New Mabaruma and Morawhanna Stellings completed

For passengers waiting with groceries, supplies, and luggage along Region One's riverbanks, ferry travel is part of everyday survival. The completion of two major ferry stellings in Mabaruma and Morawhanna promises to make those journeys safer, faster, and far more comfortable for the

people of Barima-Waini. The Ministry of Public Works has announced the completion of the two facilities, representing more than \$4 billion in infrastructure investment aimed at transforming river transport across the district.

Minister of Public

Works Bishop Juan Edghill, alongside Minister of Amerindian Affairs Sarah Browne-Shadeek, recently inspected the newly completed Mabaruma Ferry Stelling. Built by R. Bassoo & Son Construction Company at a cost of \$2.16 billion, the structure is a precast, prestressed concrete facility designed to support modern Roll-on/Roll-off (RoRo) vessels.

With a link-span bridge capable of accommodating ferries such as the M.V. Ma

Lisha and the Kalliopi N, the stelling is expected to significantly improve the movement of heavy cargo, vehicles, and passengers—an essential boost for a region where waterways serve as the primary transport corridor.

Beyond its technical strength, the new Mabaruma terminal was also built with passenger comfort in mind. The facility includes seating for 60 persons, male and female washrooms, a baby-changing station, staff offices, and a cargo storage bond. Two

canteens, a public benab, and toll booths have also been added to streamline operations and improve the travel experience.

Minister Edghill was also briefed on the completion of the Morawhanna Ferry Stelling, another major project executed by the same contractor at a cost of \$1.9 billion. That facility provides seating for 50 passengers and offers similar modern amenities.

Together, the two stellings mark a significant upgrade in Barima-Waini's

transport network, enhancing safety, efficiency, and accessibility for residents, businesses, and river operators who depend on reliable ferry services.

The investments reflect a commitment to ensuring that hinterland communities benefit from the same level of infrastructure development as coastal regions, improving daily life and strengthening economic activity throughout Region One.

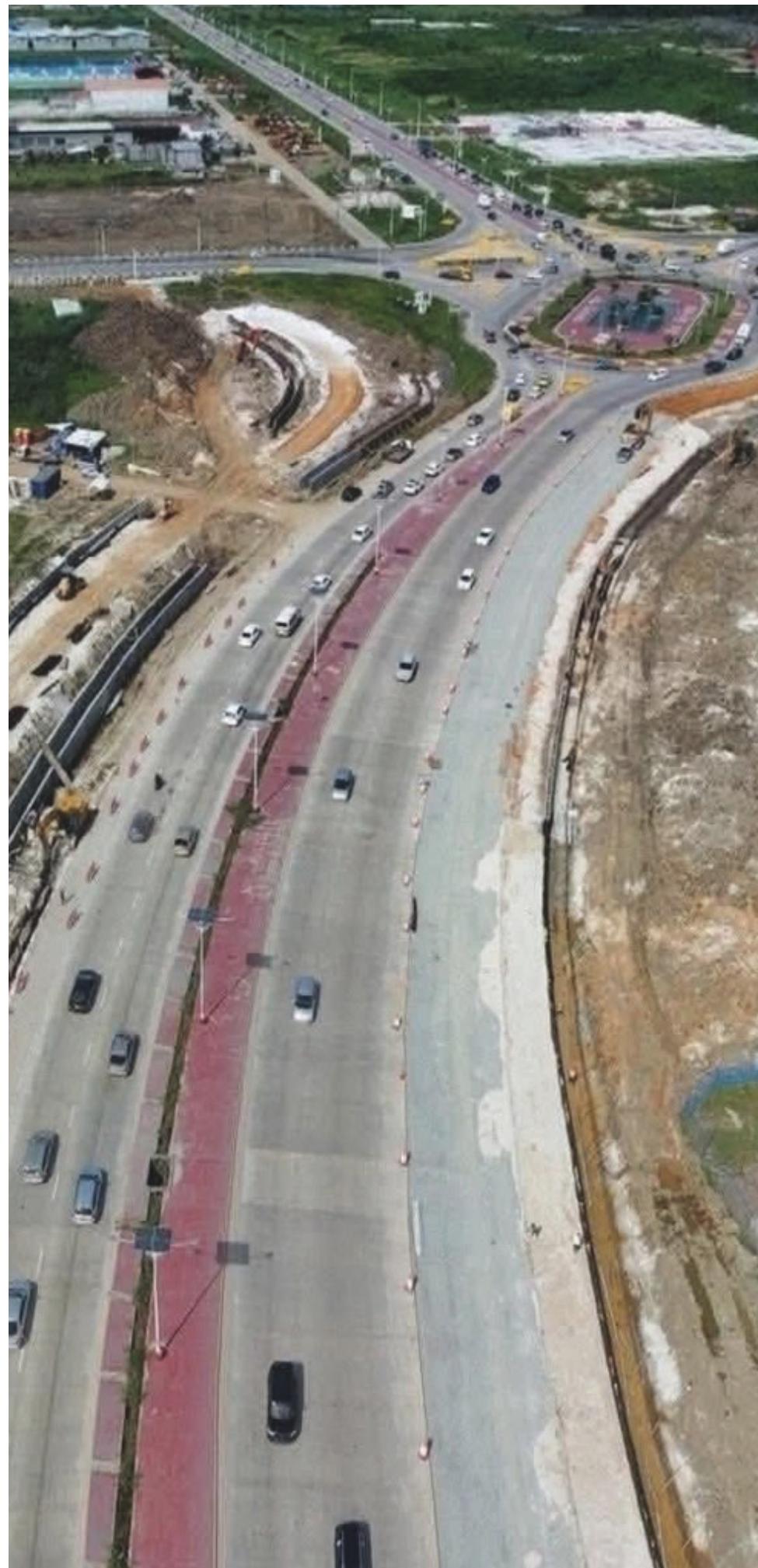


Guyanese DIASPORA DIGEST

KEEPING THE DIASPORA INFORMED EDITION 112

SIX-LANE UPGRADE UNDERWAY FOR HEROES HIGHWAY

Work is moving at an accelerated pace on the expansion of the Heroes Highway, as the major artery is transformed into a six-lane roadway. The critical stretch from Massy Road to the Eccles Roundabout is expected to further reduce commute times and improve daily travel for thousands of motorists.



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Pres Ali unveils bold energy-driven transformation agenda at energy conference

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali declared that Guyana is not “sleep-walking into the future” but boldly engineering a model of development that converts energy wealth into sustainable prosperity.

While delivering the feature address on Tuesday at the Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo at the Guyana Marriott Hotel, Georgetown, President Ali painted a sweeping vision of a modern, connected and technology-driven Guyana.

It is one, he said, in which artificial intelligence strengthens healthcare, every child has access to digital learning, government services operate at the “touch of a button,” and infrastructure links coast and hinterland seamlessly.

“Energy is the capacity to do work,” the head of state said. “And in a national context, that energy is people, technology, capital, partnership, but importantly, ideas. Ideas are what create the momentum to move this country forward.”

Referencing a real-time survey conducted among participants, President Ali noted that while 65 per cent of respondents believe the world is not heading in the right direction, more than 90 per cent believe Guyana is moving forward positively.

“We cannot be satisfied when nearly 10 per cent still believe we are not heading in the right direction,” he said. “That means we must continue working to ensure every citizen is part of this journey.”

He emphasised that development must translate into measurable eco-



A section of the delegates attending the Guyana Energy Conference 2026

nomic value and improved human development indicators, including life expectancy, education attainment and income per capita, all of which have shown improvement.

The president outlined five strategic pillars through which Guyana is leveraging its rapidly expanding oil and gas sector:

Strengthening national and regional energy security

Building resilient food production systems

Driving economic diversification
Creating sustainable high-value jobs

Expanding infrastructure through strategic financing

He stressed that prosperity is not

achieved through spending alone but through “spending plus strategic alliances, integration and partnership.”

Guyana, he said, is building a model that does not postpone development.

“Yes, we have a Natural Resource Fund. But simultaneously, we are moving at lightning speed with infrastructure development. We are developing a global model, one that adopts developmental prosperity with an eye on sustainability.”

President Ali highlighted ongoing and planned investments in Wales, including the Gas-to-Energy Project, gas processing facilities, fertiliser and industrial development, and plans for a scalable data centre to position Guyana

as a regional technology hub.

He also underscored the importance of transport and logistics integration, including deep-water port development, enhanced connectivity with northern Brazil, and proposals for new municipal airports in Lethem and Region Six, as part of positioning Guyana as a gateway between South America and the Caribbean.

“Our neighbours are not here by accident,” he said, pointing to Brazil’s massive agricultural output and the opportunities for integration. “Our long-term sustainability requires integration with the region’s economy.”

Human capital development remains central to the government’s strategy. The president noted that Guyana has already graduated its first cohort of locally trained offshore deep water drilling specialists and is expanding technical institutes in oil and gas, agriculture, construction, and hospitality.

From coding programmes in primary schools to AI-driven public services and cybersecurity investments, he said the country is building a citizen-centric digital ecosystem.

“We have to make the investments for tomorrow today,” he emphasised.

President Ali reaffirmed that Guyana’s transformation is grounded not only in infrastructure and energy, but in people, culture, technology and faith.

“Our investments will secure energy independence, strengthen food production, propel industrialization,

Guyana, Suriname could develop oil resources jointly

GUYANA has signalled its position to collaborate with neighbouring Suriname to jointly develop natural-gas resources, President, Dr Irfaan Ali has said.

Addressing this year’s Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo on Tuesday morning, the Head of State disclosed that Guyana is keen on investing in a second gas plant in its Berbice county that neighbours Suriname.

“We have to make the investments for tomorrow today. That is why, in all of this development, security and investment in security is critical,” the President told stakeholders.

In addition to the gas plant, the country intends to build a deep-water port that will support regional transhipments and greater industrial growth for the region.

“If you look at what we are doing, you would see that we are on that path of integration, and on the path of integration for [the] Berbice gas project,” he said adding:

“We want to do this with our friends in Suriname, and we are hoping that our friends in Suriname can make

a decision to join us by bringing their gas with our gas, so we can move from a medium-sized project to a larger-scale project for both of our countries and for the region.”

Dr Ali noted that investors have signalled their readiness to support this massive project.

“Our investors are waiting for those decisions, and those decisions are critical for your future and our future. We want this partnership,” he asserted.

He reiterated that while building the relevant infrastructure is important, building human capital, strengthening technology, and integrating intelligence services with like-minded partners will achieve regional and global energy targets.

To this end, he pointed to a collaboration with northern Brazil to position Guyana as a transhipment hub.

“Just like we are partnering with our friends in Roraima and Brazil on transport and logistics and the food partnership, so too we are patterning on building a security platform that would allow our people to be successful,” he said.



Irfaan Ali

President Ali had last year met with Suriname’s President Jennifer Gerlings-Simons.

The two Heads of State had then reaffirmed the strong bonds of friendship and co-operation that exist be-

tween Suriname and Guyana, rooted in their shared values and aspirations, cultural ties, and geographic proximity. They expressed their mutual commitment to further deepen the bilateral partnership to promote peace, security, and prosperity for the peoples of both countries.

Dr Ali had previously outlined an extensive development agenda to position Guyana’s Berbice county as a major economic and industrial hub.

Among the flagship projects driving this transformation are the establishment of a deep-water port, the new high-span Berbice River Bridge, and the Corentyne River Bridge, which will link Guyana and Suriname. Currently, the two countries are connected by a ferry service, but the President said the new bridge will drastically enhance cross-border movement and commerce.

This year’s energy conference is being held under the theme: ‘Building tomorrow’s future, today.’ In the coming days Suriname’s Minister of Oil, Gas and Environment, Patrick Brundings, is expected to join several key discussions.



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