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Mia promises cost-of-living relief

The Barbados Labour Party (BLP) has pledged cost-of-living relief through targeted cash credits and tax measures if re-elected, rejecting broad value-added tax (VAT) cuts it says may not translate into lower prices.

BLP political leader Prime Minister Mia Mottley said the approach was designed to put money directly back into people's pockets.

Addressing supporters at Golden Square on Saturday night during the launch of the party's manifesto, Mottley said the BLP had deliberately rejected calls for VAT reductions, arguing that such measures offered no guarantee of relief for the most vulnerable.

"Everybody deserves the money back in their pockets and not with some arbitrary reduction of VAT that you don't know whether the man will reduce the prices in the shops or not or the services," she said.

Instead, Mottley said the party had opted for what she described as creative and responsible solutions, building on measures implemented since taking office in 2018.

She recalled that when the BLP returned to office in 2019, the reverse tax credit stood at \$650 and was available only to those earning \$1500 a month or less.

Barbadians go to the polls next Tuesday (February 11) in a snap election called by Prime Minister Mottley.



Guyana, Belize deepen sugar ties

BELIZE and Guyana are moving to deepen cooperation in the sugar industry, Belize Prime Minister John Briceño said on Monday during a sitting of the Belizean National Assembly attended by Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali.

Reflecting on a shared history shaped by sugar production and colonial development, Prime Minister Briceño said the time has come to transition from those legacy models.

He announced that Belize and Guyana will jointly facilitate private sector investment in the refined sugar industry, while reaffirming sugar's continued importance within both countries' agricultural sectors.

"We share a history shaped by sugar. Fields were ploughed and cane cut by indentured labour and sugar exported to Europe by nationalists. As the industry evolved, it provided jobs, educated our children, earned for an exchange and drove the development of our colony, colonial societies. But that was yesterday. Today, we will jointly facilitate private sector investment in the refined sugar sector," Prime Minister Briceño, pictured with President Ali above, said.

He also assured investors that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) will be positioned as an assured market for refined sugar produced by Belizean and Guyanese producers. Back in December 2025, GAICO Construction Inc. signed a Joint Venture Agreement with Caribbean Sugar Refinery Inc. to establish a new white sugar refinery in Guyana.

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Feds expand Black business program

By Milan Maharaj

LJI REPORTER

The federal government issued a statement announcing the extension of its Black Entrepreneurship Program, saying it will continue to support Black-owned businesses across Canada through additional funding and resources. The government said the extension is intended to help address barriers faced by Black entrepreneurs and expand access to business support systems.

The announcement of the program's extension was made on February 3, 2026 in recognition of Black History Month by Rechie Valdez, Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism). The government said the extended funding will also allow the program to continue offering its loan, mentorship, and training components over the coming years.

The Black Entrepreneurship Program was first launched in 2021 with the mission of increasing access to mentorship, financing, and business support for Black entrepreneurs. Government figures show more than 24,000 Black entrepreneurs have received support through the program since its creation.

According to the federal government, the

Black Entrepreneurship Loan Fund, a key component of the program, has approved over 800 loans which total to over \$70 million in financing for Black business owners across Canada. This program's elements include a loan fund for business financing aid, a knowledge hub with resources connected to Black entrepreneurship, and an ecosystem fund which directs support to community-based organizations.

In remarks released by the federal government, Valdez said the program's extension is designed to build on progress that has been made prior to the program, along with helping more Black entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses in Canada. She noted that Black women and 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs in particular have faced a large amount of challenges in accessing support and capital to open businesses.

The announcement by the government also referenced an expansion made to the program in fall of 2025. At that time, the government said it would invest \$189 million over the next five years to continue broadening the initiative's support system.

Government officials said the extended program seeks to strengthen inclusive economic growth by increasing access to mentorship, capital, and services for underrepresented entrepreneurs nationwide.

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KEEPING THE DIASPORA INFORMED EDITION 111

RECORD \$1.558 TRILLION 2026 BUDGET PUTS PEOPLE FIRST

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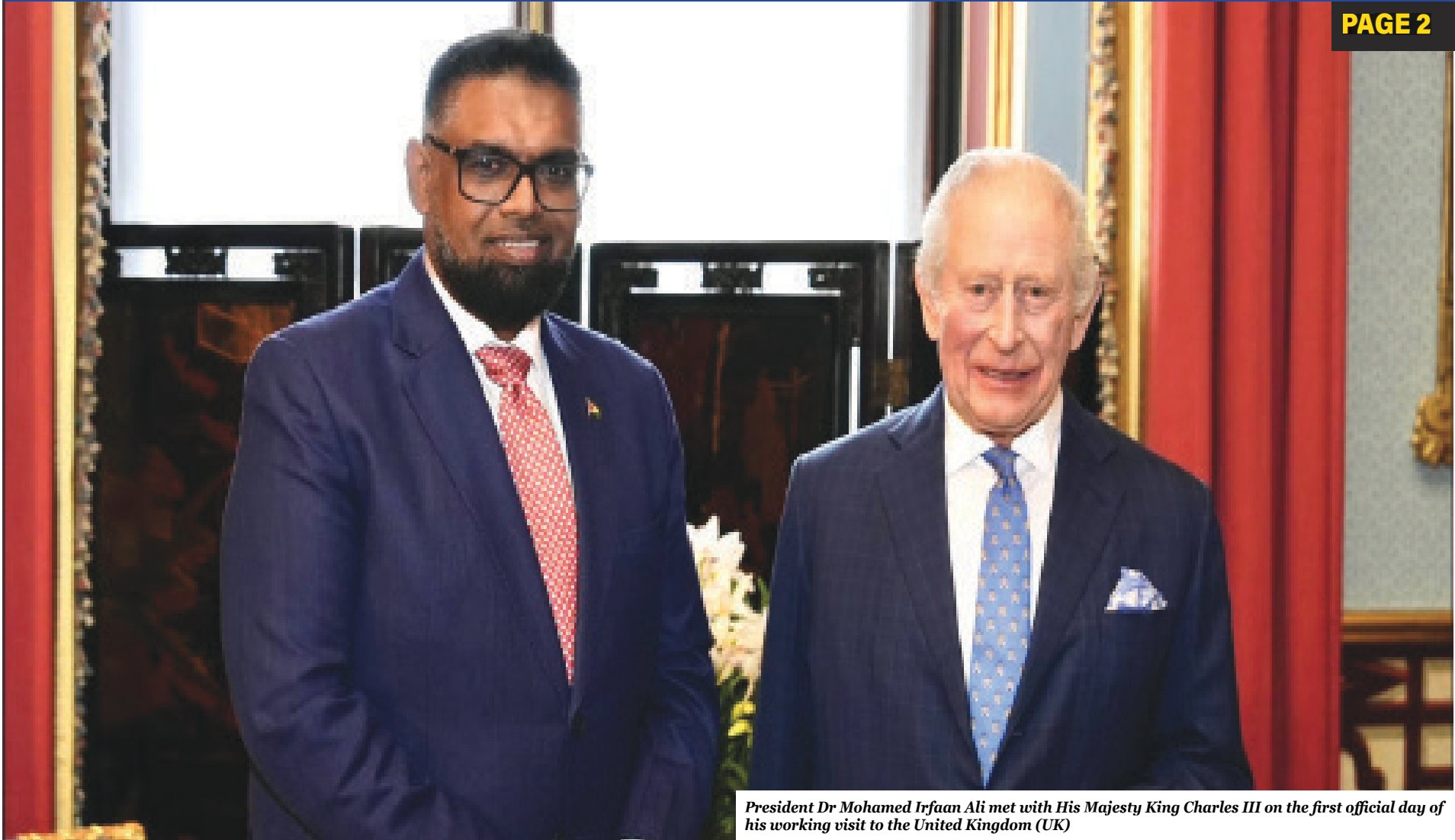


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- COMMUNITY WORKERS' STIPEND: \$50K | CHILD SUPPORT: \$85K/CHILD

- INCOME TAX THRESHOLD: \$140K
- LOW-INCOME MORTGAGE CEILING: \$30M | HOUSING SUBSIDIES: \$7.5B

PRESIDENT ALI'S UK VISIT STRENGTHENS GUYANA'S GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT

PAGE 2



President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali met with His Majesty King Charles III on the first official day of his working visit to the United Kingdom (UK)

PRESIDENT ALI'S UK VISIT STRENGTHENS GUYANA'S GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT

Exciting opportunities for Guyana's sustainable development agenda took centre stage during President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali's recent visit to the United Kingdom, where a series of high-level engagements focused on advancing climate resilience, biodiversity protection and long-term economic growth for the benefit of all Guyanese.

In a video released on his official social media platforms, President Ali said the visit was guided by Guyana's long-term national interests and highlighted the country's expanding leadership role in global environmental and



President Ali and his delegation met with The King's Foundation to advance work on urban renewal initiatives

ecosystem initiatives.

A major highlight of the visit was a meeting with His Majesty King Charles III, whom President Ali described as **"not only an onlooker in what we are doing, but an active participant and promoter of Guyana's**

work in climate, environment, forestry and biodiversity."

The President said discussions were productive, with King Charles reaffirming his support for Guyana's progress in forestry management, biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.

The visit also advanced discussions on innovative financing mechanisms for biodiversity, including the development of a market-based biodiversity model supported by sustainable and predictable funding. President Ali underscored

the strong links between biodiversity, pharmaceuticals, indigenous culture and traditional knowledge, noting that Guyana is positioning itself as a global focal point for biodiversity action, research and innovation.

As part of the UK engagements, President Ali and his delegation, held discussions with Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey. The talks highlighted alignment between Guyana's environmental priorities and Commonwealth initiatives, including plans to establish a Commonwealth Centre of Excellence on Biodiversity. The proposed centre would be integrated with other international institutions to address biodiversity loss while supporting sustainable economic growth.

President Ali noted that sectors such as environmental services, biodiversity, forestry and climate-related industries, much like

digitalisation and artificial intelligence, will be key drivers of the global economy in the years ahead. **"We are positioning Guyana ahead of that time, future-proofing our economy for our people, for sustainability and resilience, and for the world,"** he said.

the UK's decision to become a signatory to the Guyana-led Global Biodiversity Alliance, launched in July last year.

Additional meetings were held with UK Export Finance CEO Tim Read to explore support for major infrastructure projects, including the expansion of the Cheddi



President Ali and UK's Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy with the signed document

The President also met with the United Kingdom's Deputy Prime Minister, the Right Honourable David Lammy, the son of Guyanese immigrants. Discussions focused on Guyana and the UK's shared commitment to biodiversity protection and climate leadership. President Ali welcomed

Jagan International Airport terminal. Discussions with The King's Foundation focused on urban renewal initiatives such as the Georgetown Restoration and Revitalisation Programme and the Estate of Harmony project in Moraikobai, Region Five.



President Ali meeting with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey

SINGLE MOTHERS MOVE INTO HYDE PARK HOMES

In the Yarrowkabra area, a quiet transformation is underway: new homes, shade houses, and opportunities are giving families a reason to dream bigger. The Hyde Park (Yarrowkabra) Homestead Project, launched along the Soesdyke/Linden Highway, is already changing lives, especially for single mothers who have long struggled to secure stable housing.



Ministers Kwame McCoy and Vanessa Benn tour one of the fully furnished homes to showcase how the space can be both warm and inviting

described the allocation process as smooth and hassle-free, highlighting

"This initiative is a real help for single mothers like me," Rodrigues said. **"It will significantly improve our lives and give our children a stable place to grow."**

The Yarrowkabra development, a key part of the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) Government's national housing strategy under Budget 2026, will see 500 housing units built on 100 acres. Fifty homes have been completed, 25 are half finished, and construction on 37 more units is set to begin soon, bringing the

total to 102 homes under development.

Each homestead includes a core house paired with a shade house, allowing families to grow crops year-round. This feature provides not only food security, but also the opportunity to earn supplemental income.

For Rochelle Wellington, a teacher and mother of three, the programme is the culmination of more than a decade-long wait for a house lot. She plans to grow celery, tomatoes, and broccoli in her shade house to help reduce household expenses and generate income.

Minister of Housing Collin Croal said the project reflects the government's commitment to people-centred development and women's empowerment. **"These are not abstract figures; they represent real families, real opportunities, and**

real progress," he said.

Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister, Kwame McCoy, emphasised that safe, stable homes provide dignity and opportunity for families to thrive. The ministers, along with officials from the Central Housing and Planning Authority and NAREI, toured completed homes to showcase how functional spaces can also feel warm and inviting.

The development

improvement subsidies announced in Budget 2026. Beneficiaries were screened by financial institutions, prioritising those without land or housing.

The project also includes road, water, and electricity infrastructure, part of a \$7.5 billion investment along the Soesdyke/Linden corridor. With plans for housing, business, tourism, and investment, the area is being positioned as a major growth and sustainable



The first 27 beneficiaries were allocated homes at Hyde Park



President Ali meeting with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey

Claudia Rodrigues, a single mother of two, was among 27 women assigned homes at the recent launch. She

that beneficiaries receive not only a house, but also financial support through grants to assist with construction.

is implemented through a public-private partnership with Duravilla Homes and supported by expanded mortgage financing, higher low-income mortgage ceilings, and home

community hub. For Rodrigues, Wellington, and dozens of other women, the Hyde Park project is a foundation for stability, opportunity, and a better future.

RECORD \$1.558 TRILLION 2026 BUDGET PUTS PEOPLE FIRST



Minister Singh presenting the 2026 Budget to the National Assembly



The government side of the house



Minister Singh arriving for the presentation of the budget

Guyana’s largest-ever budget was unveiled on Monday, January 26, with Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, presenting a \$1.558 trillion plan designed to turn the country’s robust economic growth into tangible benefits for all citizens.

The first budget of the current People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) administration since its landslide September 2025 election victory represents a 12.7 per cent increase over last year and a remarkable 307 per cent rise from the \$383.1 billion budget of 2021. Its theme, “Putting People First,” reflects the government’s commitment to inclusive development and broad-based opportunity.

Dr Singh highlighted that Guyana’s economy expanded by 19.3 per cent in 2025, with the non-oil sector growing 14.3 per cent across agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, and services. “Budget 2026 is designed to translate sustained economic expansion into investments that improve livelihoods, strengthen communities, and modernise infrastructure,” he said.

Key allocations focus on homes, education, and agriculture. Over \$159 billion will advance housing initiatives, providing affordable homes and upgrading regional infrastructure. Education is allotted \$183.6 billion for school construction, teacher development, skills training, and scholarships, while agriculture, including agro-processing and livestock development, is allocated \$113.2 billion to enhance food security and rural livelihoods.

Social protection measures remain central, with \$78.3 billion to support children, women, the elderly, and vulnerable groups, and \$7.5 billion to Amerindian communities. Infrastructure development continues at scale, including \$196.1 billion for roads and bridges, \$119.4 billion for energy projects, and \$11.2 billion for hinterland and river transport improvements.

To ease the cost of living, income tax threshold is set to rise to \$140,000, the old-age pension is earmarked at \$46,000 per month, public assistance \$25,000, and a National Cash Grant of \$100,000 per adult will again be distributed. SMEs, women, youth, and persons with disabilities will access zero-interest loans through the Guyana Development Bank, alongside mentorship and co-investment schemes.

Drawing on Guyana’s oil wealth, the budget anticipates US\$2.4 billion in profit oil from the Stabroek Block and US\$375 million in royalties,

while maintaining no new taxes.

As the country approaches its 60th independence anniversary, Budget 2026 signals a new phase in national development, one that channels economic growth directly into everyday lives, ensuring opportunity, security, and prosperity for every Guyanese.

BUDGET 2026 AT A GLANCE

Household Relief & Social Support

National Cash Grant: \$100,000 per adult

Old-Age Pension: \$41,000 → \$46,000 per month

Public Assistance: \$22,000 → \$25,000

Community Workers’ Stipend: \$40,000 → \$50,000

Child Support Package: \$85,000 per child (Because We Care + Transport + Uniforms)

Income Tax Threshold: \$130,000 → \$140,000

Housing & Water — \$159.1B

Affordable housing projects and regional upgrades

Low-income mortgage ceiling: \$20M → \$30M

Housing improvement subsidies: \$7.5B

Net property tax removed

Education — \$183.6B

40+ schools completed or under construction (\$24.3B)

Scholarships (GOAL & UG): \$26.1B

School feeding: \$7B (210,500+ students)

CSEC/CAPE fees

covered for 8 subjects

Healthcare — \$161.1B

Regional hospital upgrades & Ogle Pediatric/Maternity Hospital (\$24B)

GPHC improvements (\$1.5B)

Drugs & medical supplies: \$34.9B

Emergency medical system: \$3.7B

Electronic Health Records: \$764M

Roads, Bridges & other Infrastructure — \$196.1B

Major highways & new bridges

Community and hinterland road development

Safe Road Intelligent System: \$382.9M

Agriculture & Food Security — \$113.2B

Sugar, rice, livestock, fisheries, and agro-processing support

Drainage & irrigation: \$81.9B

Coconut industry: \$195M

Energy — \$119.4B

Gas-to-energy, GPL upgrades, renewable energy projects

Amaila Falls Hydropower: project resuscitated

Tourism, Culture & Jobs — \$5.9B

Hospitality & Tourism Institute: \$2.2B

Orange Economy & cultural markets: \$3.7B

SMEs, youth & women: zero-interest loans & co-investment schemes

GOVT PROJECTS 16.2% GROWTH IN 2026

Guyana is set to continue its rapid economic expansion in 2026, with the government projecting overall GDP growth of 16.2 per cent and non-oil growth of 10.8 per cent under its record-breaking \$1.558 trillion Budget 2026.

Presented by Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, the budget, titled “Putting People First”, signals a focus on broad-based development and social investment, even as the global economy faces uneven growth and uncertainty.

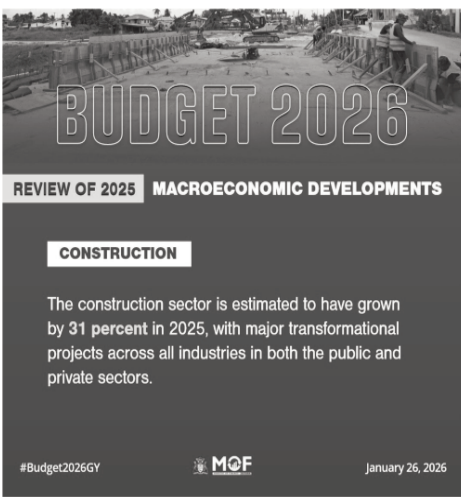
The country’s economic resilience stems from a dual strategy: leveraging

its booming oil and gas sector while simultaneously strengthening the non-oil economy. In 2025, Guyana’s overall economy grew 19.3 per cent, with non-oil growth of 14.3 per cent. Agriculture, mining, and construction were key drivers outside the petroleum sector, reflecting a deliberate effort to diversify economic activity. Sugar and rice production, targeted at 100,041 tonnes and 827,500 tonnes respectively in 2026, highlight sustained investment in traditional industries alongside the extractive boom.

The oil and gas sector continues to underpin fiscal stability,

with the Stabroek Block projected to produce nearly 307 million barrels, generating an estimated US\$2.4 billion in profit oil and US\$375 million in royalties. This revenue underpins both the \$779.6 billion Public Sector Investment Programme and robust social initiatives, including cash grants, increased stipends for community workers, and dedicated development funds for Amerindian communities.

Dr Singh note that the government’s approach balances rapid growth with inclusivity. Construction is expected to surge 25.4 per cent, services 6.8 per cent, and manufacturing 12.9 per cent, with a focus on both employment-intensive



sectors and high-value economic activity. Inflation is targeted at 2.5 per cent, reflecting an intent to maintain macroeconomic stability while supporting private sector expansion.

Budget 2026 underscores a broader strategy: using oil wealth to fund structural

investments and social programmes that can sustain growth beyond the petroleum cycle. Dr Singh framed the plan as more than numbers, emphasising homeownership, education, and opportunity as core priorities. The budget positions Guyana not

only for continued wealth generation but also for a people-centred growth model, demonstrating the government’s commitment to translating macroeconomic gains into tangible improvements in the daily lives of citizens.

PRESIDENT ALI CHAMPIONS CITIZENS IN BUDGET 2026

Speaking during a series of live broadcasts and a special discussion with an all-women panel of business leaders and economists, President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali described Budget 2026 as a continuation of sound fiscal policy that balances social support with economic growth and resilience against global shocks.

“Budget 2026 is designed not only to maintain relief for citizens, but also to stimulate growth, create opportunities, and strengthen the economy against external pressures,” President Ali said.

A central feature of the budget is the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups, particularly persons with disabilities and children with special

needs. Measures include accessibility standards in transportation, education, healthcare, and public facilities, along with expanded day and night-care centres to support families while ensuring livelihoods. For children with special needs, the government is investing in modern schools, teacher training, and additional support staff across all regions.

President Ali also highlighted the role of the Guyana Development Bank, which will provide interest-free, collateral-free seed capital to start-ups, particularly for women and young entrepreneurs. The Bank will also provide mentorship, technical guidance, and incubation support to ensure sustainable business growth.

Budget 2026 caters



The meeting on the city’s sanitation

for continued support for households, with measures such as raising the income tax threshold to \$140,000, removing over 5,000 citizens from the tax net, and maintaining VAT and duty reductions on key vehicles, agriculture, and agro-processing inputs. These initiatives are expected to inject over \$100 billion into households, boosting disposable income and strengthening family livelihoods.

The President

emphasised that the budget also sustains subsidies on electricity, water, fuel, and freight costs, maintaining price stability while encouraging local production. VAT on food, medical supplies, and farming inputs continues to be zero-rated, lowering costs for households and producers alike.

Highlighting Guyana’s strong economic fundamentals, President Ali noted the country’s 19.3 per cent overall economic

growth in 2025, with non-oil GDP expanding 14.3 per cent across key sectors including agriculture, bauxite, gold, manufacturing, construction, and professional services. Banking and financial indicators, including rising international reserves, reduced non-performing loans, and a declining public debt-to-GDP ratio, point to a resilient and diversified economy.

President Ali also referenced

improvements in governance, economic freedom, and social cohesion, citing stronger institutions, reduced political instability, and declining human flight and brain drain. These developments, he said, provide the fiscal space to sustain relief while supporting wealth creation, entrepreneurship, and inclusive growth.

“Budget 2026 continues the tradition of putting people first, ensuring stability, supporting families, and creating opportunities for all Guyanese,” President Ali said, highlighting the government’s commitment to sustainable development and a stronger, more inclusive economy.

POLICE SERVICE COMMISSION CHAIRMAN, PATRICK FINDLAY, PASSES AWAY

Police Service Commission chairman, Patrick Findlay, passes away

Chairman of the Police Service Commission, Pastor Patrick Findlay, has passed away, leaving a legacy of calm leadership, fairness, and dedicated public service. His death was confirmed on January 30 by his daughter, Suelle Findlay-Williams, Head

of the Press and Publicity Unit in the Office of the President.

“Dad’s passing is sudden, and he will be greatly missed for his kindness and enduring faith,” she said.

President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali paid tribute to Pastor Findlay, describing him as a man of principle and integrity whose life was **“a quiet sermon**

in service”. He noted that Pastor Findlay brought balance and a steady moral compass to every responsibility, ensuring that authority was always exercised with compassion and fairness.

Appointed Chairman of the Police Service Commission in 2022, Pastor Findlay carried the sensitive mandate of overseeing the nation’s police service

with dignity, restraint, and moral seriousness. In every role he held, he demonstrated calm leadership and a commitment to the public good.

Beyond his official duties, Pastor Findlay was a devoted Christian and family man, guided by humility, patience, and integrity. His faith shaped his interactions with people, and his example inspired both



Chairman of the Police Service Commission, Pastor Patrick Findlay, has passed away

colleagues and citizens alike.

President Ali extended heartfelt condolences to Pastor Findlay’s family,

congregation, colleagues, and friends, noting that his passing is a profound loss for the nation.

BUDGET 2026 GETS BROAD SUPPORT FROM BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Major stakeholders in Guyana’s private sector have expressed broad support for Budget 2026, describing it as a practical, forward-looking plan that balances investment, social development, and private enterprise growth. Business leaders said the measures, presented by Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, signal confidence in the country’s economic direction and provide reassurance for companies planning expansion over the coming years.

GCCI WELCOMES TAX RELIEF AND INVESTMENT INCENTIVES

The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) highlighted several initiatives expected to benefit businesses, including the removal of corporate taxes on agriculture and agro-processing enterprises, expanded export allowances for value-added timber products, and the elimination of VAT on locally produced furniture, jewellery, and imported security equipment.

GCCI also welcomed the US\$100 million allocation to a zero-interest development

bank, which will support micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through financing, mentorship, and technical guidance.

“The Association anticipates ongoing collaboration with policymakers to



Board Member Peter Pompey (far left), along with the GMSA’s President, Rafeek Khan, Vice President, Ramsay Ali, Executive Director, Govindra Raghubansi, and board member Zahid Khan

support a stable, competitive, and diversified economy,” GCCI said, noting that government investment in housing, agriculture, agro-processing, and technology would provide businesses with certainty for expansion and investment decisions over the next five years and beyond.

PRIVATE SECTOR COMMISSION SEES A BALANCED BUDGET

The Private Sector Commission (PSC) described the 2026

budget as “balanced and forward-looking,” citing incentives aimed at strengthening Special Development Zones, supporting SME growth, and encouraging local production. Measures to reduce costs for businesses and households, such as VAT

and duty exemptions on vehicles, hybrid cars, ATVs, and outboard engines, are expected to generate broad economic benefits.

Social initiatives, including increased grants for children, pensions, and cash transfers, are projected to inject \$100 billion into disposable income, stimulating consumer demand and supporting local commerce.

MANUFACTURERS ANTICIPATE EXPANSION AND LOWER COSTS

Industry-specific

groups also voiced strong support. The Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA) expressed optimism for the year ahead, with President Rafeek Khan highlighting the government’s plan to establish Special Development Zones, which would reduce

manufacturing costs while improving efficiency and competitiveness.

“With the development zones, manufacturers can benefit from consolidated hubs across the country, where like-minded businesses operate in shared spaces,” Khan said. “This will also help lower electricity costs, making our products more competitive.”

Khan added that the zones would enhance monitoring of product standards and quality,

long a challenge for local manufacturers. GMSA Vice President Ramsay Ali described the measures as a “game changer,” particularly for agro-processing, where improved access to financing and market expansion opportunities are expected to drive growth.

JEWELLERY SECTOR WELCOMES BOOST TO COMPETITIVENESS

The removal of VAT on locally produced furniture and jewellery was widely welcomed, with manufacturers noting it will immediately reduce costs for consumers and help local products compete more effectively with imports. The Guyana Jewellery Association (GJA) praised the VAT removal as a meaningful investment in domestic manufacturing that strengthens local value chains and recognises the craftsmanship of Guyanese artisans.

Harinand Persaud, proprietor of King’s Jewellery, said the savings would be passed directly to customers. “The removal of this VAT will make us more competitive. These savings will go straight to the customer,” he said, noting global gold prices

remain high. Vead Persaud, owner of LSM Jewellers and Vice Chairman of the Guyana Gold Jewellers Association, added: “One of the biggest issues in this industry has been the VAT addition. Once implemented, consumers can expect an immediate 14 per cent reduction in prices.” Both jewellers said the measure is expected to boost local sales and attract tourists seeking authentic Guyanese gold jewellery.

TOURISM, CONSTRUCTION AND DIGITAL SECTORS SEE OPPORTUNITY

The Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana (THAG) welcomed the removal of the 14-day residency requirement for destination weddings, noting that it would increase demand for local suppliers, creative professionals, and tourism services.

Overall, responses from the business community indicate that Budget 2026 is being viewed as a strong step toward fostering economic growth, supporting local enterprises, and improving livelihoods across Guyana.

Guyana’s leading sports organisations have welcomed the Government’s proposed \$6 billion allocation to the sector in Budget 2026, describing it as a transformative investment in youth, community development, and international competitiveness.

The Guyana Basketball Federation (GBF) praised the allocation as a defining moment for national development and youth empowerment. President Michael Singh called it “unprecedented”, noting that it signals the Government’s belief in the power of sport to foster healthier communities and create meaningful opportunities for young people.

“Basketball

SPORTING BODIES HAIL \$6B BUDGET BOOST AS GAME-CHANGER FOR GUYANA’S ATHLETES



Sporting associations are pleased with the proposed allocations for the sector

stands ready to play its part in ensuring this investment brings lasting benefits to communities nationwide,” Singh said, highlighting the Federation’s growing role in hosting historic regional and international events that have elevated Guyana’s profile in the sport. He further emphasised the

importance of managing the funding strategically to ensure equitable development across all sporting disciplines. Similarly, the Guyana Bodybuilding and Fitness Federation (GBBFF) welcomed the support, setting ambitious goals to double or even triple the number of professional athletes representing the country on the international

stage. The federation praised the inclusion of Guyana’s first-ever dedicated powerlifting and high-performance conditioning facility in the budget, alongside a \$1.2 billion youth development fund. “With this level of support, we aim to create a sustainable sporting ecosystem and prepare the next generation of world champions,” the GBBFF stated.

The Guyana Badminton Association (GBA) also expressed strong support, describing the budget as a “strong platform” for international competitiveness. The association highlighted the nearing completion



Sporting associations are pleased with the proposed allocations for the sector

of a dedicated badminton and table tennis facility, alongside investments in professional coaching, athlete development, and grassroots programmes. “The focus on improved facilities and investment in people and coaching is critical if we are

to compete at the international level,” the GBA said. Finance Minister Dr. Ashni Singh, unveiling the budget, stressed that sport is “big business” and a key driver for youth empowerment, economic development, and sports tourism.

SMALL BUSINESSES GET A BREAK - INTEREST-FREE LOANS SET TO ROLL OUT

In Bourda Market, where businesses are often built one customer at a time, news of interest-free loans is being met with cautious hope.

Under the 2026



Vendor and craftswoman Cyrida DeLacruz and her food cart at the Swan Village market square

Budget, small and medium-sized businesses across Guyana are set to gain greater access to financing, as the Guyana Development Bank (GDB) prepares to offer interest-free micro-credit loans. The initiative is part of the government's broader effort to lower financial barriers, encourage entrepreneurship, and unlock new opportunities for small business owners who have long struggled to access capital.

For Michelle Washington, who operates a snackette at the bustling market, the



Alisa Chung, a vendor at Bourda Market

programme represents a chance to do more than keep up; it offers room to grow. She said access to financing could help her improve her space and better serve customers.

"This would be great for me and also for young people who

just finished school and want to become business owners," Washington said. **"Most financial institutions require a deposit, and not everyone has access to that, which causes stagnation."**

For entrepreneurs already in business, she added, the support could be a turning point.

Nearby, Alisa Chung, a fresh-produce vendor with more than 30 years at Bourda Market, sees the initiative as long-overdue assistance for small traders.

"I could benefit from that because I could take a loan and expand my business



Michelle Washington, a proud owner of a snackette in Bourda Market

free. The market needs an uplift, it's been like this for a very long time."

Backed by an initial US\$100 million injection into the GDB, the programme will allow young entrepreneurs,

women, Small and Medium Enterprises and persons living with disabilities to access micro-credit loans of up to \$3 million, tailored to their financing needs.

In addition to funding, the initiative will offer mentorship and training programmes, aimed at helping business owners strengthen their operations and grow sustainably.

Government said the focus is on accessibility, accountability and long-term growth, ensuring that small businesses, the backbone of the economy, are given a fair chance to thrive.

GUYANA TO GET CARIBBEAN'S FIRST STANDALONE NEUROLOGICAL CENTRE

For years, Guyanese patients needing complex brain or spinal surgery have faced a painful reality: travel abroad or go without. That reality is now set to change.

A nearly GYD \$1 billion local investment by Neurospine Services Inc., facilitated by the Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest), is bringing advanced neurological care home, marking a major leap forward for the country's health-care system and the lives it serves.

The project will establish a state-of-the-art, internationally certified Institute of Neurological Sciences

and Rehabilitative Centre, the first standalone neurological facility of its kind in the Caribbean. Once fully operational, the investment is expected to create more than 50 new jobs and significantly expand access to specialised medical services in Guyana.

At the heart of the initiative is renowned neurosurgeon Dr. Amarnauth Dukhi, whose career has been defined by a commitment to advancing neurosurgical care locally. The centre will offer advanced treatment in brain and spinal care, rehabilitative medicine, and paediatric

neurological services, allowing patients to receive life-changing procedures without the emotional and financial burden of overseas travel.

The development will unfold in phases, with a second phase introducing a 150-room nursing home, along with a medical storage and logistics complex, addressing Guyana's growing needs in geriatric care and medical supply management. A dedicated rehabilitation centre will support patients through recovery, helping them regain independence and quality of life.

Among the facility's

standout features is the Caribbean's first GE Healthcare SIGMA Champion 1.5T wide-bore MRI machine, powered by artificial intelligence, bringing cutting-edge diagnostic capability to the region.

Head of GO-Invest, Peter Ramsaroop said the investment reflects Guyana's growing appeal as a destination for high-value, knowledge-based industries. **"Projects like this elevate the quality of care for our people while creating meaningful employment and regional impact,"** he said.

Scheduled to open by mid-2026, the



Artistic impression of the facility

centre aligns with the Government of Guyana's broader health-care transformation agenda under President Dr.

Mohamed Irfaan Ali, focused on modern infrastructure, technology and improved service delivery.

CHILDREN IN MIBICURI AND CHESNEY GET CLOSER ACCESS TO LEARNING WITH NEW NURSERY SCHOOLS



Two nursery school commissioned in Region Six

Children in Mibicuri, Black Bush Polder, and Chesney Village along the Corentyne coast now have easier access to early childhood education, thanks to two newly commissioned nursery schools. The facilities, officially opened by Minister of Education Sonia Parag,

aim to ensure that young learners no longer have to travel long distances for basic education.

The Mibicuri Nursery School, built with a \$62.5 million investment, can accommodate 100 children and features four spacious classrooms, a kitchen,

sick bay, air-conditioned learning spaces, and dedicated offices. Meanwhile, the Albion Chesney Nursery School, which was built at a cost of \$93 million, has the capacity for 120 learners and employs approximately 12 teachers.

At both openings, Minister of Education Sonia Parag highlighted the significance of investing in early education, describing the new classrooms as more than just physical spaces. **"I do believe that the physical space created with**



Two nursery school commissioned in Region Six

these classrooms goes far beyond just a physical interaction. It's a space where teachers can make a lasting impression on a child," she said.

The Minister also

emphasised that early access to education forms the foundation for national development. **"Education is the foundation and the core of national development in any**

nation, anywhere in the world. It starts with early childhood centres because it gives children the foundation they need," she noted, adding that the government is working towards universal access to secondary education.

Beyond academics, Minister Parag stressed the importance of moral and civic education to cultivate positive attitudes, social responsibility, and a strong sense of national identity from an early age.

PRIME MINISTER PHILLIPS CALLS ON CITIZENS TO EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY

“Technology is everyone’s opportunity,” Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret’d) Mark Phillips said, and called on Guyanese to actively engage with the nation’s digital transformation.

He delivered the message during his keynote address at the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA) Tech Conference at the Guyana Marriott Hotel, urging citizens, businesses, and students to embrace technology as a tool for personal, professional, and national growth.

The conference, themed “Operational Excellence Through Digital Transformation” showcased how the



Participants at GMSA Tech Conference

Government’s Digital Guyana agenda is modernising public services, strengthening business operations, and opening new pathways for skills development.

“Our approach is deliberate,” Prime Minister Phillips said. “We are replacing fragmented processes with integrated ICT solutions and leveraging data-

driven and AI-supported tools wherever they add value. But these efforts can only succeed if citizens and businesses embrace technology and apply it in their daily lives.”

For young professionals like Rashida Khan, an ICT graduate who attended the event, the Prime Minister’s message struck a chord.

“Programmes like the GOAL scholarships and the One Guyana Digital Initiative show that there are real opportunities for us to build careers and contribute to the country’s growth,” she said.

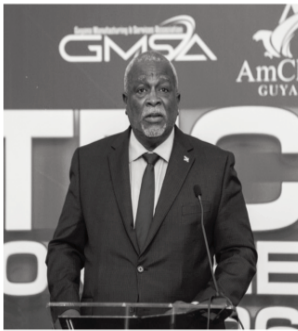
The Prime Minister highlighted major achievements in the digital space, including the launch of Guyana’s first Internet Exchange Point (GYIXP), a Memorandum of Understanding for a 100-megawatt AI data centre in Wales, and efforts to update the Cybercrime Act to improve data security and governance.

“Digital transformation

is not just about technology. It is about governance, accountability, and skills,” he said. “A digitally connected economy is only as strong as its weakest link, so every citizen and business must take responsibility for digital resilience.”

Prime Minister Phillips also emphasised the need for workforce upskilling in software development, digital finance, robotics, and logistics, noting that these skills are essential for remaining competitive in a global economy.

“Our government remains committed to creating an environment



PM Phillips underscoring government’s digital push at GMSA Tech Conference

where digital innovation thrives, and the benefits of transformation are inclusive and far-reaching,” he said.

For conference participants, the takeaway was clear: Guyana’s digital transformation is not a distant vision; it is an immediate opportunity for every citizen to innovate, grow, and help shape the country’s future.

“A lot of workers will receive an increase,” Minister of Labour and Manpower Planning Keoma Griffith said, as two landmark Collective Labour Agreements were signed, that will benefit hundreds of municipal and mining employees across Guyana.

In Georgetown, the Ministry successfully facilitated a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Mayor and Councillors of the City of Georgetown (M&CC) and the Guyana Labour Union (GLU). The agreement, covering January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2027, marks a major step in strengthening labour relations for municipal workers.

Key provisions include improved wages and salaries, a standard 40-hour work week, and

GOVT FACILITATES LANDMARK COLLECTIVE LABOUR AGREEMENTS FOR MUNICIPAL AND MINING WORKERS



Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), constituting a Collective Labour Agreement was signed between the Mayor and Councillors of the City of Georgetown (M&CC) and the Guyana Labour Union (GLU)

clearly defined working hours for staff such as pump operators, sluice attendants, and security personnel. Minimum wages will align with comparable roles in the wider public sector, while the union retains the right to negotiate rates based on job requirements.

The signing follows years of stalled negotiations, demonstrating the importance

of constructive dialogue in achieving agreements that protect workers while supporting operational efficiency. Ministerial representatives emphasised the government’s commitment to fair and transparent labour-management relations.

Meanwhile, at Aurora Gold Mine (AGM) in Region Seven, hundreds of miners celebrated the signing

of a two-year CLA with the National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees (NAACIE), covering January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2026. The agreement comes weeks after workers staged strike action over stagnant wages and working conditions.

Major gains include a 10 per cent wage increase in 2025 and a further 8 per cent in 2026, higher night shift premiums (\$160/hour in 2025, \$200/hour in 2026), double overtime for Sundays and holidays, and enhanced travel and meal allowances. Employees are entitled to eight paid sick days annually, with unused days paid out,

and improved vacation allowances. Paid severance is guaranteed in cases of medical discharge.



The signing of a two-year Collective Labour Agreement (CLA) between Aurora Gold Mines (AGM) Inc. and the National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees (NAACIE)

NAACIE’s General Secretary Dawchan Nagasar described the agreement as historic, the first full CLA between a trade union and a gold mining company in Guyana. Minister Griffith hailed both agreements

as examples of balanced negotiation, reflecting the government’s commitment to fair, productive, and

sustainable labour relations. AGM General Manager Carl Chen also welcomed the agreements, noting their positive impact on both employee welfare and operational effectiveness.

BIDDING FOR GOVT PROJECTS TO GET EASIER -NEW PROCUREMENT SITE TO OPEN

For small contractors watching tender notices from afar, transparency has often felt out of reach. That gap, government officials say, is about to close.

Standing before a packed audience at the opening of the third Technology Conference at the Guyana Marriott Hotel, Minister of Public Service, Government Efficiency and Implementation Zulfikar Ally announced that

government will launch a national procurement website later this year, allowing citizens and businesses to see, and even watch, how public contracts are awarded.

“We lead by action,” the minister declared, as he outlined plans to modernise procurement through transparency and technology.

The new platform will publish all government bids online and allow

the public to view live tender openings via direct links or QR codes, an unprecedented move aimed at strengthening accountability in public spending. Work on the site is already underway and will form part of a wider shift toward fully integrated e-procurement by the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB).

To support this

transition, the NPTAB is set to receive \$145.2 million in the 2026 national budget, while government continues reviewing procurement legislation to facilitate digital bid submissions.

The announcement struck a chord with entrepreneurs and students attending the conference, many of whom see digital access as a gateway to fairer competition. Organised by the Guyana



Minister of Public Service, Government Efficiency and Implementation, Zulfikar Ally

Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA) and the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham), the conference brought together business leaders, policymakers and young innovators

under the theme “Operational Excellence Through Digital Transformation.”

Minister Ally said the procurement site will complement several digital tools already in use across government, including Electronic Health Records, Telemedicine, the Guyana Digital School, Skills Connect, Gov Connect, and an AI-powered government chatbot. In the security sector, automated speed ticketing systems and e-immigration services are already operational.

OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP FINALISED, BUT QUESTIONS OVER LEGITIMACY AND IMPACT PERSIST



Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Mohamed Anil Nandlall, SC

The swearing-in of Azruddin Mohamed as Guyana’s Leader of the Opposition on January 26 completed the leadership structure of the 13th Parliament, but it has also propelled the country into an unusual constitutional moment, marked by sharp warnings from government officials about reputational harm and possible diplomatic consequences.

Mohamed, leader of the We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) party, was elected during a meeting of Opposition Members of Parliament convened by Speaker of the National Assembly

Manzoor Nadir at the Parliament Buildings, shortly before the presentation of the 2026 National Budget. The vote formally established a parliamentary opposition leadership, a constitutionally required step following the September 2025 elections.

Sixteen WIN MPs voted in favour of Mohamed, joined by Forward Guyana Movement parliamentarian Amanza Walton-Desir. Members of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), which holds 12 seats, exited the meeting after Mohamed’s nomination

and did not participate in the vote. The election was conducted by a show of hands.

While procedurally valid, the appointment has ignited controversy due to Mohamed’s legal status abroad. Mohamed and his father, businessman Nazar Mohamed, have been indicted in the United States and are currently facing extradition proceedings on charges including money laundering, wire and mail fraud, bribery, and tax evasion.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs Mohabir Anil Nandlall, S.C., has sharply criticised the elevation of an indicted and OFAC-sanctioned individual to one of the country’s highest constitutional offices, warning that the decision could undermine Guyana’s democratic institutions and damage its international standing.

“The very suggestion is an

indictment on our country, our Parliament, and governance in the English-speaking Caribbean,” AG Nandlall said during his weekly *Issues in the*



Speaker of the National Assembly, Manzoor Nadir

News programme. He stressed that the office of Leader of the Opposition carries responsibilities comparable to an alternative executive authority and must therefore command credibility both domestically and internationally.

The Attorney General further disclosed that concerns have been conveyed

by the United States ambassador, cautioning that diplomatic and economic repercussions could arise if Guyana elevates a person under active U.S. sanctions and extradition proceedings

to such a prominent constitutional role.

Speaker Nadir has defended his handling of the process, maintaining that his actions were guided strictly by constitutional and legal requirements rather than political pressure or public sentiment.

“There may be a moral position in the court of public

Nadir acknowledged in an interview aired on the National Communications Network. “But in the end, I had to rely on the rule of law.”

The Speaker noted that while many jurisdictions prohibit convicted individuals from holding parliamentary office, Guyana’s Constitution provides for disqualification only upon conviction, not indictment or fugitivity. He described the situation as complex and unprecedented, but cautioned that deviating from constitutional provisions would pose a greater threat to parliamentary integrity.

“No matter the amount of massaging or erasing that we do, this will be a burden on Guyana,” Nadir said, adding that Parliament will now have to work deliberately to preserve public trust.

GOVT STEPS IN TO SOLVE GEORGETOWN'S WASTE ISSUE

Georgetown residents, long frustrated by overflowing garbage and unreliable sanitation services, may finally see relief as the government signals decisive action to tackle the city’s mounting refuse crisis.

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development Priya Manickchand expressed frustration after Mayor Alfred Mentore and APNU councillors failed to attend a crucial meeting on the city’s sanitation plan. Scheduled for

January 19, the meeting was meant to present a comprehensive strategy to reverse the capital’s deteriorating conditions.

Describing the situation in Georgetown as “wholly unacceptable,” Minister Manickchand said the mayor initially agreed to attend, but withdrew when all councillors were invited, ensuring residents from each constituency could have their voices heard. She added that no APNU councillors attended, and some who arrived

“received a call and hurriedly left the compound.”

Calling the boycott a deliberate obstruction, the minister suggested that city leadership “benefit in some way from a city that is approaching being inhabitable,” leaving residents, commuters, and visitors “held hostage to poor politics.” She stressed that political manoeuvring should never take precedence over service to citizens.

Minister



The meeting on the city’s sanitation plan

Manickchand clarified that the government has not issued any contracts to sanitation workers, countering claims that it was undermining the council. She also highlighted discrepancies in public statements by the mayor, who downplayed resource challenges that officials had privately cited as affecting sanitation services.

“Serious action will have to be taken for the benefit of the citizens and residents of Georgetown,” she said. “Your government

understands that this cannot go on.”

For residents, the promise of cleaner streets and more reliable

garbage collection is more than political debate, it is a matter of health, safety, and dignity.

Minister Manickchand pledged that the government will take practical steps to restore order, insisting sanitation will no longer be held hostage to political disagreements.

“Service to citizens must trump politics,” she affirmed, promising action that “will be responsive to your needs,” signaling a potential turning point for Georgetown’s long-suffering communities.



The meeting on the city’s sanitation plan



The meeting on the city’s sanitation plan

COMMUNITIES, MAYORS WEIGH IN AS GUYANA RETHINKS WASTE MANAGEMENT



Stakeholders consulted on new Integrated Solid Waste Management Legislation

Overflowing dumpsites, clogged drains and growing health risks are challenges many communities across Guyana know well. These everyday concerns took centre stage when stakeholders from across the country gathered at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre for a National Consultation on the Integrated Solid Waste Management Bill. The consultation, hosted by the Ministry of

Local Government and Regional Development, brought together a broad cross-section of voices directly involved in managing waste at the community level. Regional representatives from all 10 administrative regions, Neighbourhood Democratic Council officials from the East Coast and East Bank of Demerara, and mayors of Georgetown, Linden and New Amsterdam were among those in attendance. Environmental health officers, municipal sanitation officials, and representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Ministry of Health also participated in the discussions. Delivering the feature address, Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Priya Manickchand,

stressed that waste management is no longer a problem that can be addressed in fragments. She said the proposed legislation aims to tackle long-standing weaknesses in the sector while preparing Guyana to adopt modern, sustainable waste management practices. The minister explained that while the government is examining future-focused options such as recycling, waste-to-energy systems and converting waste into

fertiliser, the immediate priority is to establish properly engineered landfill facilities in every region. These facilities, she noted, will replace informal dumpsites and regulatory agencies and communities. She noted that lasting change requires shared responsibility and continuous engagement at every level. The proposed Integrated Solid Waste Management Bill introduces a modern legal framework to govern how waste is collected, transported, treated, recycled and disposed of. It provides for a graduated enforcement system that prioritises compliance and corrective action, while allowing for strict penalties in cases of serious or repeated violations. Key provisions include the establishment of a national e-waste management framework, the formal inclusion of oil and gas waste under national oversight, requirements for

financial security from waste operators, and strengthened licensing and institutional coordination to improve accountability and service delivery. Technical presentations were delivered by Permanent Secretary Miguel Choo-Kang, Director of Sanitation Satrohan Nauth and Legal Consultant Rommel St Hill, who outlined how the Bill will be implemented in practice. Participants were given the opportunity to raise concerns, share experiences and offer recommendations, reinforcing the government's commitment to an inclusive and consultative approach as Guyana moves toward a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable future.



Stakeholders consulted on new Integrated Solid Waste Management Legislation

MOLESON CREEK-EL DORADO ROAD BRINGING REGION SIX COMMUNITIES CLOSER

The steady advance of the Moleson Creek to Eldorado Road is changing more than the landscape, it is changing expectations. As construction continues on Phase Two of the project, thousands of acres of land are being unlocked, promising improved farm-to-market access and stronger links between riverain and hinterland communities in Region Six. For farmers and residents along the corridor, the works represent long-awaited relief from isolation. Improved road access means reduced travel time, lower transportation costs, and a more reliable



Moleson Creek-Eldorado project gains momentum

route for moving crops, livestock, and supplies. It also signals new opportunities for housing, investment, and essential services in areas that have historically been difficult to reach. During a recent site visit, Minister within the Ministry of Public

Works, Madanlall Ramraj, described the road as a transformative development that extends far beyond basic transportation. "We are opening connectivity right across this region, from Crabwood Creek and Moleson Creek to Orealla,

and from Orealla to Kwakwani," Minister Ramraj said. "This road is opening farm-to-market access and unlocking thousands of acres of land for farmers." The minister said that the Moleson Creek-El Dorado alignment is a key component of the government's broader infrastructure strategy, aimed at reducing isolation and supporting sustainable development across hinterland and riverain communities. Providing a technical overview, Engineer Joel Tucker explained that construction began in phases in 2021. The initial works included 1.6 kilometres of fair-weather road built using a crusher run surface.



Moleson Creek-Eldorado project gains momentum

Since then, the alignment has been extended to nearly two kilometres, including sections that were previously paved with asphalted concrete. Phase Two, now underway, will extend the road by an additional kilometre to the final culvert at the entrance to Eldorado. Looking ahead, a further five kilometres are planned, which will bring the total distance from the Canawaima Turn

junction to El Dorado to eight kilometres. Beyond El Dorado, the long-term vision stretches even further. Reconnaissance conducted from Orealla back toward El Dorado has identified sections of roadway already in fair condition, as well as swampy areas that will require detailed technical assessment to determine the most suitable route forward.



President Ali meets doctors from World Pediatric Project

President Dr. Irfaan Ali was updated on the World Pediatric Project's recent work in Guyana, where children received complex scoliosis

treatments that would normally require travel to the United States. The meeting took place at the Office of the President in Georgetown and highlighted the organisation's ongoing collaboration with local healthcare providers. Through this partnership, visiting doctors successfully

performed eight corrective surgeries at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), providing specialised care that typically costs more than US\$100,000 per patient abroad. In 2024 and 2025, visiting teams completed 10 and eight similar interventions respectively.

President Ali expressed his gratitude to the team for their dedication, noting the significant support they provide to both GPHC staff and the national healthcare system. The scoliosis mission in Guyana was led by Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon Dr. Hydar Khan, who also coordinates the

programme locally. By bringing advanced medical interventions directly to Guyanese children, the World Pediatric Project is helping to reduce the need for costly overseas treatment while strengthening the country's capacity to deliver specialised healthcare services.

SCOLIOSIS SURGERIES PERFORMED LOCALLY

PRESIDENT ALI, OFFICIALS ATTEND FAREWELL OF BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER

President Dr. Irfaan Ali joined Government Ministers and officials to bid farewell to British High Commissioner Jane Miller, who confirmed the United Kingdom’s participation in Guyana’s Global Biodiversity Alliance during a reception at her residence.

The alliance, led by President Ali, seeks to leverage financing and technical expertise to advance conservation goals and combat global biodiversity loss. “We believe this is a

small initiative for people together to slowing down global see real progress,” biodiversity loss, Miller said. She also bringing countries, praised Guyana’s rich institutions, and natural heritage, noting



President Ali bids farewell to UK High Commissioner Jane Miller

that visiting every region of the country had been a highlight of her tenure.

During her tenure from July 2021 to January 2026, Miller focused on trade, sustainable forestry, climate change, environmental issues, and strengthening democratic institutions. She facilitated visa-free access to the United Kingdom (UK) for Guyanese citizens in November 2022 and led the establishment of the British Chamber of Commerce in Guyana.



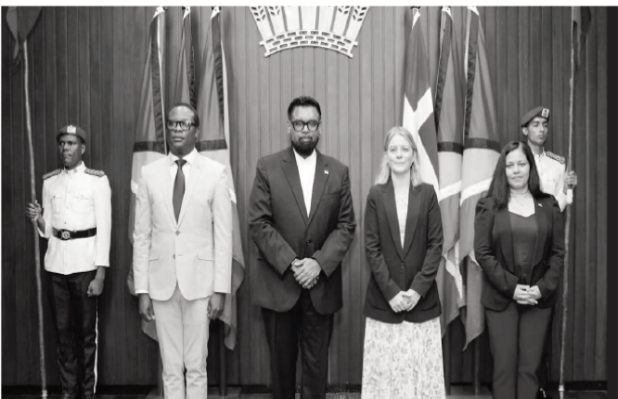
President Ali bids farewell to UK High Commissioner Jane Miller

Miller also expressed emphasising the strong gratitude to central partnership between the government, civil society, the opposition, and the media for their support throughout her tenure, UK and Guyana.

PRESIDENT ALI RECEIVES LETTERS OF CREDENCE FROM FOUR NON RESIDENT AMBASSADORS

President Dr. Irfaan Ali has received the Letters of Credence from four nonresident ambassadors to Guyana during separate ceremonies at the Office of the President on Shiv Chanderpaul Drive.

The new diplomatic representatives included H.E Mai Taha Khalil of Egypt, H.E Eva Bisgaard Pedersen of Denmark, H.E Katarina Tomkova of the Slovak Republic, and H.E Gerold Vollmer of Austria. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hugh Todd, and Permanent Secretary Sharon Roopchand Edwards were present at all ceremonies.



The ceremony for H.E Eva Bisgaard Pedersen of Denmark

Discussions with Ambassador Khalil focused on strengthening ties in agriculture, defence and security, and the orange economy, including culture, art, and heritage. President Ali praised Egypt’s success in leveraging its natural heritage as a tourism product.

Diplomatic relations between Guyana and Egypt date back to September 1971. With Ambassador Pedersen, the President highlighted shared priorities with Denmark in agriculture, climate security, biodiversity, and ecological services, which are integral

to Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030. Guyana and Denmark established relations on November 16, 1979.

Discussions with Ambassador Tomkova centered on technology and digitisation, security, infrastructure, and national development priorities. President Ali noted Guyana’s AI and digitisation initiatives, as well as ongoing environmental and biodiversity efforts. Guyana and the Slovak Republic established diplomatic relations on January 1, 1993.

Finally, Ambassador Vollmer and the President discussed cooperation in

technology, health, diplomatic relations on infrastructure, April 3, 1973. These ceremonies underscore Guyana’s commitment to



The ceremony for H.E Katarina Tomkova of the Slovak Republic

President Ali on Guyana’s strengthening bilateral rapid development ties and advancing over the past five years. strategic partnerships Guyana and Austria across key sectors. formally established

DIAMOND RESIDENTS TO BENEFIT FROM UPGRADED WATER TREATMENT FACILITY

Residents of Diamond on the East Bank of Demerara are set to enjoy improved access to safe and reliable drinking water, following the signing of a concessional agreement between the Governments of Guyana and Japan. The agreement, finalised at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Georgetown, will fund the upgrade of the community’s water treatment infrastructure.

The document was signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hugh Todd, and Japanese



The signing of the concessional agreement between Guyana and Japan

Ambassador to Guyana, His Excellency Dr Akima Umezawa. The ceremony highlighted nearly six decades of strong cooperation between the two nations, with Japan consistently supporting initiatives that enhance human development and improve the quality of life for Guyanese citizens.

Minister Todd emphasised the critical role of water in building a resilient and competitive economy, noting Diamond’s rapid growth as an emerging hub in Region Four. “Access to reliable water infrastructure

is fundamental to improving the quality of life of every citizen,” he said, stressing that the project aligns with President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali’s people-centred development agenda.

The upgrade is part of a broader framework of Japanese-supported investments in Guyana, with similar water infrastructure projects already implemented in Regions Two, Three, and Seven. Minister Todd also linked the project to Sustainable Development Goal Six, which focuses on clean water and sanitation, highlighting its impact on public health, poverty

reduction, and overall human development.

Ambassador Umezawa echoed these sentiments, describing safe water as a basic human right. “This project is aimed at not only creating safer and sustainable drinking water but also enhancing a healthy life environment,

which contributes to the development of Guyana,” he said.

For the residents of Diamond, reliable water supply will support households, schools, businesses, and public services, ensuring that a growing community has the essential resource needed to thrive.



The signing of the concessional agreement between Guyana and Japan

PRESIDENT ALI LENDS HANDS-ON SUPPORT TO TIGER BAY WOMEN’S AGRICULTURE PROJECT



The launch of the new agriculture initiative in Tigerbay

President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali got his hands dirty in Tiger Bay, literally, helping to build a shade house as part of a bold agriculture project aimed at putting money into the pockets of local residents while fostering community spirit and sustainable livelihoods. The initiative, launched at the One Guyana Kitchen on Main Street in Georgetown, will see 30-by-20-foot shade houses established in the Tiger Bay, Kingston, and Cummingsburg areas over the coming months. Each shade house will be managed primarily by women, with a focus on single mothers, providing opportunities to earn

income, gain skills, and build confidence. “This project is about more than handing out grants,” President Ali told residents. “The idea is to translate 50 beneficiaries to help each other to establish the shade houses.” On average, each participant could earn around \$1 million over a six-crop cycle. Minister of Local



The launch of the new agriculture initiative in Tigerbay

this support into wealth creation and demonstrate in a real way how we can transform lives and build business opportunities.” The project encourages beneficiaries to work together, rotating responsibilities over six- to eight-week cycles as crops are grown, tended, and harvested. President Ali emphasised that cooperation is a central part of the initiative, saying, “If we do 50 of these, we expect the entire Government and Regional Development, Priya Manickchand, framed the project as part of a broader effort to restore and revitalise communities in Georgetown under the government’s “Neighbourhood Love” initiative. She noted that improvements are already underway, including upgraded surroundings, regular garbage collection, new waste bins, and improved recreational facilities. Future projects will see sections from Guyana

Stores to the seawall and from High Street to Charmichael Street undergo significant revitalisation. Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha highlighted the innovative approach, explaining that participants can invest just an hour a day, split between morning and afternoon, to supplement their income. He said the model is Institute (NAREI), ensuring beneficiaries have the guidance needed to succeed. Private sector partners are also playing a key role, with the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) lending support. Similar initiatives are being rolled out in other communities, including Yarrowkabra, where another 50 homes will adopt the same



The launch of the new agriculture initiative in Tigerbay

changing perceptions about agriculture and encouraging participation from women and young people. Technical support will be provided by officers from the National Agricultural Research and Extension model. For the women of Tiger Bay, the project represents a chance to contribute to the transformation of their neighborhood, cultivate skills, and take an active role in shaping the future of their community.



The launch of the new agriculture initiative in Tigerbay

HYDE PARK ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN SET TO OPEN ON MARCH 3



The park blends education, entertainment, and sustainability

The wait is nearly over for wildlife enthusiasts in Guyana, as the Hyde Park Zoological and Tropical Garden in Land of Canaan, East Bank Demerara, prepares to officially open its doors on March 3, coinciding with World Wildlife Day. The facility promises to be a landmark attraction, showcasing Guyana’s commitment to conservation and sustainable tourism. During a preliminary assessment of the facility, Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Susan Rodrigues and Director of the Guyana Tourism Authority Kamrul Baksh emphasised the national significance of Hyde Park. The site is being developed to international standards, allowing for responsible animal exchanges and

conservation-focused breeding programmes aimed at protecting endangered species and supporting their long-term survival in the wild. Director of the Zoological and Tropical Garden, Sasha Lall, said preparations are in their final stages. “We are hoping to open on World Wildlife Day, especially because we want to bring in some of the foreign species the public has been waiting for,” she explained. Lall noted that while March 3 remains the planned opening, a brief delay may occur depending on the arrival of the animals. Hyde Park is closely aligned with Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), which promotes forest preservation, non-deforesting economic activities, tree replanting, and environmentally responsible practices to combat climate change. The project aims to



The park blends education, entertainment, and sustainability



The park blends education, entertainment, and sustainability

set a new benchmark in wildlife tourism by combining expansive, free-roaming habitats with world-class animal care. Minister Rodrigues reassured that a dedicated Product Development Team will work alongside the Hyde Park staff to enhance the visitor experience, ensuring the site becomes a flagship attraction for the country. For visitors, Hyde Park offers more than a chance to see animals. It provides an opportunity to witness conservation in action. By blending education, entertainment, and sustainability, the facility is expected to strengthen Guyana’s reputation as a leader in responsible tourism, inspiring both residents and international guests to appreciate and protect the country’s rich natural heritage.



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INSIDE BUD

From early arrivals at the Parliament Building to applause in the National Assembly, Budget Day 2026 unfolded as a defining moment in Guyana’s development story. Finance Minister Dr. Ashni Singh presented a \$1.558 trillion budget as government ministers and MPs rallied behind a vision centred on people, progress and national transformation.



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INTERNATIONAL STEAKHOUSE BRAND TEXAS DE BRAZIL OPENS IN GUYANA

As Guyana’s tourism numbers climb and visitor expectations rise, the official opening of Texas de Brazil at MovieTowne highlights how the country’s hospitality sector is stepping confidently onto the global stage.

The internationally recognised Brazilian steakhouse franchise was formally welcomed to Guyana during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the MovieTowne complex on the Rupert Craig Highway, marking another milestone in the country’s expanding tourism and lifestyle landscape.

Delivering the feature address, Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Susan Rodrigues, said the presence of a global brand such as Texas de



The opening of Texas de Brazil at MovieTowne

Brazil sends a powerful signal that Guyana is now competing at the highest level of international tourism and investment.

“Today is evidence of that success. With an international brand like Texas de Brazil opening here in Guyana, we have arrived. Guyana has arrived,”

Minister Rodrigues said, noting that the investment reflects strong confidence in the country’s economic trajectory and growing appeal as a destination.

The minister emphasised that tourism is ultimately built on experience, and high-quality dining plays a critical role in shaping how visitors remember a country. She said internationally branded restaurants complement Guyana’s rich culinary culture while helping to elevate service standards across the sector.

Guyana recorded more than 450,000 visitor arrivals in 2024, a historic 22 per cent increase over the previous year, with the Caribbean accounting

for nearly one-third of those arrivals. According to Minister Rodrigues, today’s travellers are increasingly discerning, seeking quality, diversity and professionalism in

standards over the past five years. She added that a world-class tourism and hospitality institute is nearing completion, further strengthening service excellence

Although the restaurant has been operational since September 2025, Chin explained that the official ribbon-cutting was intentionally delayed



The opening of Texas de Brazil at MovieTowne

services.

“Texas de Brazil and other international brands coming on stream are responding to that demand and helping to deepen and diversify our tourism product,” she said.

The minister also highlighted government’s investment in people, noting that more than 8,000 Guyanese have received training in customer service, food safety and hospitality

nationwide.

Chairman of the Dachin Group of Companies, Derek Chin, reflected on the journey of bringing Texas de Brazil to Guyana, describing it as the result of long-standing relationships, careful planning and confidence in the country’s future. He noted that discussions with the brand began years ago and led to successful operations elsewhere in the region before Guyana joined the franchise’s global network.

to allow for fine-tuning and to coincide with the availability of President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali.

“This investment reflects belief in Guyana and in what this country is becoming,” Chin said.

Texas de Brazil offers its signature churrasco dining experience, adding to Guyana’s growing portfolio of international brands and reinforcing its emergence as a competitive tourism destination.



The opening of Texas de Brazil at MovieTowne

BAGANARA RESORT EXPANDS TOURISM HORIZONS



Baganara Resort’s new conference cottages open

The newly launched conference cottages at Baganara Resort in Cuyuni Mazaruni were officially opened, with Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret’d) Mark Phillips emphasising their potential to boost employment, support local businesses, and position Guyana as a competitive destination for international conference tourism.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Prime Minister highlighted recent investments in resorts

and hotels across Region Seven, noting that developments like Baganara’s conference cottages are transforming the tourism landscape. **“The expansion represented by these conference cottages is a strategic and transformative investment. It will strengthen small conference tourism and, combined with other resorts and hotels in Bartica, has the potential to support conference tourism on a much**

larger scale,” he said.

Prime Minister Phillips underscored the economic significance of conference tourism, pointing out that the

global business tourism sector generated an estimated USD \$1.57 trillion in 2025 and is expected to continue growing through 2030. He stressed that attracting this category of visitors stimulates employment, promotes local business growth, and contributes to broader economic development.

He also highlighted the importance of continued investment in tourism infrastructure, training programmes for local personnel, and



Baganara Resort’s new conference cottages open



Baganara Resort’s new conference cottages open

effective promotion of Brand Guyana internationally. **“Tourism must not be seen as simply travel or sightseeing. It is also about education, cultural understanding, and even health. It is about connection, learning, and business,”** the Prime Minister said.

Speaking about the region’s potential, he praised Cuyuni Mazaruni’s rich heritage, scenic landscapes, welcoming

communities, and abundance of water-based activities, describing it as a growing hub for both leisure and sustainable tourism.

Prime Minister Phillips commended Baganara Resort’s owners for their foresight and investments, calling the conference cottages a **“game-changing moment”** for Guyana’s tourism sector. Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Susan Rodrigues, also attended the event.

Fair system of trade necessary to support investments in food security

GUYANA and Belize have an increasingly important role to play in building a food-secure region, President, Dr Irfaan Ali has said.

Climate change is severely affecting coastlines, food systems and water security, and this is compounded by the volatility in global markets which expose economies of small states to shocks beyond their control.

Cognisant of this reality, President Ali, during his address to the Belizean National Assembly on Monday, said: “Food insecurity, driven by climate events and external disruptions, places additional strain on vulnerable populations. That is why, Prime Minister, my dear friend, I agree with you that Belize and Guyana must lead in food security of this region,” he said, adding: “When we make this investment, human, financial and technological investment[s], the region must, in turn, have a fair trade system in which our produce and production is [sic] not subjected to the bureaucracy of the system or is not subjected to artificial barriers of trade that affect this region.”

Dr Ali pointed out that for far too long, the region’s farmers and food systems have suffered from the lag in trade opportunities.

“We must push back hard now to ensure that our food becomes the region’s food by a system that encourages and supports us,” he said.

At a time when the international environment itself is marked by heightened uncertainty and rapid change, he stressed that small states must reinforce the importance of stable institutions, predictable rules and co-operative approaches to global problem solving.

“When international conditions become less predictable, small economies face higher costs, reduce market access and fewer opportunities for growth,” Dr Ali said, stressing that the global realities must push small states to further partnerships, dialogue and collective engagement to protect their interests and advance their aspirations in the global arena.

“These realities compel us to ask a fundamental question: how can small states, facing existential threats and operating in a complex and demanding international environment, secure their well-being

and advance sustainable development? I suggest that the answer does not lie in a single solution. It lies in a strategic set of mutually reinforcing approaches,” he said.

The President pointed to Guyana and Belize as a strong example of reinforcing collaboration with the exchange of ideas, technology and systems to support stability.

“When we trust each other, we transfer our localised technology to support the growth and development of each other, we become stronger, more resilient and definitely more independent, and that is what we celebrate today through shared membership in regional organisations; small states find



President Dr Irfaan Ali during his address to the Belizean National Assembly

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GUYANA FEATURED ON INTERNATIONAL GREEN TRAVEL PLATFORM FOR ECO-TOURISM EXCELLENCE



Guyana continues to strengthen its position as a leading eco-tourism destination

Guyana has earned international recognition for its eco-tourism initiatives, being featured on the Green Destinations – Good Travel Experiences (GTE) platform for three

of its flagship sustainable tourism offerings. The highlighted experiences include the Rewa Eco Lodge’s Arapaima Conservation and Research Initiative, the Caiman House Eco



Guyana continues to strengthen its position as a leading eco-tourism destination

Lodge’s Yupukari River Turtle Conservation Project, and the Atta Rainforest Lodge’s Iwokrama Canopy Walkway Trail. The recognition reflects collaborative efforts in 2025 among the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA), and Green Destinations, underscoring the country’s commitment to

sustainable, community-led conservation. The Good Travel Alliance, of which Guyana is a founding member, is a global network of destinations, tourism boards, tour operators, and experience providers focused on creating travel products and attractions that maximise benefits for local communities while minimising environmental, cultural,

and social impacts.

By being part of the alliance and featuring on the GTE platform, Guyana continues to strengthen its position as a leading eco-tourism destination. The country offers travellers authentic experiences that protect its rich biodiversity while empowering local communities through conservation-focused tourism initiatives.

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Susan

Rodrigues, lauded the recognition, noting that it showcases Guyana’s unique offerings and commitment to sustainable tourism development. The GTA emphasised that eco-tourism projects like these are key to balancing environmental protection with socio-economic benefits, ensuring communities directly benefit from the growth of responsible travel.



Guyana continues to strengthen its position as a leading eco-tourism destination

Travellers using the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) can expect smoother, faster, and more efficient services as the airport takes steps to modernise operations with support from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

A technical team from IATA recently met with Minister of Public Utilities and Aviation, Deodat Indar, and senior management of CJIA to explore areas of collaboration aimed at strengthening airport operations and enhancing service delivery. The visit included a specialised

workshop for key airport personnel, focusing on service-level standards and international best practices designed to place passengers at the centre of airport operations.

Minister Indar stressed the importance of CJIA’s modernisation as part of President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali’s vision for a “One Guyana.” **“Service must be our top priority,”** he said. **“We are building an aviation hub that reflects a modern Guyana, and that**

requires a culture of excellence where every second counts for the travelling public.”

The airport’s CEO, Ramesh Ghir highlighted the practical impact of the collaboration, noting that digital solutions and streamlined workflows introduced through the partnership will reduce wait times and make travel more seamless. **“Together with IATA and our airline partners, our focus is clear: a faster, more pleasant journey for every passenger at**



A technical team from IATA with Minister of Public Utilities and Aviation, Deodat Indar, and senior management of CJIA

CJIA,” he said.

IATA’s Caribbean Area Manager, Annaleen Lord, described the engagement as timely, highlighting the organisation’s commitment to

supporting regional airports in meeting the growing expectations of global travelers. The team also included Senior Manager Alejandro Pineda and Principal Airport Consultant

Jürgen Renner, who provided technical insights on operational improvements.

The discussions underscored the airport’s broader goal of creating a world-class travel experience while supporting Guyana’s expanding economic landscape. By integrating global best practices, digital innovation, and a passenger-first approach, CJIA aims to position itself as a leading aviation hub in the Caribbean.

ST CUTHBERT’S MISSION TO GET RECORDING STUDIO

St Cuthbert’s Mission, also known as Pakuri Village, is taking a bold step in nurturing local talent and preserving cultural heritage, thanks to \$2 million in government funding for a new recording studio. The funding was handed over to residents by Minister of Amerindian Affairs Sarah Browne-Shadeek during a village meeting, marking what community leaders describe as a historic moment.

“This is a

significant amount. I think this is one of a kind and one of the first ever support for music and music development in the village,” Toshao Alvaro Simon told the Department of Public Information. **“I am happy and very proud to know that this helps with our cultural revival. With the addition of the music aspect, it strengthens the work we have been doing.”**

The studio is expected to provide a



Minister of Amerindian Affairs Sarah Browne-Shadeek handing over the cheque to Toshao Alvaro Simon

platform for the village’s many talented young people, who already play instruments in churches

and community groups, allowing them to develop their skills while celebrating Pakuri

Village’s rich cultural traditions. According to the Toshao, the project will be key in preserving and revitalising the village’s heritage for future generations.

Work on the recording studio will begin immediately, with experienced professionals brought in to help set up a modern, well-equipped facility.

Minister Browne-Shadeek reiterated the government’s commitment to empowering Amerindian communities

through sustainable development and cultural advancement. Under the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), the village has already completed several projects, including a cassava processing facility, a shade house, and a mechanic shop, demonstrating that investment in Pakuri Village is creating opportunities across education, culture, and economic development.

CLIMATE-RESILIENT CHARITY MARKET WHARF TO PROTECT COMMUNITIES AND BOOST TRADE IN REGION TWO



A new \$880 million wharf in Charity is set to transform trade in Region Two

As flooding increasingly threatens riverside communities, the \$880 million Charity Market Wharf is being constructed with a climate-resilient design, promising to safeguard homes and businesses while expanding trade and tourism across Region Two.

Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Madanlall Ramraj, who recently visited the site, said the project reflects the government's commitment to modernising infrastructure while directly improving livelihoods.

"This is a modern, climate-resilient facility that will protect this community from flooding while expanding transport and economic activity. That is the kind of development this government is delivering," Minister Ramraj said. **"When**

we improve docking facilities, protect the river bank, and create space for commerce, we are directly improving incomes, encouraging trade, and opening new opportunities for tourism and investment in this region."

The Charity Market wharf, designed to serve the largest community on the Essequibo Coast, features a reinforced concrete wharf deck, a floating dock for vessels of various sizes, an administrative building, parking facilities, and provisions for a future crane to assist with cargo handling. The project also includes upgraded river defence works along the wharf frontage and two additional sections 500 feet upstream and downstream to protect the surrounding areas from flooding.

The project has seen

significant foundation work, with 160 stressed concrete piles already driven into the riverbed. Jermaine Braithwaite, Project Manager for Sea and River Defence, said the wharf will expand docking and off-loading

hub, facilitating commercial activity and bringing tremendous benefits to the community," Braithwaite added.

Chief Sea and River Defence Officer Kevin Samad noted



A new \$880 million wharf in Charity is set to transform trade in Region Two

Chairman Humace Oodit said the project will create new opportunities for farmers, traders, and local businesses, encouraging investment and higher production throughout the Pomeroun.

With completion targeted for the last quarter of 2026, the climate-resilient wharf is poised to transform the waterfront, protect communities from flooding, and provide a platform for increased trade, tourism, and long-term economic growth.

Mr. Oodit thanked the government for this massive investment saying, **"we want to thank His Excellency President Dr. Irfaan Ali and Minister Ramraj. Charity residents will feel more secure and confident with this important project in their community,"** Oodit added.

SEA DEFENCE PROJECT AT CULLEN HITS HALFWAY MARK

After years of watching the river slowly eat away at their coastline, residents of Cullen can finally feel relief as the government's multi-million-dollar sea defence project progresses steadily toward completion.

The \$168 million initiative, now more than 50 per cent complete, promises to protect homes, livelihoods, and the community from the growing threat of coastal erosion along Guyana's Essequibo Coast.

Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Madanlall Ramraj, visited the construction site and highlighted the human impact of the



Cullen coastline being secured

project. **"Sea defence isn't just about preventing water,"** Minister Ramraj said, **"it is about protecting people and bringing immediate relief to their worries. This government is acting before disaster strikes, not after."**

The project

involves installing rip-rap protection along vulnerable stretches of shoreline, with an additional 200 metres currently being added. Chief Sea and River Defence Officer Kevin Samad explained that natural barriers like sand, loam, and vegetation had historically protected

the foreshore, but progressive erosion over the past five to six years necessitated engineered intervention. **"Phase five of the project brings us close to one kilometre of protection,"** Samad noted, adding that construction is proceeding ahead of schedule despite rainy-season challenges.

For the people of Cullen, the sea defence work is peace of mind. Regional Chairman Davin Mohan described the transformation as a significant improvement for the community. **"We used to have massive erosion along this sea dam. Now, under**

this government, we are seeing major infrastructure works. This sea defence will

that much of the fabrication, including piles and components, is completed off-site and transported by barge, meaning visible progress on-site does not yet reflect the full scope of the work underway.

Regional Vice-

construction expected over the next two to three years, residents can look forward to a safer,

more secure coastline, where families no longer have to fear the river encroaching on their homes and livelihoods.

With continued monitoring and phased



Cullen coastline being secured

TEACHERS' APPRAISAL ON THE CARDS AS EDUCATION MINISTRY PUSHES FOR HIGHER STANDARDS

Teachers across Guyana can expect a return to formal appraisals this year, as the Ministry of Education moves to strengthen accountability and improve classroom instruction.

Speaking on the *Starting Point* podcast, Minister of Education

Sonia Parag explained that the appraisals will assess both teachers' performance and attendance, with the aim of recognising excellence and creating opportunities for promotions when positions become available.

The initiative, first

piloted in recent years, has been developed in close consultation with the Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU), with several engagements held to refine the process and ensure it is fair and constructive.

Minister Parag also outlined plans for a wider performance



Teachers guiding students to use tablets to access learning materials

framework for schools, which includes the introduction of a **"school report card"**. This tool will provide a clear picture of each school's achievements and areas for improvement, helping educators, parents, and policymakers focus on results that matter most for students.

\$1 BILLION INVESTMENT AT BARAMA STRENGTHENS SUSTAINABLE PLYWOOD PRODUCTION

Barama Company Limited (BCL), the largest investor in Guyana’s forestry sector, has taken a major step forward with the expansion of its plywood production facilities at Land of Canaan, East Bank Demerara. The \$1 billion Strategic Reinvestment and Plywood Expansion programme, known as “Barama 3.0”, was highlighted during a visit



Local plywood production ets major boost with Barama expansion

by Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat, Minister within the Ministry of Housing Vanessa Benn, Commissioner of Forests Edward Goberdhan, and BCL Guyana Country Manager Mohindra Chand. Established in 1991, BCL has been a cornerstone of Guyana’s forestry and construction sectors, supplying high-quality

tropical hardwood plywood and driving value-added production from the country’s forest resources. Minister Benn noted the importance of supporting local products, stating, “When you buy plywood produced in Guyana, it is from trees that are sustainably harvested. The product is good. It is of high quality.”

The expansion, expected to increase plywood production capacity by 50 to 70 per cent depending on market demand, directly supports the government’s housing drive by boosting the domestic supply of essential construction materials and reducing reliance on imports. Following a period of restructuring, BCL has achieved full operational

recovery, improving log-to-plywood conversion rates by over seven per cent, a move consistent with Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy, which emphasises sustainable forest management and higher-value outputs.

The initiative also strengthens local economic linkages. Approximately 95 per cent of BCL’s manufacturing inputs are sourced domestically, through partnerships with small-scale loggers and community forestry associations. Employment growth remains a key outcome, with the company’s workforce expanding to 415 employees. Notably, women now account for over 40 per cent of staff across technical, production, and management roles, marking a significant



Local plywood production ets major boost with Barama expansion

shift in the traditionally male-dominated sector.

Minister Benn highlighted this milestone, encouraging Guyanese to support locally produced products and, in turn, the families behind them.

BCL has also introduced waterproof plywood to meet growing construction demand, with plans to diversify further with specialised

plywood products.

The company has been re-certified for four consecutive years under the GNBS “Made in Guyana” Standards Mark, reaffirming the quality and competitiveness of its products for both domestic and international markets.

CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL MINING OPERATION EXPANDS ACROSS REGIONS

Acting on President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali’s call to dismantle all illegal mining operations, the Government has intensified enforcement across the country, resulting in dozens of arrests, court convictions, and the seizure of heavy equipment from unlicensed camps operating in multiple regions.

The Ministry of Natural Resources has confirmed that 44 individuals have been arrested, charged, and brought before the courts for engaging in illegal



Illegal mining under fire

mining practices. Those found guilty have already been fined in accordance with the law, while investigations continue into several other cases that are expected to lead to additional charges.

Enforcement teams have been active in key mining districts,

including Bartica and surrounding areas in Region Seven, Mahdia and its environs in Region Eight, and the North West District, where more than 50 pieces of mining equipment were seized during recent compliance operations. Among the items

confiscated were engines, generators, water pumps, hoses, and gold detection equipment, all of which were being used unlawfully. The seized equipment has since been lodged at Mines Stations pending further action.

For communities living along rivers and near mining areas, the operations have brought a sense of reassurance. Residents have long raised concerns about environmental degradation, unsafe mining practices, and the impact of illegal operations on livelihoods

and water sources.

One such case unfolded along the Essequibo River, where inspectors shut down a mining operation found to be working within a protected buffer zone. The site’s general manager was arrested after authorities discovered him in possession of over one ounce of gold. He later pleaded guilty in the Mahdia Magistrate’s Court, and the seized gold was lodged at the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission.

Minister of Natural Resources Vickram

Bharrat said the enforcement actions reflect the government’s unwavering stance on protecting Guyana’s natural resources.

The ministry has made it clear that inspections and monitoring will continue nationwide, in collaboration with the GGMC and law-enforcement agencies. Miners and operators are once again being urged to ensure their activities are fully licensed and compliant.

YARROWKABRA TRAINING CENTRE RENAMED TO HONOUR FORESTRY PIONEER JAMES SINGH

For generations of Guyanese, the Yarrowkabra Training Centre has been more than a school—it has been a place where careers were shaped and a deep respect for Guyana’s forests was instilled. Now, that legacy has been formally honoured with the renaming of the facility as the James Singh Centre for Innovation, Training and Sustainable Forestry.

Established in the

1960s, the centre has trained more than 20,000 Guyanese, equipping young people and forestry professionals with skills in sustainable forest management, environmental stewardship, and technical innovation. Its graduates have gone on to play key roles in protecting Guyana’s vast forest resources, helping the country maintain one of the lowest deforestation rates in the world.

Minister of Natural Resources Vickram Bharrat, who attended the renaming ceremony, said the centre represents both technical excellence and national pride. “This centre has produced generations of foresters who helped shape Guyana into one of the most forested countries in the world,” he said, adding that naming it after James Singh was a fitting tribute to a



Scene from the renaming ceremony

man whose leadership strengthened forest management systems still in use today.

Minister within the Ministry of Housing and

Water, Vanessa Benn, described the institution as a place that builds more than skills. “This institution is not only about teaching

forestry techniques, but about building character, discipline and a sense of service,” she said.

With its new name, the centre stands as a living tribute to James Singh’s lifelong dedication to forestry and public service, ensuring that future trainees understand the history, values, and responsibility behind Guyana’s forest success story.

LOCAL GAS AND FERTILISER PRODUCTION TO CUT HOUSEHOLD BILLS

Guyana is betting on local gas and fertiliser production to ease everyday expenses. Planned gas bottling and fertiliser plants in Wales, West Bank Demerara, are expected to lower cooking gas bills, reduce food prices, and even create new opportunities for export, offering tangible relief to households and farmers alike.

Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips spoke about the projects on the *Starting Point* podcast, noting that most Guyanese already know the gas-to-energy (GTE) project at Wales is expected to cut electricity bills by as much as half. But, he said, the wider payoff will come from follow-on



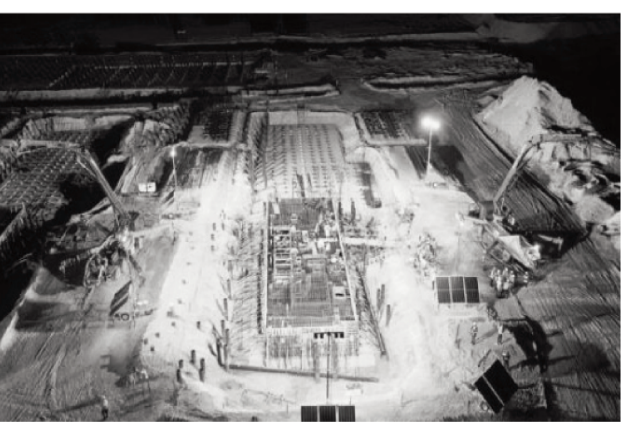
Prime Minister Mark Phillips on a site visit to the Wales gas-to-energy (GTE) project

investments. **“The gas bottling facility will allow us to produce and distribute cooking gas locally at significantly lower prices than households and businesses now face,”** Prime Minister Phillips explained. **“Once domestic demand is met, we can even export to**

the wider Caribbean, Guyana benefits, and the region benefits too.” For farmers, the planned fertiliser plant could reduce input costs for thousands of producers nationwide, creating a ripple effect that makes food more affordable for everyone. **“If you cushion the cost of production in the farming sector,**

it will also affect the price of food that goes on our tables,” the prime minister said. Any surplus fertiliser would also be available for export, adding economic value.

Prime Minister Phillips recalled that requests for proposals for the Guyana Gas Bottling and Logistics Company and the Guyana Ammonia and Urea Plant were issued in 2025, both earmarked for Wales. He added that these developments are part of a broader vision, which includes a second phase of the gas-to-energy programme expected to add 300 megawatts of power by 2030 to meet growing demand from housing schemes, hotels, agro-



Works are ongoing on the massive gas-to-energy (GTE) project in Wales (September 2025 photo)

processing ventures, and public infrastructure. While temporary measures such as power ships were necessary to address immediate energy needs, Prime Minister Phillips said the government’s focus is now on long-term solutions that provide stability and

affordability. The GTE project, a joint venture between the government and the private sector, remains on track for completion by the end of 2026, promising benefits that will ripple through homes, farms, and businesses across the country.

NEW SOLAR FARMS WILL BRING MANY DEVELOPMENTS TO LINDEN

With renewable energy set to power Linden, residents are looking forward to more than just electricity. The new solar farms in Region Ten will create local jobs, attract investment, and help businesses thrive, while also making the power supply more reliable and environmentally friendly.

The project is part of the Guyana Utility Scale Solar Photovoltaic Programme (GUY SOL) and forms a key component of the PPP/C government’s broader push to expand renewable energy across the country. It

will integrate a total of 15 megawatts (MW) of solar power, supported by at least 22 megawatt-hours (MWh) of battery storage, into the Linden isolated system. Three sites have been identified: Dacoura (3 MWp), Retrieve (8 MWp), and Block 37 (4 MWp).

The programme is expected to reduce government subventions, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and cut dependence on fossil fuel-generated electricity, while supporting the growth of infrastructure in the region. Local job creation

is another anticipated benefit, offering practical opportunities for residents to participate in a growing sector.

During a public consultation hosted by Guyana Power and Light (GPL) in collaboration with GUY SOL, residents had the chance to learn about the project and provide input. One resident, Linden Younge stressed the importance of community engagement. **“It is very important that the community understands initiatives like this and is informed, so they can give their input. This should**

be well-received because it introduces a new type of energy infrastructure that will help offset daily power consumption and reduce reliance on diesel engines,” he said.

Resident, Keron Williams welcomed the project as timely and environmentally significant. **“Diversifying the power source in Linden is incredible. It’s good to see this has moved beyond talk to action, with contracts already in place,”** he said. Norris King also expressed support, noting that



Keron Williams



Linden Younge



Norris King

the initiative would not negatively affect residents financially.

The US\$22.6 million project is being

constructed through a joint venture between SUMEC Complete Equipment and Engineering Co., Ltd. and XJ Group Corporation. Each site is expected to generate approximately 6,707 megawatt-hours annually, with construction scheduled over 18 months and full integration into the power system anticipated by the first quarter of 2027.



GUYANA ADVANCES GREEN ENERGY IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Beyond environmental benefits, the initiative strengthens institutional capacity and human capital across the public sector.

A key component of the programme is gender inclusion. Through a two-year training programme for 20 female electrical apprentices, young women are gaining hands-on experience in electrical installation and solar photovoltaic technologies. Launched in March 2025 by the Board of Industrial Training, the programme

is helping participants secure internships and professional certification in a field traditionally dominated by men.

The Mission also reviewed procurement, financial management, environmental and social safeguards, and waste management strategies, ensuring responsible handling of renewable energy equipment, including solar panels and batteries. Preparations for the next phase of energy audits and building retrofits are underway, with additional public

facilities scheduled for implementation between February and August 2026.

Through the CEGEB Project, Guyana is advancing a sustainable, low-carbon public sector while fostering regional collaboration, resilient infrastructure, and an inclusive workforce. For communities, students, and women entering technical fields, the project represents an investment in people, opportunity, and a cleaner, brighter future.

Guyana is joining forces with Saint Lucia and Grenada to make public buildings smarter, cleaner, and more energy-efficient. The Caribbean Efficient and Green-Energy Buildings (CEGEB) Project combines renewable energy investments with workforce training, giving local residents new skills and greener public spaces.

From January 12-14, 2026, the World Bank conducted a hybrid Implementation Review and Support Mission in Guyana to assess progress and provide technical support for ongoing project activities. Sites visited included the De Willem and Zeeburg Secondary Schools, and the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission facility in

Crane, where officials evaluated building readiness for energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy installations. The project targets 259 public buildings across Regions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10, with a total installed renewable energy capacity of 21.2 MW and projected lifetime energy savings of approximately 51 GWh.

PRESIDENT ALI RECEIVES PROGRESS REPORT ON NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

President Dr. Irfaan Ali received a progress report on the Guyana–Mount Sinai Healthcare Initiative, a national programme using digital tools and targeted screenings to address priority health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, mental health, and autism. The update was provided during a steering committee meeting at State House.

The initiative, which runs until 2030, recently launched an electronic health record system and has already screened around 80,000 children, ensuring vital data is available to guide healthcare decisions. Targeted therapies



President Ali briefed on National Healthcare Programme for children and adults

are being provided to children with autism and other specialised conditions, reducing the need for complex treatments abroad.

President Ali was informed that the programme will expand to include adolescent health centres, a digital chronic disease-tracking system, and a

“one-stop” community health centre to provide comprehensive services in a single location.

The Ministry of Health and the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation continue on the initiative to implement the electronic system nationwide, strengthening Guyana’s healthcare capacity and improving access to specialised care for citizens across the country.



Students at the launch of the breakfast programme at Mackenzie Primary School in Region Ten

From learning to respect the national anthem to understanding their identity, young Guyanese will soon have moral and civic education as part of their daily school routine, alongside nutritious meals provided through an expanded school feeding programme.

Education Minister Sonia Parag, speaking on the *Starting Point* podcast recently, said the government is committed to reaching more students while improving the quality and nutritional value of meals. **“That’s a manifesto promise,”** she said. **“Whether that means introducing the programme to different schools or looking at the quality,**

we are definitely focusing on the nutritional intake of the meals. That’s a priority for the next five years.”

Currently, the breakfast component alone is offered in about **240 schools**, benefiting over **5,100 students**. Hot meals such as breakfast and lunch, along with juice and biscuit snacks, are served daily. The programme also supports roughly **340 caterers**, giving them steady employment and financial empowerment.

Minister Parag

emphasised that proper nutrition is critical for children’s health, school attendance, and learning outcomes, particularly for those in remote communities. “It is not every family that may have had the opportunity to have three meals a day. The government wants to ensure they do, especially children living in remote areas,” she said.

In tandem with the feeding programme, the Ministry of Education is introducing **moral and civic education as stand-alone subjects** at nursery,

primary, and secondary levels. The curriculum is tailored to each age group and scheduled in the mornings to ensure students receive focused instruction.

“At a nursery level, children need to know patriotism. They need to know their identity and nationality. It is all towards nationhood, building cooperation and building unity,” Minister Parag explained. Lessons include proper conduct during national events, including how to stand and behave during the national

anthem, ensuring students understand their responsibilities as citizens.

While aspects of morality and civic responsibility have appeared in other subjects, the government believes dedicated teaching will strengthen national identity. Combined with improved nutrition, these initiatives aim to nurture well-rounded, informed, and proud young Guyanese who are ready to contribute to their communities and the nation.

MABURA GETS MODERN HEALTH CENTRE

Residents of Mabura and surrounding communities in Region Ten now have improved access to quality healthcare with the official commissioning of the new Mabura Health Centre and adjacent staff quarters.

The \$54 million facility is fully staffed and equipped to provide essential primary healthcare services, marking a significant step in the government’s effort to ensure equitable medical care across Guyana.

The centre offers outpatient services, maternal and child health programmes, basic emergency care, and health education initiatives aimed at preventive care and

early intervention. A \$30 million staff building was also commissioned, providing safe and comfortable accommodation for healthcare workers, which is expected to improve staff retention and ensure the continuous presence of medical personnel in the hinterland.

Minister of Health

Dr Frank Anthony emphasised the importance of the facility in saving lives. **“What we are trying to do is something extraordinary. We want to ensure that the same services accessible on the coastland are also accessible in the hinterland,”** he said.

Looking ahead,



Healthcare upgraded in Mabura

telemedicine services will be introduced at Mabura, allowing patients to access specialist consultations without travelling long distances. The facility will

also create opportunities for residents interested in pursuing nursing and other healthcare training programmes, strengthening the local healthcare workforce.

EDUCATION MINISTER REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO SAFE AND RESPECTFUL SCHOOLS



Minister Parag meets students at Zeeburg

Students at Zeeburg Secondary School in Region Three received a strong message from

Minister of Education Sonia Parag: schools must be safe spaces, free from violence, gangs, and

disruptive influences.

During an engagement with the students, Minister Parag addressed a recent incident that shook the school community. A video circulating online showed a teenage student being assaulted by a group of boys. The footage prompted urgent discussions about discipline, peer pressure, and the safety of learning environments.

“... you cannot develop unless you are in a safe environment,” Minister Parag told students, emphasising that violence and negative peer influence not only disrupt learning, but also undermine the efforts of teachers. She highlighted the importance of respect, responsibility, and accountability among students, reminding

them that acts of aggression have real consequences.

The Minister made it clear that her administration will maintain zero tolerance for gang-related behaviour or attempts to infiltrate schools with cliques that threaten safety and order. She also assured students that the Ministry of Education will work closely with authorities and school

leaders to implement measures that protect both learners and teachers.

Minister Parag’s visit underscored the government’s broader commitment to creating safe, nurturing spaces where students can focus on learning, personal growth, and development without fear.

BORDER COMMUNITIES FEEL IMPACT AS GUYANA STRENGTHENS SECURITY

Residents along Guyana’s western frontier are getting a reassuring message from the highest levels of government: their safety matters. In response to recent political developments in neighbouring Venezuela, Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret’d) Mark Phillips said the country has stepped up border defence and is working closely with defence forces, local authorities and frontline communities to maintain peace and security.

Speaking on the *Starting Point* podcast, Prime Minister Phillips said that Guyana had quickly moved into a heightened state of readiness following the January 3 upheaval in Venezuela, building on an existing security posture that already keeps soldiers along the borders with Venezuela, Suriname and Brazil.

“We will not fall into any false sense of security,” he said, noting that while no unusual activity has been observed along the Guyana–Venezuela boundary, constant vigilance is essential



PM Phillips, meeting with GGDF troops, during his visit to Region One

to protect families and livelihoods in the border regions. That message was

met with community members, regional officials and members of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) and other security agencies. For border residents, whose lives are shaped by daily interactions with the hinterland and occasional crossfrontier movement, information and connectivity have become key. Better internet access has helped communities stay informed about events unfolding in Venezuela, and local leaders have been active in sharing updates and reassurance.

Prime Minister Phillips stressed that the government’s priority remains safeguarding Guyana’s territorial integrity and ensuring that parents, children and elders in border communities feel secure. While regional positions on Venezuela’s political changes may vary, he said Guyana will act in its own national interests and continue to closely monitor events to prevent any instability from crossing into its territory.

MINISTER EDGHILL WARNS DEFAULTERS AGAINST ILLEGAL DUMPING OF WASTE ON MAJOR HIGHWAYS



Government moves to stop roadside waste

What should be clean, open roadways are increasingly turning into dumping grounds, and for commuters along the Ogle Highway, the consequences are becoming impossible to ignore.

During a recent inspection of the busy corridor, Minister of Public Works Bishop Juan Edghill issued a stern warning to individuals and

contractors who continue to dump dirt, builders’ waste and garbage along road shoulders, calling the practice dangerous, irresponsible and unacceptable.

“Anybody who is caught dumping there will face serious consequences,” the minister warned. **“Dumping of waste is not allowed on road shoulders, especially on main access roads and highways.”**

For residents and daily road users, the illegal dumping is more than just an eyesore. Piles of waste obstruct drainage, damage road infrastructure and create serious safety hazards for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, particularly at night or during periods of heavy rainfall.

While the

government will undertake cleanup efforts along the Ogle Highway, Minister Edghill made it clear that enforcement will now be stepped up. Waste, he stressed, must only be taken to designated landfill sites or approved locations such as schools or community grounds where dirt is required for landfilling.

Beyond immediate enforcement, the minister pointed to longer-term solutions underway, including assessments of lands across Guyana for the development of modern sanitary landfill sites to address long-standing waste disposal challenges.

Proper waste management, he said, is central to the government’s

environmental agenda and community safety goals. This includes building supporting infrastructure such as roads capable of handling



Government moves to stop roadside waste

heavy-duty garbage trucks and facilities to ensure waste is disposed of responsibly.

Derelict vehicles

The minister also addressed another growing concern, abandoned and derelict vehicles lining roadways.

Speaking particularly about the old railway embankment behind the GuyOil Gas Station, Minister Edghill said the government would

no longer tolerate vehicles blocking active construction zones.

He noted that contractors attempting to build a vital road in the area have repeatedly been obstructed by abandoned vehicles owned by Global Spare

Parts and Auto Sales.

“We have cleared this area more than five times, and the same thing continues to happen,” the minister said, adding that efforts to negotiate more time for removal were rejected.

“The government will have no choice but to impound these trucks and get on with its work,” he stated firmly. **“These parapets do not belong to individuals or businesses.”**

Minister Edghill said the public is being informed in advance to prevent misinformation, reiterating that enforcement actions will continue in the interest of public safety, community wellbeing and national development.

FITZBURG RESIDENTS CLOSER TO 100% SAFE DRINKING WATER

Residents of Fitzburg in Region One, who have relied on creek water for years, are set to benefit from a new well that will bring the community closer to 100 per cent



The meeting with the residents

access to safe drinking water.

Minister of Housing Collin Croal, joined by Regional Chairman Brentnol Ashely, announced the

development during a community meeting held at the local ground. The well will be drilled by Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI), under the Ministry of Public Utilities and Aviation.

Minister Croal also highlighted upgrades under the Hinterland Electrification Programme, which will improve power reliability for Fitzburg and the wider Port Kaituma area. A new generator is being procured to ensure households enjoy

consistent electricity for lighting, appliances, and small economic activities.

Other initiatives discussed included community beautification projects and improved waste management, designed to enhance residents’ quality of life. An interactive session allowed community members to raise household and neighbourhood concerns, with issues either addressed immediately or recorded



The meeting with the residents

for follow-up by relevant agencies.

Deputy Regional Executive Officer Jason Ramjohn, Chairman of the Matarkai NDC Keith Parker, and other officials were also present.

Thanks to accelerated government investments, potable

water access in Region One has increased from approximately 38 per cent in 2020 to over 90 per cent at the end of 2025. With the passage of Budget 2026, new wells are expected to continue expanding safe water access for communities like Fitzburg.

NEW HOMES FOR MAINSTAY AND HOFF VAN AURICH



New housing schemes Offer residents a fresh start in Region Two

Excitement is building on the Essequibo Coast as construction crews lay the foundations for new homes in Mainstay/Whyaka Village and Hoff Van Aurich. The government’s national housing programme is

bringing infrastructure and roads, to communities eager for change. Minister of Housing Collin Croal highlighted that while these communities have previously received housing support from

organisations like Food for the Poor, the government is now taking a hands-on role in building homes that will improve living conditions and opportunities for families. **“Every region can rest assured, they are going to be part of the housing programme,”** Minister Croal said during a local radio broadcast. In Mainstay, residents are eagerly anticipating the completion of the \$187 million access road. The one-kilometre stretch, now in its final phase, will improve access to the village and pave the way for housing

construction, bringing families closer to their dream homes. Meanwhile, in Hoff Van Aurich, a 102-acre housing scheme is rapidly taking shape, with 200 residents already allocated house lots. Multiple contractors are working across several lots, constructing roads, vital access bridges, and 9.7 kilometres of loam-surfaced streets to ensure smooth connectivity throughout the community. Reinforced concrete drains and extensive pipework are also being installed to manage water and provide essential utilities for every lot.

For residents of Region Two, these developments are opportunities for stability, growth, and

along the Essequibo Coast, the government’s strategy is giving residents tangible



New housing schemes Offer residents a fresh start in Region Two

renewed community pride. As roads connect families to the wider world and homes rise

reasons to believe in a brighter future.

FOUR NEW WATER SYSTEMS BENEFITTING OVER 2000 RESIDENTS IN REGION NINE

Nearly 2,000 residents of Karasabai, Jawari, Wichabai, and Curicock now have reliable access to potable water following the commissioning of four new water supply systems in Region Nine.



Scene from the commissioning

The projects, two new 150mm PVC

representing a \$102 million investment in hinterland development, have transformed water access for 1,865 people who previously relied on rainwater harvesting and open surface sources.

In Karasabai Village, wells were drilled in Section 2 and the Airstrip View area, serving 127 households. The facilities are powered by independent solar systems and secured with perimeter fencing. Similar wells and distribution lines were installed in the three satellite villages to ensure a consistent supply of safe water.

Minister of Public Utilities and Aviation, Deodat Indar, who officially commissioned the systems, highlighted the broader benefits of the projects. **“We are bringing the people in the community to be part of the execution**



Scene from the commissioning

of the development... they are paid, they learn a skill, and they become skillful to move that skill to other areas,” he said.

The minister emphasised that the initiative reflects the government’s

commitment to bridging the gap between coastal and hinterland water access. **“Here you are, surrounded by mountains, and you have 100 per cent access to water. That is the philosophy that nobody’s left behind,”**

he added.

Between 2020 and 2025, the government invested \$2 billion in Region Nine’s water sector, drilling over 65 wells and installing solar-powered pumping systems to address the region’s geographical challenges. In 2026, \$500 million is earmarked for the installation of 12 new water supply systems and the rehabilitation of the Lethem Pumping Stations, ensuring that even remote indigenous communities have a reliable, year-round water supply.

KARRAU TURNS TO SMART FARMING

The riverine village of Karrau in Lower Mazaruni, Region Seven, is charting a new path toward sustainable development and economic diversification with the launch of a smart agriculture project.

With a \$5 million investment from the government through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the community will soon have a shade house to cultivate high-value crops such as pepper, celery, shallot, and pak choi.

The initiative aligns with the government’s Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030 and reflects



The shade house project in Karrau village

the Village Council’s commitment to modern, environmentally friendly farming. Construction is progressing steadily, with planting boxes being filled and the water system being installed. Plans for an automatic irrigation system will further

enhance efficiency and water management.

Toshao Shane Cornelius explained that the project aims to diversify livelihoods traditionally dependent on mining and logging, while providing residents, especially youth, with exposure

to modern agricultural techniques. **“This is a controlled way of farming,”** he said, noting that the shade house protects farmers from harsh sun and rain while promoting sustainable practices.

The Village Council is working closely with the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) to ensure the project meets technical and operational standards. Toshao Cornelius hopes the initiative will serve as a model for schools and other stakeholders in and around Karrau. **“We are really excited about this project,”** he added.

Beyond food production, the shade house will generate employment opportunities. Two persons will directly manage operations, supported by Community Service Officers (CSOs) and pathway workers. During early construction, six residents were

employed, highlighting the project’s immediate economic impact.

Karrau is one of over 200 Amerindian communities that have benefited from significant government investments over the past five years, from LCDS funding to capital projects under various ministries.



The shade house project in Karrau village

BUXTON/ST JOSEPH RESIDENTS TO SOON ACCESS HOUSE LOTS AS MAJOR DRAINAGE PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY

Residents of Buxton and St Joseph in Region Two are one step closer to accessing their long-awaited house lots, thanks to a new drainage and irrigation project aimed at tackling persistent flooding in the area.

The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) has completed a detailed drainage plan, which will be implemented in two phases to improve water management and reduce the risk of flooding that has long plagued the community.

The first phase of the project, set to begin soon, will see the construction of about 0.7 kilometres of drainage channels and related structures. These will help channel water away from the housing scheme into nearby ponds, allowing residents to move onto their land safely.

Valued at \$44.2 million, the work has been contracted to Triple A General Contracting Services. The second phase will focus on boosting irrigation capacity, including the installation of an 80-cusec mobile pump to discharge excess water into the Pomeroon River. The pump is expected to be installed by the end of February, with contracts already in place.

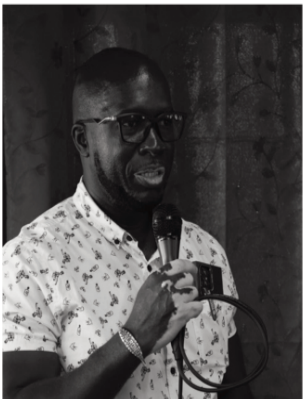
Minister of Housing Collin Croal, who visited the site, said residents can look forward to a permanent solution to the waterlogging and flooding that has delayed access to their homes. **“We’re looking for no later than three months from today to be able to permanently address the waterlogging, the flooding, or the accumulation of water that is causing flooding,”** Minister Croal said.

For families who have waited years for their plots, the project represents a promise of a fresh start and a chance to finally build their homes.



An excavator conducting drainage works

REGION FIVE FARMERS GET NEW PASTURES, RESOURCES UNDER LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



Dr. Dwight Waldron

Sheep and goat farmers in Region Five are seeing tangible results from the Government of Guyana’s livestock development initiatives.

Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha visited the area to review progress and reaffirm support for rural farming communities. The meeting was part of the government’s broader effort to strengthen the small ruminant sector, expand economic opportunities, and transform Region Five into Guyana’s livestock hub, a vision first outlined by President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali during the launch of the Black Belly Sheep Project.

Minister Mustapha highlighted the significant strides made in pasture development, noting that 60 five-acre parcels have been allocated to sheep and goat farmers to ensure proper grazing and sustainable production. **“Each farmer will receive five acres. Region Five was designated the livestock capital of the country, and we must ramp up production to create a national brand and reduce reliance on imported mutton,”** he said.

The minister also reported progress in building the national flock. Over the past three to four years, more than 1,500 farmers received breeding rams and other animals, boosting the national stock to over 5,000 animals. Officials from the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) have already allocated 54 of the 60 parcels, with continued support to develop these lands as pasture and secure them for sheep and goat rearing.

Farmers were assured of additional financial support through interest-free loans of up to \$3 million via the Guyana Development Bank, and were encouraged to join the regional sheep and goat association and collaborate on collective security systems. Minister Mustapha also confirmed that drainage and irrigation systems in the area are already in place, reducing flooding risks and supporting year-round production.

GLDA’s Chief Executive Officer Dr Dwight Waldron revealed that a training centre is under construction, which will provide farmers with access to silage bins, mobile corrals, and technical staff to support animal care and general **and youth in agriculture,”** Minister Mustapha said.

President Ali has reiterated that the livestock management. **“This initiative is about more than increasing production... it is about creating sustainable livelihoods, strengthening national food security, and empowering women**



Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha meeting with farmers

NEW HOTLINE ENABLING NORTH RUIMVELDT RESIDENTS TO GAIN 24-HOUR ACCESS TO GOVT SERVICES

Residents of North Ruimveldt now have a direct line to the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, thanks to a newly launched 24-hour hotline designed to improve community-level service delivery.

The initiative was highlighted during a community walkthrough led by Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Priya Manickchand, who visited the area to meet residents and hear their concerns firsthand. The hotline, 762-2431, allows citizens to report issues such as uncollected garbage, drainage problems, and other community-related concerns.

“While I can’t come here every day, they can see me, meet me, speak to me, every day through that number,” Minister Manickchand said. **“You will see us doing this throughout communities all over Guyana... and it is just how we serve.”**

During the walkthrough, the minister also welcomed feedback from residents, including children, on improving recreational spaces and observed areas where drainage, secondary drains, and alleyways could be enhanced.

The visit also allowed Minister Manickchand to address the role of the Mayor and City Council in service delivery. She expressed frustration at what she described as a lack of collaboration from City Hall, noting that administrative or political disagreements should not leave residents without essential services.

“I wish local organs, City Hall with Georgetown Mayor and City Council could do what they had to do... We cannot allow the citizens of Georgetown to suffer because of back-and-forth politics,” she said.

Since the hotline’s launch, the ministry has been receiving messages from East and North Ruimveldt, demonstrating strong community engagement even before the walkthroughs were completed.

Minister Manickchand stressed that the hotline is part of a broader effort to strengthen direct engagement with communities across Guyana, ensuring that residents have a reliable way to voice concerns and access government support around the clock.



The community walkthrough led by Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Priya Manickchand



The community walkthrough led by Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Priya Manickchand

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TIGER BAY CORNER TRANSFORMED INTO FLOODLIT FUTSAL AND BASKETBALL COURT



Tiger Bay gets modern floodlit court less than a year after promise

A quiet corner of Tiger Bay is now buzzing with energy. Once a simple parking space, the site at Queen and Hope Streets has been transformed into a floodlit futsal and basketball court, giving local youth a safe and modern place to gather, play, and dream big.

The new facility was unveiled by President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, less than a year after the promise was made to the community. The project was funded by the government, with a generous contribution from businessman Harry Mattai, owner of Mattai's Supermarket, who leased his land specifically for

this purpose. By day, the area serves as a private car park; by evening, floodlights illuminate the court, allowing residents to enjoy sporting activities after work or school.

President Ali praised the residents of Tiger Bay for their continued partnership with the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government, underscoring the administration's long-term commitment to walking alongside communities across Guyana.

"We are partnering together for the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years. We are

on the journey of development. We are on the journey of unity. We're on a journey of togetherness. We are building for all," he said. **"This is just the beginning of a beautiful transformation and path that we are taking."**

To the delight of onlookers, President Ali also joined a game of



Tiger Bay gets modern floodlit court less than a year after promise

one-on-one basketball, showing that the court is not just symbolic but a space for shared community enjoyment.

The investment is part of a broader strategy to revitalise

Tiger Bay, with historic areas earmarked for restoration and underutilised buildings converted into skills training centers. Minister of Labour and Manpower Planning, Keoma Griffith, will work alongside the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development to implement technical training programmes, including the BIT initiative, directly in the

community. These and related projects form part of a wider plan to transform Tiger Bay into a "neighbourhood of love", a vision introduced by the president.

Minister within the



Tiger Bay gets modern floodlit court less than a year after promise

Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Steven Jacobs, noted that the court will also create opportunities for local vendors and residents to earn income during sporting events such as futsal tournaments. Local football players have committed to

mentoring youth at the court, helping young residents develop skills and discipline.

Mr. Mattai said his contribution reflects his support for President Ali's "One Guyana" vision and his dedication to the people of Tiger Bay.



Tiger Bay gets modern floodlit court less than a year after promise

PALMYRA MULTIPURPOSE FACILITY SET TO TRANSFORM OPPORTUNITIES FOR BERBICE YOUTH

Excited young athletes in Berbice are on the verge of a game-changing opportunity. The Palmyra multipurpose facility, a state-of-the-art stadium, is set to give them access to modern infrastructure, coaching, and exposure that previous generations could only dream of.

During a site visit, Minister within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Steven Jacobs, highlighted the transformative potential of the facility for both sport and community development in Region Six. **"Having a facility of this nature will be impactful, not only for Palmyra but for the entire country. When we were growing up, these facilities did not exist. Now, young people will have access to modern infrastructure that will elevate their skills, exposure, and opportunities,"** he



Tiger Bay gets modern floodlit court less than a year after promise

said.

Minister Jacobs explained that the Palmyra facility is part of a broader national strategy to build a sustainable sports ecosystem. This includes the Albion Cricket Academy, community-based coaching programmes, and structured career pathways for former athletes, allowing them to return to their communities as mentors and coaches. **"We are building an ecosystem... facilities, human resources, coaching, and development**

programmes—that will elevate our athletes. This is about the entire country," Minister Jacobs noted.

The minister was joined by Region Six Chairman and Member of Parliament Zamal Hussain, technical officers, regional officials, and a distinguished lineup of national and international cricket icons, including former West Indies and Guyana players Devendra Bishoo, Veerasammy Permaul, Assad Fudadin, Jonathan Foo, and Sewnarine Chattergoon.

MP Hussain hailed the facility as historic,

emphasising its dual role in sport and economic growth. **"Berbice has produced some of the greatest cricketers this country has ever known. This stadium will mean so much for our people. It is not only about cricket. It is multi-purpose. It will support cycling, exercise, recreation, and generate massive economic activity,"** he said. Hussain added that the venue will



Tiger Bay gets modern floodlit court less than a year after promise

open opportunities for hosting CPL matches, international games, concerts, and other major events, benefiting

local businesses and boosting the wider Orange Economy.

Former West Indies leg-spinner Bishoo described the project as a turning point for young athletes. **"Growing up, we never had anything like this. The youngsters are going to benefit tremendously. This initiative will change the future for Berbice cricket,"** he said. Former all-rounder

stadium will open new doors for the community.

Minister Jacobs underscored the people-centered approach behind the development. **"Every facility we bring has a spillover effect... jobs, businesses, opportunities for families, communities, and young people. This is about giving people a chance to earn, grow, and develop through sport and culture,"** he said.

Scheduled for completion later this year, the Palmyra facility is expected to play a central role in transforming Berbice into a hub for sport, culture, commerce, and community life, complementing other major projects such as the Albion Cricket Academy, New Amsterdam synthetic track, a deep-water port, and the new Berbice Bridge.



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SNEAK PEEK AT HOUSTON'S NEWEST HOTEL



President Dr. Irfaan Ali got an exclusive look inside the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel in Houston, set to officially open in March 2026. The guided tour gave the President a firsthand view of the 172-room property, which has already begun accepting bookings and operating a restaurant since November, serving a variety of Guyanese dishes.

The hotel features world-class amenities, including a large swimming pool, an event hall that can host up to 1,000 guests, and a bar. Five rooms are specially designed to accommodate persons with disabilities, ensuring accessibility for all visitors.

Highlighting Guyanese culture and craftsmanship, the hotel displays a collection of local art and crafts throughout its walls. Furniture and room accents incorporate designs from indigenous communities, creating a uniquely Guyanese touch in each space.

Currently operating at around 40 percent capacity, the property aims to combine modern luxury with cultural authenticity, offering both comfort and a celebration of Guyanese heritage to guests.

The full opening in March 2026 is expected to position the Four Points by Sheraton Houston as a premier destination for visitors, while also promoting Guyanese art, cuisine, and culture to an international audience.



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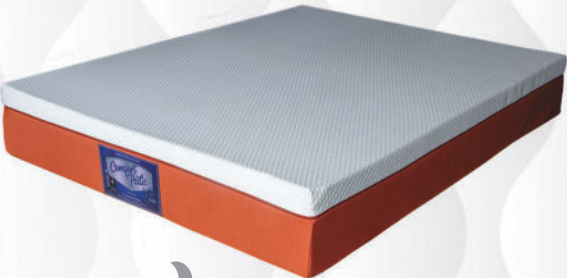
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2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BANKS MASH IN DE AVENUE

FRIDAY JAN 16 16:00 HRS

MAIN STREET

BANKS MASH IN DE AVENUE

FRIDAY JAN 23 16:00 HRS

MAIN STREET

MASHRAMANI POP-UP CONCERT

SATURDAY JAN 24 17:00 HRS

MAIN STREET NEW AMSTERDAM

MASH IN DE AVENUE

FRIDAY JAN 30 16:00 HRS

MAIN STREET

REPUBLIC BANS PANORAMA LAUNCH PARTY

SUNDAY FEB 1 17:00 HRS

SEAWALL ESPLANADE

BANKS MASH IN DE AVENUE

FRIDAY FEB 6 16:00 HRS

MAIN STREET

MASHRAMANI POP-UP CONCERT

SUNDAY FEB 7 17:00 HRS

BARTICA COMMUNITY CENTRE

CALYPSO MONARCH

FRIDAY FEB 13 20:00 HRS

MORUCA REGION 1

CHUTNEY MONARCH

SATURDAY FEB 14 20:00 HRS

BATH SETTLEMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE

DANCEHALL MONARCH

SUNDAY FEB 15 21:00 HRS

REX MONUMENT SITE KITTY SEAWALL

MASHRAMANI PANORAMA STEEL BAND CONTESTION

THURSDAY FEB 19 18:00 HRS

KINGSTON BEACH

Soca MONARCH

FRIDAY FEB 20 20:00 HRS

GEORGETOWN BUS PARK LINDEN

MASHRAMAMA

SATURDAY FEB 21 20:00 HRS

NATIONAL PARK

SPLASHRAMANI

SUNDAY FEB 22 20:00 HRS

PROVIDENCE NATIONAL STADIUM

REPUBLIC FLAG RAISING

SUNDAY FEB 22 22:00 HRS

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