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Murder charge for MV Barima captain, crew

Following legal advice obtained from the Director of Public Prosecutions, three employees attached to the Transport and Harbour Department were charged with the offence of Murder, contrary to common law, in relation to the tragic deaths of passengers who were on board the MV Barima.

Those charged are Kevin Price (pictured), called “KP”, a 40-year-old Captain of Melanie Damishana, East Coast Demerara; Rondell Dwayne Roberts, a 42-year-old Chief Mate of Grove Public Road, East Bank Demerara and Delon Granderson, a 33-year-old Goods Superintendent of Fellowship, West Coast Demerara. The matter was transferred to the Charity Magistrate’s Court and adjourned to August 3, 2026 following a court appearance before Chief Magistrate Judy Latchman on Tuesday.



CCJ dismisses Mohameds’ case against extradition

The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) on Wednesday dismissed an appeal by Azruddin Mohamed and his father Nazar “Shell” Mohamed on the grounds that Home Affairs Minister Oneidge Walrond’s Authority To Proceed (ATP) for a magistrate to hear extradition proceedings was infected with political bias.

“The substantive appeal is dismissed...The interim stay of the extradition proceedings imposed by this court on 25th March, 2026, is hereby lifted,” Justice Denys Barrow said.

The court also found that Mr Azruddin Mohamed also made politically provocative comments. “The second appellant does not have clean hands. He provoked verbal attacks against him by his own earlier attacks against government officials, or his own willing participation in a general brawl of politics,” the judge said.

The Mohameds are wanted by the United States (US) to face trial in a federal court for alleged money laundering, wire fraud and mail fraud linked to their gold trading business. The Mohameds were sanctioned in June 2024 by the United States Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control for allegedly evading more than US\$50 million in taxes payable to the Guyana government on the export of more than 10,000 kilograms of gold.

The regional court, which is Guyana’s final court, said there was no general right to be heard prior to the issuance of the ATP and no requirement for the minister issuing the ATP to be free from political bias.

Azruddin Mohamed was named Guyana’s Opposition leader in January this year, following the September 2025 general election.

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Guyana President Dr Irfaan Ali

Guyana aims to clear housing backlog by end of 2027 - President Ali

Guyana President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali has announced a government plan to eliminate the country’s housing backlog by the end of 2027, with pending applications in every administrative region except Region Four expected to be addressed by that time.

During a social media address on Thursday, Ali said his administration had surpassed its commitment to distribute 50,000 house lots over the past five years, but demand for housing has continued to rise due to growing economic confidence and an increase in new applications.

“As of early 2026, Guyana faces a housing backlog of approximately 75,000 to 78,000 pending applications. What is interesting is that over 50,000 of that backlog is concentrated in Region Four,” Ali said.

The president noted that 53,000 house lots were distributed between 2020 and 2025, but the number of new applicants has kept pressure on the housing system.

To address the backlog, the government has developed region-specific strategies, including acquiring additional land, developing new housing schemes and accelerating infrastructure projects.

Ali said Regions One, Three, Five, Six, Seven, Nine and Ten are expected to clear their backlogs by the end of 2027, while Region Eight is projected to achieve that target by the end of 2026.

For Region Two, where demand continues to increase, the government is pursuing additional state and privately owned land to meet both current and future housing needs.

The president acknowledged that Region Four, which includes the capital Georgetown and surrounding areas, remains the most difficult challenge because of limited land availability. “The amount of land being acquired in Region Four currently can only clear 50 percent of this backlog by the end of 2027. That is why we are investing heavily in Silica City and opening up new housing areas along the Linden-Soesdyke Highway,” Ali said.

The government has invested nearly \$240 billion in the housing sector over the past five years, funding the distribution of house lots, development of new communities and efforts to increase homeownership opportunities nationwide. Ali said the government’s housing agenda is now shifting beyond simply

providing house lots toward helping more families acquire completed homes through expanded financing options, affordable housing programmes and targeted assistance for vulnerable citizens.

“We believe that every Guyanese who is qualified, every Guyanese family qualified, should be able to live in their own home,” the president said.

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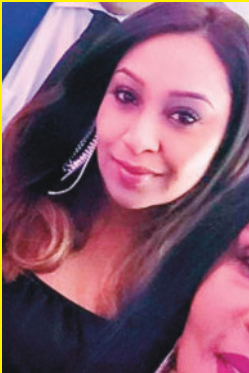
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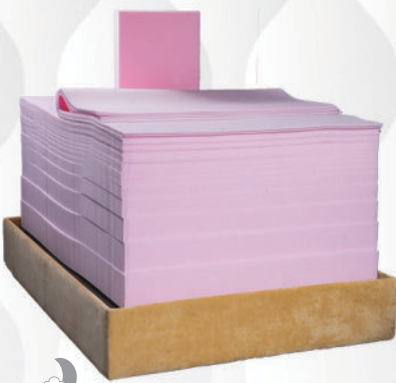
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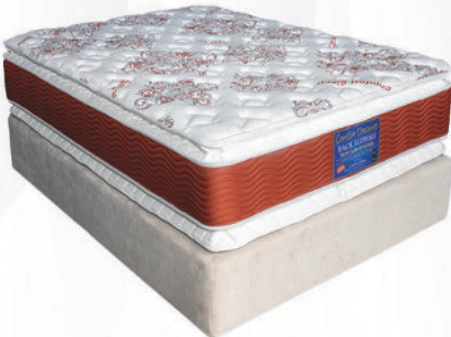
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Pooja, Indar team up for Tere Naam

Pooja Sutram and Indar Kanhai join together in bringing you a Song that will reside in your hearts forever (Tere Naam).

Pooja is the first Guyanese female singer to Collaborate with the Bollywood Melody King of Trinidad Indar Kanhai in the Song titled TERE NAAM, a true love story in one song.

From her previous hit PARDESIYA, social media has grabbed the spotlight of her energetic style and charisma.

From a small village of Windsor Forest WCD Guyana, Pooja was born into a Chinese and Indian family she inherited the Bollywood Vibes from her father.

Pooja would like to thank the entire musical team of BigRich iconic music studio, Masala Entertainment, West Indian Chutney Music and Indar Kanhai for their effortless time and dedication in making this project possible.



Canadian-Guyanese honour memory of victims of MV Barima

By Andreiko Basir

The Guyanese diaspora and members of the wider Caribbean community gathered at the Consulate of Guyana in Scarborough, Ontario, to honor the memory of those who tragically lost their lives in the MV Barima disaster.

Representatives of the Hindu, Christian, and Islamic faiths came together in a spirit of unity to offer prayers for the souls of those who perished and for comfort and strength for their grieving families.

The gathering was attended by Honorary Consul General Mani Singh (pictured), Acting Consul General Grace Joseph, and the Consuls General of Grenada, Cuba, and St. Kitts and Nevis. Also present were many community leaders and representatives from the Association of Concerned Guyanese, the Central Islamic Organization of Guyana, as well as mandirs, mosques, churches, and other community organizations.

On behalf of the Guyanese diaspora in Canada, we extend our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to all the families and loved ones affected by this heart-breaking tragedy. We continue to pray for everyone impacted and ask God to grant comfort, healing, and strength during this difficult time.

May the souls of all those who perished in the MV Barima tragedy rest in eternal peace.

The Guyanese diaspora in Canada stands united in solidarity with the people of Guyana. We also express our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the rescue and recovery efforts, including the emergency services, volunteers, fishermen, and all those who assisted in any way.

May God bless you all, and may Guyana continue to find strength, hope, and unity in the face of this tragedy.

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Jamaican deportations more than double in 2025, PIOJ reports

A total of 1,317 Jamaicans were deported to the island in 2025, representing a more than 140% increase from the 547 who were returned in 2024, according to the latest Economic and Social Survey Jamaica (ESSJ).

The findings are contained in the 2025 edition of the annual report published by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ).

The majority of the deportees, referred to in the report as involuntary returned migrants (IRMs), were returned from the United States.

The report also found that the number of voluntary returned migrants (VRMs) rose to 852 in 2025, up 52.1% from 560 in 2024.

VRMs are individuals who choose to return to their home country because of personal decisions, economic opportunities or family reasons. In contrast, IRMs are people who are forcibly returned to their country of origin due to legal issues, including immigration violations or criminal convictions.

The increase in deportations comes amid heightened immigration enforcement in the United States, prompting renewed discussions in Jamaica about the country's preparedness to receive and reintegrate returning nationals.

Jamaican officials have sought to reassure nationals abroad that those who voluntarily return or are deported will be welcomed home, while also warning that individuals with criminal backgrounds will face the consequences of any illegal activity upon their return.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness has previously urged Jamaicans in the United States facing uncertain immigration circumstances to view Jamaica as their home, emphasizing that returning nationals would be supported. However, he has also warned deportees with criminal histories that they would face law enforcement action if they attempt to continue criminal activity on the island.

In response to concerns over increased returns, the government has



A total of 1317 Jamaicans were deported from the USA in 2025

also established a Deportation Response Action Plan involving multiple agencies to coordinate reception, security screening and support services for returning migrants.

Meanwhile, the number of Commonwealth citizens who migrated to Jamaica declined by 3.8% to 3,491 in 2025, compared with 3,630 the previous year.

The PIOJ also reported an increase in the number of registered aliens, with the figure rising 8.7% to 11,029 in 2025 from 10,146 in 2024.

According to the report, Asians accounted for the largest share of people requesting extensions of stay beyond six months, representing 49% of applicants. Caribbean nationals made up 19.4%, followed by Africans at 11.4%.

High Court permanently halts Jack Warner extradition

A Trinidad and Tobago High Court judge has permanently halted extradition proceedings against former FIFA vice president Jack Warner, ruling that the case breached his constitutional rights.

Justice Karen Reid on Friday ordered that the extradition proceedings against Warner "be permanently stayed" and ruled that the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago must pay damages for breaches of Warner's constitutional rights. The amount of damages will be determined by the court if the parties cannot reach an agreement.

The Attorney General was also ordered to pay Warner's legal costs, certified fit for Senior and Junior Counsel. The assessment of damages has been scheduled for a case management conference on September 30.

Warner, 82, faces 29 charges brought by U.S. authorities, including allegations of fraud, racketeering and illegal wire transfers linked to activities in the United States, Trinidad and Tobago and other countries between 1990 and June 2011.

He was arrested in 2015 under a provisional warrant following a U.S. extradition request and later released on TT\$2.5 million bail. Warner was among several senior FIFA officials indicted after a 2015 investigation by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Justice into corruption in international football.

The extradition proceedings had been delayed for years after Warner challenged the legality of the process, including the government's decision to issue an Authority to Proceed (ATP) in 2015.

In her 71-page ruling, Justice Reid found that the issuance of the ATP without an arrangement between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States guaranteeing protections required under the country's Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) Act violated



Jack Warner

Warner's constitutional rights.

The judge said the absence of such an arrangement breached Warner's right to liberty and his right not to be deprived of liberty except through due process of law under the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution.

Justice Reid also found that continuing the extradition proceedings after the Privy Council proceedings, where the state had represented that a special arrangement existed between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States, further breached Warner's constitutional protections.

The extradition case had previously moved through several stages of legal challenges. Warner's judicial review application against the 2015 ATP was dismissed by the High Court in 2017, and subsequent appeals were dismissed by the Court of Appeal in 2019 and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 2022.

The proceedings resumed before the Magistrate's Court before Warner filed a constitutional challenge in March 2023, arguing that the state had failed in its duty of candour and violated his rights. In addition to permanently staying the extradition proceedings, Justice Reid issued an order preventing the government from enforcing previous costs orders made against Warner in earlier judicial review proceedings.



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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

The MV Barima

The tragedy of the sinking of the MV Barima in Guyana on July 18 is unimaginable.

At last check, 77 people have died, and another 30 remain unaccounted for. Given the passage of time, we can now assume that the death toll from this event is over 100, making it the worst maritime disaster in Guyana's history, and one of the worst ever in the Caribbean.

The government's response was immediate and massive. The Irfaan Ali regime was able to secure, very quickly, rescue teams both locally and regionally, and within hours of the event, there were rescuers on site, trying to save as many souls as possible.

Thanks to this quick response, over 60 survivors were pulled from the sea.

The stories that have since emerged, however, are tragic. One mother was given the unthinkable Sophie's Choice of saving one of her children while another slipped beneath the waves.

A father learned that his entire family -- a wife and seven children, according to reports -- had perished. And there are numerous more heartbreaking tales which we will no doubt hear about in the future.

What makes this tragedy even worse is the fact that the vessel, the MV Barima, was being operated by the state. Although it was over 70 years old -- built in 1939 -- it was found to be in servicable condition during the last inspection.

The Barima offered affordable travel for the mainly indigenous communities who call the Port Kaituma area home. This village is not easily accessible (if at all) by road, making the ferry the best option for those who had to visit the capital Georgetown for business or shopping, and the boat had offered reliable and timely service for decades.

The vessel was reportedly equipped with 250 life jackets -- enough for every person on board -- as

well as life rafts, but the tragedy that struck in the late hours of the night happened so quickly that most of the passengers were unable to secure life jackets for themselves and their children.

There are questions, however, that must be answered: why didn't the crew make sure that every passenger was made to wear a life jacket as they boarded? That is the usual practice in many jurisdictions, including here in Canada. No pleasure craft is allowed on our many lakes without everyone on board wearing a life jacket, and maritime patrols happen regularly to enforce this. Also, no commercial ferries are allowed to sail until all passengers are properly informed where the life jackets are, and what to do in an emergency.

Secondly, was there a procedure to ensure that the passenger manifests were properly maintained? There seems to be doubt about that, as the ferry originally reported it had 133 people on board when in fact, it had well over that number. That confusion hampered the rescue efforts, as searchers didn't know exactly how many people to look for.

Thirdly, there is the question of whether the ferry had a GPS system on board that would have made locating it much faster, perhaps allowing more people to be rescued.

If not, why not? Are steps going to be taken now to equip all other ferries operated by the state with GPS systems?

The captain and two crew members who survived the tragedy have been charged with murder, and must now answer those questions and more when they eventually are called upon to face the courts.

The Ali government has also convened an international panel of experts to conduct a commission of Inquiry into the incident in an attempt to get the important answers that are needed.

Allow us to quote and excerpt from an editorial

in the Guyana Chronicle: "The decision to establish an independent Commission of Inquiry (COI) into the MV Barima tragedy is not merely about determining what happened on the night the vessel sank. It is about restoring public confidence, providing answers to grieving families and ensuring that whatever failures occurred are never repeated.

"That distinction is important.

"In the aftermath of any national tragedy, there is often a rush to assign blame. Public opinion quickly fills the void left by incomplete information. Social media becomes a courtroom, speculation becomes fact, and conclusions are drawn long before investigators have had the opportunity to examine the evidence.

"The Government has chosen a different path.

"By appointing an independent five-member Commission comprising experts in law, marine engineering, maritime safety and disaster investigation, President Dr. Irfaan Ali has signalled that the country requires more than assumptions. It requires facts.

"That is precisely what a Commission of Inquiry is designed to produce.

The families who lost loved ones deserve to know what happened. Survivors deserve to have their experiences heard. The wider public deserves confidence that every aspect of the tragedy, from the vessel's operation and safety procedures to emergency response and regulatory oversight, will be examined thoroughly and without prejudice.

Importantly, the government has indicated that this inquiry will be comprehensive. That commitment should reassure the nation."

We applaud Ali for his swift response in an attempt to prevent another tragedy of this type on Guyanese soil.

Our condolences to all who lost loved ones.

Where Vultures Prey

By Donald Ramotar

Former President of Guyana

The sinking of the MV Barima and the deaths of so many of our fellow Guyanese is one of the most tragic and traumatic events in our history. Everyone felt the pain and suffering. I have seen people who had no had no personal connection with anyone on board, openly shedding tears.

The government has been doing everything, humanly and practically possible to help ease the suffering of the families and those closely connected with who were on board the vessel at the time the tragedy occurred. President Ali has been leading in these efforts himself. At every level they have made themselves available to the families of those who perished in the tragedy.

Unfortunately, our politics has sunk to possibly its lowest level ever. The opposition has only seen this as an occasion to gain cheap political mileage, and have been attacking government ministers, personally and relentlessly.

This was manifested in the first sitting of the

National Assembly on July 27th. That sitting, I anticipated, would have been a very solemn occasion. At the highest forum in our land, we would have thought that families of the deceased would have felt the love and solidarity of the entire nation, coming together through their political leaders in expressions of condolences. It could have been an occasion to let the families and survivors know that they were not alone in their time of grief, and everyone in Guyana and the diaspora were sharing their pain. That would have been a source of great comfort to all Guyanese.

Unfortunately, the behaviour of the opposition was nothing short of hooliganism and thuggery. They saw it as an occasion to cast blame and hurl accusations. They seemed totally uninterested in trying to ease the terrible loss of the families, and instead to extract whatever political mileage they could make from the people's grief.

They could have used the sitting to demonstrate that they could rise above just "cheap political hustling". It would have shown that they could be stateswomen and statesmen.

They could have used the time to prepare their

case to present to the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) which the government announced it is setting up.

The behaviour of the combined opposition in a way demonstrated a disregard for those who died and the survivors who must be terribly traumatized.

I remember another traumatic event in the life of our country and the dignified way our opposition behaved then. I refer to the Jonestown Massacre which took place in the North West on November 18th 1978 almost 48 years ago. True, most of those who died were US citizens, but more than that they were our fellow human beings and the then opposition parties conducted themselves in a way that reflected the emotions of our people and appropriate respect for the victims and their surviving loved ones. The opposition then treated the occasion with dignity, solemnity, and respect that it warranted.

Yes, the opposition would have lots of questions, but they exhibited a callous disregard for the dead and for their grieving families when the National Assembly met for the first time after the tragic and unfortunate incident.



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Passport applications now online, increasing accessibility for all

By Milan Maharaj
LJI REPORTER

You can now avoid the long lines at Service Canada when applying for a passport, which is news that will come as a relief to many.

The Government of Canada has now made it much easier to apply for a passport from the comfort of your home.

The online passport application system, which had been in use before now but was limited to a specific number of applications per day, is now available to every adult who is applying for a passport from within the country.

Lena Metlege Diab, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, on Monday announced that online passport renewal is now available to all eligible adult Canadians in Canada.

By removing the limit on how many people can renew their passports online, the department is providing more Canadians with a convenient and secure option.

Online passport renewal makes it easier for Canadians to access the services they need, when and where it's most convenient for them.

Canadians can complete their passport renewal application online by

submitting their application, photo and payment digitally—instead of mailing documents or visiting a Service Canada Centre.

Online passport renewal also benefits those who face barriers to in-person service, including people living in rural or remote communities and those with mobility challenges.

In-person and mail-in services will continue to be available for Canadians who choose or need them.

This change builds on recent improvements to passport services, including the online passport application status checker; expanded access to in-person 10-business-day passport service at select Service Canada Centres; and the government's passport service guarantee that applications will be processed within 30 business days or the passport is free.

“Canadians expect passport services that work for their lives. Expanding online renewal gives eligible Canadians a simpler, more convenient way to renew their passports, without unnecessary barriers or delays. This is part of the Government of Canada's ongoing work to modernize passport services and deliver public services that are responsive to the needs of Canadians today,” said Minister Diab.

All passport applications require

commercially taken photos. Online renewal uses a digital photo file provided by a commercial photographer. The photos can then be uploaded with your application.

Online renewals follow the same 20-business-day service standard as simplified adult renewals submitted in most Service Canada Centres and by mail. They include real-time status updates so applicants can track their application as it's being processed.

Canadians who need a passport sooner must apply in person at a Service Canada Centre or a passport office that offers the 10-business-day, express or urgent service.

Those applying for their passport

outside Canada can do so by mail or by visiting a Government of Canada office abroad.

“Accessible service means giving Canadians options, starting with more ways to renew a passport. We are removing the barriers between Canadians and the services they rely on by modernizing how we deliver them and shaping them around how people live. When Canadians can access services without added stress or lost time, they can focus on what matters, their families, their jobs, and their futures,” said Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario.



Royalton to reopen five Jamaica resorts after hurricane repairs

Royalton Hotels & Resorts is preparing to reopen five of its Jamaica properties this summer, bringing back all-inclusive vacation experiences in two of the island’s most popular destinations: Negril and Montego Bay.

The resort company will begin reopening three properties in Negril on Aug. 25, followed by two resorts in Montego Bay on Sept. 15. The returning properties are part of the Marriott portfolio, with reservations now available for stays beginning on each resort’s reopening date.

The first phase includes Royalton Negril, the adults-only Hideaway at Royalton Negril and Grand Lido Negril, an adults-only clothing-optional resort. The second phase will reopen Royalton Blue Waters Montego Bay and Hideaway at Royalton Blue Waters.

Royalton said guests can expect refreshed public spaces, updated ac-



Royalton Montego Bay

commodations and new experiences across its Jamaica resorts.

Royalton’s Negril properties offer three different all-inclusive experiences designed for a range of travelers.

Royalton Negril serves as the fam-

ily-friendly centerpiece, offering spacious suites, upgraded Diamond Club accommodations, multiple dining options, pools, children’s programming and entertainment.

The adults-only Hideaway at Roy-

alton Negril provides a more private atmosphere with exclusive areas and amenities for couples and groups traveling without children.

Grand Lido Negril offers a smaller, more intimate adults-only experience with a clothing-optional setting and a collection of suites designed for guests seeking greater privacy.

The resorts are located near Negril’s famous Seven Mile Beach, known for its white sand, calm waters and legendary Caribbean sunsets.

The second phase of Royalton’s reopening will focus on Montego Bay, Jamaica’s tourism hub known for its beaches, golf courses, restaurants, nightlife and international airport connections. Royalton Blue Waters Montego Bay and Hideaway at Royalton Blue Waters will welcome guests beginning Sept. 15, offering both family-friendly and adults-only vacations.

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Overseas Guyanese gather in candlelight vigil to honour victims of the MV Barima

IN a moving display of unity, compassion, and remembrance, Andrea Narine of You and Eye Vision, in Queens, New York, hosted a candlelight vigil on Friday evening to honour the lives lost in the tragic MV Barima disaster.

The solemn event brought together members of the Guyanese Diaspora, many of whom gathered with candles in hand to pay tribute to the victims, and stand in solidarity with the families whose lives have been forever changed by the tragedy.

As candles illuminated the evening, attendees observed moments of silence, offered heartfelt prayers, and reflected on the precious lives that were lost. The gathering was filled with emotion as participants remembered the victims, shared words of comfort, and expressed their unwavering support for the grieving families back in Guyana.

For many in attendance, the tragedy struck close to home. Though living thousands of miles away, they emphasised that distance has not lessened their pain or their connection to their homeland. The vigil served as a reminder that the Guyanese community, wherever they may be, remains united during times of sorrow, and stands together in offering love, strength, and hope.

Andrea Narine said the vigil was



he solemn event brought together members of the Guyanese Diaspora, many of whom gathered with candles

organised to ensure that the victims are never forgotten, and to let the bereaved families know that they are not alone in their grief. She encouraged those gathered to continue praying for the souls of those who perished, for the families mourning unimaginable losses, and for

all those affected by the devastating incident.

The evening concluded with candles burning brightly in memory of the victims; a powerful symbol of love, remembrance, and the enduring bond shared by Guyanese around the world.

The gathering reflected the resilience of the Guyanese spirit, and the collective hope that the families impacted by the MV Barima tragedy will find comfort, healing, and strength in the support of communities both at home and abroad.

Guyana’s ‘hub of excellence’ to be conduit for regional ‘agri’ innovation

BRAZIL’S Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAPA) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) have signed an agreement to accelerate the transfer and adaptation of technologies, strengthen scientific capacities and promote innovative solutions for tropical agricultural systems, with a particular focus on the Caribbean region.

The agreement builds on the commitments established in the Letter of Intent signed in June by MAPA, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and IICA, under which the parties agreed to promote the establishment of a Sustainable Agriculture Hub of the Americas in Guyana.

The Hub is envisioned as a regional platform for technical co-operation, science, technology and agricultural innovation.

The agreement was signed by Cleber Soares, Brazil’s Deputy Minister of Agriculture, and Muhammad Ibrahim,

Director General of IICA, during the meeting of the Institute’s Executive Committee, the governing body composed of Ministers of Agriculture from countries across the Americas, held in San José, Costa Rica.

The agreement will strengthen coordination among MAPA, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), IICA and other regional partners, including the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute of Guyana (NAREI), the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

“Through this Hub, EMBRAPA and Brazilian experts will contribute their experience, technologies and knowledge across a range of crops and production systems so that, together, IICA, Brazil and the Government of Guyana can advance the development of agriculture and livestock production in the Caribbean and Central America,” Soares said.

The IICA Director General emphasised that the centre of excellence to be established in Guyana will leverage Brazil’s extensive experience as a global leader in tropical agricultural innovation.

“As outlined in the Institute’s 2026-2030 Medium-term Plan, approved by the Ministers of Agriculture during this Executive Committee meeting, technical co-operation will be tailored to the diversity of production systems across the Americas, with particular emphasis on the transfer of innovations, technologies and science-based solutions,” Ibrahim added.

The agreement identifies several priority areas for co-operation, including research and technology transfer for sustainable tropical agriculture; strengthening technical capacities; enhancing food security, productivity and production diversification; agricultural risk management; the sustainable use of natural resources; agricultural health; the prevention of transboundary pests

and diseases; and collaboration with technical organisations in the Caribbean and other regions.

It also establishes mechanisms to facilitate the participation of additional institutions and the incorporation of new areas of work, with the goal of consolidating a stable and replicable co-operation platform capable of addressing the challenges facing tropical agriculture.

The proposal to establish the agricultural innovation hub in Guyana was presented in June to the country’s President, Mohamed Irfaan Ali.

At the time, President Ali said the initiative seeks to position Guyana as a major food supplier for the Caribbean and to accelerate the transformation of agriculture in both Guyana and the wider region through new technologies that create added value, strengthen climate resilience, support seed production and build a technical ecosystem that enhances food security.



Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha

Guyana records 31% growth in mangrove coverage but pollution remains major threat — Mustapha

GUYANA has expanded its mangrove coverage by more than 6,000 hectares over the past five years through nearly G\$1 billion in restoration and coastal protection investments, but Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha has warned that pollution, particularly plastic waste, continues to pose a serious threat to the country’s fragile coastal ecosystem.

Delivering his message for the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, observed on July 26, the minister said mangroves remain one of Guyana’s most important natural defences, protecting vulnerable coastal communities from erosion and storm surges while supporting biodiversity, fisheries and climate resilience.

“As Guyana joins the international community in observing the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, I wish to begin by recognizing the quiet, essential service our mangroves provide,” Mustapha said.

“They stand between our communities and the Atlantic, holding mud, softening waves and offering young fish, birds and crabs places to feed and shelter. We pass them often without notice, yet they continue their work all the same, for us.”

He noted that for a low-lying coastal nation such as Guyana, man-

groves are indispensable, describing them as “part green shield, part nursery and part storehouse for carbon.”

“They support fisheries and coastal livelihoods, shelter wildlife and steady vulnerable shorelines. Without them our coast would be more exposed and far less able to cope with a changing climate. This is why mangrove protection sits naturally within Guyana’s Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030.”

The minister said the government has backed that commitment with significant investment, allocating almost GY\$1 billion in recent years towards mangrove management and restoration.

He disclosed that 11 green-grey infrastructural projects have been completed across Regions Two, Four and Five, benefitting more than 11,000 people by helping to protect homes, farms, roads and livelihoods from coastal erosion and flooding.

“Those aren’t abstract figures. They speak to more secure shorelines near homes, farms, roads and the places where people earn a living,” Mustapha said.

According to the latest national mangrove mapping, Guyana’s mangrove coverage increased from 19,616 hectares in 2020 to 25,644 hectares in 2025, representing a net gain of 6,028 hectares, or approximately 31 per cent.

The gains were recorded across

Regions One, Three, Four, Five and Six.

However, the minister pointed out that the data also revealed ongoing challenges. Region Two experienced a decline in mangrove coverage from 4,966 hectares in 2020 to 3,567 hectares in 2025, a loss of 1,399 hectares.

He further noted that national mangrove coverage had fallen from 24,517 hectares in 2023 to 22,799 hectares in 2024 before rebounding in 2025.

“Good news overall? Yes. A reason to become comfortable? No. The coast changes, and our vigilance has to change with it,” he said.

Mustapha credited the ongoing work of the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) and the Mangrove Management Action Network, saying collaboration between science, engineering, policy and communities remains critical to successful restoration.

He added that the Guyana Mangrove Information System (GuyMIS) is enabling authorities to monitor changes more effectively and guide restoration efforts. “Not every loss is obvious from the roadside. Sometimes the map tells the story first,” he said.

Despite the encouraging increase in mangrove coverage, the minister identified poor waste disposal as one of the greatest threats facing the country’s coastline.

“A plastic bottle caught between mangrove roots may seem like a small thing. Yet it reminds us of a larger truth — about what we discard, how far it travels, and what our coastline is being asked to bear,” he said.

He warned that investments in restoration alone cannot solve the problem if garbage continues to be dumped into drains, canals, kokers and waterways.

“We can invest in groynes, breakwaters, planting and monitoring, but if garbage is being pushed into drains, canals, kokers and waterways, we are working against ourselves. Waste discarded inland doesn’t simply disappear. It travels. It reaches the coast. It settles among the roots.

“We can’t plant our way out of a dumping problem,” Mustapha stressed.

The minister revealed that the 2026 coastal assessment recorded visible waste at 53 of the 60 locations surveyed across Regions Two to Six, while plastic packaging was found at 51 of the 53 affected sites.

He said discarded waste can smother young mangroves, block water flow, injure wildlife, degrade fish and bird habitats and contribute to flooding caused by clogged drainage systems.

“Quite simply, no community should have to accept a coastline treated as a dump,” he said.

Hinterland communities taking lead in infrastructural projects — Edghill

HINTERLAND communities are becoming increasingly involved in delivering their own infrastructural projects, with village councils and residents now taking on greater responsibility for building and maintaining roads and bridges, Minister of Public Works Juan Edghill has said.

The Minister made the remarks during discussions with Indigenous leaders at the National Toshaos Council (NTC) Conference, where he said the Government has shifted from the traditional approach of bringing external contractors into communities to a model in which residents are trained, employed and directly engaged in development projects.

Edghill said the approach was born out of concerns raised by community leaders who had complained that contractors would enter villages, complete projects and leave residents with little involvement in the process.

“I am happy to stand here and report to you that, having listened to that, you have become the contractors. You are the ones who are doing the work, and you are making a difference in your communities,” Edghill said.

He noted that the community participation model has ensured that investment remains within villages while allowing residents to develop skills that can be used beyond individual projects.

According to Edghill, through interventions by the ministry’s Special Projects Unit, more than 800 persons have been employed in hinterland communities, with many receiving training and acquiring construction-related skills.



Public Works Minister says village-led infrastructural model increasing jobs

“It’s not just about building roads. We have moved the discussion and the understanding from infrastructure to sustainable village economies,” he said.

The Minister highlighted that the approach has also enabled communities to develop the capacity to undertake future projects, noting that residents who worked on earlier initiatives have been able to transfer their knowledge and

skills when new projects are introduced elsewhere.

Edghill said infrastructure investment has been critical to reducing isolation in hinterland communities, particularly during periods of flooding and other emergencies.

He noted that improved roads and bridges have helped maintain access to essential services, including healthcare,

education and the transportation of supplies.

The Minister also outlined the scale of the Government’s infrastructural investments since 2020, pointing to increased allocations for hinterland development and the construction and upgrading of roads across several regions.

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:

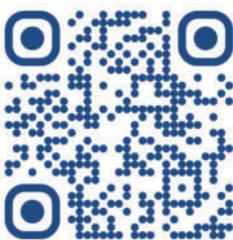
- Build a globally cohesive community with a focus on youth and women in business and civic leadership worldwide.
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To find out more about World Guyanese Congress and our goals and priorities. Scan the QR code, or visit www.wgc-org.com

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President Ali launches HEART Initiative, pledges nation will never abandon MV Barima survivors

President Dr. Irfaan Ali has announced the creation of a new national body to coordinate long-term support for survivors and families affected by the MV Barima tragedy, promising that Guyana’s compassion will not fade once the headlines do.

The vessel, carrying passengers and crew from Georgetown to Port Kaituma, capsized after a distress call was received on the night of July 18, triggering one of the largest maritime search and rescue operations in Guyana’s history, with support from the Guyana Defence Force Coast Guard, local agencies, private vessels, international partners, and specialist diving teams from France, Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago.

In the days that followed, President Ali declared three days of national mourning, with the Golden Arrowhead flown at half-mast on government buildings across the country, alongside a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance at the Kingston Seawall, followed by nights of reflection in Port Kaituma and Mabaruma.

In his address, President Ali said his government’s commitment to the affected families was never meant to be temporary.



President Ali lights candles at a memorial for the victims of the MV Barima tragedy

“We will do so not for a fleeting moment, not until the headlines fade, but throughout the long, tender journey of healing that stretches far beyond this period of immediate grief,” he said, describing the response not as an act of

duty but as an expression of who Guyanese people are as a nation.

That commitment now takes the form of the H.E.A.R.T. Initiative — Hope, Empathy, Aid, Resilience, and Trust — a coordinating body meant to sustain material, moral, and spiritual support for as long as it’s needed.

The initiative will be steered by respected religious and civil society leaders from across the country’s faiths, under the leadership of Carl Stewart, with a mandate to ensure no affected family “slips through” the safety net of support and compassion.

The President also announced that Eamon Harrison Courtenay of Belize — a lawyer and former Foreign Affairs Minister and Attorney General — will help work out the modalities of financial assistance for survivors and victims’ families.

He was careful to stress that this assistance is not compensation, but a gesture of solidarity: “Grief cannot be balanced by any ledger.”

The announcement follows other steps taken in recent days, including the appointment of a five-member international Commission of Inquiry, chaired by Justice Godfrey Phillip Smith of Belize, made up of regional and international experts in law, maritime engineering, and marine safety, tasked with determining the causes of the disaster and recommending reforms to Guyana’s maritime safety framework.

Invoking the national motto — One People, One Nation, One Destiny — President Ali closed with a message of collective resolve: “We are Guyana. We do not abandon our own. We rise from the ashes of sorrow with arms wide open.”

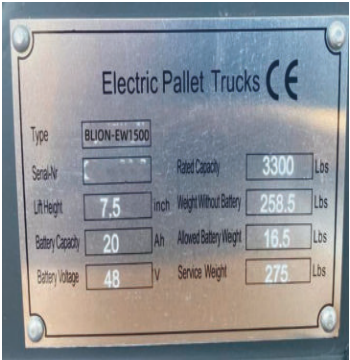


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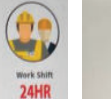


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Development Bank Bill passed, paving way for new wave of opportunities

THE Guyana Development Bank Bill 2026 was, on Monday, successfully passed in the National Assembly, paving the way for the establishment of a dedicated financial institution to expand access to financing for small businesses and entrepreneurs, despite repeated attempts from the parliamentary opposition to disrupt proceedings.

The passage of the legislation fulfils a key commitment in the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) 2025 manifesto and clears the path for the creation of the Guyana Development Bank, which will provide micro-credit loans of up to \$3 million at zero per cent interest, alongside mentorship and business development support.

Following the bill’s second reading, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, said the legislation would improve access to financing, particularly for the country’s most vulnerable entrepreneurs.

“What this bill seeks to do... is to facilitate our smallest and most vulnerable businesses being able to access financing for good business opportunities,” Dr Singh said.

He went on to add that the bank would unlock “a wave of entrepreneurial activities” that would strengthen broad-based economic growth while improving the lives and livelihoods of small business owners across Guyana.

He also expressed disappointment that opposition members did not offer support for the legislation, while thanking government parliamentarians for backing the bill despite the prevailing circumstances in the House.

The new institution forms part of the government’s wider strategy to broaden financial inclusion and ensure more Guyanese can benefit from the country’s expanding economy by accessing affordable financing to start or grow businesses.

The initiative is also expected to support community-based enterprise and create new opportunities for sustainable economic development nationwide.

Minister of Agriculture Zulfikar Mustapha noted that the bank will help ensure economic opportunities reach every region and community, including rural and hinterland areas.

He highlighted that many farmers, small manufacturers, and entrepreneurs have ideas and resources but often lack

access to financing.

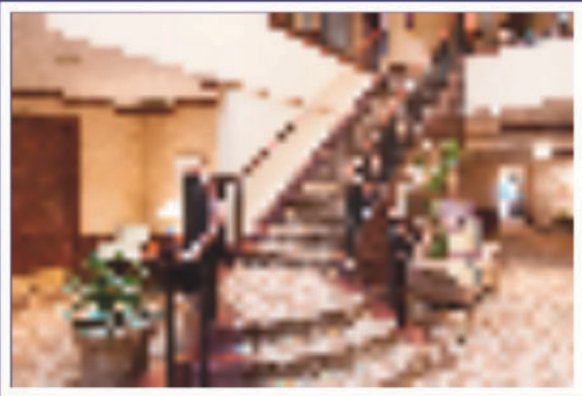
“This will be a game changer for the small farmers, for the farmers in the hinterland, for the fisherfolk and for agro-processors,” Minister Mustapha said. Additionally, Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Susan Rodrigues said the legislation represents a commitment to removing barriers that have prevented many Guyanese from transforming their ideas into successful businesses. Rodrigues said the new bank will support farmers, manufacturers, tourism operators, artisans, women-led enterprises and young entrepreneurs.



Finance Minister Dr Ashni Singh

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Canadians, Canada-based Guyanese pledge financial assistance for MV Barima communities

By Frederick Halley

AS Guyana continues to mourn the lives lost in the tragic MV Barima ferry disaster, several faith leaders including Dr Shabir Ally, Gord Rankissoon, and Pandit Bhoj Sharma along with Honorary Consul Mani Singh, several dignitaries and Guyanese individuals offered prayers, compassion and solidarity for the deceased and their loved ones in this difficult period.

The service, conducted on Sunday in the Peace Park on the grounds of the Vishnu Mandir at 8640 Yonge St. Toronto, was held under the auspices of Dr Budhendra Nath Doobay and Winston Kassim, the only two Canadians with Guyanese heritage who were recognised by the Canadian federal and provincial governments for their Global volunteerism and were the recipients of Canada’s highest civilian awards, the Orders of Canada and Ontario.

Collectively, the faith leaders prayed for the mercy and blessings of the souls of those who departed, while asking for the comfort and giving courage to their families during this difficult period.

The leaders also asked for the requisite strength to all responders involved in the ongoing recovery efforts for those who are missing and prayed for the responders’ protection, wisdom and strength as they continue their critical work. They also prayed for the safe recovery of the loved ones who remained missing so that their families and loved ones may find peace as they



Honorary Consul Mani Singh is fourth from left. Others in picture, include Dr Doobay and Dr Shabir Ally, fifth and sixth from left respectively along with Winston and Kamen Kassim at extreme left

move forward.

According to Kassim, Canadians applaud the Guyana Government for doing everything in supporting the departed souls, their families and communities both monetarily and spiritually and also recognized that the government intends to continue doing so in future.

Kassim further remarked that “notwithstanding the Guyana Government’s excellent response since the tragedy occurred, Dr Doobay and himself have received a number of calls from individuals stating that they

should proactively do something to support the impacted communities. He pointed out that they readily agreed to the initiative.

Kassim further pointed out that “in all religions, we are taught that when we know someone is in need, we should never allow that person to ask for help. Rather, it is our duty to offer that support proactively without thinking what others are doing or not doing.

“So, I am delighted to announce that IDRF with several mosques in the Greater Toronto Area and Vishnu Mandir’s Global Outreach and other

Mandirs will start a joint fund-raising drive to collect funds indicating that these funds from Canada will enable development work for the impacted communities at a later date.

“In other words, we will support efforts on teaching folks how to fish rather than giving them the fish to eat”

Kassim thanked everyone for attending the event and announced that several individuals and the Muslim community within the Greater Toronto area have already made pledges in excess of Canadian \$50,000.00 to support the development work in Guyana.

Families denounce unauthorised use of loved ones’ photos

RELATIVES of those who perished in the MV Barima disaster have expressed outrage and dismay after photographs of their family members appeared during an opposition-led demonstration at Parliament’s sitting, stating that no one sought or received their consent to use the images for political purposes.

Numerous family members described feeling profoundly hurt upon seeing their children’s and relatives’ faces displayed in what they characterised as a one-sided political action, emphasising that their sorrow must not be turned into a weapon for partisan agendas.

While affirming their continued determination to pursue truth, accountability, and justice on behalf of the victims, the families made clear they will not tolerate their loss being manipulated for narrow political advantage.

“We don’t want our relatives to be drawn into the political divide, but we must honor them by seeking answers,” said one relative overcome with grief.

A second family member insisted



The Opposition protest in Parliament

that the tragedy is a matter of national concern, not something to be co-opted by any single faction or exploited for political mileage.

Going forward, the families are appealing to political organisations, civil society groups, and the general public alike to treat the victims’ mem-

ory with dignity and to obtain family consent before featuring personal images in any form of public advocacy.

They further appealed for attention to shift toward assisting bereaved families, establishing the complete truth behind the tragedy, and drawing the necessary lessons to prevent a simi-

lar catastrophe from recurring in the future.

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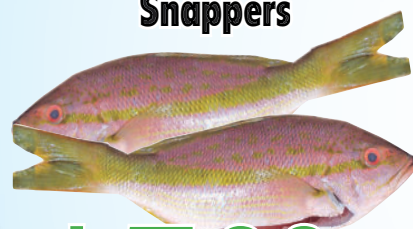
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BermudAir to expand Caribbean, North America network

BermudAir has placed its first-ever order with Airbus, purchasing 10 A220-300 aircraft as the Bermuda-based airline looks to expand its network across Bermuda, the Caribbean and North America.

The order, unveiled at the Farnborough Airshow, was previously listed as an undisclosed purchase in Airbus' March order book.

The airline said the new aircraft will support route expansion and open new destinations, while introducing the Airbus A220 to a new region of operations in the Atlantic and Caribbean.

"The A220 is the ideal aircraft to support the next phase of BermudAir's growth," said Adam Scott, the airline's founder and chief executive officer.

"Its exceptional range, operating economics and performance at constrained airports will allow us to connect more communities across Bermuda, the Caribbean and North America with direct, reliable and convenient air service."

Scott said the aircraft also aligns with the airline's focus on passenger comfort. "The A220's spacious, quiet and comfortable cabin is perfectly aligned with the experience our guests have come to expect from us," he said.

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\$54.89B supplementary funds approved to continue development projects

Guyana’s National Assembly on Monday approved \$54.89 billion in supplementary funding to accelerate the implementation of key national development projects across multiple sectors, presented by Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh.

The largest allocation of \$19.09 billion was approved for the Office of the Prime Minister to support the Gas-to-Energy Project, providing additional resources to facilitate an accelerated work programme, which seeks to provide electricity to Guyanese households at a significantly reduced cost by time it is completed.

The Ministry of Housing received \$17.5 billion to fast-track infrastructure development and construction projects.

At the same time, the Ministry of Public Works secured \$8.5 billion, comprising \$6 billion for miscellaneous roads and drainage works and \$2.5 billion for hinterland roads.

The National Assembly also approved \$4.5 billion for the Ministry of Agriculture to provide subsidies and contributions to local organisations, including the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) and the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo).

Other allocations include \$496.3 million for coastal water supply works,



Among the development plans are new airstrips in hinterland and coastal areas

\$600 million for the maintenance of hinterland and coastal airstrips under the Ministry of Public Utilities and Aviation, \$337.9 million for the rental of buildings under the Ministry of Health, and \$60

million for the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Of the total approved supplementary allocation of \$54,889,259,163,

some \$4.75 billion will finance current expenditure, while \$50.14 billion has been allocated for capital expenditure to advance the government’s ongoing development agenda.

Sexual Offences Bill to be sent to Committee

THE Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill 2026 has been referred to a special select committee of the National Assembly for further scrutiny following its presentation by Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Dr Vindhya Persaud, during Monday’s sitting at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre.

The bill seeks to amend the Sexual Offences Act, Cap. 8:03, to reform the country’s laws relating to sexual offences and provide for the establishment of a National Sex Offender Database.

In presenting the bill, Dr Persaud said the amendments are intended to strengthen protections for vulnerable adults and children and address gaps identified in the existing legislation.

“This is a pivotal piece of legislation and a moral and legal obligation to protect the most vulnerable in our society,” the minister told the National Assembly.

Dr Persaud explained that the proposed amendments build on the Sexual Offences Act of 2010, which she described as a necessary and progressive measure that provided important protections for victims of sexual offences.

She noted that a review of the legislation revealed several gaps and inadequacies that now require stronger legal

measures.

“It is time to move this piece of legislation to close those gaps and inadequacies and to close them with robust, modern and uncompromising measures,” she stated.

The minister told the house that the amendments were developed through a nationwide consultation and gap analysis process involving the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.

She said the review also included constitutional and rights commissions, legal and judicial stakeholders, civil society organisations, faith-based groups, indigenous and regional leadership and members of the disciplined services and public service.

Among the key changes proposed in the bill are the modernisation of definitions and terminology, provisions relating to digital and visual evidence, strengthened victim privacy protections, greater accountability in the reporting process involving healthcare workers and police, and the creation of a National Sexual Offences Task Force and National Sex Offender Database.

Dr Persaud said the legislation re-



Minister Dr Vindhya Persaud

flects the need for the justice system to keep pace with technological changes while ensuring stronger safeguards for victims.

During her presentation, the minister also expressed condolences to the families affected by the MV Barima tragedy.

The proposal was agreed to by the National Assembly under Standing Order 58, and the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill 2026, Bill Number 6 of 2026, was formally committed to the Special Select Committee for detailed examination.

Regional experts to lead inquiry into deadly MV Barima sinking

A five-member Commission of Inquiry into the MV Barima tragedy in Guyana will be led by Belizean Justice Godfrey Phillip Smith and will include regional and international experts in maritime operations, law and marine investigations.

The commission was announced by Guyanese President Dr. Irfaan Ali on Sunday as the country seeks answers following the sinking of the MV Barima, one of the deadliest maritime disasters in Guyana's history.

The other members of the commission are Captain Hamada Fouda, Nyree Dawn Alfonso, Rear Admiral (Ret'd) Hayden Pritchard and Dr. Andrzej Jasionowski.

Justice Smith currently serves as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) High-Level Representative on Law and Criminal Justice and is an ad hoc Justice of Appeal in the Eastern Caribbean. He previously served on Guyana's Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the 2020 General and Regional Elections.

Captain Fouda is a senior maritime surveyor and compliance auditor with the Maritime Authority of Jamaica, while Alfonso, a Trinidad and Tobago attorney, specializes in admiralty and maritime law.

Rear Admiral (Ret'd) Pritchard, a former Chief of Defence Staff of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, brings decades of experience in security and maritime operations. Dr. Jasionowski, a Polish forensic naval architect and marine engineer, has advised on investigations into several major maritime incidents.

President Ali said the commission's terms of reference will include determining the circumstances surrounding the disaster, including the causes and factors related to the loading of the vessel, boarding of passengers, onboard conditions, and the capsizing and sinking of the MV Barima.

"The terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry will be establishing the full circumstances surrounding the tragedy, including the causes and all other factors relating to the loading of the vessel, the boarding of passengers, conditions onboard, the capsizing and sinking of the MV Barima and any other related matters," Ali said.



The inquiry will also examine the effectiveness of search, rescue and recovery efforts, whether ferry regulations and safety standards were followed, and whether negligence, misconduct, dereliction of duty or institutional failures contributed to the disaster.

Investigators will assess the vessel's seaworthiness, maintenance history and the competence of its crew as part of the review.

At the conclusion of the inquiry, the commission is expected to provide recommendations on legislative, regulatory,

institutional and operational reforms aimed at strengthening maritime safety, improving emergency response systems and preventing future tragedies.

The investigation comes after the MV Barima sank in Guyanese waters, claiming dozens of lives.

Guyana to await inquiry before deciding on compensation for MV Barima tragedy

The Guyana government says it will continue covering funeral and burial expenses and providing immediate assistance to families affected by the sinking of the MV Barima, but any decision on compensation will be made only after an independent Commission of Inquiry completes its investigation.

Prime Minister Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips said Wednesday that the government's immediate priority is supporting grieving families and completing ongoing rescue and recovery efforts.

"The focus now is not on compensation. The focus is on recovering bodies, financing the burial and funeral rites, and providing whatever assistance the families need now," Phillips told a news conference.

He emphasized that the financial assistance currently being provided should not be viewed as compensation.

"That is not deemed compensation. That is the government's responsibility in times like this to assist families," he said.

Phillips also announced that the government will establish an independent Commission of Inquiry as soon as rescue and recovery operations conclude.

"As we close off the rescue and recovery operation, the government intends to have a commission of inquiry mounted

as early as possible," he said.

According to Phillips, the commission's findings and recommendations will determine whether compensation is warranted and how it should be handled.

"After the commission of inquiry, then the issues of compensation will be determined because it will be guided by the commission of inquiry, the report, and the recommendations," he said.

Meanwhile, search and recovery efforts remain underway, with the government deploying 19 vessels and three aircraft following the sinking of the MV Barima.

Phillips said the Guyana Defence Force, the Coast Guard and the Maritime Administration Department have mobilized smaller vessels to search inland waterways for the remaining missing passengers, while technical teams continue assessing the wreck in preparation for its recovery.





An aerial view of vast areas submerged by floodwaters in Jorhat

'It took everything from us': India's Assam faces worst floods in years

When Saline Patro watched the rain on 19 July from her home in Jorhat district in the north-east Indian state of Assam, she didn't know that her life was about to change.

In the afternoon, the 18-year-old suddenly heard the sound of rushing water and people shouting.

"Within minutes, knee-deep water had entered our house," she recalled.

Patro helped her elderly parents and younger brother reach higher ground before returning to try and salvage some belongings. But by the time she fought her way back through the water, their house had been washed away.

"We had a television, a cupboard and a sofa. Nothing was left. We couldn't even save a glass to drink water from," she told BBC Hindi from a relief camp.

"The floods took everything from us."

Every year, she said, floods swept through her village, Seleng Sumoni Pathar on the banks of the Jhanji River, a tributary of the mighty Brahmaputra, one of the world's largest rivers.

But this year was different.

Flooding is a recurring part of life in Assam - nearly 40% of the state is classified as flood-prone by India's National Flood Commission. Assam lies on the vast floodplain of the Brahmaputra, which flows down from the Himalayas and is fed by more than 50 tributaries.

During the annual monsoon, heavy rain across the region increases the volume of water in the river. As the Brahmaputra flows across Assam's flat plains, it deposits large amounts of sand and silt, reducing the river's capacity to carry water and making flooding more likely.

But experts say flooding has worsened over time because of upstream deforestation, ageing embankments and heavier rainfall driven by climate change.

Exceptionally heavy rain across parts of neighbouring Nagaland and Assam from mid-July triggered this year's devastating floods,

which minister Pijush Hazarika described as the state's worst in six decades.

At least 68 people have died in the past four weeks, including 58 in the past week alone, while around 40 remain missing. Government data says more than 600,000 people have been affected, with tens of thousands displaced and living in relief camps.

On 21 July alone, 21 people died in 24 hours, most swept away or drowned in floodwaters. Others were killed in landslides and house collapses.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said districts in Nagaland and Assam received rainfall between about 435% and 490% above normal over that period, causing rivers to rise at an unprecedented speed.

Upper Assam, where tributaries from the surrounding hills feed the Brahmaputra, bore the brunt of the flooding. Districts including Sivasagar, Charaideo and Jorhat were among the worst hit. As villages were cut off, rescue teams struggled to reach stranded families.

Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kotta said officials had been deployed to the worst-hit districts to speed up relief and restoration, with priority given to supplying relief materials and restoring essential services.

A mother and her seven-year-old son spent 12 hours in a mango tree after floodwaters engulfed their village.

They were rescued the following morning and are now staying in a relief camp while waiting for the floodwaters to recede.

Chief Minister Sarma said the government's focus was now shifting towards rehabilitation, with ministers deployed across the state to coordinate recovery efforts.

But for Patro, whose parents are daily wage workers, the future looks uncertain.

"My parents spent years building that house," she said. "I don't know what we will do now. It will take us years to build another one."



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): You may be impatient for change, but it will be other people’s actions that get the ball rolling. The good news is that tomorrow’s full moon will remove an obstacle that has been holding you back, and soon you will be moving ahead at top speed again.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): You may be struggling to find answers to questions that have been bugging you, but the approaching full moon will resolve the situation once and for all. Whether that is a “good” thing or a “bad” thing will depend on your chosen point of view.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): Mars in your sign is at odds with values planet Venus, so at some point over the next few days, you will have to decide what really matters and how that will affect your actions over the next few weeks. It’s about to get personal!

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): Most things in life have a rational explanation, but now and again, you are confronted with a situation that apparently makes no sense at all. With that fact in mind, don’t take what occurs today and tomorrow too seriously. You’ll “get it” eventually.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): With the Sun and Jupiter moving through your sign, you may think you can do no wrong, but because there is a full moon in your sign over the next few days, you cannot afford to take risks. Be smart and bring other people into your plans.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): If you get the feeling that you are heading in the wrong direction, then stop what you are doing and retrace your steps. Most likely, you are worrying for no good reason, but if you have made a bad move, there is still enough time to change it.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): The more of an effort you make to bring people into your plans, the more they will appreciate it and the more likely it is you will eventually succeed. Share your hopes for the future with those who are most likely to understand.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): By all means, give your imagination permission to roam, but don’t lose sight of the fact that not everyone is as adventurous in their thinking as you are. If friends and family members are reluctant to join your latest quest, don’t take it personally.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): As someone who sees the world through eyes that take in the whole picture, you find it hard to understand people who get bogged down in details, and bog you down as well. Try to be patient with someone whose caution annoys you today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): It’s not often you get emotional, but the approaching full moon will bring your feelings to the surface and make it difficult to accept what is taking place around you. Like it or not, though, the matter is out of your hands, so try to stay calm.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): Tomorrow’s full moon will force you to make a decision about a partnership matter, but it is more likely to be the right decision if you give it some serious thought today. A little pre-planning could save a lot of wasted time and energy.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): It will be easy to lash out at people who annoy you, but if you do, you will most likely make the situation worse than it needs to be. It could be they are deliberately trying to wind you up, so be smart and refuse to take the bait.

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Trinidad and Tobago PM says wealth and status will not shield anyone from law

Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar on Monday defended the country’s protective services, saying no individual’s wealth, influence or social standing will place them above the law.

In a statement posted on social media platform X, Persad-Bissessar praised members of the police service, Defence Force, Strategic Services Agency (SSA) and prison service, saying they had faced criticism while working to improve national security.

She said that since increased US support for Trinidad and Tobago’s protective services began last year, there has been “heightened unease and furor” among those who have benefited from illegal activity.

Persad-Bissessar accused individuals who have built wealth and status through criminal networks of spreading misinformation and attacking the country’s law enforcement agencies.

“They have spread false narratives to stoke hatred between the two major ethnic groups and launched unrelenting attacks on the American government and our protective services through their social media trolls, deranged commentators, race gifters,” she said.

The prime minister said that despite criticism and what she described as attempts by criminal groups and their supporters to undermine the protective services, law enforcement agencies had made progress in reducing serious crime.

She said members of the police, military, intelligence agencies and prison service had helped bring down serious crimes by 15% in 2026 through their efforts and personal sacrifices.

“I am thankful to the brave men and women of our law enforcement and intelligence agencies who daily undertake the difficult responsibilities of protecting our nation and safeguarding our freedoms, often under immense pressure and unfair criticisms,” Persad-Bissessar said.

She also expressed gratitude to Police Commissioner Allister Guevarro, SSA Director Alicia Henry, Chief of Defence Staff Commodore Don Polo, and Prison Superintendent Elvin Scantebury.

Persad-Bissessar said tackling organised crime and dismantling the country’s illegal drug networks requires strong leadership and commitment.

“We are committed to seeing this mission through along with our international partners professionally and fairly,” she said.

The prime minister said Trinidad and Tobago had for too long operated



Trinidad & Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar

with a “tiered justice system” in which people received different treatment based on factors including income, ethnicity, location and influence.

“That time has come to an end. No one’s wealth or social status will put them above the law,” she said.

She added that people from com-

munities including Laventille, Siparia, Westmoorings and other parts of Trinidad and Tobago would face the same application of justice.

Her comments come after public debate over the detention of businessman Dominic Hadeed and his wife, Genevieve Hadeed, who were released

last week after National Security Minister Roger Alexander revoked a preventative detention order that had kept them in custody for a month.

The case has prompted calls from some opposition voices and critics for the removal of Alexander and Attorney General John Jeremie from Cabinet.

Marriott to debut first all-inclusive resort in Montego Bay

Marriott International is set to open its first all-inclusive Marriott-branded resort in Montego Bay in 2028 after signing an agreement to convert the former Catalonia Montego Bay hotel into a 522-room beachfront property.

The project forms part of a dual agreement between Marriott International and Spain-based Catalonia Hotels & Resorts, which will also see the development of an Autograph Collection all-inclusive resort in Zanzibar, Tanzania, scheduled to open in 2027.

The Montego Bay property, formerly the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort before being rebranded as Catalonia Montego Bay, was acquired by Catalonia in May 2024. It closed following Hurricane Melissa and had already been slated for a major refurbishment. When it reopens in 2028 as The Marriott All-Inclusive Resort, Montego Bay, the hotel will feature 522 guest rooms, 13 dining outlets, three swimming pools, a lazy river, a spa, fitness centre, tennis and pickleball courts, nearly 13,000 square feet of meeting space and more than 2,100 feet of beachfront. The redevelopment adds 10 rooms to the property's previous inventory.

Laurent de Kousemaeker, Marriott International's chief development officer for the Caribbean and Latin America, said the agreement marks another step in the company's growing all-inclusive portfolio.

"These agreements represent a significant milestone in our all-inclusive strategy and demonstrate the strength of our

relationships with experienced owners seeking to maximise value through Marriott's globally recognised brands," he said.

De Kousemaeker noted that Catalonia already has an established relationship with Marriott through its ownership of the Renaissance Barcelona Fira Hotel and said the company was pleased to expand that partnership into two major leisure destinations.

The project marks Catalonia Hotels & Resorts' first investment in Jamaica, expanding its Caribbean footprint beyond its five all-inclusive resorts in Mexico and four in the Dominican Republic. It also represents the entry of Spain's Vallet family into Jamaica's hotel sector, joining other Spanish hospitality groups such as Riu Hotels & Resorts, Bahia Principe Hotels & Resorts and Iberostar Hotels & Resorts.

"This agreement reflects leading international brands' recognition of our operational excellence and the strength of our management model. It also aligns with the company's expansion strategy, including collaborations that support our growth in strategic markets."

The announcement further strengthens Marriott's presence in Jamaica, where the Courtyard by Marriott Kingston became the company's first branded hotel when it opened in 2015. Montego Bay is also preparing to welcome another Marriott-branded property. Sandals Resorts International Executive Chairman Adam Stewart announced last year that a 165-room AC Marriott hotel will be developed there.

Caribbean literary giant Ian McDonald dies at 93

Caribbean literary icon Ian McDonald, the celebrated poet, novelist and columnist who famously described himself as “Antiguan by ancestry, Trinidadian by birth, Guyanese by adoption, and West Indian by conviction,” has died at the age of 93.

McDonald died on Thursday, July 24, 2026, according to an announcement from Guyana’s President Irfaan Ali.

Born in Trinidad on April 18, 1933, McDonald became one of the Caribbean’s most respected literary voices. His ancestry on his father’s side was Antiguan and Kittitian, while his mother was Trinidadian. He spent much of his life in Guyana, where he became a prominent cultural figure and longtime newspaper columnist.

His only novel, *The Humming-Bird Tree*, first published in 1969, is widely regarded as a classic of Caribbean literature. In addition to his fiction, McDonald published numerous collections of poetry and essays that explored Caribbean identity, landscape, history and sport.

In a message of condolence, President Ali described McDonald as “a literary figure of worth and one of the Caribbean’s distinguished sons.”

“Dr. Ian McDonald was the Caribbean made flesh: Antigua’s blood ran in his veins, Trinidad cradled his first breath, Guyana claimed the fullness of his years, and the West Indies claimed his soul,” Ali said.

The president praised McDonald’s ability to capture the region’s beauty and complexity through his writing, saying he “gave dignity to the toiling hands of



Ian McDonald was a true Caribbean man

our people” and celebrated “the genius and majesty of our cricketers.”

McDonald was also known for his deep love of cricket, which he often wrote about as a reflection of Caribbean culture and identity. Ali noted that he was equally passionate about lawn tennis and played the sport with distinction.

Beyond literature and sport, McDonald served for many years in

Guyana’s sugar industry, another aspect of his contribution to national life that Ali said would be remembered.

“His verses sang of both our fractures and our wholeness, our anguish and our ecstasy, stitching the frayed tapestry of Caribbean life into something luminous and lasting,” the president said.

McDonald was married to Mary

Callender, and they had two sons, Jamie and Darren. He also had a son, Keith, from a previous marriage to Myrna Camille Foster.

Tributes have begun pouring in from across the Caribbean, with writers, academics and readers remembering McDonald as a poet of rare grace whose work helped shape modern Caribbean literature and thought.

U.S. and Catholic Relief Services send aid flight to Cuba

The United States and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) on Tuesday sent the first humanitarian relief flight to Cuba under a new \$100 million assistance commitment announced by Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Senior Official for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs, and Religious Freedom Jeremy Lewin and Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs Senior Advisor Viviana Bovo joined CRS representatives in Miami on July 21 for the departure of the flight carrying humanitarian supplies for Cuban families.

The shipment includes pre-packaged food and hygiene kits intended to support up to 700 families on the island. The supplies will be distributed by CRS in partnership with the Catholic Church and Caritas Cuba.

The initiative builds on a previous U.S. humanitarian program with CRS and Caritas Cuba that provided \$9 million in direct assistance following Hur-

ricane Melissa.

U.S. officials said the latest effort is designed to ensure aid reaches people in need through direct delivery by local parish representatives, rather than government channels.

“This partnership builds upon the success of the Department’s program last year with CRS and Caritas Cuba,” the U.S. State Department said in a statement, adding that local distribution networks would help ensure humanitarian assistance reaches Cuban communities.

The aid comes as the United States continues to provide humanitarian support to vulnerable Cubans amid ongoing economic challenges on the island.

CRS, a humanitarian organization affiliated with the Catholic Church, has worked with local partners around the world to provide emergency assistance, food security support and other humanitarian services.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio

Three CARICOM countries hit with new U.S. tariffs over forced labour trade

Three CARICOM member states are among 60 economies facing new U.S. tariffs under a sweeping trade enforcement initiative launched by the Trump administration, which says the measures are aimed at strengthening enforcement against goods linked to forced labour.

The new tariffs, which took effect Friday after a temporary global tariff expired, affect The Bahamas, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. The Dominican Republic is also among the Caribbean countries included in the new regime.

According to the Office of the United States Trade Representative, imports from the affected countries will now face tariffs of either 10% or 12.5%, replacing the temporary global 10% tariff that expired at 12:01 a.m. Friday.

The Bahamas and Guyana will each be subject to a 12.5% tariff on exports to the United States, while Trinidad and Tobago will face a 10% tariff.

The White House said the new tariff framework is designed to reinforce the United States' ban on imports produced with forced labour and will apply to more than 95% of imports from what it described as 60 key U.S. trading partners.

The measures were imposed under Sections 301(b) and 304(a) of the Trade Act of 1974 following investigations by the Office of the United States Trade Representative, which concluded that certain trade practices in the affected economies warranted action.

According to the USTR, countries that have implemented or committed to implementing prohibitions on imports produced with forced labour through an Agreement on Reciprocal Trade generally received a 10% tariff. However, some economies were assigned higher rates based on the findings of individual Section 301 investigations.

For The Bahamas, the USTR said it reviewed the investigation, public comments, testimony and recommendations from advisory committees before determining that a 12.5% tariff was appropriate. Guyana was assigned the same rate, while Trinidad and Tobago received the baseline 10% tariff.



New US tariffs will hit products from three Caricom nations

The USTR said tariffs ranging from 10% to 12.5% were considered "appropriate and feasible" to address the trade practices identified during the investigations. It said alternatives, including lower tariff rates, negotiations without tariffs and action under other legal authorities, were considered but ultimately rejected.

The Office of the Prime Minister in The Bahamas said the government was reviewing the potential impact of the tariffs on local exporters.

"The government is aware of the announced tariff adjustment and is re-

viewing its potential impact on Bahamian exporters," said Senator Latrae Rahming, director of communications in the Office of the Prime Minister.

"We are engaging our United States counterparts to seek clarification and to ensure that recent legislative measures taken by The Bahamas are fully considered," Rahming added.

He said The Bahamas remained committed to its longstanding economic relationship with the United States and would continue working toward "a fair resolution that protects Bahamian businesses and maintains the

strong trade relationship between our countries."

The latest action marks another use of Section 301 of the Trade Act as a U.S. trade enforcement tool, allowing Washington to impose tariffs on countries it determines are engaging in unfair trade practices. The Trump administration said the measures form part of a broader effort to tighten global supply chain standards and discourage the use of forced labour in international commerce.



Child advocacy group renews call for public sex offenders registry

A child advocacy organization is renewing calls for Jamaica's sex offenders registry to be made public following the rape and murder of 10-year-old Shani Coke in Trelawny last week.

The Fi We Children Foundation said the tragedy highlights the urgent need to strengthen Jamaica's child protection system through legislative and policy reform.

The man accused of killing the child, Delroy Coke, was later killed by angry residents in an apparent act of vigilante justice. Reports indicate he had a history of sexual offences and had recently been released from prison.

In a statement, the foundation argued that making the sex offenders registry publicly accessible would allow parents, guardians, schools, childcare institutions and communities to identify convicted sex offenders living in their neighbourhoods and take steps to better protect children.

The organisation is also calling for a comprehensive review of the Child Care and Protection Act, saying stronger legal safeguards are needed to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

It further urged the government to strengthen prevention and early intervention measures to identify children at risk, while increasing investment in child protection services, including investigations, victim support and community-based prevention programmes.

"While Jamaica has enacted important child protection laws and policies, implementation remains a persistent challenge," the foundation said, adding that intervention too often comes only after a child has suffered irreparable harm.

While condemning the child's killing, the organisation also denounced the mob slaying of the accused, stressing that accountability must be pursued through the rule of law to ensure justice is served and the integrity of criminal investigations is preserved.

The foundation also appealed to media organisations to carefully consider the ethical implications of publishing photographs of child victims, urging news outlets to report in ways that preserve the dignity of children and avoid causing additional trauma to grieving families.

Jamaica's sex offenders registry is currently maintained by the Department of Correctional Services and is not open to the general public. Access is limited to specified groups, including the police, professional counsellors of offenders, prospective employers and employees, and certain relatives of offenders.

In May 2025, Prime Minister Andrew Holness said the government



Shani Coke, 10, was murdered

would review aspects of the registry with a view to prioritising public safety over offender confidentiality.

Calls for the registry to be made public have persisted for years, with supporters arguing that the current level of confidentiality offers greater

protection to offenders than to potential victims.

Meanwhile, Children's Advocate Diahann Gordon Harrison described Shani's murder as a painful reminder of the danger posed by sexual predators.

In a statement, Gordon Harrison

said the incident underscores the collective responsibility of Jamaicans to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence. She also condemned the reported mob killing of the accused man.

Chinese nationals receive most of Jamaica's work permits again in 2025

Chinese nationals once again received the largest share of work permits issued to foreign workers in Jamaica during 2025, continuing a longstanding trend, according to the latest Economic and Social Survey Jamaica published by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ).

The report shows that 2,441 work permits were issued to Chinese nationals during the year, far outpacing other nationalities. Indian nationals received the second-highest number of permits with 882, followed by Cubans with 307. The PIOJ noted that Chinese nationals have consistently topped the list of work permit recipients each year.

Under the Foreign Nationals and Commonwealth Citizens (Employment) Act, 1964, foreign nationals seeking employment in Jamaica must first obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS).

According to the PIOJ, the ministry received 5,701 work permit applications in 2025, representing a 0.9 per cent increase over 2024.

Of those applications, 2,972 were renewals, down 3.5 per cent from the previous year, while new applications rose 6.1 per cent to 2,729.

"The majority of work permit applications – 96.6 per cent or 5,509 – were approved, with 79.3 per cent issued to males," the PIOJ said in the report.

The institute also found that work permit approvals remained heavily concentrated in a few sectors. Wholesale



Chinese workers in Jamaica

and retail trade, including the repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, accounted for the largest number of approvals with 2,258 permits. Construction followed with 1,120 approvals, while the accommodation and food service sector received 607.

By region, nationals from Asia accounted for the largest share of approved work permits at 64.9 per cent, followed by Latin America with 13.5 per cent of the total.

T&T assassination plot investigation expands across multiple jurisdictions

Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar says an investigation into an alleged plot to assassinate her and senior members of her government has expanded significantly, with multiple foreign intelligence and investigative agencies now involved.

Persad-Bissessar told the Trinidad Guardian that she could not provide specific details about the ongoing investigation but said authorities had uncovered a wider scope involving new jurisdictions, individuals and entities.

“I would not have any specific details on the ongoing local and foreign investigations,” she said. “As Minister Roger Alexander stated in his press release, the investigation has widened beyond the original scope to new areas and across multiple jurisdictions.”

The prime minister said she had been informed that several foreign agencies were assisting with the probe.

“I am advised that multiple foreign intelligence and investigative agencies are involved and that new persons, financial institutions and businesses have been identified in the expanding investigation,” she said.

Persad-Bissessar added that local and international authorities had warned that the investigation had become more complex and would require additional time.

The comments follow the release last week of prominent businessman Dominic Hadeed and his wife, Genevieve Hadeed, after National Security Minister Roger Alexander revoked Preventive Detention Orders (PDOs) issued against them.

The Hadeeds were detained on



Dominic Hadeed and his wife Genevieve

June 24 as part of a Trinidad and Tobago Police Service investigation into allegations of a conspiracy to kill Persad-Bissessar and Attorney General John Jeremiah.

The Hadeeds are the owners of

identified Hadeed as being involved in an ongoing conspiracy to assassinate senior members of the Government and/or other serving Members of Parliament.

According to the notice, following statements made in Parliament during the debate on the extension of the state of emergency, Hadeed allegedly expressed violent intentions by stating words to the effect that persons would be “shot in their head”. The notice alleged that the statement was made in furtherance of a developing plan to target members of the Government.

The legal notice further alleged that Hadeed was a person of substantial financial means and influence with the resources, access and capability to facilitate serious organised criminal activity. It also stated that his continued liberty presented a real and immediate risk of facilitating plans intended to destabilise the Government through violence.

In announcing the revocation of the PDOs, Alexander said the continued detention of the couple was no longer proportionate after consideration of legal, medical and constitutional issues, as well as recommendations from the Constitution Review Tribunal.

The Hadeeds have not been charged with any offence, and investigations into the alleged assassination plot remain ongoing.

A third person, Star Sabga, 69, who is the aunt of the Hadeeds, was also arrested on June 24.

On Monday, a High Court judge also ordered her release and said she should be held under house arrest until her matter is heard.



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Guyana to host 2027 Carifta Games after St Kitts withdraws bid

Guyana has stepped forward to host the 2027 Carifta Games, just one week after St Kitts and Nevis withdrew its bid to stage the Caribbean's premier junior athletics competition.

The announcement was made Thursday by the North American, Central American and Caribbean Athletic Association (NACAC), which also confirmed that Barbados will host the 2028 edition of the Games.

The development follows last week's decision by the St Kitts & Nevis Athletics Association and the St Kitts & Nevis Olympic Committee to withdraw from hosting the 2027 event, saying it was "not the most ideal time" for the twin-island federation to stage the competition.

NACAC President Mike Sands said the commitments from Guyana and Barbados came after swift intervention and support from CARICOM Heads of Government. "On behalf of the NACAC Athletics Council, officials, and athletes of the NACAC Athletics family, I wish to thank the CARICOM Heads for their swift and positive response in support of the Carifta Games," Sands said during a media briefing.



The Carifta Games will be held in Guyana in 2027

"I especially thank President Ali of Guyana and Prime Minister Mottley of Barbados for agreeing to host Carifta 2027 and 2028. This secures the immediate future of what is arguably the

world's premier junior athletics event." NACAC said it will now work with the relevant authorities in Guyana and Barbados to begin early planning for both editions of the Games. The organi-

zation also plans to continue discussions with CARICOM leaders on establishing a more sustainable framework for athletics and major youth sporting events across the Caribbean.

Cricket mourns the passing of Sir Garfield Sobers

Cricket has lost one of its brightest lights, and the Caribbean has bid farewell to a figure whose influence stretched far beyond statistics, trophies, or records.

Sir Garfield St. Aubrun Sobers, the man widely regarded as the greatest all-round cricketer the game has ever known, died July 17 at the age of 89, prompting an outpouring of grief and admiration from every corner of the cricketing world. From his beloved Barbados to the game's most celebrated venues, tributes flowed for a player whose brilliance transformed the sport and whose character inspired generations.

For more than two decades, Sobers embodied cricketing excellence. He was equally capable of dismantling bowling attacks with breathtaking stroke play, breaking partnerships with virtually every style of bowling imaginable, and producing spectacular catches that shifted the course of matches. Long after his retirement, he remained the benchmark by which every complete cricketer has been judged.

West Indies President Dr. Kishore Shallow captured the magnitude of that legacy.

"In the story of cricket, there are great players. There are champions. Then, there are those rare individuals who redefine the very meaning of greatness.

"Sir Garfield Sobers was the greatest cricketer the world has ever seen. His mastery of batting, bowling and

fielding was unparalleled, but his true significance reached far beyond the boundary ropes."

Born in Bridgetown, Barbados, on July 28, 1936, Sobers' path to immortality began under modest circumstances.

Raised in a poor household after losing his father at just five years old, the young Garfield learned the game with improvised equipment, palm branches serving as bats and tightly rolled balls fashioned from tar. Those simple beginnings concealed extraordinary natural talent that required little formal coaching before it began astonishing the cricket world.

At only 16 years old, Sobers announced himself in first-class cricket with an eye-catching debut against the touring Indians, claiming four wickets to help Barbados secure victory. Just a year later, he earned his first Test cap against England in Jamaica, introducing himself to international cricket with figures of 4-75.

Initially selected as a left-arm spinner, it quickly became apparent that his gifts extended far beyond bowling. His elegant stroke play, flawless timing and limitless versatility soon established him as one of cricket's most complete performers.

Former Australian captain Richie Benaud perhaps summed him up best.

"He could do anything."

While Sobers displayed flashes of brilliance early in his career, one unforgettable innings elevated him into cricketing immortality.

At Sabina Park in Kingston in February 1958, the 21-year-old left-hander compiled what remains one of the greatest Test innings ever played. His unbeaten 365 against Pakistan shattered Len Hutton's longstanding world record of 364 and made Sobers the youngest player to score a Test triple century. Remarkably, it was also his maiden Test hundred.

The landmark score stood untouched for 36 years before another Caribbean batting genius, Brian Lara, eclipsed it in Antigua in 1994.

Rather than guarding his own place in history, Sobers encouraged Lara to chase greatness.

"There was a lot of pressure on him, people telling him not to break the record, to preserve it for the legend.

"So, I spoke to him in the dressing room during his innings and said, 'Go out and do it, man.'"

It was a fitting gesture from a man whose legacy was never measured by personal milestones alone, but by the inspiration he provided to those who followed.

Sobers' numbers remain extraordinary, but they reveal only part of his genius.

Across 93 Test matches between 1954 and 1974, he amassed 8,032 runs at an average of 57.78, including 26 centuries, becoming the first player to surpass 8,000 Test runs. With the ball, he collected 235 wickets using an astonishing range that included left-arm pace, orthodox spin and wrist spin. Add 109 catches in the slips and 39 Tests as

captain, and his versatility becomes almost impossible to comprehend.

His first-class career proved even more remarkable.

Representing Barbados, the West Indies, Nottinghamshire and South Australia, Sobers scored more than 28,000 runs, claimed over 1,000 wickets and produced countless performances that have become woven into cricket folklore.

Those accomplishments earned him a knighthood in 1975, recognition as one of Wisden's five Cricketers of the Century in 2000, and eventual induction into the ICC Hall of Fame in 2009.

Statistics alone cannot fully explain why Sobers occupies such a unique place in sporting history.

He could dominate attacks with graceful cover drives or overpower bowlers with brute force. He bowled with swing, seam, finger spin and wrist spin, often within the same match. He patrolled the slip cordon with lightning reflexes while leading the West Indies through one of the most important periods in the team's development.

His extraordinary versatility led many, including the legendary Sir Donald Bradman, to recognize him as cricket's greatest all-rounder, while Wisden placed him among the five greatest cricketers of the 20th century.

For Cricket West Indies President Dr. Kishore Shallow, Sobers represented something far greater than sporting excellence. "He became a symbol of Caribbean excellence."



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Gov't committed to truth, accountability, stronger maritime safety: PM

PRIME Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, has reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting every family affected by the MV Barima tragedy, establishing the full circumstances surrounding the incident and implementing the reforms necessary to strengthen maritime safety across Guyana.

During an interview on Jump Start on HJ 94.1 Boom FM on Friday morning, the Prime Minister acknowledged the deep grief being experienced across the country and said the questions being raised by families and citizens are understandable and deserve clear, evidence-based answers.

"Our people are hurting, and they deserve the truth.

"We are all in this together, and your government will continue to stand with the survivors, the bereaved families and the affected communities during this extremely difficult period."

Addressing concerns about the age of the MV Barima, the Prime Minister explained that the government has pursued the modernisation of Guyana's ferry fleet since 2020, including the acquisition of three new vessels.

He noted that older vessels remaining in operation are required to undergo scheduled maintenance, inspections and dry-docking. The MV Barima was dry-docked in 2024, underwent repairs and was subsequently deemed seaworthy. Its next scheduled dry-docking was expected during the latter half of 2026.

While the vessel was considered serviceable before the incident, the Prime Minister acknowledged the importance of accelerating the modernisation of the national ferry fleet and continuing to improve the safety and reliability of transportation services, particularly for hinterland and riverine communities.

As it relates to questions concerning drug testing and operational oversight, Prime Minister Phillips said that regulations governing the conduct and fitness of maritime personnel are already in place.

He emphasised that the management of the Transport and Harbours Department must ensure consistent compliance at every level; from management and supervisory personnel to captains, engineers and other crew members serving aboard vessels.

PM Phillips reiterated that the government will use the findings from the Commission of Inquiry to strengthen mandatory testing, port-clearance procedures, supervision, monitoring and accountability within the department.

The Prime Minister further indicated that expanded CCTV coverage and improved monitoring of wharves

and loading areas will form part of the reforms being advanced, noting that security footage was used to assist investigators in reviewing the loading of the MV Barima and estimating the number of persons aboard.

He also lauded the Guyana Defence Force Coast Guard, the Guyana Police Force, other government agencies, local fisherfolk, private operators and international partners for their contributions to the search, rescue and recovery operations.

He said that the participation of fisherfolk and private operators represents the strength and solidarity of the Guyanese people during a national emergency.

Speaking on the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry, he explained that it will be independent and will be expected to carefully examine the circumstances surrounding the tragedy, identify weaknesses and recommend measures to prevent a recurrence.



PM Mark Phillips

The government, he said, will respect the rule of law, allow the inquiry to conduct its work independently and act upon its recommendations.

According to the Prime Minister, the inquiry is expected to consider the

concerns being raised about passenger records, ticketing, loading, crew conduct, vessel maintenance, drug-testing procedures, port security, CCTV coverage, management systems and regulatory oversight.

"The purpose of this process is to establish the truth, provide answers to the families and ensure that the necessary lessons lead to meaningful change."

He also used the opportunity to assure survivors and bereaved families that the government's support will not end when the immediate response concludes.

Assistance, including psychosocial support, will continue to be provided as families mourn, recover and seek answers. He said the tragedy must ultimately lead to stronger institutions, safer transportation systems and greater protection for every person who depends on Guyana's waterways. "We are not perfect, but we will continue to listen and support our people..."



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