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Guyana gets its first MRI machine

Guyana has reached another landmark in its ongoing healthcare transformation with the installation of the country's first Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine within the public healthcare system at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC).

The state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment represents a significant investment in strengthening the nation's health sector and ensuring equitable access to advanced medical services. Here, Minister of Health, Dr Frank Anthony and CEO of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation Robbie Rambarran show off the MRI machine. Once operational, it will provide thousands of patients with access to high-quality diagnostic imaging that was previously available only through private facilities or overseas medical referrals.

The technology plays a vital role in the early detection and diagnosis of conditions such as strokes, tumours, neurological disorders, spinal injuries, musculoskeletal conditions and other complex diseases.



Carney celebrates Canada's diversity

In his annual Canada Day message, Prime Minister Mark Carney spoke on unity, kindness and strength, as his government continues to face challenges to Canada's sovereignty, both from within the country, and outside of it.

Carney celebrated the beauty and diversity of the country's landscape and people. "Canadians have never just imagined a stronger, more united country," he said. "We have picked up our tools and built one."

"Small acts of solidarity, repeated millions of times, (prove) that together, we can give ourselves far more than anyone can take away," he said.

Carney finished his address by encouraging kindness and unity amongst fellow Canadians, before wishing them a happy Canada Day.

"When we show kindness, kindness grows. When we seek unity, unity grows. When we are Canadian, Canada grows. That's our conviction. And it has never been stronger."

See Editorial, Page 6

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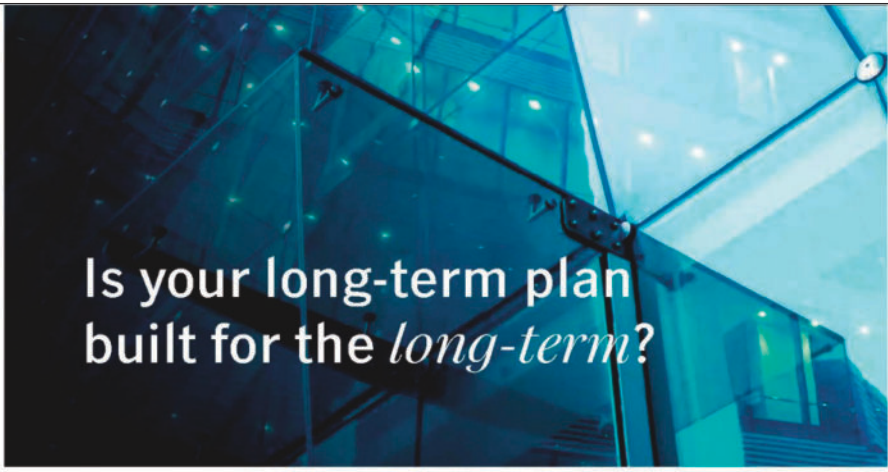
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US wants to send third-country nationals to Jamaica

Jamaica considers U.S. proposal to accept non-Jamaican deportees

Jamaica and the United States are expected to begin formal discussions on a proposed arrangement initiated by Washington that could see the island accepting non-Jamaican nationals deported from the U.S., according to a draft framework reviewed by The Gleaner. The proposal remains at an early, exploratory stage and has not been agreed or implemented, but it places Jamaica within a growing network of countries being approached by the U.S. on third-country migration arrangements.

The proposal is understood to originate from a U.S. policy initiative and could involve the transfer of thousands of third-country nationals over time. Under the draft structure, the United States would propose individuals for removal, while Jamaica would retain full discretion to accept or reject each case on an individual basis.

Under the proposed memorandum of understanding, Jamaica would receive up to 25 individuals every two weeks, subject to case-by-case approval by Jamaican authorities. The arrangement is described as non-binding and operational in nature, with either country able to withdraw at any time with 90 days' notice through diplomatic channels.

The draft outlines exclusions for unaccompanied minors, Jamaican nationals, and individuals with serious criminal convictions, although eligibility would depend on the completeness and accuracy of documentation provided by U.S. authorities at the time of transfer. It also proposes that Jamaican officials receive biographical, medical, and criminal background information prior to any arrival.

The framework further states that individuals not accepted by Jamaica would be returned to U.S. custody, and that the U.S. could pause transfers if certain thresholds are reached, including if a set number of transferred individuals remain in Jamaica beyond 30 days.

The proposal is part of broader U.S. efforts to pursue third-country migration agreements across Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean as Washington seeks to manage asylum pressures and deportation backlogs.

Several Caribbean governments have already confirmed participation in similar arrangements or discussions with Washington, reflecting a wider shift in migration diplomacy across the region.

Countries including Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia have acknowledged agreements or memoranda of understanding with the United States to receive third-country nationals or deportees under varying conditions. In most cases, governments have emphasized that the arrangements are limited in scope and subject to security screening and national discretion.

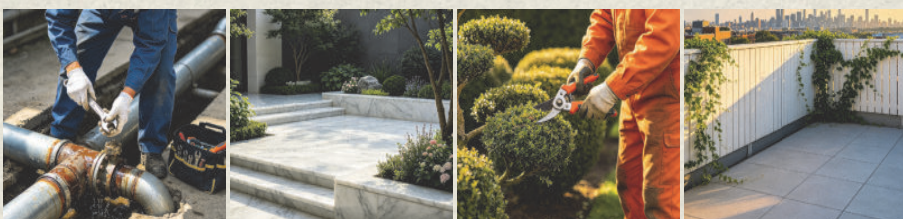
In St. Kitts and Nevis, officials have publicly stated that only non-violent individuals would be considered, while St. Lucia has described its agreement as non-binding. Belize has also signed a separate "safe third country"-style agreement with the United States involving asylum processing cooperation.

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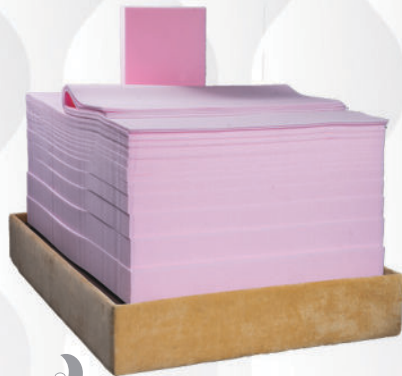
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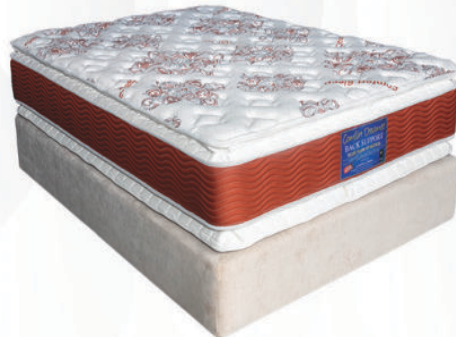
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PSIP Review of Agriculture

Agriculture Minister, Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, is currently chairing the Ministry of Agriculture's weekly Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) review meeting at his office, bringing together heads of departments and agencies to assess the progress of ongoing government projects and programmes.

The meeting serves as a key mechanism for monitoring implementation, addressing challenges, and ensuring that public investments remain aligned with the government's broader strategic development priorities and deliver meaningful benefits to citizens.

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Guyana is witnessing a rapid expansion of its economy

‘Gov’t building sustainable, strategic Guyana for decades to come’

MINISTER within the Ministry of Housing Vanessa Benn has said the government is “building a sustainable, strategic Guyana for decades to come,” pointing to the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) administration’s investments to support not only home ownership, but long-term economic growth.

Addressing the opening of the International Building Expo 2026, being held under the theme, ‘Guyana at 60 Building strong foundations for a sustainable future,’ Minister Benn hailed the country’s rapid economic expansion, highlighting significant gains in

construction, agriculture and other growth sectors.

“We are witnessing in real time the rapid expansion of our economy,” she said, adding that new roads, highways and model communities are reshaping the nation and improving living standards.

Benn paid tribute to the legacy of previous housing leadership, noting that the foundations laid by former ministers have enabled the current government’s ambitious programmes.

She stressed that housing is about more than land allocation, it is also about creating aesthetic, safe and re-

silient communities that can withstand future challenges such as climate change.

The minister further underlined the government’s commitment to integrated services and closer coordination across ministries, agencies and local authorities to ensure development is resilient, inclusive and sustainable.

“Our work programme at the Ministry of Housing is pivotal to supporting national development as a whole,” she said.

She praised the Central Housing and Planning Authority’s single-window system, now in its second year, for streamlining building-application re-

views and bringing greater efficiency and transparency to the sector.

This year’s expo will feature a two-day seminar which will examine sustainable urban planning; smart building technologies; construction-waste management; flood risk and drainage during construction and measures to transition the housing stock to greater energy efficiency.

The four-day expo, Minister Benn said, aims to showcase practical solutions and encourage knowledge sharing among policymakers, industry and the public.

This year’s expo also features expanded activities for patrons.

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Oh Canada

Oh, Canada.

As we celebrate the 159th birthday of this nation, we must give thanks and praise for the opportunity we all have to live in what has been described as the best country on earth.

And we believe this to be true, even as many among us seek to divide us along political lines, some playing the very dangerous game of trying to divide us to conquer us as happened with our neighbour to the south.

In recent times, we've been seeing outrageous Facebook and other social media posts telling us that immigrants are to blame for crime, and calling for stricter immigration control.

Fortunately, most of us know the truth -- that it is immigrants who worked hard to build this nation, that our diversity is something to be celebrated, that a main reason why Canada is seen as one of the best places in the world is the harmony in unity that we

display, the kindness and compassion we show each other.

In his yearly Canada Day message, Prime Minister Mark Carney spoke on unity, kindness and strength, as his government continues to face challenges to Canada's sovereignty, both from within the country, and outside of it.

In the two-and-a-half-minute address, Carney celebrated the beauty and diversity of the country's landscape and people. He stressed that in 1867, when four colonies became one country, they bet they "could build something greater than the sum of their parts."

Carney highlighted the country's infrastructure that helped link the east to the west, like the national railway, and the Trans Canada Highway.

"Canadians have never just imagined a stronger, more united country," he said. "We have picked up our tools and built one."

Carney didn't shy away from acknowledging the "decisive moment" the country currently faces, as well as the "forces that want to divide us."

Clearly, he was referring to the challenges mounted against us by the Trump USA, which has brought Canadians together like no time ever before.

Here at Equality, we are very proud of the fact that for more than 48 years, we have been able to serve our Canadian readers without fear or favour, and secure in the knowledge that our voice is not just being heard but accepted across the nation.

We are part of the diversity of this nation that makes it great. And we're honoured to hold this place in Canada's history.

Wear your red and white and be proud. You're Canadian. You're part of this great experiment. And we're winning the battle to create the world's best country.

VP Region 5 outreach was a huge success

Dear Editor,

PLEASE permit me a space in your letter column to share what took place last Friday during the Vice-President's outreach in Region Five.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Vice-President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P., and his team for visiting Region Five, the largest agriculture-producing region in Guyana.

Residents, both young and old, turned out in large numbers to share their concerns and have them examined, addressed, and, where possible, resolved.

As an agricultural region, many farmers—including those involved in cash crops, rice cultivation, cattle rearing, and poultry production—had the opportunity to voice their concerns and frustrations regarding issues affecting them within the Ministry of Agriculture and its regional departments.

All of the farmers in attendance had the opportunity to engage directly with Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P., and his team. They were able to raise their concerns, face-to-face, and I can confidently say that many of their matters were addressed immediately, leaving them satisfied and encouraged.

The day was well organised, and flowed smoothly as residents sought assistance from various ministries and agencies, as well as the opportunity to meet Vice-President Jagdeo.

Hon. Collin Croal, M.P., Hon. Vanessa Benn, M.P., and representatives from the Ministry of Housing were on hand to address concerns related to the housing sector.

Residents were able to receive updates on their

house lot applications, and gain valuable information regarding the Home Construction Assistance Programme and other housing initiatives.

The ministers and their teams worked diligently to resolve issues, with some residents receiving allocations, and others obtaining immediate assistance that would help them begin building their homes.

Also present were representatives from GWI, GPL, the Small Business Bureau, and several other agencies. Residents took the opportunity to raise concerns and seek assistance, and many matters were addressed on-the-spot.

Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, M.P., and his team also did an excellent job in ensuring that pensioners and residents experiencing issues with NIS received the attention and guidance they needed.

Residents were likewise able to engage with officials from the Ministry of Public Works. The ministry's team, led by Hon. Madanlall Ramraj, M.P., along with Permanent Secretary Mr. Vladim Persaud and regional staff, listened attentively to concerns, and provided assurances regarding infrastructure improvements throughout the region.

I must commend all of the ministers and their teams for the excellent work they did in listening to and addressing the concerns of the people of Region Five.

Many residents had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the Vice-President himself, discuss their issues, and either have them resolved immediately or referred to the relevant agencies for prompt action.

I also commend the Regional Chairman, the Re-

gional Executive Officer (REO), and their teams for ensuring that the day's activities were conducted in an orderly and professional manner, creating an environment where everyone felt welcomed and heard.

For many years, this region has lacked outreach initiatives of this nature, where ordinary citizens can directly engage ministers and senior government officials. Too often, communities feel disconnected from decision-makers, and concerns remain unresolved.

I therefore encourage the Regional Chairman and the newly appointed REO to continue working for the people by organizing regular community outreaches—not only political engagements, but genuine opportunities to listen to residents and address their concerns.

Once again, on behalf of the people of Region Five, I extend sincere gratitude to the Vice President and his team for what was undoubtedly a successful and beneficial regional outreach.

Mr. Vice-President, I must also commend you for the tremendous effort you continue to invest in these outreaches, ensuring that our people have a voice and access to those who can help address their concerns.

Through initiatives such as these, we can continue building a better Guyana—one where all citizens are treated with respect and dignity as we strive toward the vision of One Guyana.

Regards,
Abel Seetaram



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Montreal shooting leads to call for more gun control

By Milan Maharaj

LJI REPORTER

A gun control lobby in Canada has called upon the federal government to ban the sale of SKS rifles after the deadly shooting incident in Montreal, where a police constable and another civilian lost their lives, leading to the re-opening of discussions on firearms regulations in Canada.

This demand follows a shooting at Montreal's Côte-des-Neiges neighborhood in which Montreal police constable Mohamed Lamine Benredouane and Michel Mizrahi, a civilian, lost their lives. While no official confirmation has been made by the police concerning the type of the weapon used to carry out the shooting, pictures circulating on social media suggest that it was an SKS rifle.

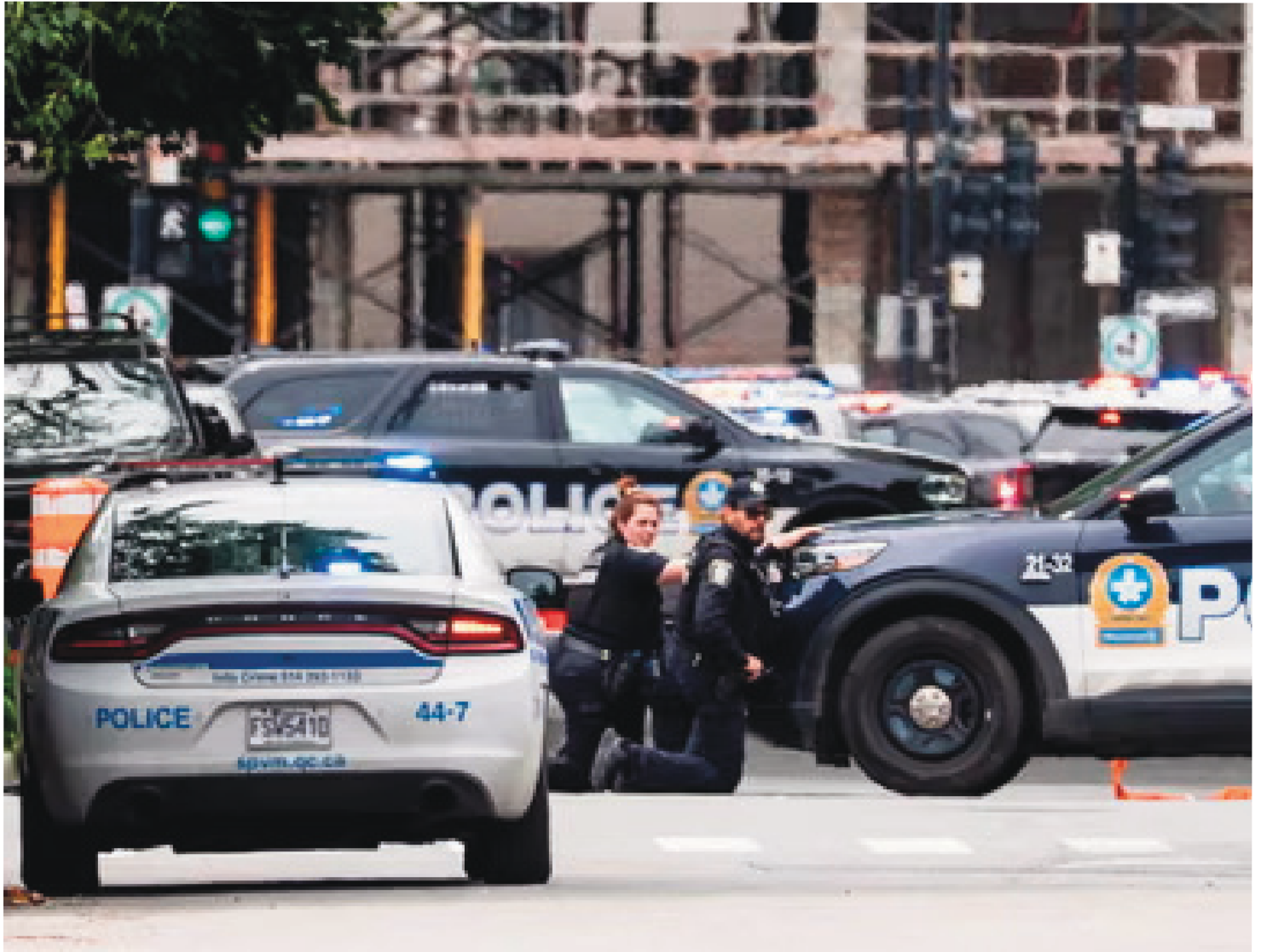
"The Liberal Government must immediately ban the sale of new SKS Rifles," according to PolySeSouvient, a gun control advocacy group. It noted that such a step would help fill what it terms as the last remaining gap in Canadian firearms regulations.

The SKS is an automatic rifle that was first manufactured in the Soviet Union after the end of World War Two. Within Canada, the gun is legal to use and is employed mainly for hunting purposes, including by numerous Indigenous hunters who employ the weapon for harvesting meat. Due to its wide usage in the country, the rifle was not included in past bans on around 2,500 firearm models.

As of May 2020, the Canadian federal government had banned almost 2,500 models and variations of firearms that it considered to have been specifically developed for military purposes rather than civilian ones. Yet, the SKS rifle was not banned and the federal government stated that further consultations needed to take place before determining the classification of the gun.

Firearms in Canada are categorized into non-restricted, restricted, or prohibited firearms according to the Canadian Firearms Act and the Criminal Code. The categorization dictates how the firearm is possessed, transported, and used, and any alteration to the status of the firearm is subject to regulations and legislation at the federal level.

Prime Minister Mark Carney was asked about the situation in a press conference held last Thursday. The Prime Minister responded that the Canadian



Last month's shooting in Montreal left 3 people, including a police officer, dead

federal government will continue its examination of firearms classification within the country and is using the technical expertise of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in order to make such decisions.

It further demands that the Government of Ottawa sets a clear timeline for consultations and, where necessary, regulations pertaining to already-existing SKS rifles. It claims that the process of examination has gone on for too long and more clarity needs to be shed on the legality of the gun in the future.

The organization was critical of the federal government's buyback scheme for firearms. Under the current system, those who own firearms that are prohibited as per 2020 will be compensated upon giving up the weapon. PolySeSouvient claims that the people can acquire the SKS rifle after giving up the prohibited weapon, which is a threat to the overall goal of limiting certain guns.

The federal government is claiming that the firearm policies are designed to ensure that there is an improvement in safety while taking into consideration the legal use of firearms for hunting, sports and traditional practices of Indigenous harvesting.

The issue of gun control has been an ongoing debate in Canada, especially

after events that have involved police or where there are multiple casualties. There have been many legal and regulatory reforms implemented by successive Canadian governments that seek to reduce gun violence but still allow people to keep firearms for legal purposes.

In light of the controversy surrounding the SKS, there is the problem of reconciling the public interest in security with the interests of the Canadian population that uses legally owned firearms. On one hand, those supporting the gun control policy feel that there is a need to put more limitations on firearms after acts of violence come to public attention, whereas on the other hand, in-

divergent communities and hunters stress that the SKS has been traditionally used by the hunters because of its affordability and reliability.

It has not been stated at what point the firearms categorization review will end. In the meantime, the SKS still retains its legal standing and is available for purchase by persons who qualify for a Canadian firearms license.

Once again, the shootings in Montreal have raised the issue of Canadian firearm regulations. It is unlikely that the status of the SKS will change until the federal firearms classification study and the consultations with interested parties are completed.



Barbados tourism hits record arrivals as sector contributes 45% of GDP

Barbados recorded its highest-ever visitor arrivals last year, with tourism accounting for an estimated 45 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), according to Tourism and International Transport Minister Ian Gooding-Edghill.

Speaking at the 2026 Tourism Awards Gala, hosted in collaboration with Gallagher, Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., and the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), Gooding-Edghill said the island welcomed a record 727,310 long-stay visitors and 817,950 cruise passengers, driven by expanded airlift and strong tourism activity.

"We welcomed an unprecedented 727,310 long-stay visitors to our shores, along with a staggering 817,950 cruise arrivals, powered by expanded airlift and robust onboarding activity," he said.



Ian Gooding-Edghill, Minister of Tourism, Barbados

He added that tourism earnings continue to play a dominant role in the national economy.

"Tourism earnings contribute approximately 45 per cent to our GDP. Significantly, our collective invest-

ments continue to make promising returns as we honour individual excellence," the minister said.

Gooding-Edghill attributed the sector's performance to what he described as the "unyielding resilience"

of industry partners and a sustained push to expand airlift capacity.

He said momentum carried into 2026, noting that the first quarter alone brought 214,944 long-stay visitors and 473,960 cruise passengers. According to the minister, the winter season opened strongly, with hotels reporting high occupancy levels, restaurants operating near full capacity, and car rental availability nearly exhausted.

He said the industry's success rests heavily on service quality and consistency, describing excellence in hospitality as Barbados' key competitive advantage.

"Unlike the stars of entertainment, sports ... the stars we celebrate tonight shine through service," he said, praising workers across hotels, restaurants, airports, seaports, and tourism enterprises.

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First-time homeowners to receive full tax deduction on mortgage interest

FIRST-TIME homeowners will now be able to deduct the full amount of interest paid on mortgages of up to \$30 million from their taxable income, President Dr Irfaan Ali announced on Thursday night as he officially declared open this year's International Building Expo.

The Head of State, addressing hundreds at the Providence National Stadium, described the policy move as the government "sharing the cost" of home ownership with Guyanese families.

"The government has doubled the ceiling and mortgage interest tax relief for first-time homeowners under Section 28 of the Income Tax Act," he said adding:

"If you're a first-time homeowner living in your own property, you can now deduct from your taxable income the full interest you pay on mortgage principle up to \$30 million."

He explained that this is a direct partnership between the State and households in financing their homes.

"What does this mean in practice? It means the government is sharing the cost of your mortgage with you. That is what it means in practice, that the government is sharing the cost of your mortgage with you," the President said.

The President linked the tax relief to aggressive reforms in the mortgage and housing finance market since the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) returned to office in 2020.

He noted that when the government took office, the New Building Society (NBS) mortgage ceiling stood at \$8 million. That has since been increased almost fourfold.



Guyana's talent was on show at the launch of this year's International Building Expo

"We're not just giving you access to loans; we are making the government your partner in building your home."

Dr Ali said the wider banking sector has followed suit, with commercial banks slashing mortgage rates and expanding access to larger loans, signalling strong confidence in the economy.

"The power of competitive financial system is when a government moves, the market follows and has

moved with extraordinary speed," he underscored.

Republic Bank has scrapped its residential mortgage ceiling altogether and is now offering loans of up to \$60 million at 5 per cent, with rates starting as low as 3.5 per cent, alongside a 'mortgage move' product that allows borrowers to transfer from higher-cost loans at other institutions.

Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry Limited (GBTI) has restructured its entire mortgage portfolio with standard

rates beginning at three per cent from 1 May, further reduced for loyal customers.

Citizens Bank has introduced a new mortgage regime with rates from 3.5 per cent over a 35-year term, 100 per cent construction financing, no requirement for a 25 per cent upfront contribution, and zero commitment or processing fees.

According to the President, similar reductions have been rolled out by Demerara Bank and Scotiabank.

Innovation at heart of push for climate-smart housing

HOUSING Minister Collin Croal placed innovation at the centre stage of this year's International Building Expo, noting that new technologies and processes are key to delivering climate-resilient, affordable homeownership across Guyana.

Minister Croal highlighted several areas where innovation is already making an impact, climate-smart materials, modular and prefabricated construction methods, elevated foundation designs, and advanced drainage systems during his address at this year's expo launch.

"Countries like ours must remain open to new technologies, modern building solutions, and more efficient approaches to development. This includes stronger building standards, climate resilient designs, sustainable materials, and smarter urban planning," he said.

He said these approaches reduce construction times, lower costs and improve durability, helping communities withstand flooding and other climate risks.

The four-day expo will showcase international and local innovators, bringing fresh ideas to the market from Japanese and UK suppliers of resilient mate-



Housing Minister Collin Croal

rials to regional firms.

"As we build for the future, we must ask the difficult but necessary questions. How do we reduce costs while maintaining standards? How do we create communities that are resilient to flooding and climate risks? How do we integrate sustainability into every phase of our development? Over these four days I am hopeful that we will get new and more innovative answers to these questions as construction methods evolve globally," he said.

Minister Croal encouraged public-private partnerships to pilot these technologies at scale, linking developers, financial institutions and insurers in coordinated projects.

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Participants at the inaugural meeting of the Caribbean Police Network to Combat Environmental Crime, which was held on June 26, 2026, in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad

Caribbean, EU to form joint environmental police network

SECURITY officials from across the Caribbean, Latin America and Europe will soon establish a specialised police network to track and dismantle transnational environmental crime organisations operating in the Region.

The inaugural meeting, co-hosted by the European Union (EU)-funded programme EL PACCTO 2.0 and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) held on 26 June 2026, followed an intensive two-day Waste Trafficking Workshop geared towards confronting the rapidly escalating global threats of waste trafficking and pollution crime.

The newly proposed network will establish a structured regional mechanism to improve real-time intelligence sharing, coordinate joint investigations and dismantle criminal networks exploiting the Region's unique geography and maritime routes.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the introductory meeting, which took place at CARICOM IMPACS' headquarters in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, international and regional security experts warned that environmental crimes, such as wildlife poaching, illegal logging and illicit mining, have

evolved far beyond ecological threats, becoming major challenges to national security and regional governance.

Ms. Evelina Melbarzde, Deputy Head of Mission, Delegation of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago, emphasised that these activities directly undermine the rule of law and the stability of local communities.

She noted that whether dealing with timber, wildlife or waste, these offences rely on the exact same networks, maritime routes and illicit financial flows that sustain other criminal markets.

Ms. Melbarzde stated that EU views the creation of this network as part of a genuine, reciprocal partnership between the two Regions, rather than a one-sided initiative.

"Our aim is not only to support individual activities, but also to build stronger bridges between Caribbean institutions, national law enforcement authorities and their European counterparts. In this way, co-operation with regional partners delivers value in both directions", she explained.

Mr. Virun Lutchman, Environmental Crime Lead, CARICOM IMPACS, highlighted how vulnerable the Caribbean Region's geography makes it

to exploitation. He said that transnational syndicates take advantage of vast maritime spaces and porous borders to move illegal goods, frequently combining environmental offences with document fraud, tax evasion and money laundering.

Mr. Lutchman stated that because these criminal networks operate across borders, a siloed national response was no longer viable. He urged regional law enforcement to move towards a highly integrated model of policing, stressing that the proposed network was essential for closing the operational gaps that criminals currently exploit.

"No Caribbean country should have to face environmental crime alone. The regional geography, maritime space, biodiversity and strategic traf-

ficking routes create vulnerabilities that call for a coordinated regional response", he reiterated.

Mr. Alain Lemangnen, Key Expert for Environmental Crime, EL PACCTO 2.0, reinforced the call for structural unity, framing the defence of the environment as a matter of regional sovereignty.

He warned that illegal exploitation directly threatens food security and exposes local populations to heightened risks from natural disasters.

Mr. Lemangnen asserted that international agencies stand ready to provide specialised operational training but underscored the importance of local execution and long-term commitment to the network's success.

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Rebuilding continues across Region Two following devastating storm

REBUILDING efforts are continuing across Region Two as government teams work around the clock to restore homes damaged by Thursday evening's powerful windstorm.

Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, Madanlall Ramraj, along with Regional Chairman Devin Mohan and Regional Vice Chairman Humace Oodit, visited several communities, including Dartmouth and Henrietta, where repairs are progressing on homes that sustained major roof damage.

Officials reported that works are advancing well and will continue until all affected homes are restored.

Following an early coordination meeting on Friday morning, multiple teams were once again deployed across the Essequibo Coast to carry out repairs simultaneously.

While restoration works continue, Minister Ramraj is also leading regional assessment teams to ensure every affected household is identified and receives assistance.

Minister Ramraj said President Dr Irfaan Ali has instructed that every affected family must receive the support they need, and teams have been working tirelessly over the past three days to deliver on that commitment.

He also commended Men on Mission Coordinator, Lieutenant Colonel Bhageshwar Murlu, for ensuring roofing materials were procured and delivered promptly.

Among those assisted was Jenny Bacchus, whose home suffered severe roof damage. She recalled that President Ali visited her shortly after the storm, after which regional officials



Rebuilding efforts are continuing across Region Two

quickly mobilised workers and materials. Her roof was fully restored within 24 hours.

Another resident, Kumar Ramdeo, expressed gratitude to the Government of Guyana after his home, which had its roof completely torn off, was repaired promptly.

Assessments remain ongoing as additional residents continue to report storm-related damage to regional officials.

The powerful windstorm damaged more than 70 homes across Region Two, while several public buildings, including the Anna Regina Stadium Blue

Stand, also sustained significant damage.

A teacher was injured after being struck on the head during the incident. Recovery operations are expected to continue until all affected families receive assistance.

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

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

Key priorities of the WGC include:

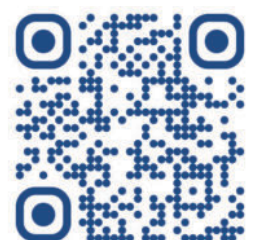
- Build a globally cohesive community with a focus on youth and women in business and civic leadership worldwide.
- Support social entrepreneurship and civic engagement in communities around the world.
- Engage diaspora communities in the social and economic development of Guyana.

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

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Silica City advances with evaluations for health-care, innovation, university hubs

PROPOSALS are being evaluated for the financing and development of several key components of Silica City along the Soesdyke-Linden highway, with plans for the construction of health-care and innovation hubs.

This was according to Chief Executive Officer of the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA), Dr. Martin Pertab, during the launch of the 2026 National Building Expo last week.

He said: “Currently, proposals are being evaluated for the design, finance, and development of a world-class healthcare and innovation hub that would include a state-of-the-art hospital, medical research and innovation facility, a university campus, residential communities, commercial amenities, and extensive green and recreational space.”

Back in August 2024, the government partnered with the University of Miami to complete the comprehensive plan for Silica City. It was during building expo when the master plan for the city was unveiled, showcasing all the cutting-edge technologies and other amenities it will have.

The city will represent a significant step forward in Guyana’s developmental strategy for a sustainable and climate-



A 3D model of Silica City

smart future. It is set to emerge as the most desirable area for ecologically conscious living.

Recreational parks, community

centres, buildings, an electrical system, and multi-specialty healthcare will all be part of the city, creating an atmosphere that improves enjoyment, productivity and well-being.

“This project reflects our commitment to not only build for today, but [for] generations to come, providing world-class amenities accessible to the Guyanese people,” Dr. Pertab said.

In the first phase of the project, some 110 homes are being constructed with four architectural designs, and allocation of the houses has underway.

There are 75 flat housing units and 35 elevated ones. The flat houses are priced between \$25,200,603 and \$25,290,178, while the elevated ones

cost approximately \$33,980,153 to \$34,450,145.

Once completed, Silica City will be outfitted with the newest energy-saving technologies for wastewater management, energy management and water conservation.

To this end, Dr. Pertab noted that the CH&PA has been exploring emerging technologies to ensure sustainability in all projects.

“As we build more houses, communities, and infrastructure, we are also mindful of how we build. We have realised that our foreign housing challenges and those of tomorrow cannot be solved using yesterday’s method alone,” he said.

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Origins festival gains momentum as Guyanese fashion takes centre stage

GUYANA’S creativity continues to reach new heights and larger stages, most recently with the growing success of the Origins Guyana Fashion Festival.

What began just a year ago as an initiative by the Government of Guyana has returned in 2026 with new themes, greater participation and overwhelming anticipation ahead of the event, which will be held from July 3–5 at the Railway Courtyard.

Now in its second year, the festival aims to pay homage to Guyana’s creative history under the theme, ‘A Diamond Legacy: Fashioning 60 Years’, backed by the energy of 31 designers from both Guyana and the diaspora, and more than 80 models ready to showcase the country’s creativity and unique fashion flair to the world.

In a recent interview, Secretariat Director Lourdeth Ferguson said the event has grown considerably over the past year, with more designers and models participating, greater public interest, and a clear message being sent that Guyanese creativity is very much on the rise.

While the event is being celebrated under the broad theme, ‘A Diamond Legacy: Fashioning 60 Years’, each of the three nights carries its own distinct theme, aimed at highlighting Guyana’s creative history, current expansion and future trajectory.

As Ferguson noted, “Day one is Golden Threads of Time. That night is a beautiful mix of diasporan, experienced and emerging designers all coming together on one stage.”

She added, “Day 2 is Ancestral Threads. Again, we are bringing together diaspora and emerging designers, and every night we really try to create a different feel, a different energy, so the audience experiences something fresh each time they walk through those doors.”

The closing night is expected to be particularly compelling. Celebrated under the banner of fashion and innovation, it gives Guyana’s creatives the opportunity to think outside the box and move beyond conventional ideas to create something truly captivating.

As Ferguson explained, “Day three is Fashion Meets Innovation, which is all about threads, fashion, and innovation. That one is more futuristic in its approach. It gives designers the space to push past the norm, to really reach, and to put something on that runway that the world can be proud of.”

This year’s event is also seeing strong participation from designers and



Some of the designers set to participate in this year’s Origins Festival models alike. Each night will feature approximately 10 designers, with the line up drawing from both Guyana and the diaspora, a mix Ferguson described as bringing something unique and valuable to the stage.

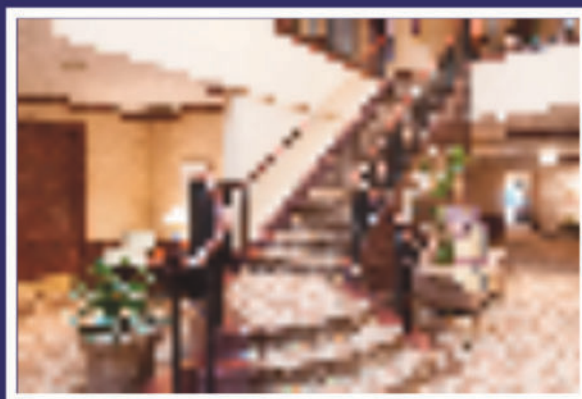
“This year we have 31 designers in all, so every night we have approximately 10 designers showcasing their work. Of that 31, we have nine designers coming in from the diaspora, and they are here to support and complement what our local designers are doing,” she said.

Beyond the designers, interest among Guyana’s models has been equally significant. While 85 models will grace the stage in July, Ferguson noted that more than 400 people participated in casting calls held earlier this year.

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Guyana, Jamaica hope to deploy financing in logistics of food security

GUYANA and Jamaica are moving to deepen collaboration on agriculture, with an emphasis on deploying financing, improving transport and logistics, and building value-added agro-processing as part of a wider regional response to food security threats.

Speaking to reporters last week after Guyana and Jamaica signed a series of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), President Dr Irfaan Ali said food security remains one of the region's most serious long-term challenges, pointing to the combined impact of global politics, economic volatility and climate change.

"Food security is an important challenge for the region, and more and more, the global political environment, global economic environment, and climate change continue to remind us that this is one of the most serious threats to the region, but with that threat come opportunity," he said.

President Ali underscored Guyana's geographical advantage, citing abundant fresh water and large-scale arable land as key assets that can anchor regional production and value creation.

Within this framework, Jamaica is seen as a critical partner, particularly in driving private-sector investment into value-added agriculture.

"Guyana is the land with abundant fresh water, large scale harbour land... What we have discussed with Jamaica is how we can now move the private sector to value added, value creation," he added.

Guyana's government is already



President Dr Irfaan Ali

constructing agro-parks and agro-processing facilities, with a clear policy intention to go beyond traditional agriculture and embrace technology-driven, climate-resilient systems.

"The government is building out the infrastructure for agro parts, agro processing facilities that is not only linked to traditional forms of agriculture, but the technologically driven agriculture... more resilient to climate shocks," he said.

Dr Ali indicated that the emerging Guyana-Jamaica framework goes beyond simply increasing food produc-

tion.

It is expected to cover technical support, training, and policy design aimed at strengthening the entire food ecosystem.

Key elements under discussion include, training young people for modern agriculture; increasing the participation of women and youth in the sector; designing policies and programmes to deploy more financing into agriculture.

Addressing the transport and logistics systems needed to keep more of the region's production within

Caribbean markets and expanding value creation and backward linkages across the supply chain.

"This agreement goes beyond a system of food production. They speak about technical support, training of our young people. How are we going to get more women and youth involved in agriculture? How are we going to get more finances? Deploy the type of policies and programmes to deploy more financing to support agriculture. How are we going to get the region to keep more of what we produce?" he said

Telemedicine expands healthcare options in remote Guyana

TELEMEDICINE is transforming healthcare delivery across Guyana's hinterland, allowing patients to remain with their families while accessing specialist care from some of the country's leading medical professionals.

According to Michael Gouveia, Coordinator for Indigenous People's Communities within the Ministry of Health's Regional Health Services Department, the programme has expanded significantly since its pilot launch in Region Nine in 2022 and now operates at 131 sites across the hinterland.

"Starting this year, we are putting another 70 sites into operation and that is tremendous because what it does, it closes the divide even further in relation to the disparity that is existing," Gouveia said.

The system links remote health centres with specialists based at regional hospitals and the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, allowing patients to receive consultations, follow-up care and ongoing treatment within their own communities.

"Family support is important for



CHWs in Guyana's hinterland in consultation via telemedicine

the patient to heal, to get well and get better. The consultant is able to communicate with the patient through telemedicine, issue instructions to the nurse, medic, Government Medical Officer or Community Health Worker, and the patient continues to be managed," he added.

Additionally, the platform also provides access to mental health services, enabling patients in remote villages to receive counselling and specialist support without interrupting their daily lives.

"We have been able to use the 'telemed' to do psychosocial support.

Somebody in Region Eight, in one of the remote villages, is able to have mental health counselling and see the psychiatrist who is in Georgetown," he said.

Beyond consultations, telemedicine units are equipped with advanced diagnostic tools, including EKG machines, ultrasound equipment and otoscopes used for ear, eye and dental assessments, expanding the range of services available within hinterland communities. Guyana's success in telemedicine is also attracting regional interest.

"I understand there are at least two other countries in the Caribbean that have already approached Guyana for help and partnership in relation to telemedicine. It is something that we are proud of and something we should advertise a little more," Gouveia said.

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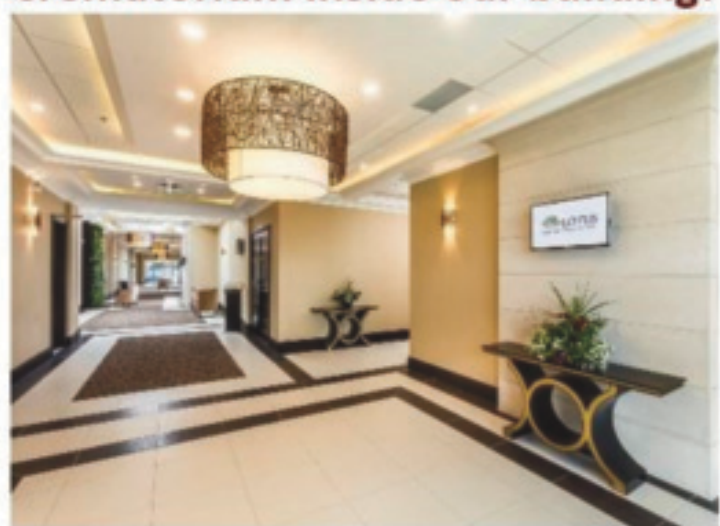
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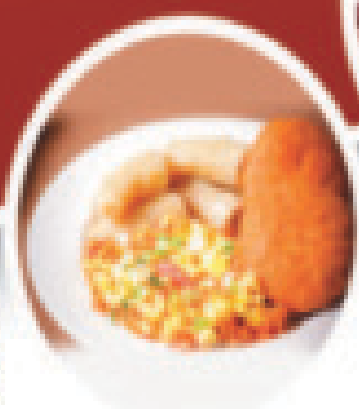


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UG advances Indigenous language preservation with Wapichan grads

THE University of Guyana (UG), on Wednesday, celebrated the graduation of 12 students from its Elementary Wapichan Language Course (WAP1101).

This is a major milestone in the University's efforts to preserve, promote, and strengthen indigenous languages through higher education.

The graduates received their certificates during the inaugural GLU Indigenous Languages Awards Ceremony held at the Education Lecture Theatre (ELT), Turkeyen Campus, hosted by the Guyanese Languages Unit (GLU), a unit within the International Centre of Excellence for Modern and Indigenous Languages, Literatures and Linguistics (ICEMILL), Faculty of Education and Humanities.

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana, Professor Paloma Mohamed Martin, during her remarks, congratulated the graduates for being among the first to undertake the programme and acknowledged the years of advocacy and effort that made the initiative possible. "...we also want to thank you for being self-respecting enough, being respectful of the language and your Guyanese-ness, to be the first to have taken the leap to learn this language," Professor Mohamed Martin said.

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SCAN ME

Guyana Rice farmers to receive \$3B cash subsidies from next week

THE government will begin distributing cash subsidies to rice farmers across Guyana next week, Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha announced, fulfilling a pledge made by President Dr Irfaan Ali during consultations with rice producers in April.

“At the President’s direction, and following consultations with hundreds of rice farmers at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre on April 30, the Ministry of Agriculture will commence direct cash transfers to eligible rice farmers beginning next week,” Minister Mustapha said.

The programme provides GY\$15,000 per acre for farmers cultivating 50 acres or less, and GY\$10,000 per acre for farmers cultivating more than 50 acres.

The Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) completed registration and a post-harvest verification of claims to ensure transparency and accountability, Mustapha added.

The cash transfer initiative, funded to the tune of approximately GY\$3 billion by the PPP/C administration, is intended to help cushion rice producers from mounting global pressures on agricultural production and markets.

The government framed the assistance as part of a broader strategy to pro-



Rice farmers are getting cash subsidies

tect livelihoods, bolster food security, and sustain rural economies.

Rice has long been one of Guyana’s most important agricultural exports and a cornerstone of rural employment.

Since coming to office, the PPP/C government has pursued a series of measures aimed at modernising the sec-

tor and improving producers’ incomes, including capital injections through the GRDB, mechanisation subsidies, infrastructure upgrades, and support for value chain development.

Key PPP/C measures and investments over recent years include direct subsidies and cash support schemes, including fertiliser and input subsidies and

targeted cash transfers during periods of price or supply shocks.

There have also been infrastructure improvements, such as rehabilitation of irrigation and drainage networks, improvements to farm access roads, and investments in storage and milling capacity aimed at reducing post-harvest losses.

Parents welcome ‘Because We Care’ cash grant

PARENTS across Guyana are expressing gratitude for the government’s ‘Because We Care’ cash grant, as distribution got underway on Monday at schools nationwide and is set to continue throughout the week.

Mothers and fathers described the initiative as timely and impactful, with many already planning to direct the funds towards uniforms, textbooks, stationery, and backpacks in preparation for the new school year. Several parents noted that the grant eases the financial burden of back-to-school preparations, while others praised the increasingly seamless distribution process.

Parent and teacher at St. Winefride’s Secondary, Peggy Charles-Bynoe, noted that the grant will be dedicated to preparing her child for the school year ahead.

Speaking on the impact it will have on not just her child but the family, Charles-Bynoe added that the support of the grant now allows her to budget for other things.

“It is going to be a great relief to me in terms of not having to spend my own money. I can now budget for other things. Basically, his money goes towards shopping for his school things in preparation for the new school year,” she



A parent receives the ‘Because We Care’ cash grant at a school

said.

Moreover, she cited the increase of the grant to \$85,000 as a major benefit, adding, “Seeing that we have had the increase, and his wardrobe needs a little refurbishment, a little of it will also go towards buying a few pieces of clothing for him as well,” she added.

Another parent, Chitradevi Jattan, mother of a child attending J.E. Burnham Primary in Georgetown, shared

similar sentiments, noting that the grant will go toward the purchase of school items for the term ahead.

She added that the grant is especially beneficial for parents who may struggle to buy textbooks, highlighting that it adds not just to the items children need, but it directly and positively impacts their learning.

“It has been good, and the money would be beneficial for the child in terms

of buying all the school items. Thanks to the government for bringing this initiative. It would be more beneficial because the cost of living is very high,” she said adding, “I plan to use it for schoolbooks, uniform, and stationery. It is very important because some other parents cannot afford to buy textbooks, so this money would come in handy to enhance the child’s education. Thanks to the government, it is a great input.”

Tatiana Moore, a mother of three, said that the grant will go toward the future of her children, with the funds set to be placed into savings on their behalf. One of her children attends the Novar Primary, while another is at Novar Nursery School in Region Five.

“I find that it benefits a lot. Usually, I would put it into savings for them,” she disclosed.

Moreover, she added that the grant will benefit a number of other parents in helping them prepare their children for the year ahead, saying, “I find that it will help a lot of parents out there, a lot, especially given the economy, and with September coming...they will have a comfortable term at school.”

She added, “I feel good. I feel like we matter and that they listen.”

President Ali urges Sandals to invest in Guyana eco-tourism push

President Irfaan Ali has made a direct appeal to Sandals Resorts International to establish operations in Guyana, positioning the country as a premier eco-tourism destination and one of the region's most promising investment opportunities.

Speaking on Saturday at the launch of CAM Motors and the official introduction of FOTON and JETOUR vehicles at Railway Courtyard on Lamaha Street in Georgetown, the president addressed Sandals CEO Adam Stewart in person, urging the company to consider Guyana as a strategic expansion site.

Sandals currently operates all-inclusive beachfront resorts across eight Caribbean destinations and is widely regarded as one of the region's leading hospitality brands.

President Ali argued that Guyana's combination of natural assets, biodiversity and expanding tourism sector makes it an ideal location for a world-class eco-resort, adding that the country offers a tourism product unlike anywhere else in the Caribbean.

He said the absence of a Sandals property in Guyana represents a missed opportunity for the brand, and called for deeper engagement with the country's private sector to develop what he described as a flagship eco-destination.

In a pointed appeal, Ali said, "You will be doing your brand a great disservice if you don't have the bold capacity that I know your brand carries...make the best possible investment decision... That decision is to work with our private sector as partners in creating Sandals' number one eco-destination, all-inclusive resort here in Guyana."

The president also highlighted what he described as growing confidence among local investors, noting that domestic capital is already playing a significant role in driving tourism expansion.

He told attendees that Guyana's competitive advantage lies in its biodiversity, cultural richness and authenticity of visitor experiences, arguing that no other destination in the region can match its natural or cultural depth.

"I can assure you that none will come close to you, none will match you, because none can match the beauty of this country, none can match the natural heritage of this country, and none can



Sandals is making a significant investment in St Vincent

match the cultural significance, cultural intensity, the diverseness of our culture and the richness of our culture," he said.

Ali added that these strengths position Guyana to emerge as a leader in eco-tourism and sustainable destination

development, particularly as global demand shifts toward more nature-based travel experiences.

He also used the platform to call on the local private sector to increase investment in tourism infrastructure and

related industries, stressing that Guyana's long-term economic growth must extend beyond oil and gas into diversified sectors such as tourism and value-added services.

Guyana proposes national mining consortium to expand local ownership

The Government of Guyana is moving to establish a national mining consortium aimed at increasing local ownership in the country's mineral sector and broadening opportunities for citizens to participate in large-scale mining ventures.

President Irfaan Ali announced the proposal during the commissioning of a new Citizens Bank branch in Bartica, outlining plans for a locally owned company that would bring together small, medium and large-scale miners, alongside members of the public, into a unified investment structure.

Under the proposed model, participants would collectively hold stakes in a national mining company designed to operate competitively at an international level, while ensuring greater retention of mineral wealth within Guyana.

President Ali said the initiative is part of a wider strategy to deepen financial inclusion and expand access to wealth-building opportunities across key sectors of the economy.

He noted that the proposal aligns with broader reforms being considered, including the establishment of a junior stock exchange, a Guyana Development Bank, and new investment channels tied to agriculture, infrastructure and industrial development. He also highlighted ongoing

discussions with Citizens Bank on setting up a Development Bank desk and an electronic identification support service for residents in Region Seven.

According to the president, the long-term goal is to shift more economic participation into the hands of ordinary citizens, allowing families to become shareholders in sectors that have traditionally been dominated by larger investors.

He added that financial inclusion must extend beyond basic banking access to include meaningful pathways for investment and wealth creation at the community level.

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The Ram temple in Ayodhya has become one of India's most important pilgrimage centres

Row over alleged theft of donations from India's landmark Ram temple

Two-and-a-half years after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a grand temple to Hindu god Ram, the shrine is embroiled in an unsavoury row over allegations that donations from devotees worth tens of millions of rupees have been embezzled.

The temple in the once-flashpoint city of Ayodhya in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh replaced a 16th-Century mosque torn down by Hindu mobs in 1992, sparking riots in which nearly 2,000 people died.

Since its inauguration in January 2024, the three-storey temple spread over 2.7 acres has become one of India's most important pilgrimage centres, attracting an estimated 50 million visitors annually.

But in recent weeks, questions over the handling of cash, valuable jewellery, gold and silver offered by devotees have triggered a political controversy and petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored investigation by the federal police.

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust - an independent trust which manages the shrine - has denied any wrongdoing. The state government has set up a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to inquire into the allegations.

Following an interim report from SIT, Ayodhya police registered a case of alleged embezzlement on Thursday, naming eight people.

All eight are in custody and being questioned, senior police officer Gaurav Grover told BBC Hindi. They are expected to be produced before a magistrate within a day or two, he added.

The temple complex, which also includes six smaller shrines, draws 70,000 to 80,000 devotees daily, with crowds tripling on weekends and festivals. Most leave offerings in about 35 donation boxes around the site.

The trust - which collects, sorts and counts the offerings - recorded an annual income of 3.27bn rupees (\$35m; £26m) in the financial year 2024-25, making it one of India's largest temples in terms of earnings, the Hindustan Times reported.

A former city legislator has alleged more than 70m rupees (\$739,550; £560,420) have gone missing.

The temple trust rejected claims that donations or offerings were improperly handled.

In a video statement on Facebook, its general secretary Champat Rai said the trust's activities, including the process used to count donations and even the counting room, were routinely audited by their trustees and workers along with some State Bank of India employees.

"This work continues for several days. This is what is happening nowadays. No-one has noticed any discrepancy yet," he added.

The allegations of embezzlement at what is considered one of India's most consequential religious sites has made headlines in India. The temple stands on a site that has been at the centre of one of India's most consequential religious, political and legal disputes for decades.

Many Hindus believe Ayodhya to be the birthplace of deity Ram. A vigorous nation-wide campaign spearheaded by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to reclaim the land led to the demolition of the Babri mosque by Hindu activists in 1992.

After a long legal battle, the Supreme Court in 2019 awarded the disputed land for the construction of a temple and ordered that alternative land be provided for a mosque.

The dispute shaped Indian politics for decades and became closely associated with the rise of the BJP in the 1990s in a country where 80% of the population is Hindu.

The construction of the temple was one of the main election promises of the BJP and its opening in January 2024 is believed to have contributed to Modi's win in the general election held a few months later. So even though the temple is managed by an independent trust, opposition parties are demanding answers from Modi and his BJP - which is also in power in the state.

The alleged irregularities in the handling of donations and offerings made by devotees were first made by Mahipal Singh, who previously supervised the trust's accounts team and is now being called the "whistleblower".

Singh has publicly claimed that he was replaced after he raised concerns internally about the handling of cash offerings and precious metals received as gifts.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): Jupiter, planet of good fortune, joins Venus in the most optimistic and outgoing area of your chart today, so even if your life is a bit of a mess at the moment you will find no end of reasons to smile. Creative people will bring you luck.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): You may be inclined to back a hunch of some sort today but with mind planet Mercury beginning its retrograde phase there is no guarantee that hunch will be correct. Stick to the facts and ignore that little voice in your head, for now.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): If someone disrupts your routine or delays a project today, putting you behind schedule, there is no point getting upset about it. With Mercury moving retrograde you will probably have to go back and do it all again later on anyway.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): Your money situation may not be great but neither is it as desperate as you seem to believe, so stop worrying about where your next dollar is coming from and trust the universe to look after you. It knows exactly what you need.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): With Jupiter joining Venus in your sign today your mood will improve considerably, so much so that you may believe nothing can go wrong. Reality will bring you down to earth soon enough, but your luck is certainly changing for the better.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): The pressure will be on you to play a role today but you should only do so if you are in the right mood. You were put on earth in part to help other people but that does not mean you have to be a performing seal!

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): Friends will be a lot of fun now that Jupiter is joining your ruler Venus in the most neighborly area of your chart. Get out and about and meet as many people as you can over the next 24 hours. Everyone will want to be your friend.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): If you want to get ahead in your career then the next few days are going to be of the utmost importance. Make yourself known to someone in a position of power, because you could be exactly who they have been looking for.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): Don't jump to conclusions if someone you work or do business with gives you a hard time today. With mind planet Mercury moving retrograde it's possible that you have misinterpreted their motives. They could be trying to do you a favor.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): While Mercury is moving retrograde through the partnership area of your chart joint activities will come to a halt, or at least slow down. That's actually a good thing in that it gives you time to reappraise them. Changes may be needed.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): The more people you work with gripe and complain today the more inclined you will be to tell them to stop feeling sorry for themselves and buck up their ideas. Having said that, are they really worth the effort? Probably not.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): If it is in your power to make right a wrong of some sort today then put everything else on hold and make that your one and only aim. You are at your best when your generosity of spirit is allowed to work its magic.

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New push to help Jamaica's returning deportees reintegrate into society

Jamaica is strengthening its support systems for involuntarily returned migrants (IRMs), as hundreds of deportees continue to arrive annually and reintegration challenges remain a persistent social and economic concern.

The Ministry of National Security and Peace has partnered with the Open Arms Development Centre, a temporary shelter, food and clothing to the homeless to provide transitional housing, rehabilitation and support services for returnees who often arrive with limited resources, disrupted family ties, or difficulties securing employment.

The collaboration is part of a wider multi-agency approach aimed at helping returning nationals rebuild their lives, according to government officials.

While Jamaica does not publicly operate a single consolidated reintegration programme for deportees, authorities say coordination across ministries — including Labour and Social Security, Health and Wellness, and Local Government — is intended to close gaps in housing, counselling and job placement support.

The issue remains significant in scale. According to Jamaica's Economic and Social Survey, 547 Jamaicans were forcibly returned in 2024 alone, while 2,843 were deported over the five-year period from 2020 to 2024.

Longer-term research on migration patterns suggests the cumulative impact is far greater. Between 2000 and 2013, more than 41,000 Jamaicans were deported from countries including the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, with the United States accounting for the largest share.

Officials and researchers have long noted that many returnees face immediate reintegration hurdles, particularly around housing, stigma, and employment. In Kingston, facilities such as Open Arms Development Centre have become key points of support, offering temporary accommodation and structured rehabilitation programmes for those with limited family networks or no immediate place to stay.

Chief Technical Director in the ministry, Shauna Trowers, said partnerships with organisations like Open Arms are essential for stabilising returnees in the critical early stages after arrival.

She said the centre provides “transitional support where there's limited family support and limited accommodation,” allowing time for agencies to coordinate longer-term assistance.

Located on Windward Road in Kingston, Open Arms has operated



Over 2,000 Jamaicans have been deported between 2020 and 2024

since 2012, offering residential care and reintegration services for vulnerable returnees and other at-risk groups.

Beyond immediate support, officials say the broader challenge is ensuring sustainable reintegration into communities, particularly for individuals returning after years abroad.

Human rights and migration researchers have previously noted that a significant share of deportees struggle with access to stable housing and employment upon return, while some also face stigma linked to their migration status or time spent overseas.

The government maintains that its

approach is focused on coordination rather than centralisation, working through multiple agencies and community-based partners to support reintegration outcomes.

As deportation flows continue at steady levels, officials say strengthening these networks remains central to

Caribbean moves to assist Venezuela

Governments across the Caribbean have expressed condolences and pledged support to Venezuela following a pair of powerful earthquakes that struck off the South American country's coast on Wednesday, causing widespread damage and triggering regional concern.

The Government and people of Jamaica said they were “profoundly saddened” by the disaster, which struck on the evening of June 24, and extended condolences to those affected.

“On behalf of the people of Jamaica, we extend our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” a statement said. “Our hearts are with the families who have lost loved ones, with the injured, and with the many still searching for those trapped beneath the rubble.”

Jamaica said the country stood in full solidarity with Venezuela, noting the shared experience of natural disasters across the Caribbean.

“As a Caribbean nation that knows well the suddenness with which natural disaster can visit our region, Jamaica stands in full solidarity with Venezuela in this hour of grief and recovery,” the statement added. “Jamaica stands ready to support the relief and recovery effort in whatever way it can.”

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago also issued a statement of support through its Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, saying it stood with Venezuela and was prepared to assist where possible.

“The Government of Trinidad and Tobago stands prepared to provide any requested support and assistance to the Venezuelan authorities, where possible,” the ministry said.

It added that the country was mindful of the region's vulnerability to natural disasters and was closely monitoring developments through its diplomatic mission in Caracas, which it said remained operational and not significantly affected.

“The people of Trinidad and Tobago cherish the fraternal bond with the people of Venezuela,” the ministry said, underscoring long-standing bilateral ties.

The statements came as reports indicated significant destruction following two major earthquakes west of Caracas. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), a magnitude 7.2 quake was followed less than a minute later by a 7.5 magnitude tremor.

Local authorities reported building collapses and ongoing rescue operations, though an official national death toll had not been confirmed as of Wednesday evening. Early estimates from USGS models suggested casualties could potentially be in the thousands, though the situation remained fluid.

A tsunami warning issued shortly after the quakes was later lifted, easing fears of further immediate coastal impacts. Across the region, governments have reiterated calls for solidarity and coordination in the face of natural disasters, reflecting the Caribbean's shared exposure to seismic and climate-related shocks.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines health officials urge vigilance as HIV cases rise

Health authorities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are urging residents and visitors to take greater precautions as new HIV infections continue to increase across the country.

Chief Health Promotion Officer Shanika John said recent health data shows a rise in new cases, with the highest prevalence recorded among people aged 25 to 29, as well as men over the age of 60.

John also noted a gender gap in testing patterns, with more women than men voluntarily getting tested. However, she warned that a significant number of positive cases are still being identified among men in the affected age groups. “Females are the ones who are still coming forward for testing as they rank higher, but we’re still seeing a lot of the males who are showing up positive within that age group,” she said.

Health officials stressed that HIV status cannot be determined by appearance alone, underscoring that testing remains the only reliable method of diagnosis. “You cannot tell by looking if somebody is HIV positive, and the only way that you can do that is by protecting yourself,” John added.

The public is being encouraged to consistently use condoms, particularly with new or casual sexual partners, as part of broader prevention efforts. Officials also highlighted the importance of sexual health awareness, especially among younger people.



Attention has also turned to the upcoming Vincymas carnival season, which health officials say typically brings increased travel, higher alcohol consumption, and more casual sexual activity—factors that can elevate the risk of transmission.

The Ministry of Health is urging the public to drink responsibly, maintain adherence to any prescribed medication for existing conditions, and prioritise regular HIV testing. Men, in particular, are being encouraged to come forward for screening.

Officials say early testing and prompt treatment remain critical in controlling the spread of HIV and improving long-term health outcomes. “We ask persons to have a safe and festive season. Your health and energy is a shared responsibility,” John said.

Sonia Boyce appointed Barbados Commissioner

Barbados Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police Sonia Boyce has been appointed Commissioner of Police, effective July 3, 2026, succeeding Commissioner Richard Boyce, who is retiring after what officials described as a distinguished career in law enforcement.

The appointment was made following a selection process conducted by the Protective Services Commission, which included candidate interviews and a formal recommendation to Prime Minister Mia Mottley. The prime minister then carried out the constitutionally required consultation before presidential approval was granted.

In announcing the appointment, the government highlighted Sonia Boyce’s extensive experience, leadership, integrity and exemplary service spanning four decades in policing and public service. Boyce joined the then Royal Barbados Police Force on April 21, 1986, and has served in a wide range of operational, investigative, administrative and human resources roles. She was appointed acting deputy commissioner in November 2025 and currently oversees administration and human resources within the force.

Her career includes leading several major murder investigations that resulted in convictions, earning her a reputation for professionalism, investigative excellence and strong commitment to the rule of law.

She has completed extensive leadership and policing training in Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, the United Kingdom and the United States. Most recently, she graduated with merit from the Executive Leadership Programme at the College of Policing. She also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science with Law from the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus. Boyce has been recognised for her service with the Barbados Services Medal of Honour with First Clasp and the Barbados Humanitarian Award. She has also served in several regional and international policing and civic organisations.

The government thanked outgoing Commissioner Richard Boyce for his long-standing service and contribution to national security, noting that Sonia Boyce’s appointment will ensure continuity, professionalism and strong leadership within the Barbados Police Service.



Guyana pledges to build 300-plus homes in Jamaica

Guyana has announced a second phase of support for Jamaica's post-hurricane recovery, including plans to construct more than 300 homes as part of ongoing regional assistance efforts.

The commitment was made by Guyanese President Mohamed Irfaan Ali during his feature address at the opening of the International Building Expo at the Guyana National Stadium in Providence, East Bank Demerara.

The announcement came in the presence of Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness, who is on a two-day visit to Guyana for bilateral talks on cooperation in areas including agriculture, energy, and development planning.

President Ali said Guyana would follow through on its earlier commitments made after Hurricane Melissa, stressing that the housing initiative would be delivered through Guyana's construction sector, including local builders, banks, and materials suppliers.

"Our promised second phase of support in your recovery programme will be delivered. We are known for keeping our promises," he said, adding that preparations should begin immediately to start construction of the 300-plus homes in Jamaica.

The initiative builds on earlier assistance provided by Guyana after the storm, including emergency supplies such as generators, tarpaulins, chainsaws, food, building materials and water tanks. The Guyana Defence Force has also been working alongside the Jamaica Defence Force in ongoing recovery operations to restore shelter and infrastructure in affected communities.

Hurricane Melissa struck Jamaica in late October 2025 as the most powerful storm in the island's recorded history, causing widespread damage to homes, hospitals, power systems and government facilities. Guyana was among the first CARICOM states to respond and later committed additional support during regional coordination efforts.

President Ali also said discussions with Jamaica covered broader cooperation in energy, culture and sport, including athlete training exchanges and plans for a cricket academy as part of deeper people-to-people and institutional ties.

The International Building Expo, held June 25 to 28 under the theme



Guyana will help replace homes destroyed by Hurricane Melissa

"Guyana at 60: Building Strong Foundations for a Sustainable Future," marks Guyana's 60th anniversary of independence and brings together regional leaders, policymakers and private sector stakeholders.

Minor earthquake shakes parts of Jamaica

A minor earthquake with a magnitude of 3.9 was felt across sections of Jamaica on Sunday morning, according to the Earthquake Unit at the University of the West Indies.

Preliminary data indicate the tremor occurred at approximately 11:45 a.m. and was felt in parts of Kingston and St Andrew, as well as St Catherine.

The unit reported that the epicentre was located about five kilometres northeast of Golden Spring, with a focal depth of 12 kilometres. It described the event as a local earthquake.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage linked to the tremor.

Officials said the information remains preliminary and could be revised as additional seismic data is analysed.

Meanwhile, Guyana President Irfaan Ali has expressed sympathy and support for Venezuela following two powerful back-to-back earthquakes that struck near Caracas, causing widespread destruction, multiple deaths, and injuries across affected areas.

The seismic events, which were also felt in parts of Guyana and other areas of the Caribbean and northern South America, have reportedly killed dozens of people and injured hundreds more, while damaging buildings and critical infrastructure.

In a statement on Thursday, President Ali said Guyana stands ready to assist its neighbour during the unfolding cri-

sis.

"As neighbours, we are deeply saddened by the scale, magnitude, and destruction caused by the two powerful back-to-back earthquakes that struck Caracas yesterday and so far, claiming dozens of lives and injuring hundreds," Ali said. "We stand in solidarity with the people of Venezuela."

"As neighbours, we are ready to offer assistance within our capacity. Our love, prayers, and thoughts are with the families of those affected and the people of Venezuela."

The expression of solidarity comes as Guyana continues to deal with the aftermath of severe weather impacts of its own. Strong winds and storms have affected communities along the Essequibo Coast, damaging homes, schools, government buildings and other infrastructure. Emergency teams have been deployed to assess damage and assist affected residents.

Despite its own recovery efforts, Guyana has joined other regional governments in extending condolences and support to Venezuela as search-and-rescue and recovery operations continue.

The earthquakes have renewed regional concern about the Caribbean and northern South America's vulnerability to natural disasters, with leaders again stressing the importance of cooperation, preparedness and mutual support in times of crisis.



UWI warns of fake website posing as university, urges caution

The University of the West Indies (UWI) has issued a warning about an unauthorised website falsely claiming affiliation with the institution and allegedly collecting personal information from users.

In a statement from its Regional Headquarters on Friday, June 26, 2026, the university said the website is not endorsed, affiliated with, or authorised by UWI and appears to be using the university's name and branding without permission.

The institution also cautioned that the fraudulent site contains a data capture form requesting personal details, including names, email addresses and telephone numbers. UWI stressed that any information submitted through the site is not received by the university.

"As this is not an official UWI website, it must be underscored that any data submitted such as name, email address, telephone number, or any other personal information via that site is not received by The UWI," the statement said.

The university urged individuals who may have interacted with the site to be cautious of follow-up communications claiming to represent UWI and advised them not to share additional personal or financial information in response to unsolicited messages. It also encouraged verification of all communications through official university channels.

Prospective students and stakeholders were reminded that legitimate information on programmes, admis-



UWI said a website that claims it is associated with the university is fake

sions and partnerships is available only through official UWI platforms, including its regional and campus websites.

UWI said it has launched a coordinated response, including reporting the matter to international cyber and

law enforcement authorities, pursuing legal and technical action to have the website removed, and working with partners to reduce potential harm.

Individuals who may have interacted with the site or have relevant information have been urged to contact

the university at oadmin@uwi.edu.

The university said it remains committed to protecting students, partners and its institutional reputation, and will continue taking steps to address the issue.

CAF launches \$1 million recovery fund for earthquake-hit Venezuela

The CAF - Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean has established a new fund to support Venezuela's recovery and reconstruction efforts following the earthquakes that struck the country on June 24.

The Venezuela Recovery and Reconstruction Fund was announced on June 26 and is designed to mobilize public, private and international contributions to help address the country's immediate and long-term needs. The initiative comes in addition to the US\$300,000 in humanitarian assistance that CAF had already pledged for emergency response efforts.

As part of its initial commitment, CAF will contribute US\$1 million in seed funding to launch the mechanism and finance priority initiatives. The institution said it will not charge administrative fees, ensuring that all contributions go directly toward emergency response and rebuilding efforts.

The fund will receive donations from governments, international organizations, businesses, foundations, individuals and other partners under a single framework aimed at promoting transparency and accountability. Resources will be directed toward projects identified and prioritized by the Government of Venezuela.



According to CAF, the mechanism is intended to provide a coordinated response that avoids duplication of efforts and speeds up the delivery of aid to affected communities.

"Acts of nature are met with acts of humanity and solidarity, and Venezuela needs us today more than ever," said Sergio Díaz-Granados. "Venezuela is a founding country and home to the headquarters of CAF, and that is why we are launching this Fund for reconstruction: an agile and transparent mechanism that we invite governments and the private sector to join, so that their contributions, together with ours, become part of an effective response."

CAF said the fund is designed to adapt to the dif-

ferent stages of recovery. In its initial phase, it will support immediate humanitarian assistance, including emergency supplies and assistance for institutions leading the response efforts. The next phase will focus on restoring critical services such as healthcare, water and sanitation, energy, education and connectivity. In the longer term, the fund will support reconstruction and resilience initiatives, including rebuilding efforts, restoring livelihoods and reducing vulnerability to future disasters. The bank said interventions will be guided by damage assessments and priorities established by Venezuelan authorities.

The fund's resources will remain separate from CAF's own finances and will include independent audits, periodic financial reporting and traceability measures to ensure accountability. Contributions can be made in U.S. dollars or euros and may be implemented through eligible entities or directly managed by CAF when deemed more efficient.

CAF said its longstanding relationship with Venezuela, a founding member and the location of the institution's headquarters, reinforces its commitment to supporting the country's recovery and mobilizing regional and international solidarity in the aftermath of the disaster.

Serious crimes fall nearly 20% across Jamaica in first half of 2026

Serious crimes across Jamaica declined by almost one-fifth in the first half of 2026 compared to the same period last year, according to figures released by the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

The statistics, covering January 1 to June 27, show an overall drop of 19.5% in serious crimes nationwide, falling from 1,818 cases in 2025 to 1,464 in 2026.

The data also points to broad declines in several major categories: murders fell 22.5%, shootings dropped 27.7%, robberies declined 25%, and break-ins were down 11.5%. Shooting injuries also decreased, from 241 to 159, a reduction of nearly 34%.

But while the national picture is one of improvement, the data shows sharp contrasts at the divisional level, with several parishes recording notable increases in violent crime.

The figures were released by the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

Police data show 265 murders were recorded in 2026, compared to 342 in the same period last year. Shootings dropped from 357 to 258, while robberies fell from 360 to 270. Break-ins also declined from 558 to 494.

Officials say the overall downward trend reflects sustained policing efforts, though they caution that gains remain uneven across regions.

Several divisions recorded significant reductions in serious crimes.

In the corporate area, the St. Andrew North saw one of the steepest improvements, with serious crimes plunging 69.2%, driven by sharp declines in shootings and break-ins. St. Andrew South also recorded a 30.6%



Crime has fallen by 19% in first half of 2026

drop in overall serious crimes, alongside a halving of murders.

Similarly, St. Catherine South and Westmoreland both recorded declines of more than 30% in serious crimes, with notable reductions in murders and shootings.

However, not all areas followed the national trend.

The most striking increase was recorded in St. Elizabeth, where murders surged from 6 to 16 — an increase of 166.7% — despite a drop in robberies and break-ins.

St. James also saw an uptick in

murders, rising from 28 to 35, even as robberies and break-ins declined. The parish also recorded a small increase in shootings.

In the capital region, Kingston Eastern saw murders rise from 11 to 19, while shootings fell but other categories remained mixed.

Meanwhile, Manchester recorded increases in both murders and shootings, and Kingston Western saw notable rises in robbery and rape figures despite a fall in murders.

While the national decline in serious crimes suggests progress in public

safety efforts, the uneven distribution of gains highlights persistent challenges in several communities.

Security analysts often note that Jamaica's crime trends can shift sharply between parishes, with localized gang activity, economic pressures, and policing capacity playing significant roles.

For now, the JCF data presents a dual picture: a broad national improvement, tempered by pockets of rising violence that continue to demand attention.



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A historic 401-run stand puts Windies in complete control of first Test

West Indies produced a breathtaking batting performance on Saturday as Amir Jangoo and captain Roston Chase delivered one of the greatest partnerships in the nation's Test history, placing Sri Lanka under enormous pressure in the opening match of the series.

The pair combined for an extraordinary 401-run partnership for the sixth wicket at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, powering West Indies to a commanding first innings total of 626 for nine before Chase declared.

With a huge first innings advantage of 318 runs secured, the hosts immediately tightened their grip. Fast bowler Jayden Seales removed Pathum Nissanka for just three before stumps, leaving Sri Lanka struggling at 15 for one and facing a difficult battle to survive the final stages of the match.

The third day belonged entirely to the West Indies duo.

Their sixth-wicket partnership became the highest ever recorded in Test cricket, surpassing the previous mark of 399 set by England's Ben Stokes and Jonny Bairstow against South Africa in 2016.

The achievement also placed the pair among the greatest West Indies batting partnerships ever, second only to the legendary 446-run stand between Sir Garfield Sobers and Conrad Hunte against Pakistan in 1958.

When play resumed, West Indies were still behind.

They began the day at 271 for five, trailing Sri Lanka's first innings score of 308 by 37 runs. With only the lower order remaining, Jangoo and Chase understood that a major partnership was required to completely change the direction of the contest.

They delivered far more than expected.

Jangoo, playing only his third Test match, continued his impressive form from the previous day.

The left-hander blended patience with controlled aggression, moving



Amir Jangoo

steadily toward a breakthrough moment in his young international career.

Starting the morning on 78, he pushed into the 90s before giving West Indies the lead with a beautifully timed boundary through the off side against spinner Sonal Dinusha.

One over later, history arrived.

Jangoo reached his maiden Test century by clipping Kasun Rajitha through square leg for four, raising the bat as his teammates celebrated a major milestone.

By lunch, the partnership had car-

ried West Indies to 356 for five, with Sri Lanka's bowling attack struggling to find answers, especially after losing their quickest bowler, Lahiru Kumara, to a hamstring injury the previous day.

While Jangoo attacked when opportunities appeared, Chase provided the stability and control needed to build a massive total.

The captain reached his sixth Test century by driving Milan Rathnayake through cover for two runs, pushing West Indies beyond 400.

There was a brief scare when

Chase survived a dropped chance at first slip by Kamindu Mendis, although the moment would not have counted because the delivery had been called a no-ball.

The partnership continued to grow.

By tea, the record stand had passed 300 runs and West Indies had moved to 492 for five, completely dictating the match.

After the interval, Jangoo reached another landmark.

The young batsman brought up a magnificent double century with a single to square leg off Dinusha, celebrating by jumping and punching the air in delight.

With West Indies looking to accelerate toward a declaration, Jangoo shifted into attacking mode.

He launched Rathnayake over deep backward square for a huge six but attempted the same shot again the very next delivery and paid the price.

A leading edge sent the ball high into the air, allowing wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis to complete the catch.

Jangoo departed after a remarkable innings of 233, lasting more than nine and a half hours. He faced 373 deliveries and struck 19 fours and three sixes.

The entertainment continued as West Indies pushed for a declaration.

Alzarri Joseph added quick runs with a lively cameo, smashing two sixes and a four in his 21 off 20 balls before Rathnayake claimed another wicket.

Then came the captain's dismissal.

Chase was within touching distance of a double century but fell for 194 when he missed a sweep attempt against Dinusha and was bowled.

His marathon innings lasted more than eight and a half hours, with 13 fours and two sixes from 324 balls.

Sri Lanka's only major success came through Rathnayake, who completed his first five-wicket haul in Test cricket with figures of 5-124.

Cricketing world mourns passing of Charlie Davis

Cricket West Indies (CWI) and the West Indies Players' Association (WIPA) have paid tribute to former Trinidad and Tobago and West Indies cricketer Charles "Charlie" Davis, who has died at the age of 82.

A respected figure from West Indies cricket's formative years of international prominence, Davis represented the region with distinction during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Born in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on January 1, 1944, Davis was remembered as a dependable right-handed middle-order batsman whose calm presence and technical quality made him a valuable member of the West Indies side.

Davis earned 15 Test caps for the

West Indies, finishing his international career with 1,301 runs.

His record reflected remarkable reliability at the crease, with a Test batting average of 54.20, a figure that placed him among the most effective batsmen of his era.

During his career, Davis recorded four test centuries, four Test half-centuries, and a highest score of 183.

One of the defining moments of his career came at the historic Lord's Cricket Ground in England, where he scored his maiden Test century in only his third appearance for the West Indies.

That innings became an important milestone in a career remembered for patience, discipline, and quality stroke play.

CWI recognized Davis as an important contributor to the history of West Indies cricket and expressed heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and loved ones.

To honor his contribution, the West Indies Senior Men's Test team wore black armbands during the third day of the ongoing first Test against Sri Lanka at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua.

The gesture reflected the respect held for a player who helped represent Caribbean cricket during a significant period of growth and achievement.

WIPA also shared condolences following Davis' passing on Thursday, June 25, 2026.

WIPA President and CEO Wavell

Hinds highlighted the sadness felt throughout the cricket community, saying: "The cricketing fraternity is saddened at the passing of Charles Davis. May his soul rest in peace; we extend our condolences to his family and friends."

The association described Davis as a player whose contributions formed part of the foundation of West Indies cricket's international identity.

While Davis' numbers remain a testament to his ability, his importance extended beyond runs scored and records achieved. He represented a generation of Caribbean cricketers who carried regional pride onto the world stage and helped shape the reputation of West Indies cricket.



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JAGS Aviation has emerged a leader in Guyana's aviation industry

By Dr. Asquith Rose

On Saturday June 20, Jags Aviation, an accredited subsidiary of BK Group of Companies, commissioned two 19-seat HAL 228 aircraft. purchased from the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited of India. Based on the proven Dornier 228 platform, the Hal 228 high-wing twin turboprop aircraft are designed specifically for rugged environments like Guyana. Their Short Takeoff and Landing (STOL) capability, and the ability to operate on short, unpaved hinterland air strips, coupled with excellent passenger capability, strong reliability and low operating cost per seat, means that they are perfectly suited for interior operations where conditions are tough and challenging and profit margins are tight.

Acquired by one of the most devoted, authentic, successful, competent and accomplished businessman Mr. Brian Tiwari, founder and executive chairman of BK Group of Companies in 2014 with just four aircraft, today, Jags Aviation fleet of aircraft has more than tripled in just over a decade. Mr. Tiwari's bold vision to reduce cost and raise the standard of domestic and regional aviation will surely boost the aviation industry and Jags ongoing operations as well as its commitment to make a significant contribution to develop the tourist industry in Guyana.

The commissioning ceremony was held at the company's Bradley Hangar at Ogle and the attendees include President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, Vice President Dr. Bharat Jagdeo, members of Cabinet, diplomats and other distinguished guests, members of the private sector and Jags employees. There were several speakers, among them was Jags Accountable Manager Lieutenant Colonel Miguel Benjamin who told the audience that the acquisition of the two HAL 228 aircraft marks a strategic step towards modern efficiency and excellence in both regional and domestic air services. He stated that such huge investments contribute directly to the government's broader vision of positioning Guyana as a leading aviation hub in the Caribbean. Benji as he is often called, explained that the aircraft are built for short-field performance and regional connectivity and that they are ideally suited for Guyana's diverse and jagged terrain and remote airstrips. With seating capacity for 19 passengers, the aircraft offers a spacious, air-conditioned cabin, USB power ports, and an advanced avionics system which brings a new level of comfort and efficiency to local and regional air



Prime Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd), the Honourable Mark Phillips, this past Saturday joined His Excellency President Dr Irfaan Ali, and the executive management of Jags Aviation Inc. for the official commissioning and ribbon-cutting ceremony of two new HAL-228 aircraft.

travel.

Managing Director of Jag's Aviation, Ms. Briony Tiwarie-Gabriel explained to the audience that the new additions will enhance both domestic and regional connectivity, particularly in strengthening tourism links to the interior and other outlying areas of the country. She said that the expanded fleet of aircraft will improve accessibility to remote communities, facilitate increased passenger movement, and contribute to economic activity in the hinterland, regional markets and Guyana's development. Ms. Tiwarie-Gabriel explained to the audience that Jags Aviation has always placed safety first and the two new HAL 228 aircraft have an excellent safety and reliable record.

BK Group of Companies Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mr. Kyle Tiwarie remarked that the HAL 228 aircraft acquisition is a striking reminder that Jags Aviation is committed to commuter airworthiness standards and the safety of passengers. According to the CEO, the aircraft upgraded technology, and its modern twin engine are designed to support passenger travel, increased reliability and versatility, enhance pilot situational awareness, thus making the aircraft ideal for Guyana's jungle environment in the hinterland regions of the country. Kyle praised

Jags employees for their efficiency and for their outstanding achievements and expertise in high maintenance standards over the years. He ended his remarks by saying that the acquisition of the aircraft by Jags Aviation is a major step in strengthening its fleet and expanding its role in Guyana's aviation landscape and that it marks a significant milestone in the company's continued growth and expansion.

President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali delivered the keynote address at the commissioning ceremony of the two new Hal 228 aircraft. He praised the Tiwarie family, especially the Executive Chairman of BK Group of Companies Brian Tiwarie for acquiring the two aircraft and for their continued ingenuity and vision to invest in human development. His Excellency commended the investment by Jags Aviation as a major step forward in modernising the aviation industry and improving connectivity to remote hinterland communities. President Ali noted that the acquisition aligns with his vision to lower passenger costs to the hinterland and that Jags aviation has positioned itself for new opportunities and perhaps the leader in the aviation industry. He highlighted his government's 10-point plan for the aviation industry which includes new terminals, municipal airports, modernised

hinterland airstrips, ego-tourism connectivity and a national aviation school, among others. The Head of State urged local aviation operators to invest in a regional carrier and transform Guyana into a regional aviation and maintenance hub. He officially challenged Hindustan Aeronautics to establish a commercial and maintenance hub in Guyana to serve the Caribbean and South American markets.

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of a portrait to Mr. Brian Tiwarie of his parents, Seelochanie Hargobin (mother) and Hargobin Tiwarie (father) the two aircraft named after them by Ms. Brioni Tiwarie-Gabriel, the Managing Director of Jags Aviation. It is important to mention that Brian Tiwarie aka BK, the founder and chairman of the BK Group of Companies and the former Honorary Council General of the Kingdom of Spain is the recipient of several national prestigious awards including A.A. (Cacique's Crown of Honor), O.M.C. (Order of Roraima) and the Officer's Cross of the Order of Civil Merit from King Felipe VI of Spain, recognising his diplomatic service and his contributions to strengthening relations between Guyana and Spain. The event was well attended.



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