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Thursday January 1 2026. Volume 46, Issue #01 www.equalitynews.ca. For advertising, call 647-216-2359



Guyana First Lady visits Christmas babies

FIVE babies were born at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) on Christmas Day. First Lady Arya Ali spent the holiday morning bringing comfort, compassion, and cheer to the babies, their parents, and healthcare workers.

The newborns: two girls and three boys, were delivered earlier in the day, with hospital officials noting that more births were expected as essential services continued uninterrupted. During her visit to the maternity and paediatric wards, the first lady distributed care packages and hampers and announced that toys would also be provided for children receiving care. She said her visit reflects the true spirit of the season, sharing love and hope.

“Christmas is a time for family, but today we are extending our love to our extended family, spreading compassion, hope and joy,” she said.

The first lady expressed gratitude to corporate partners, including Massy Distribution, Haliborange, BPI, J’s Group of Companies and Sleepy, for supporting the initiative and giving back to the community.

She also extended Christmas greetings to patients, healthcare workers and their loved ones. GPHC’s Chief Executive Officer, Robbie Rambarran, said that Christmas Day remains a busy and emotionally demanding period for the hospital, as staff continue to serve patients at their most vulnerable.



Trinidad-born international rapper Nicki Minaj

Petition calls for Nicki Minaj’s deportation

A Change.org petition started by Tristan Hamilton has called on United States immigration authorities to review the residency status of rapper Nicki Minaj and consider her deportation to Trinidad, citing what the petition describes as harmful rhetoric and a reversal of positions that once aligned her with LGBTQ+ advocacy.

The petition, which had 53,971 verified signatures as of Monday, argues that Minaj’s recent words and actions have left many former supporters feeling “deeply betrayed,” particularly those who once viewed her as a voice of support and understanding within the LGBTQ+ community. It claims her public stance has shifted from advocacy to promoting what it describes as outdated and harmful ideas.

Minaj, born Onika Tanya Maraj on December, 8, 1982 in the St James district of Port of Spain, Trinidad and

Tobago, lived there until moving to the United States at age five. The petition raises the point that Minaj is not a United States citizen, arguing that her immigration status warrants review in light of what it characterises as divisive public conduct.

Central to the complaint is Minaj’s assertion that “boys should just be boys,” a comment the petition says undermines the foundations of a community that previously found representation and solidarity in her music and public persona.

The petition maintains that such statements carry significant weight because of Minaj’s global platform and influence. The issue text frames the matter as personal for supporters who followed Minaj’s rise and now feel “abandoned by her shift in values,” describing the change as deflating and disillusioning.



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New Year message calls for unity

The Secretary-General of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has urged Caribbean citizens and stakeholders to recommit to regional unity and resilience, citing a year marked by devastating hurricanes, geopolitical pressures, and steady progress on regional integration.

In her end-of-year message issued December 22, Secretary-General Dr. Carla Barnett reflected on the impact of Hurricane Beryl in 2024 and Hurricane Melissa in 2025, which caused “death and destruction” in Jamaica and Haiti, noting that recovery would require significant time and resources. She also pointed to “unprecedented geopolitical headwinds” that threatened export earnings, regional peace, and sovereignty.

Despite those challenges, she said the region’s resilience remained evident. CARICOM member states, she noted, mobilized quickly after the hurricanes to meet urgent needs and adapted to protect businesses and livelihoods across the Community.

The Secretary-General highlighted progress on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, pointing to decisions by Barbados, Belize, Dominica, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines to begin full free movement of people among themselves. She described the move as a step toward greater economic activity and deeper people-to-people ties.

She also reported advances toward a comprehensive CARICOM Industrial Policy and Strategy aimed at strengthening productive capacity, innovation, and economic diversification, while noting setbacks in agricul-

ture caused by hurricanes and other climate-related events, even as the region continued implementing the “25 by 2025+” food security initiative.

Cultural and democratic milestones were also underscored, including celebrations of Caribbean creativity during CARIFESTA XV in Barbados in August, and the holding of peaceful general elections in seven member states and four associate members.

Looking ahead, the Secretary-General said CARICOM would continue focusing on human capital development, inclusivity, and expanding opportunities for young people and women, while exploring the implications of artificial intelligence and strengthening physical and digital connectivity. Building disaster resilience and improving food and nutrition security, she added, would remain top priorities.

She praised the region’s citizens, CARICOM institutions, international partners, civil society, the private sector, labour groups, and the Caribbean diaspora for their continued engagement, and expressed confidence that outcomes from this year’s meetings of CARICOM Heads of Government — including those held in Barbados in February and Jamaica in July — signal a clear strategic direction.

The message concluded with a call for all stakeholders to work together toward a “Community for All” that is resilient, prosperous, and united, as the region prepares to enter the new year.

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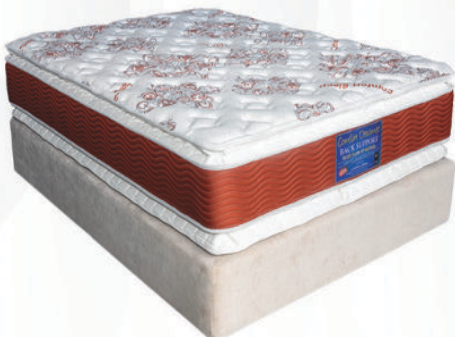
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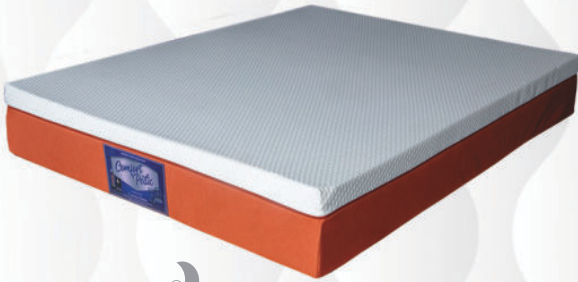
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Cracks in Caribbean unity over the Trump-fuelled Venezuelan crisis, serious reduction in crime and Jamaica's 'Storm of the Century' Hurricane Melissa dominated headlines

Top stories from the Caribbean in 2025

If for nothing else, the year 2025 will be remembered for a string of major regional and geopolitical events, including American threats to invade Venezuela, a dozen peacefully held elections in the Caribbean, a massive reduction of violent crime, and continuing annual calls from devastating mega hurricanes.

As a tumultuous year comes to a close, there are increasing mumblings about alleged cracks in Caribbean Community unity brought about by Trinidad and Tobago's unrelenting support for the American military presence in the South Caribbean, deadly attacks on alleged narco-fetching boats and frustration in the Trinidad cabinet because the remainder of the 15-nation bloc is not as strident in their support for the US against Venezuela.

Labelling the bloc as "dysfunctional and self-destructive" Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar basically dismissed the community as a waste of time, contending that instead of supporting the US, CARICOM has chosen to disparage "our greatest ally, the United States lending support to the Maduro narco-government headed by a dictator who has imprisoned and killed thousands of civilians and opposition members as well as threatened two CARICOM members."

Colleague leaders were quick to take her on, led by Prime Minister Gaston Browne of Antigua who denied that leaders or governments have "bad-mouthed the US. No evidence has been offered because none exists," Browne said in a spirited reply to the T&T head of government. And if there are widening fissures, Barbadian Foreign Minister Kerrie Symmonds says the answer is simply for leaders to "meet behind closed doors to discuss concerns on all sides."

As tensions linger, the bloc is celebrating what is perhaps a record-breaking year for general elections, hosting 12 races, sometimes two in one week, as governments that won consecutive terms, such as those in Bermuda, St. Lucia, and Guyana, among others, did so handsomely. And some of those that lost, like Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves' United Labor Party (ULP), suffered humiliating defeats as the ULP took home only Gonsalves' seat from the late November race. The ULP had been in power since 2021 but voters appeared to end the Gonsalves' era with a decisive mandate for new PM Godwin Friday.

But as the region prepares for the



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

new year, governments in many regional jurisdictions like Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, and The Turks and Caicos are all reporting significant reductions in violent crimes, such as murders with Jamaica leading the way.

For example, Prime Minister Andrew Holness, who won a third term in elections in September, has wasted little time in bragging that the island will record no more than 700 murders this year for the first time in 30 years. The projected figure will be at least a 40 % reduction in annual figures that had averaged around 1,300 murders per year.

"It happened because the government made an investment and gave confidence and support in policy and direction to our security forces, and we are now reaping the benefits of that," he declared. As a result of that, the murder rate is now down 42 % this year, 21 % last year, and seven % the year before. So now we can, for the first time in over 30, almost 40 years, look for a murder rate that is below 700," he stated.

In Trinidad, Deputy Police Chief Junior Benjamin told Newsday newspaper that "we are now in one of the lowest years in terms of homicides. The police service is judged by one thing: the murder rate. We set the groundwork, so the mistakes of 2024 were not repeated in 2025." Murders are expected to decrease to under 400, compared to an average of 600 in recent years.

Others enjoying felony crime reductions include the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), with an overall drop of 40 % compared to 2024 when gangsters were on the rampage. In Guyana, Police Chief Clifton Hicken says his force has recorded a 26 % decrease in serious crimes, while Police in Barbados, The Bahamas, and Suriname,



Andrew Holness

among others, continue to take action against gangs.

Meanwhile, superstorm Melissa killed at least 32 people in north and western Jamaica as it came ashore in late October, destroying homes, hospitals, police stations, and the infrastructure, including utility poles and road networks.

As officials struggle to repair and help communities recover from the devastation, a consortium of multilateral financial agencies including the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group is working to raise \$3.6 billion in loans and grants to help recovery efforts. Officials estimate damage to be around \$9 billion. Haiti and Cuba were also hurt by Hurricane Melissa.

Officials say that Jamaica's misfortune is all the more compelling because Hurricane Beryl, another mega storm, had also caused severe damage to the country in July of 2024. Damage from Beryl and Melissa, Dorian in The Bahamas in 2019, and Irma and Maria in 2017 caused terrible damage to Dominica and neighboring islands. Leaders argue that the increasing power of these storms is evidence that developed nations, whose actions persistently trigger these violent changes in weather patterns, should be held accountable for their actions.

And in late December, the Trump administration cited its distrust of the due diligence abilities of some regional governments to properly administer the citizenship by investment program (CIP) as the reason for suspending visa access to Dominicans and Antiguans. The issue has since been resolved, with

holders of existing visas being allowed to travel, but new applicants face an uncertain future and extensive background checks. Under the CIP, local passports and citizenship are offered to foreigners for as low as US\$100,000, along with investments in development sectors.

Neighbors like Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Kitts say they are closely monitoring developments, but the new administration in St. Vincent has announced plans to implement its own CIP scheme, despite local fears of being penalized by the US.

Regional civil society leaders like Chester Humphrey, a former Grenadian senate president, say the US is simply bullying and pressuring CARICOM nations to do its bidding, like allowing it to set up military radars on Caribbean soil and use countries as jumping off points for military action against Venezuela, as it has done in both Trinidad and Tobago. The US has recently set up a radar in Tobago while awaiting a decision from Grenada regarding similar facilities.

As Trinidad rallies behind the US, Venezuela has made it clear that it will attack the republic if military incursions are launched against it from the federation. It has also thrown similar shade against neighboring Guyana, which is also supporting America's alleged war on drugs in the area. "We have always lived in peace, but if Trinidad lends its territory to attack Venezuela, we must respond with maximum popular military police fusion," said Vice President Diosdado Cabello Rondó in response to joint military exercises in Trinidad. Antigua has already said no radar or military facilities will be allowed in the federation as the US moves to reclaim hegemony over its so-called Third Border or hemispheric backyard.

Influential local commentators in Trinidad, like Rodney Charles, a former lawmaker in the Trinidad PM's party, say foreign policy making is headed in the wrong direction.

"I think that we are going down a very, very dangerous path. We do not have a well-thought-out and/or nuanced foreign policy that serves our interests. The US is not Trump. We might very well find post-midterms US elections in November 2026 that we positioned ourselves on the wrong side of even their foreign policy realities," he said in a late December social media post.

(Courtesy Caribbean Life)



The arrivals hall at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport

Tourism takes off as Guyana gears up for three million visitors

GUYANA’S tourism performance continues to chart bold territory, and the nation is now preparing to welcome three million passengers by 2030, according to Minister of Tourism, Industry, and Commerce, Susan Rodrigues.

Speaking during a live broadcast on Tuesday, the minister highlighted the high-volume of visitor arrivals: “...We are looking forward to welcoming 3 million passengers by 2030 and our economy and our people have to be ready to receive these 3 million passengers.”

She stressed that all Guyanese can “participate in the economy through tourism.”

Minister Rodrigues said, “From the moment a visitor touches down at the airport or any port of entry, jobs are created, opportunities are created in transportation,

in food, in accommodation, in tour guiding, all of which are done by ordinary people, small and medium-sized businesses.”

She also pointed out that 2025 has already been a record-breaking year for tourism, with every month, indicating year-on-year increase over the corresponding period in 2024.

The minister noted that for the period January to October 2025, the total number of visitor arrivals for 2024 was surpassed. The projected figure for 2025 now stands at an impressive 20 per cent growth, the highest ever recorded in Guyana.

She further said that all Guyanese have a role to play in ensuring that the nation’s tourism sector grows and remains sustainable.

Guyana’s exceptional performance has even garnered regional recognition as

the Caribbean Tourism Organization confirmed that the nation achieved the highest percentage increase in visitor arrivals in the entire region from January to July, she disclosed.

To accommodate the surge in visitors, the government is continuing to accelerate investment in tourism accommodation and infrastructure, thus, resulting in its issuance of a request for proposals for the construction of eco lodges and resorts at 10 locations across the country, with the expression of interest period closing December 31.

Parallel to infrastructure expansion, the government continues to place emphasis on developing its human resources since 2020 and as such, the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) has trained 8000 persons in hospitality and customer service, food preparation among other areas.

Tour operators have also benefitted

from training, the minister further disclosed.

Minister Rodrigues added that accommodation capacity has expanded significantly as 600 hotel rooms have been added through six new hotels over the last five years. Also, 15 major branded hotels are currently under construction and upon completion will add 2,000 rooms to the room stock.

Tourism growth, according to the minister, has been supported by increased airlift, with nine new airlines entering the market between 2020 and 2025.

She added: “And we will continue to expand our airlifts, those airlines that are operating here, and also will continue to add new routes, opening up new markets for the Guyanese traveller looking to explore and also to attract tourists looking to come to Guyana to experience our tourism product and even for trade and investment.



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Paving The Way For Lasting National Benefits

Editorial from the Guyana Chronicle, December 29 2025

AS Guyana approaches what President, Dr Irfaan Ali has called a “golden era,” the message from the recent Guyana Oil and Gas Energy Chamber’s Annual Awards serves as both a promise and a vital guide.

The President assured the nation that our growing oil wealth is in “safe hands.” He goes beyond just words by outlining a clear strategy aimed at ensuring long-term stability rather than short-term gains.

The announcement of a five-year economic expansion plan, supported by major industrial developments in Wales and Berbice, shows that the government is not just benefitting from oil revenues, but is also actively investing them into building a modern, diverse economy.

The scale of the planned investments highlights this vision. The Wales Development Zone alone is set

to attract over US\$4 billion for the gas-to-energy initiative and related industries. Berbice is also expected to receive an additional US\$2 billion for gas and port infrastructure. This leads to the creation of a US\$10 billion national energy network.

These numbers mean real relief for the average Guyanese. The gas-to-energy project, nearing completion, aims to cut electricity costs by 50 per cent. This change will lower household bills and enable our manufacturing sector to compete on a global scale.

Along with oil production being expected to reach an impressive 1.3 million barrels per day by 2030, the economic outlook is clearly positive.

However, what sets this administration apart is its sober approach to optimism.

President Ali’s honest warning about global market fluctuations and the potential for energy oversupply between 2025 and 2030, shows a level of

maturity often absent in resource-rich countries.

By recognising that the industry is sensitive to price, cost, and political factors, the government demonstrates it is navigating these challenges with clear awareness, while balancing ambitious growth with sound financial practices.

Importantly, the President’s focus on human resources addresses sustainable development.

Infrastructure is useless without a skilled workforce to manage it. The administration’s development of a human capital strategy, along with encouraging the diaspora to return, cor-

rectly identifies our people as the true asset.

As we move from being a raw-material exporter to an industrial leader, the need for skill improvement is essential.

In a world where many countries suffer from resource curses, Guyana’s story is shaping up differently.

The economy is being guided by leaders who understand the weight of their roles. With a well-defined strategy to turn oil into lasting national benefits, including quality healthcare and energy security, it is clear that our future is in capable hands.

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Saluting Rohan Kanhai at 90 Not Out

By Donald Ramotar

Former Guyana President

On December 26, 2025 Rohan Kanhai celebrated his 90th birthday. While this is an important milestone for anyone, it is particularly important for our nation as a whole.

Rohan, was indeed our country’s first superstar in sports. He strode the cricketing areas, throughout the world like a giant. His battling was sheer genius as he played every stroke in the book and invented some of his own. He was a fantastic fielder, particularly in the slips and in his early stage was one of the best wicket keeper of his time.

Rohan began his career in the 1950s. It was a very difficult period in

our country. At that time the progressive forces in Guyana were confronting colonialism and imperialism as we fought for the independence of Guyana. That movement was led by a villager of Rohan, the great Cheddi Jagan. The anti-colonial struggle here had grasped the imagination of freedom loving people the world over but more particularly the people of Asia and Africa. The struggles in British Guiana, Kenya and South Africa had captured International Headlines in the 1950s and 60s.

The Guyana cricketers of that period in many ways reflected the struggles of our people. But no one more than Rohan with the bat and Lance Gibbs with the ball.

While batting sometimes Rohan

would explode and then no bowler could keep him down. It did not matter if it was pace or spin, he would hit them to all parts of the ground, seemingly merciless yet with an unmatched elegance.

We saw the same with Gibbs and the ball. When he exploded, he was almost unplayable.

Rohan not only played many magnificent innings of which it is almost impossible to pick his best. They were all stupendous. Those cricket lovers who never saw the master “blasting for runs” must be considered as unfortunates.

He was also a very astute captain of the West Indies. When the team fell into bad times and began losing a lot, it

was Rohan who put it back on its winning ways. He was succeeded by Lloyd under whose leadership the West Indies enjoyed its longest period at the top of the game.

Rohan became a successful coach after he retired. His period of coaching in Jamaica is still remembered fondly. Many Jamaicans at that time named their children after the great man. This included Bob Marley who had a son named Rohan.

On this occasion of his 90th Birthday I wish to thank him for the pleasure and pride he provided for the cricketing world and for us in Guyana and the Caribbean.

I say Happy Birthday Great One and keep going for the century!



Publisher: Bhaskar Sharma

Equalitygroup@rogers.com

Editor: Nishad Sharma

Annual subscription: \$104.00 (including postage)

Funded by the Government of Canada.

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Equality News is the largest weekly newspaper serving Guyanese and Caribbean readers in Canada.

Contributors: Niraj Sharma, Freddie Kissoon,

Donald Ramotar, Cliff Rajkumar, Dr Kumar Mahabir, Dr Vishnu Bisram

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Hospitals warned about rare infection emerging in Calgary

Alberta health officials are flagging the circulation of a rare bacteria known as *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) among homeless adults living in Calgary.

A memo to emergency departments and urgent care workers from Primary and Preventative Health Services obtained by CBC News warns of a “cluster of invasive Hib cases caused by a genetically distinct sequence type.”

“This strain has previously been reported in British Columbia and is now appearing in our region among adults experiencing homelessness or unstable housing,” the memo reads.

In 2022, an outbreak of Hib was reported on Vancouver Island, spreading among homeless populations as well as people who use drugs. Island Health said at the time that one person had died from the infection.

According to the Alberta government, there have been eight cases of Hib in the Calgary zone in 2025. That's compared to three cases in 2024, and two cases between 2019 and 2023.

Hib used to be cause more illness among children, until a vaccine for it was introduced and included as part of routine childhood immunizations, says Dr. Isaac Bogoch, an infectious disease specialist at Toronto General Hospital.

"It's not a very common infection, but I think if you work in a hospital, you're not surprised to see it every once in a while," said Bogoch.

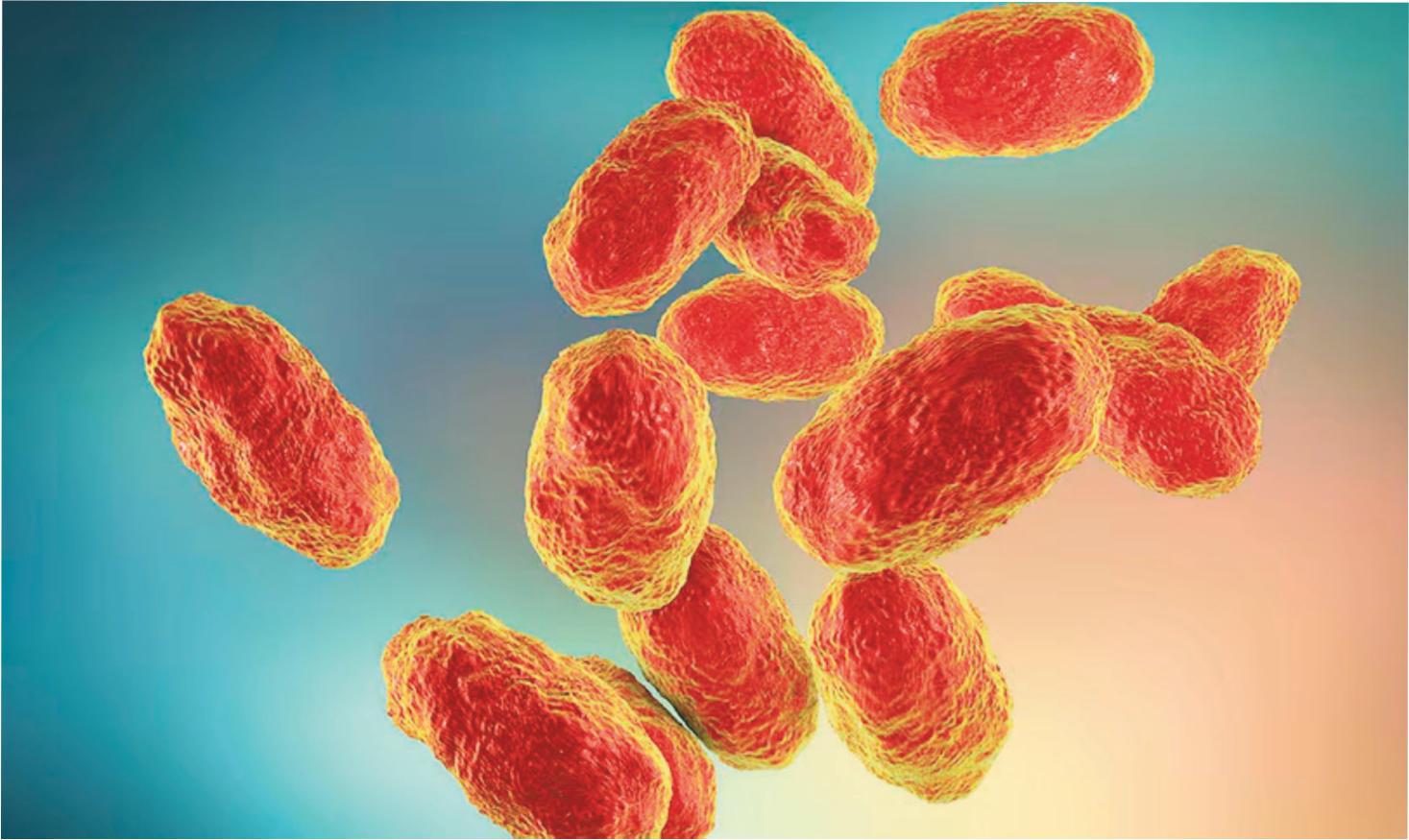
"Is this going to add significant pressure to an already stretched health-care system? No, it's not. But it's important to recognize patients coming in with risk factors like homelessness may have this infection."

The memo acknowledges Hib remains relatively rare in Calgary, but the "uniqueness of the epidemiology of the strain" warrants awareness.

Despite similarities in its name, Hib is not associated with the influenza virus (and is a bacteria, not a virus.)

It can however present as flu-like symptoms, like ear or sinus infections. Health Canada says in rarer, more severe cases, Hib can get into the blood and infect various organs. Then it can cause symptoms like fever, drowsiness and vomiting, and can be fatal.

Bogoch says as infections go, it is not hard to treat, diagnose or prevent, but said it is "sadly an infection that's



There have been 8 cases of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) reported in Calgary in 2025

more common in homeless populations."

He says that's due to lack of infrastructure in environments where people are clustered together, with lower access to health care and hygiene services.

Those factors can also lead to higher risk of weakened immune sys-

tems among homeless populations, making them more susceptible to the spread of infections, said Dr. Monty Ghosh, an addictions and internal medicine specialist and assistant professor at the University of Calgary and University of Alberta.

The bacteria typically spreads

through coughing, sneezing or sharing things like utensils or cups.

The memo from Alberta's Primary and Preventative Health Services ministry says surveillance for Hib has been stepped up, and contact tracing will be conducted.

— from the CBC

Canadians want their cars built locally

Many Canadians are looking to buy a new car in the near future — but amid the trade war, the majority say they would prefer that their cars be made entirely in Canada.

As many as six in 10 Canadians (61 per cent) said they are looking to buy a new car in the next five years, with more than three-quarters (76 per cent) worried that trade tensions and U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs will make vehicles unaffordable, a new KPMG survey released Monday showed.

Canadians want their cars built right here, the survey showed, with 72 per cent saying it is important that their vehicle be assembled or built in Canada. Nearly half (49 per cent) said it is “somewhat important,” while 23 per cent said it is “very important.”

The survey shows that non-American manufacturers with a large manufacturing footprint in Ontario — Toyota and Honda — are seeing a spike in popularity in Canada, while the Detroit Three — General Motors, Stellantis and Ford — are losing consumer trust.

“It's not surprising that Toyota and Honda, which each have a large manufacturing presence in Ontario, resonate most with Canadian consumers,” said Dave Power, partner and national automotive sector leader at KPMG Canada.

“At the same time, trust in the Detroit Three is starting to erode as Canadians see a lack of commitment to keep jobs in Canada, driven by U.S. trade policies and pressures on company leadership to move operations to the U.S.,” Power added.

In April, Trump announced a 25 per cent tariff on foreign-made automobiles, including those assembled in Canada. However, in May, he announced that any parts that are compliant with the Canada-U.S.-Mexico free trade agreement will not be hit with tariffs.

CUSMA is up for review in the new year, leading Canadians to worry about car prices if Canada loses these exemptions.

The highly integrated nature of the automotive supply chain would likely mean Canadians could see car prices affected by Trump's tariffs.

Nearly three-quarters of Canadians (72 per cent) are concerned new vehicle prices will rise if Canada's auto industry loses protection under CUSMA, the KPMG survey showed.

Half (51 per cent) believe Canada's automotive industry cannot survive without trade protections or a new trade agreement with the U.S.

The survey shows Canadians also want the government to punish automakers that move jobs down south, with six in 10 (59 per cent) saying they support subjecting automakers to Canadian tariffs if they relocate assembly lines to the U.S., the research finds.

Canadians want the country's auto sector to keep focus on electric vehicles, with more than half (55 per cent) saying they believe Canada could become a global leader in EVs to reduce its reliance on the U.S.

Most Canadians (62 per cent) say they don't plan to spend more than \$50,000 on their next car, down from 75 per cent in 2022. — from Global News

‘Guyana building judicial architecture that can withstand every storm’

PRESIDENT Dr Irfan Ali has underscored the importance of building strong institutions as the foundation of national development, praising the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and the Judiciary for their focus on long-term systems.

Speaking on institutional resilience, during the swearing in of Senior Counsel Rafiq Turhan Khan as a Justice of Appeal on Tuesday, the Head of State said, “Once we build strong, resilient systems, we will be able to build an architecture that can withstand every storm, and I want to compliment the office of the Department of Public Prosecution (DPP) and the Judiciary for focusing heavily on system, because that is what we’ll all leave.”

President Ali emphasised that public officials are temporary, but the systems they establish endure beyond their time in office.

“All of us leave office, we leave the system, and the system is what ensures the survival of the product that we deliver,” he added.

While addressing the nation from the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACC) last week, President Ali said Guyana’s judiciary, which has upheld stability and the principles of good governance, is poised for a new era of consistent excellence, signalling a commitment to strengthening the country’s judicial system.

“My government welcomes the judiciary’s effort to ensure accountability by pursuing evidence-based data management across all levels of the court system.”

He noted that the government will introduce disposal and clearance rate standards, leveraging the use of technology for all court operations.

To this end, case management, human resources, maintenance of stores for the payment of maintenance, bail and fines electronically will be the main areas of focus over the next five years.

“This administration holds an un-

flinching commitment to the rule of law, to the sanctity of our legal institutions, and most of all, to you, the people of this land. Justice must work for the people of this land,” the President said.

In addition to this, legislative changes will be made to make judges, magistrates, as well as legal practitioners more accountable.

Further, the government will be launching the revised edition of the laws of Guyana, updated from 2012 to December 31, 2021. The government will be launching the law reports of Guyana from 2008 to 2021.

“These initiatives will make our laws easier, accessible and more user-friendly to all our citizens,” the president said.

President Ali also noted that the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) is expected to fill key vacancies in the High Court and Magistrate Court, increasing the complement of commissioners of title in support of their rendering of timely decisions, and appointing more judicial research assistants who will be integral.

This, according to President Ali, will all strengthen the capacity of the courts to deal with cases more efficiently.



President Irfan Ali

All JA schools to re-open Jan 6

At least 160 schools across Jamaica remained closed to teaching and learning in early December, weeks after the passage of Hurricane Melissa. But the expected reopening of schools is January 6, 2026, according to Fayval Williams, Minister of Finance and the Public Service.

Williams said 100 of the 160 schools not yet reopened were impacted by the Category 5 storm. Speaking during a meeting of Parliament’s Standing Finance Committee recently, she also disclosed that 59 schools are still being used as shelters for people displaced by the hurricane.

Of the 1,010 public schools nationwide, Williams said 721 were damaged when Hurricane Melissa tore through the island on October 28, leaving 290 schools deemed severely impacted. Despite that, she told the committee that 850 schools have already reopened.

To support recovery efforts, the government has allocated \$616 million for school clean-up activities following

the storm. An additional \$1.7 billion has been earmarked in the Third Supplementary Estimates for public schools for the period ending March 31, 2026.

However, the Jamaica Teachers’ Association (JTA) has raised concerns about the planned January reopening, citing what it described as insufficient consultation by the Ministry of Education.

“At the end of the day, we’re going to be tripping over ourselves, and it will create a lot of inefficiencies in the system; and if we are not careful, the transition will not be as smooth as it could be,” JTA President Mark Malabver told The Gleaner.

Malabver said that while schools such as Manchester High School, Munro College in St Elizabeth, and St Elizabeth Technical High School are advanced or making progress with repairs, others remain far behind.



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Here's what economists expect the Bank of Canada to do in 2026

From Yahoo Finance:

The Bank of Canada's path ahead in 2026 is substantially murkier than it was a year ago, when economists were more or less certain of further interest rate cuts.

In some ways, the end-of-year contexts are similar — in December 2024, Bank of Canada (BoC) governor Tiff Macklem called the threat of tariffs by the just-elected Donald Trump “a major new uncertainty.” One year later, Desjardins Group economists call the Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) review “[t]he defining issue of 2026.”

What is different is where policy rates sit. At the end of 2024, economists broadly agreed that the BoC would make further interest rate cuts, with the debate primarily about how many cuts would happen. The BoC made a further 100 basis points of cuts in 2025, bringing its overnight rate to 2.25 per cent. In an email to Yahoo Finance Canada, Indrani De, head of global investment research and Robin Marshall, director of global investment research at FTSE Russell, say that rate is at “the easy end” of the BoC's neutral range — where the interest rate is neither overly stimulative nor overly restrictive.

“The debate about the next move in BoC rates is now two-way,” they wrote. “Both up and down.”

That shift reflects an economy that is underperforming but not clearly deteriorating. Most forecasters expect Canada's real GDP to grow roughly one to 1.5 per cent in 2026 — below its long-run trend, but well short of a recession, according to outlooks from Desjardins, BMO and National Bank of Canada.

Economists are united in identifying the CUSMA review's importance. While CUSMA exemptions shielded most Canadian exports in 2025, Trump's skepticism of the deal signals precarity ahead. BMO economists say they are 'relative pessimists,' noting the deal could face annual reviews rather than a permanent fix.

“The tariff dynamic introduced in 2025 — on-again, off-again, threatened and actual — is expected to continue in 2026...,” Desjardins Group economist Randall Bartlett wrote in a December 19 note. “In such a climate, businesses are likely to stay on the sidelines, reluctant to invest when the future is so unpredictable. With a deadline of July 1, how Canada's economy evolves afterward will depend on whether an agreement is reached, for good or for ill.”

FTSE Russell's De and Marshall say CUSMA is “unlikely to survive in its current ‘NAFTA 2’ mode, but also note that the world has made numerous other trade deals in the shadow of Trump's

trade war.

“This is a reason that U.S. trade policy uncertainty has had less downside impact broadly across countries,” they wrote.

That resilience, however, has not been enough to restore confidence in domestic investment or demand, leaving policymakers cautious about their next move.

Ahead of the BoC's December announcement, markets had begun to consider the possibility of an interest rate hike in 2026. Observers were surprised by a third consecutive consensus-beating jobs report, which saw the unemployment rate drop to 6.5 per cent, as well as GDP data for the third quarter well above gloomy expectations. Many saw the BoC's language around its decision to hold, and its re-use of an October line that rates were “at about the right level,” as pushing back against the rate-hike narrative.

Economists and labour-market an-

alysts broadly expect employment conditions to soften only gradually in 2026. Hiring remains weak, but so do layoffs — a 'low-hire, low-fire' dynamic that has kept unemployment stable, according to Indeed Canada economist Brendon Bernard. Slowing population growth has further limited upward pressure on the jobless rate. In a downside scenario tied to renewed trade disruption, Indeed estimates the jobless rate could rise by roughly 0.4 percentage points, but its baseline outlook points to only modest movement either way.

Most financial industry experts now expect the BoC to hold its overnight rate through 2026. LSEG data as at December 24 gave a 97.9 per cent chance of no change to rates.

“While the unemployment rate may drift lower, growth is likely to stay weak and uncertainty unusually elevated,” Desjardins Group wrote in its 2026 outlook. “But with limited excess capacity, sticky underlying inflation, and fiscal

measures gradually filtering through the economy, the bar for a move towards accommodative policy is high.”

In other words, modest economic weakness alone is unlikely to be enough to prompt further rate cuts.

That forecast is not unanimous, however. Capital Group's outlook argues that the BoC “will resist a cut amid muted inflation, but softness in the middle of 2026 may force their hand.” And economists at National Bank of Canada write that “the worst is behind the Canadian economy” and see rate hikes starting next fall.

Many forecasters now frame 2026 as a set of competing scenarios — a prolonged hold if trade uncertainty drags on, a mid-year cut if growth falters materially, or a late-year hike if resilience persists and inflation proves sticky.

For now, most agree the Bank is waiting for clearer evidence before committing to any next move.



The Bank of Canada



The new policy will focus on the services around agri-tourism

Guyana's first Agri-Tourism policy poised to create 1,500 indirect jobs

GUYANA'S first-ever agri-tourism policy aims to generate some 1,500 indirect jobs within the next five years of implementation, a target described as "achievable" by Candace Phillips, Senior Manager of Product Development within the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

Phillips explained to the Sunday Chronicle how the major target spans enterprises in all ten administrative regions, allowing for inclusive growth and the spin-off effect of such implementation. From transportation, labour, meals, culinary, hospitality, agro-processors, and associated amenities and services, the policy covers the total value chain.

The target outlined within the policy document represents 10 per cent of tourism's projected contribution to indirect employment. In the plan, the first five years will allow for project implementation focusing on curating experiences, associated training and capacity-building, Phillips explained.

Depending on the individual product development cycle, it is expected that various experiences will be unveiled, she stated, noting that post-five-year experiences offered to the

target market will give rise to new areas for further development. The overall strategy, according to her, is to improve the linkage between tourism and agriculture not only for tourism purposes but also to reduce Guyana's dependency on food importation.

Phillips did, however, note that incentives still need to be defined but will be further discussed as the implementation phase begins. One of the strategies would be to align businesses with incentives for registration and operational policies, which can help them access funding, which she said is already available but may be under-utilised.

Phillips further disclosed that robust training support will be provided by multiple institutions and agencies, including the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) and Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IICA). In fact, she stated that IICA has an online rural tourism course which beneficiaries are enrolled in to build their understanding of the linkages between agriculture and tourism.

Under the policy, according to

Phillips, there will be heavy emphasis on providing product development support. For each product to be developed, a training plan will be crafted to ensure that service providers are best positioned to be able to provide a quality service experience, she said. Accordingly, as a main beneficiary group, opportunities for women and youths will be embedded in the project.

Phillips added: "This will be done through including opportunities for their involvement and building their skillset. By exposing them to various areas of empowerment, it is envisioned that they will play a leading role in the sector- creating viable income opportunities and improving their lives."

Last month, the Government of Guyana (GoG) took a bold step and launched the national agri-tourism policy, a comprehensive strategy aimed at redefining the market, transforming livelihoods and promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. The policy offers numerous avenues for Guyana to expand its value-added opportunities, introducing many new products and experiences that are second to none, including farm-to-table activities, cultural heritage experiences and eco-ad-

ventures.

The policy aligns Guyana not only with its national development goals but also places the country at the forefront of regional priorities, including CARICOM's agri-food security agenda. On a global scale, the national policy plans to address food security, economic diversification and climate resilience, while also advancing Guyana's efforts to meet the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Susan Rodrigues, during the launch of the policy, had stated that the policy marks a decisive move towards converting Guyana into a global attraction. In her address, the minister spoke extensively about the "infinite possibilities" within the tourism sector.

"This initiative underscores the unwavering commitment of the Government of Guyana to foster the growth of niche tourism. The advancement of the agritourism sector is the result of a strategic partnership between MINTIC and the Ministry of Agriculture," Minister Rodrigues said.

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Life-changing Christmas gift: First Lady gives home to family

IN a noble and thoughtful effort to bring Christmas cheer to a family of six, First Lady Mrs. Arya Ali handed over the keys to a brand-new house to a mother and her five children on Christmas Eve at Meten-Meer-Zorg, on the West Coast of Demerara (WCD).

This special gift shows the willingness of the First Lady to give back to the community, and support families in need, providing the family with their own space to celebrate this festive season.

Teasha Spellen, the mother of five children, between 14 and three years old, was moved to tears by the simple yet impactful act by the First Lady to provide her with a furnished home, complete with enough yard space for her children to play in.

The concrete flat is valued at approximately \$14 million, and includes the cost of developing the land, fencing the yard, constructing the building and furnishing the home. This was made possible by the Office of the First Lady, with support from Courts Guyana Inc., Comfort Sleep, and Guyana Breweries.

In her remarks, Mrs. Ali reflected on her own personal challenges growing up in a single parent home, and said, “This new home provides you with a safe, stable, and dignified environment to ensure all of you have a better quality of life, and your children have a brighter future. I was raised in a single parent home so I know of some of the challenges. But today you and your little ones have a place to call yours, so I want you to recognise how blessed you are,”

Noting that Christmas is all about caring and giving, the First Lady said that there is no better way to give to the



The first lady with the lucky family outside their new home

family of six than this. She encouraged Spellen to ensure that she continues to prioritise her children’s education and support their endeavours.

“I just want to give you all my blessings, and I hope that this house means a lot to you and your family,”

Mrs. Ali said.

A first-time homeowner, Teasha and her children- all of whom are enrolled in school- had previously lived with relatives. They shared a single bedroom, which posed significant challenges for them daily.

She described this new home as life-changing for her family, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to have a safe and comfortable place to call home.

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

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

Key priorities of the WGC include:

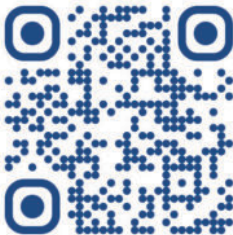
- Build a globally cohesive community with a focus on youth and women in business and civic leadership worldwide.
- Support social entrepreneurship and civic engagement in communities around the world.
- Engage diaspora communities in the social and economic development of Guyana.

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

If you have any questions feel free to get in touch:
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Guyana positioning agriculture as core pillar of country’s economy

THE government is positioning agriculture as a cornerstone of Guyana’s industrial transformation, according to the Agriculture Minister, Zulfikar Mustapha, who recently said the sector is no longer confined to farming but is evolving into a key economic engine.

“Agriculture is a core pillar of Guyana’s economy. It stands proudly alongside sectors such as natural resources, tourism and commerce, as well as foreign affairs, among others, as a major driver of our non-oil growth.”

With a \$104.6 billion investment allocated to agriculture in 2025, the sector is expected to grow by 11.3 per cent by the end of the year and account for at least 23 per cent of non-oil GDP, reinforcing its role alongside tourism, commerce and natural resources in driving sustainable growth.

“This is proof that we are not just farming. We are building an industrial engine, our fertile lands, an abundant fresh water or our greatest natural assets, and we are leveraging these assets to ensure that value is created right here at home,” Minister Mustapha said during a recent broadcast update.

The Government of Guyana he said has outlined an ambitious plan to transform the country into a leading regional hub for food production and exports, with President Dr Mohamed Ali placing agriculture at the centre of a broader strategy for national development and economic diversification.

The minister said too that the administration is moving to turn high-level policy into “real, on-the-ground development initiatives” that will improve the daily lives of Guyanese and secure the country’s long-term food security.

Fertile land and abundant fresh water are being leveraged to create value locally through modern agro-processing facilities, upgraded infrastructure and new financial support systems.

“By expanding our agro-processing capacity and investing in modern infrastructures, we are ensuring that agriculture directly supports diversification, increased income generation and increase expansion of the sector, we are working to ensure that this sector provides opportunities for every Guyanese, from our coastal communities to the deepest reaches of the hinterland,” he said.

He stressed that Guyana’s agriculture sector continues to record strong performance, even as the oil and gas industry expands at a rapid pace.



Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha


Overall agricultural production is projected to increase by at least nine per cent by the end of 2025, driven by notable gains in rice, coconuts, dairy, fruits and vegetables, roots and tubers, honey and aquaculture, underscoring the sector’s resilience and its growing contribution to national development.

Rice remains a standout success. Production has climbed to a record 810,299 metric tonnes, with a historic yield of 6.6 metric tonnes per hectare, the highest ever recorded in Guyana.


To sustain this growth, the government has, introduced new high-yielding rice varieties, provided more than \$1.2 billion in fertiliser subsidies in 2025, supplied subsidised nano urea fertiliser, distributed free seed paddy and chemicals for pest management.

“To ensure the sustained growth of the rice sector, we have invested in the research and introduction of new high Indian rice varieties, understanding the importance of lowering production costs.”

Meanwhile to ensure the sustained growth of the rice sector, we have invested in the research and introduction of new high Indian rice varieties, understanding the importance of lowering production costs

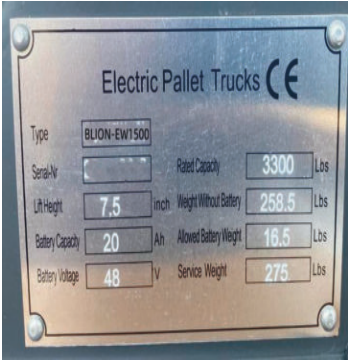



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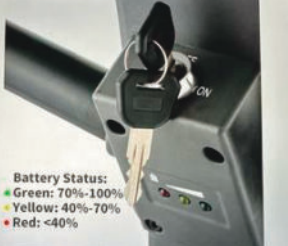
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Guyana’s non-oil economy surges 13.8% in first half of 2025

Guyana’s non-oil economy expanded by 13.8 per cent in the first half of 2025, according to the country’s mid-year economic report, underscoring a period of broad-based expansion even as its hydrocarbon sector continues to transform the national economy.

Tourism, Industry and Commerce Minister Susan Rodrigues described the figures as exceptional by global standards. “By any measure, that is a remarkable growth percentage,” she said during a live broadcast, noting that the overall economy grew by 7.5 per cent, marking the fifth consecutive year of broad-based expansion driven by performance across agriculture, tourism, trade and infrastructure.

Rodrigues added that Guyana’s diversification will be reflected across agencies such as the Small Business Bureau, Guyana National Bureau of Standards, Guyana Tourism Authority and the Competition Consumer Affairs Commission, and stressed that the government’s development strategy aims to ensure prosperity “reaches every single Guyanese” regardless of background.

While the non-oil economy has posted impressive gains, Guyana’s oil and gas sector continues to be a dominant force in its overall economic trajectory. First commercial oil was produced offshore in December 2019, and the sector has expanded rapidly since then, contributing significantly to GDP growth, export earnings and government revenue.

By 2024, Guyana’s daily oil production had risen to roughly 645,000 barrels per day, a dramatic increase from initial output and part of a broader expansion that has positioned the country as one of the world’s fastest-growing oil producers. Production is expected to climb further in the coming years with additional offshore developments planned.

In 2025, production capacity edged above 900,000 barrels per day, buoyed by projects such as Yellowtail and other developments in the Stabroek Block, which hosts an estimated 11 billion barrels of recoverable oil.

This surge has not only lifted GDP figures but also dramatically increased revenues flowing into Guyana’s Natural Resource Fund and state coffers, providing resources that the government is using to invest in infrastructure, energy projects and broader economic transfor-

mation.

Economists note that the rapid expansion of the oil sector has reshaped Guyana’s economy — raising questions about how to balance resource-led growth with sustainable diversification — even as it helps finance ambitious public investments.

Rodrigues’ remarks highlight this dual trajectory: strong performance outside of oil paired with a hydrocarbon boom that continues to redefine Guyana’s economic landscape, offering both opportunities and strategic challenges as the country develops.

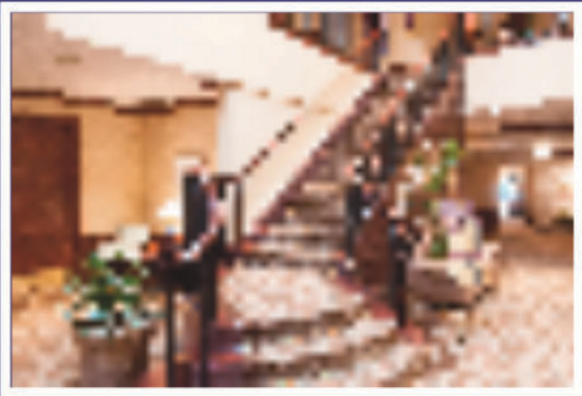


Guyana's Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Susan Rodrigues

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Electronic system to connect laboratories in new year – Health Minister

WITH work underway in the healthcare sector to foster digital integration, public health laboratories are expected to soon be connected through an electronic management system.

This disclosure was made by Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony, while speaking at a recent ISO accreditation ceremony for a local public health laboratory.

During brief remarks, Dr Anthony noted that all existing laboratories will be connected through an electronic system beginning next year.

“We are also going to be putting in and connecting all our existing labs with an electronic management system, a laboratory management system, so this is something that will be starting from next year,” he said.

Added to this, the health minister told the gathering that the ministry will also be setting up a new sample system, through which samples can be trans-

ported from one lab to another, following protocols that would ensure safety and no contamination.

Speaking on the timeline for the setup of the integration system, Dr Anthony went on to note, “So that system, next year we are going to start building that system out that is going to connect all our laboratories across the country.”

Meanwhile, in relation to upgrades to laboratory services, Dr Anthony highlighted that a new forensic lab is being set up, noting that as Guyana steps into a new set of industries and sets its eyes on the development of pharmaceuticals and vaccines, this is necessary.

He further noted that the construction of a new food and drug lab has already started. This facility is also expected to be completed within the next year and a half. When this comes on stream, he indicated that they would seek accreditation for same.



Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony

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Major justice system upgrades planned for Guyana in 2026: AG

Guyana’s justice system is set for significant upgrades nein the new year, including new court facilities, expanded digital services and plans for a modern judicial complex in Georgetown, according to Attorney General Mohabir Anil Nandlall, SC.

Speaking on his weekly Issues in the News programme, Nandlall said the initiatives build on commitments outlined by President Mohamed Irfaan Ali and are aimed at improving access to justice and speeding up court services nationwide.

The attorney general said additional magistrates’ courts are planned for the islands of Wakenaam and Leguan in Region Three, as well as the Amerindian village of Orealla in Region Six. The projects are expected to be included in the 2026 national budget.

“These three, I think, may be in the budget of 2026,” Nandlall said.

He noted that during the government’s previous term, at least seven new magistrates’ courts were built or upgraded between 2020 and 2025, replacing ageing wooden structures with modern concrete facilities that include accommodation for judges and court staff. Courts in Mahdia and Port Kaituma, he said, now meet the same standards as those in Georgetown.

With most outlying courts completed, attention is shifting to the capital. Nandlall revealed that plans are under consideration for a modern judicial complex to house the High Court and Court of Appeal, alongside upgrades to the Georgetown Magistrates’ Court, which he said has outgrown its current space.

He stressed that the investments are critical to ensuring fair and timely access to justice for all Guyanese, regardless of geographic location.

The attorney general also highlighted ongoing efforts to digitise the judiciary in support of Guyana’s evolving digital economy. Internationally recognised case management systems have already been introduced, and electronic filing is now in use across the High Court, Court of Appeal and the Caribbean Court of Justice.

Paper-based filing has been eliminated at those levels, with pleadings, submissions and supporting documents now filed electronically. Many hearings



Guyana Attorney General Anil Nandlall, SC

are also being conducted virtually. digitisation is still under way. Nandlall be fully electronic by mid-2026. At the magistrates’ court level, said the entire magistracy is expected to

Traffic moving freely on Bharrat Jagdeo Bridge

WITH the average daily traffic volume now exceeding 50,000 vehicles traversing the recently commissioned Dr Bharrat Jagdeo Demerara River Bridge, regional trade and commerce are quickly expanding as commuters now have access to a safe and less congested thoroughfare.

This is according to Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Madanlall Ramraj, who during a broadcasted video presentation said the multi-million-dollar investment in the country’s infrastructure is delivering measurable reduction in travel time, improved logistics flow and long-term resilience for national and regional commerce.

“This four-lane bridge replaced the aging Demerara Harbour Bridge and has transformed how people move between Regions Three and Four, have [sic] eased safety [and] has improved commerce flows without interruption. Since commissioning, average daily traffic volumes have exceeded 50,000 vehicles per day, reflecting both latent demand and improved network efficiency,” he said.

It was also reported that the new bridge, which offers toll-free travel has seen commuters saving as much as over \$80,000 in toll charges that was previously paid to cross the old Demerara Harbour Bridge.

“This is money now going back into his household, towards groceries, school expenses and daily living. That is what infrastructure does when its people cantered.”

Guyana, he added, is undergoing a profound economic and social transformation driven by people-centred infrastructural investments. “As Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, I have the responsibility and the privilege of translating this vision into action, ensuring that our success is measured not merely in projects completed, but in better lives, stronger communities and a more connected Guyana.

Further, the minister said that President, Dr Irfaan Ali’s five-year agenda offers “a clear road map” that places people, opportunity and national development at the centre of progress.



The heroine of Vivek Anchalia's film Naisha was entirely AI-generated

Lights, Camera, Computer: Why Indian cinema is awash with AI

When screenwriter-director Vivek Anchalia set out to pitch his next movie, producers weren't biting. However, he brought in a new kind of collaborator, and his project began to gain traction.

With the help of AI tools such as ChatGPT and Midjourney, Anchalia found a way to make a film on his own. Midjourney rendered the visuals. ChatGPT was a sounding board. It took little more than one year but he found he was able to fine-tune the AI-enhanced pipeline – one shot at a time. "I think Midjourney knows me pretty intimately by now," he jokes.

Anchalia, who is also a lyricist, had been sitting on a collection of unreleased romantic songs. They were begging for a Bollywood-style canvas. "Soon, a story started to emerge," he says. The result was Naisha, a romantic film. "Why wait for a studio's approval if AI can allow me to make the movie on my own terms?" says Anchalia.

Across India's diverse movie industry, AI is not just a curiosity harnessed by emerging filmmakers. It has penetrated the daily workflow of big budget film production. From de-ageing veteran actors to voice cloning and visualising scenes before they are shot, AI is seeping into every pore of filmmaking in India. Some studios have quickly fallen in love with the technology – but it brings with it new risks and ethical quandaries.

The way Indian cinema has embraced AI in the creative and production process of filmmaking couldn't be more at odds with the situation unfolding at its American cousin in Hollywood. There actors and writers have staunchly resisted the use of AI, launching widespread strikes two years ago that brought TV shows and big name productions to a standstill. (Read more about how dead film stars are being brought back from the dead by AI companies that own rights to their images.)

For Anchalia, however, AI was an enabler. His film's budget was less than 15% of a traditional Bollywood production, with 95% of the 75-minute long movie generated by AI. After the trailer dropped, the computer-generated titular heroine Naisha even landed an endorsement deal with a Hyderabad-based jewellery brand.

Anchalia says that while it may have taken a thousand iterations to find the desired visuals, it was still less stressful than mounting a big production: "AI has democratised filmmaking," he says. "Today, any young, aspiring filmmaker with no resources whatsoever can make a movie using AI."

Established directors have also adopted AI. Jithin Laal used it during the early creative stages of Malayalam blockbuster Ajayante Random Moshanam (ARM) to visualise a complex lock system he struggled to explain to his visual effects team. AI-driven pre-visualisation is now embedded into Laal's storytelling process. "For my next film, we are testing scenes before committing financial resources to full-scale production," he says.

And filmmaker Arun Chandu made a sci-fi satire on a shoestring budget of 20 million Indian rupees (around \$240,000). "That's less than the cost of an Indian wedding," Chandu laughs. He used Photoshop, graphics programs and a deep learning tool called Stable Diffusion to create a military sequence in his post-apocalyptic Malayalam film, Gaganachari.

Meanwhile, sound designers Sankaran AS and KC Sidharthan have turned to AI-powered tools including Soundly (a cloud-hosted sound library), and Krotos Studio's Reformer, an AI-powered sound design tool that allows artists to playfully edit sound effects using cues including their own voice. "Back in the day, if a filmmaker had a radical, last-minute idea, we would have to book a studio. Today, our approach is: 'we can do it ASAP'," says Sankaran.

However, while Indian cinema has largely embraced AI without restriction, one question looms large: are Indian filmmakers damaging human creativity and introducing unnecessary risk to their projects?

Filmmakers such as Laal argue that, unlike human artists, AI lacks the emotional depth, cultural nuances, and human intuition that are key to great screenwriting. A Tamil-language version of the 2013 film Raanjhanaa was re-released in August 2025 – with its tragic ending rewritten as a happy one by AI.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): You may have a great sense of fun but with so much cosmic activity in the career area of your chart you would be wise not to crack jokes at the expense of your employer or senior colleagues. Not everyone shares your sense of humor.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): If the domestic atmosphere is a bit uneasy today it might be a good idea to remove yourself from the scene for a while. Go some place where you can relax, forget petty squabbles and dream your best dreams.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): You can be a bit hyperactive at times and with so much nervous energy at your disposal today you won't sit quietly working on a single task. If you feel the need to rush in several directions at once then by all means indulge yourself.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): An unexpected outflow of cash could worry you today but it's unlikely to break the bank so don't get uptight about it. At the most you will have to work a bit harder for a while longer but you will make up the shortfall soon enough.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): If you find yourself having to deal with someone who is both unreasonable and obstructive today your best course of action by far is to turn your back and walk away. The planets indicate you won't lose out by taking your business elsewhere.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): You may be suspicious because a friend or loved one is giving you evasive answers but it doesn't mean they are up to no good. More likely they just don't want you to know about a personal matter of some sort. Respect their privacy.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): As a cardinal sign you are used to taking the lead but there will be times over the next few days when you wish you could hand your responsibilities to someone else. But you can't, so stop feeling sorry for yourself and do what needs to be done.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): You may have total belief in what you are doing but not everyone thinks you are on the right track. Will that worry you or hold you back? Of course not. It's simply not in your nature to let other people's doubts affect you like that.

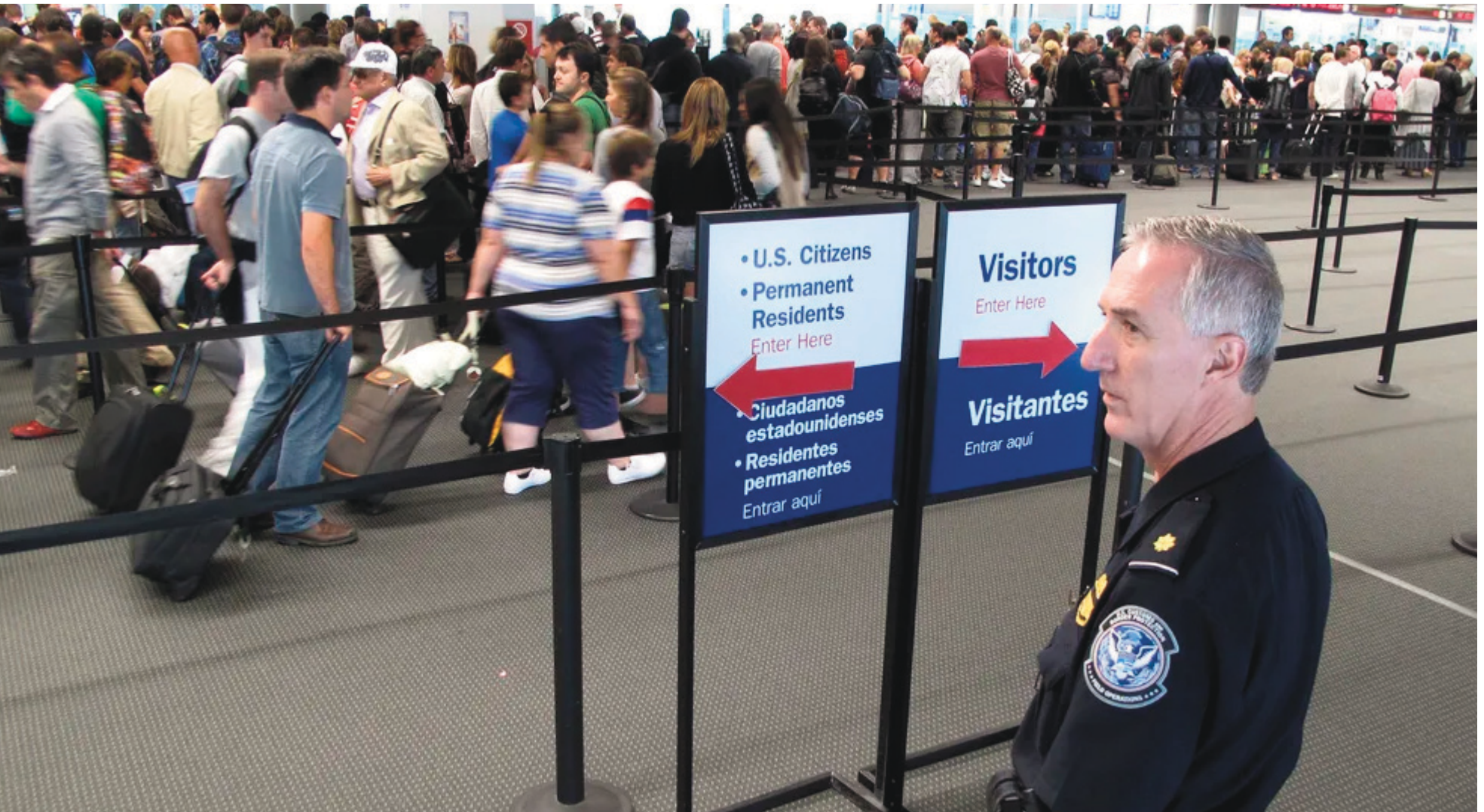
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): If people you live or work alongside seem annoyed by what you are doing today then do it even more. You need to send a message that you are not going to change your ways just because they don't share your sense of adventure.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): Make sure you push for the best possible deal when negotiating financial and business matters. It's inevitable that some people will try to bargain you down but if you stand firm they will meet your demands, because they don't want you to walk away.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): You hate it when you have no control over what's going on around you and that means you are going to hate what happens today. It's unlikely to affect you in any material way though, so quit worrying and get on with your life.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): The past few days have taken a lot out of you physically and emotionally and if you are smart you will slow down a bit as the week gets under way. You want to be going into the new year with a smile on your face, not a yawn!

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Skerrit says US entry restrictions on Dominicans remain in force

Dominica’s Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit says the United States has not suspended its December 16 proclamation imposing partial entry restrictions on Dominican nationals, but has provided key clarifications that allow most visa holders to continue traveling as normal.

In a statement issued Tuesday, Skerrit said the Government of Dominica has been in continuous engagement with U.S. authorities since the proclamation was announced, treating the matter with “urgency, seriousness and respect for the sovereignty of the United States.” The restrictions are scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2026.

The proclamation places limits on entry for certain Dominican citizens, though Skerrit emphasized that the measures are more limited in scope than initially feared. According to clarifications received from U.S. officials, Dominican nationals who already hold valid U.S. visas — including tourist, business and student visas — may continue to travel to the United States and its territories, subject to standard immigration laws. Existing visas are not being revoked.

Dominicans without valid U.S. visas may continue to submit applications after January 1, but new visas cannot be issued while the restriction remains in place for those affected by the proclamation. U.S. authorities have

not indicated any new or additional visa application requirements specific to Dominican nationals at this time.

Skerrit said the government initiated immediate discussions through the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dominica’s Embassy in Washington, D.C., engaging both the U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown and the U.S. State Department. Dominica has also formally written to the U.S. president seeking clarification and urgent dialogue.

A first formal review of the measures is expected 90 days after January 1, 2026, with the restrictions remaining in effect until U.S. authorities determine that identified concerns have been addressed.

The prime minister placed the issue within the broader context of Dominica’s recent reforms to its Citizenship by Investment (CBI) Programme, which he said have been the subject of sustained engagement with U.S. officials throughout 2024 and 2025. On October 14, 2025, Dominica became the first member of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States to enact comprehensive legislative reforms to its CBI framework.

Those reforms include enforceable residency requirements, stricter controls on name changes, enhanced due diligence and background checks, increased financial transparency, expanded powers to revoke citizenship

and recall passports, and the establishment of an independent regulatory authority.

Skerrit said the government is confident that the reforms directly address the concerns referenced in the U.S. proclamation but has formally requested confirmation from U.S. authorities on whether any additional measures are required.

Dominica, he said, values its longstanding relationship with the United States, including cooperation on mar-

itime security, law enforcement and regional stability. Engagement with the U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown and the State Department in Washington will continue, with the aim of reversing the restrictions.

“I assure the public that the Government is acting decisively, responsibly and in the best interest of Dominican citizens,” Skerrit said, adding that further updates will be provided as discussions progress.

Senator’s death still under probe

Grenada police say the death of former opposition senator Neilon Franklyn has not yet been classified as a homicide, suicide or accidental, as investigations remain ongoing.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Vannie Curwen described the case as “very complex” while speaking at the Royal Grenada Police Force’s end-of-year press conference on Wednesday, December 24.

“I do not want to speak specifically on Neilon’s matter except to say this matter is still under investigation,” Curwen said, noting that police are receiving assistance from both local and regional laboratories. “It’s a very complex matter.”

Curwen disclosed that Christopher Nelson, Director of Public Prosecutions, is leading and directing the investigation into Franklyn’s death.

“There is no secrecy about the matter; it is professionalism,” Curwen said. “At some point, when [the DPP] feels comfortable that he has all that he needs, he will address the nation, putting that information out.”

He added that police are refraining from speculation while forensic testing and investigative work continue. “It is not proper for us to be speaking about a matter that is currently being investigated... We want to ensure that when we speak, we speak with definitive answers — the data, the results, the testing and the investigation — to back what we are saying.”

Franklyn, who was appointed an opposition senator by former Prime Minister and Opposition Leader Keith Mitchell, resigned from the Senate in September 2024 and returned to his substantive post as a customs officer.

Trinidad raises alarm over drone activity near US radar sites, airports

The Trinidad and Tobago government on Wednesday criticised the use of drones to acquire photos of United States “military installations and equipment,” noting “with great concern” recent drone activity in close proximity to both Piarco International Airport in Trinidad and the ANR Robinson Airport in Tobago.

In a statement, the Ministry of Defence said it is responsible “for securing our borders, including the airspace and territorial waters,” and confirmed it had taken note of “recent drone activity” near the two airports.

The issue gained public attention earlier this week after the Trinidad Guardian published a photograph showing images of “several trucks and utility vehicles positioned within the restricted area, along with a small tent and another temporary structure located close to the equipment, suggesting use for operational or shelter purposes. A number of portable toilets were also observed at the site.”

However, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar dismissed suggestions that the image depicted a military base, saying the photo showed “support offices” for a United States military radar system on the island. While she did not explicitly describe the compound as a military base, Persad-Bissessar told the newspaper, “the picture is self-explanatory. There is a radar with the support offices to operate it.”

She later criticised both the newspaper and the main opposition People’s National Movement, accusing them of “appearing obsessed” with getting the “radar and the Americans out of the country,” and argued that the only people who would benefit from such an outcome would be drug traffickers.

In its statement, the Ministry of Defence said that “objective verification shows drones were flown within the five-kilometer no fly zone of our airports, contrary to claims made that the drones operated outside five kilometers from our airports.” The ministry warned of “reckless endangerment” by drone operators, citing “the obvious and inherent danger posed to both incoming and outgoing commercial aircraft,” with the real possibility of collisions that could “lead to loss of life on a massive scale.”

Beyond aviation safety, the ministry said the effort to obtain and disseminate footage of military installations and equipment was “inimical to national security interests and exposes the citizenry to those who would benefit from the use of such information to our detriment.”

Last month, Persad-Bissessar defended her decision to withhold details about the installation of United States



The US radar in Tobago

radar systems in Tobago, even as she criticised the previous administration for leaving Trinidad and Tobago’s borders “exposed.” She also dismissed claims that the US presence in Tobago was military in nature. “They are helping us with something to do at the (Arthur NR Robinson International) airport,” she said, pointing to work connected to a roadway near the airport. “It is not a military force as such. We are not about to launch any campaign against Venezuela.”

Persad-Bissessar has also denied

being part of United States efforts to effect regime change in Venezuela, where Washington has accused President Nicolás Maduro of being a narco trafficker — a term the prime minister is now using to refer to the administration in Caracas.

25,000 tourists repatriated in one week

Jamaica’s rapid repatriation of more than 25,000 tourists within a week of Hurricane Melissa has underscored the country’s resilience and crisis-management capacity, according to Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett.

Speaking at a tourism partners’ meeting at the Iberostar Hotel on December 13, Bartlett said the coordinated evacuation of stranded visitors sent a strong signal to the international community about Jamaica’s preparedness and reliability as a destination.

He credited hoteliers, transportation operators, airport staff, security personnel and frontline tourism workers for executing the large-scale operation in record time.

“I want to congratulate all the players of the industry who, together, made possible this initial demonstration of confidence and strength to the world,” Bartlett said.

The minister noted that within 24 hours of the hurricane’s passage, the Ministry of Tourism established a recovery task force to fast-track the sector’s rebound. The group brought together senior ministry officials, tourism agencies and private-sector partners with the goal of restoring tourism activity faster than any other sector.

Bartlett also commended Chairman of the Tourism Recovery Task Force John Byles, along with officials from the Tourism Ministry, the Jamaica Tourist Board, the Tourism Enhancement Fund, Jamaica Vacations Limited (JAMVAC), and the Port Authority of Jamaica.

He emphasized that tourism’s swift recovery is critical to national economic stability, noting that the sector generates immediate income for communities once flights resume and cruise ships return.



Edmund Bartlett

“This immediate convertibility of tourism activity into income gives the sector its unique power to drive national recovery after a crisis,” Bartlett said, adding that tourism’s extensive linkages across industries amplify its impact.

St Vincent PM says national debt worse than expected

Prime Minister Godwin Friday has described St Vincent and the Grenadines’ national debt as a significant challenge, saying the situation is more severe than he anticipated before taking office.

Friday said the country’s total public debt currently stands at approximately \$3.1 billion, owed to a mix of creditors including bilateral partner countries, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and various financial instruments.

“The debt is owed to various entities, including bilateral partner countries, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and through various financial instruments,” Friday said.

A major concern, he noted, is the strain the debt places on government finances, with 36 cents out of every dollar of government revenue now being used to service debt obligations.

“The country has reached a point where it ‘can’t borrow much more’ and must find alternative ways to meet its obligations,” Friday said.

Beyond the official debt figures, the prime minister pointed to a substantial amount of unpaid payables owed to local businesses. He said the failure to honor these payments effectively removes money from the local economy,



Prime Minister Godwin Friday

though he declined to provide a specific figure for these arrears during the interview.

Friday said the \$3.1 billion debt burden is the primary reason his administration intends to move forward with

a Citizenship by Investment (CBI) programme by 2026, arguing that the country needs new and sustainable revenue streams to plan for the future.

He characterized the overall state of government finances as “tight” and

confirmed that the finance department’s transition document revealed a fiscal situation worse than he had expected prior to taking office.

Jamaica’s reserves hold firm at US\$6.3B

Jamaica’s international reserves remain at historically strong levels despite a weakened external position following the impact of Hurricane Melissa, which struck the island on October 28, according to the Bank of Jamaica.

BOJ Governor Richard Byles said the country’s reserves stood at approximately US\$6.3 billion in mid-December 2025, representing about 151 per cent of the adequacy benchmark.

International reserves are foreign-currency assets held by the central bank to pay for imports, stabilize the exchange rate and cushion the economy against shocks.

Speaking at the BOJ’s Quarterly Monetary Policy Report press conference in downtown Kingston on December 22, Byles said the reserve position is expected to be further supported by disaster risk financing, multilateral funding and grant inflows, including proceeds from the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility and Jamaica’s catastrophe bond.



Meanwhile, the central bank has intensified its interventions to maintain stability in the foreign exchange market

since the passage of Hurricane Melissa. Byles reported that the BOJ has injected US\$250 million into the market,

including the direct supply of foreign exchange to selected energy-sector players to remove large, irregular purchases from open trading.

The central bank has also reinstated advance notices of foreign exchange intervention sales, a move Byles said helps improve market expectations around liquidity.

As a result, the exchange rate remained broadly stable between November 1 and mid-December, relative to end-October levels.

Over the 12 months to the end of November 2025, the BOJ sold approximately US\$1.1 billion through its B-FXITT facility, broadly in line with sales over the previous year. During the same period, net foreign exchange purchases totaled about US\$1 billion.

Looking ahead, Byles said the central bank will continue to act proactively to ensure orderly market conditions, noting that foreign exchange instability can quickly feed through to higher prices across the economy.

Trinidad and Tobago doubles customs fees effective January 1, 2026

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has officially doubled several customs-related fees, effective January 1, 2026, following the publication of multiple legal notices in the Legal Supplement on Christmas Day.

Under Legal Notice No. 472, issued pursuant to the Customs Act, the standard Customs Declaration transaction user fee has been increased from \$40 to \$80. Legal Notice No. 473 also raises fees at the Container Examination Station, with charges for 20-foot containers increasing from \$375 to \$750, and for 40-foot containers from \$525 to \$1,050. Although the notices were signed on December 22, 2025, they were only published on December 25, with all changes taking effect on New Year's Day.

The fee increases come in the wake of the controversial doubling of traffic fines, also announced via Christmas Day legal notices. Opposition politicians criticised the timing of the announcements, describing the moves as “clandestine” and unannounced. Customs fees apply to goods entering the country and to container inspections at official examination stations, meaning the changes will have a direct impact on importers, logistics companies and businesses reliant on shipping services.

The Government has said the measures form part of its broader revenue-raising strategy. Finance Minister Davendranath Tancoo, who had previously outlined the changes during the national budget, said the adjustments are expected to generate an additional \$1 billion in revenue. During his budget presentation, Tancoo noted that the cost of administering public services had risen significantly across min-



One of the ports in Trinidad

istries, departments and agencies, while many administrative charges had remained unchanged for decades.

“Notwithstanding, many administrative charges, including licence and permit fees and processing charges, have remained unchanged, in some instances, for as long as 30 years. This places additional pressure on the Consolidated Fund,” Tancoo said at the time. He added that updating fee structures was necessary to ensure cost-effectivity, fairness and sustainability, while safeguarding service quality and

enabling modernisation. The customs fee increases were proposed alongside the doubling of excise duties on alcoholic beverages and cigarettes.

In separate notices also gazetted on December 25, the Government announced a waiver of customs duty on several agricultural inputs. Legal Notice No. 478 provides duty-free treatment for items such as plastic mulch, freight container farm equipment and grow lights when imported for agricultural purposes.

Additionally, amendments have

been made to the Open General Licence for exporters. Legal Notice No. 485 removes clays, crushed limestone, boulders, sand, gravel, plastering sand, porcellanite, argillite and oil sand from the list of goods that can be exported without a special permit. The change, which takes effect on January 1, 2026, means exporters will now require a separate licence to ship these materials. That notice was signed by Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism Satyakama Maharaj.

More than a dozen charges laid in JA's SSL fraud

More than a dozen criminal charges have now been filed against three individuals taken into custody over the weekend in connection with the alleged multibillion-dollar fraud at the collapsed investment firm Stocks and Securities Limited (SSL), according to attorneys and law-enforcement sources.

Those charged are SSL founding director Hugh Croskery, his daughter Sarah Meany, and former SSL chief executive officer Zachary Harding. All three face multiple counts, including fraudulently inducing persons to invest; failure to register a company carrying on business in Jamaica; carrying on a securities business without a dealer's licence; failure to apply to the Financial Services Commission to be registered for securities issued; and breaches of the Banking Services Act. The charges arise under the Securities Act, the Bank of Jamaica Act, the Banking Services Act and the Lar-

ceny Act.

Croskery was granted bail in the sum of \$1 million and is scheduled to make his first court appearance on January 26, his attorney, King's Counsel Peter Champagnie, confirmed. Croskery has also been ordered to surrender his travel documents as part of the bail conditions. Attorney-at-law Samoi Campbell is also representing him.

Sources said Meany and Harding were similarly granted bail, though the specific terms of their release were not disclosed.

Champagnie said his client has consistently denied wrongdoing and has cooperated with investigators throughout the probe. He cautioned against rushing to judgment as the case moves through the courts.

“Allow the process to be ventilated in court so that there is a proper evaluation of the situation in a judicious way,”

Champagnie told The Gleaner on Sunday. “We should not be given to all kinds of wild speculation and emotions. Allow the justice system to take its course.”

The charges follow a major coordinated law-enforcement operation that unfolded early Saturday, with search-and-seizure raids carried out at four locations linked to the long-running SSL investigation — three in St Andrew and one in St James.

The operation involved a joint task force comprising the Financial Investigations Division (FID), the Constabulary Financial Unit (CFU), and the Counter-Terrorism and Organised Crime Investigation Branch (C-TOC) of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, with support from the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA).

Authorities confirmed shortly after 5 a.m. that the searches were active and urged the public to avoid the operational

areas to allow the exercise to proceed safely.

During the operation, Croskery was seen leaving a St Andrew residence on Wickham Avenue with police officers, carrying a bag containing documents as investigators searched the property. He was later escorted into a police vehicle and taken away for questioning. At the time, both police officials and his attorney declined to comment.

Croskery has previously denied involvement in the alleged fraud. Following the emergence of the scandal in January 2023, he resigned as a director of SSL and its parent company, SSL Growth Barbados, saying the move was intended to demonstrate cooperation with ongoing investigations by the Financial Services Commission.

To date, the only person previously charged in the SSL matter was former employee Jean-Ann Panton.

9 killed, including 5 children, in deadly attack near Suriname capital

Nine people, including five children, were killed in a violent attack on the outskirts of Paramaribo, police in Suriname confirmed on Sunday.

According to authorities, the victims were attacked overnight from Saturday into early Sunday. A sixth child and an adult were injured and taken to hospital for treatment. Police said officers responding to the scene detained a male suspect after he confronted them with a sharp object; he was shot in the leg during the arrest and remains hospitalized under police guard.

Local media reports, citing officials and residents, have suggested the suspect may have been experiencing mental health issues, though police have not confirmed this. The country's president said members of her family and neighborhood were among those killed.

In a statement, President Jennifer Geerlings-Simons expressed condolences to the victims' families, calling the incident a stark and painful reminder of life's fragility. She urged loved ones to support one another during what she described as an unimaginably difficult time.

Police said investigations are ongoing and that additional details about the circumstances surrounding the attack will be released as they become available.

Suriname typically records relatively low levels of fatal violent crime, making the incident particularly shocking for the nation, which has a complex political history since gaining independence from the Netherlands in 1975.



The scene of the horrific attack in Suriname



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Bishop sounds alarm as CWI faces defining Test captaincy decision

As the West Indies close a difficult chapter in their Test calendar, former fast bowler and respected commentator Ian Bishop has signaled that a defining decision looms for Cricket West Indies (CWI): whether Roston Chase should continue as Test captain.

With no red-ball cricket scheduled for the next six months, Bishop believes the pause presents both an opportunity and a reckoning for a leadership experiment that has faltered since its inception. The West Indies’ final Test assignment of the year concluded with another setback, a 2-0 series loss to New Zealand. It marked the team’s third consecutive Test series defeat in 2025, following a 3-0 home whitewash by Australia in July and a 2-0 loss to India in October.

Chase, appointed Test captain in May, led the side through all three reverses, an unenviable introduction to leadership at the highest level.

The early returns on Chase’s captaincy have been stark. In 16 innings as Test skipper, the 33-year-old is averaging below 14 with the bat, recording nine single-digit scores and managing a highest score of just 44. His struggles deepened in New Zealand, where he averaged only seven across the three-match series.

His bowling has offered little compensation. Chase is conceding nearly 71 runs per wicket and delivering more

than 17 overs for each dismissal, figures that underscore a broader decline in impact.

With the West Indies not scheduled to play another Test until a two-match home series against Sri Lanka in June, Bishop believes CWI has a rare window to reflect, evaluate, and act.

Speaking on iSports i95.5 FM on Saturday, Bishop emphasized that the most urgent question is not leadership, but selection. “Roston by his own admission has struggled big time with the bat and it still bemuses me that a guy who can score five Test match hundreds in his first 20 or so Test matches has reached this point of his career at age 33 where he’s struggling to put even moderate innings together.”

Bishop argued that the captaincy debate is secondary to Chase’s ability to justify his place in the XI.

“So, the West Indies are fortunate in that they have five or six months before their next Test series to try to determine whether Roston is capable first of all of holding his place in the team and whether he can continue, so that’s their decision to make,” he said.

Bishop did not limit his assessment to Chase’s batting alone, noting that neither his bowling nor his tactical growth as captain has progressed as hoped.

“His bowling hasn’t really fired in the way that he would have hoped and he’s still not as sharp in terms of the



Ian Bishop

captaincy strategically as I was hoping that he would reach, but again, they have five or six months to make that decision as to whether he continues.”

For Bishop, however, the issue extends well beyond one player or one role. He cautioned that constant changes at the top will mean little unless the West Indies address their developmental pipeline.

“But it’s more than the captaincy. For me the big thing is how we develop batters around the Caribbean. How do we fulfil Alick Athanaze. You’ve got one or two other young guys around the Caribbean and how do we bring them to maturation, otherwise we’re going to chase leadership, we’re going to change coaches, and the results still won’t be what we expect,” he added.

Germaican Skate Tour ignites downtown Kingston

The Germaican Skate Tour closed its Kingston leg on a high note Sunday, transforming Water Lane at the Kingston Creative parking lot into a hub of movement, creativity, and youthful possibility.

Over three days, the mobile skate park became a gathering point for children and adults from across the corporate area and neighboring parishes, many experiencing skateboarding for the first time. While newcomers tested their balance and confidence, spectators were treated to high-energy demonstrations by the accomplished Eduskateme team, whose performances showcased the sport’s athleticism and expressive appeal.

A significant number of participants came from nearby communities including Southside, Waltham Park, Trench Town, Tivoli Gardens, and other inner-city neighborhoods. For many of these young attendees, the tour represented more than recreation, it offered access to a global sport rarely available in their communities.

The initiative was organized by the Jamaica Skate Culture Foundation (JSCF), led by founder Remy Walter, with financial support from the German

Embassy. The French Embassy funded the manufacture of the mobile skate park, while the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech), home to the only skateboard club in the corporate area, has hosted the mobile facility since August.

German Ambassador Jan Hendrik van Thiel attended both the opening session on Friday and the closing day on Sunday, and on each occasion, he did not hesitate to step onto a skateboard himself.

“It’s a wonderful project in many respects,” Ambassador van Thiel said. “First of all, because it’s for the kids. It’s kids from areas that don’t have so much opportunity to express themselves and skateboard is something that is international... It’s a universal thing like art is a universal thing. It’s now an Olympic sport so to give a chance to young Jamaicans from areas which are not advantaged, perhaps disadvantaged even, to be part of the big family of skateboarders worldwide.”

Reflecting on his personal experience, he added, “It’s just wonderful. I came on Friday because I wanted to not only have the official speeches and so on, I wanted to be in contact with the



One of the young participants in the skating event

kids... I got a teacher who is 50 years younger than me, he showed me a few tricks and it was fantastic... I really loved it, and it really convinced me that we have done the right thing in supporting this project.”

Members of the Eduskateme team offered insight into what skateboarding means to them beyond competition.

Twelve-year-old Jiaquan Dillon, who has been skating for four years,

described the sport as deeply personal. “Skateboarding, from my perspective is more than a sport, it’s like a hobby,” he said, adding that being on the board meant “feeling the wind blowing on my skin, knowing that I can do the impossible.” He encouraged other children to get involved, saying, “It’s a good sport for young children. You can make it big in life with skateboarding.”



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White-ball reckoning ahead as Daren Sammy faces pivotal World Cup test

The West Indies’ performance at the upcoming ICC Men’s T20 World Cup could prove decisive for Daren Sammy’s future as all-format head coach, according to respected cricket commentator Ian Bishop.

With the global tournament scheduled for February and March 2026 in Sri Lanka and India, Bishop believes the marquee event will serve as the clearest benchmark yet of Sammy’s effectiveness since taking charge of the regional side earlier this year.

Sammy, a two-time T20 World Cup-winning captain, assumed the role of all-format head coach on April 1, inheriting a team facing significant transition. His early tenure, however, has been marked by uneven results.

To date, Sammy has overseen just two series victories: a landmark 2-1 One Day International triumph over Pakistan in August, followed by a dominant 3-0 T20 International sweep of Bangladesh in October.

Those successes have been offset by a string of setbacks. The West Indies have suffered Test and T20I defeats to Australia, a Test series loss to India, an ODI series defeat to Bangladesh, and a



Facing challenges: Daren Sammy

comprehensive clean sweep at the hands of New Zealand in their most recent T20I, ODI, and Test engagements.

Speaking during an interview on iSports on i95.5 FM last Saturday, Bishop acknowledged that the record so far has not reflected favorably on the former captain.

“The results so far are not going to be pleasing reflection for Daren

Sammy,” Bishop said.

He noted that Sammy’s initiation into the role came under some of the most demanding circumstances international cricket can offer.

“He started off with three very difficult series, but he knew that when he took the job against Australia in the Caribbean, against India in India and then against New Zealand in New

Zealand, where we haven’t won since 1995; that’s 30 years of Test cricket where we haven’t won a game, so there will be disappointment certainly from a Test match point of view...” Bishop explained.

While acknowledging the challenges of the Test arena, Bishop made it clear that Sammy’s assessment will ultimately center on limited-overs cricket, particularly T20s.

“From a white ball point of view, the real proof is going to be the T20 World Cup next year,” Bishop said.

He added that the West Indies possess enough offensive firepower to be competitive on the global stage.

“That is a team that has a lot of potential from a batting point of view if not from a bowling point of view, and so what are we going to judge him by?”

With the T20 World Cup rapidly approaching, Bishop suggested that the coming months will weigh heavily in determining Sammy’s standing.

“And I think it’s going to rest heavily on the white-ball component of the game that will come up in the next two months,” he concluded.





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Pollard powers MI Emirates to commanding win over Capitals

Kieron Pollard delivered a master-class in controlled aggression, guiding MI Emirates to a commanding eight-wicket victory over the Dubai Capitals in the International League T20 on Saturday, as the defending champions tightened their grip on the tournament.

Chasing a modest target, Pollard’s calm assurance ensured there were no late stumbles, transforming a routine pursuit into a statement win at the Zayed Cricket Stadium.

The Dubai Capitals never found momentum after being sent in, repeatedly checked by disciplined bowling that kept the run rate in check and wickets tumbling. Player of the Match AM Ghazanfar led the charge with figures of 3 for 28, as the Capitals were limited to an underwhelming 122 for eight from their 20 overs.

Captain Mohammad Nabi offered resistance with an unbeaten 22 from 30 balls, while James Neesham chipped in with 21. Beyond that, contributions were scarce, and the innings unraveled after a damaging collapse left the Capitals reeling at 52 for five midway through the 10th over.

MI Emirates approached the chase with composure rather than urgency. Andre Fletcher’s 21 from 30 balls was

unhurried but steady, anchoring an opening partnership of 47 in just over six overs alongside Muhammad Waseem, who provided the early impetus with 27 off 19 deliveries.

Though the tempo was conservative, the foundation proved sufficient for what was to follow.

Once Pollard arrived at the crease, the equation quickly tilted beyond the Capitals’ reach. The MI Emirates captain struck an unbeaten 44 from 31 balls, clearing the boundary five times with authority and adding a four for good measure.

Pollard then joined forces with Tom Banton, whose fluent 28 not out from 20 balls complemented the captain’s power. Their unbroken 67-run partnership closed the contest without drama, carrying MI Emirates to 126 for two in 16.4 overs.

The emphatic victory marked MI Emirates’ seventh win in 10 matches, reinforcing their position as one of the competition’s most formidable sides. With Pollard leading decisively both tactically and with the bat, the Emirates continue to gather momentum at a critical stage of the league.



Kieron Pollard

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A portrait of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark top, smiling at the camera. The background is a solid light orange color.

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