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Here comes Guymati Rice

You've heard about varieties of rice like Jasmine and Basmati. Well, get ready for Guyana's own variety — Guymati.

The unique brand of rice was announced Tuesday by Agriculture Minister Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha (pictured inset below), who said that scientists attached to the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) have worked tirelessly to develop a variety that can withstand the climatic and other conditions present in Guyana, which would usually pose a challenge to the optimal productivity of aromatic varieties.

Full story on Page 5



Caricom to join international aid effort to Cuba

THE Caribbean Community is moving to send humanitarian supplies to Cuba, following a decision taken at its most recent heads of government meeting.

The move comes following the announcement

at the conclusion of the recent conference of Heads of Government, which was made by CARICOM Chairman and Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis, Dr Terrence Drew.

According to a statement from the regional body, member states are preparing to dispatch a range of essential items to support Cuba, as part of the coordinated humanitarian response.

The effort, the statement said, is being managed in Guyana by the CARICOM Secretariat.

This comes as the first boat of an international flotilla carrying medical supplies, food and solar panels reached Cuba on Tuesday to aid the island as a US fuel blockade deepens its energy crisis. The *Maguro* shrimp fishing boat docked in Havana three days later than hoped after battling strong winds, currents and a pesky battery during its journey from Mexico.

Two more ships in the Flotilla, dubbed "Our America Convoy", will follow, bringing some 50 tonnes of critical aid overall.

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AIDS-related deaths in region down 60%

AIDS-RELATED deaths in the Caribbean have declined by more than 60 per cent since 2010, but rising infection rates, particularly among young people, remain a serious concern, Guyana's Minister of Health Dr Frank Anthony has warned.

Speaking at the opening of the Tenth Meeting of National AIDS Programme Managers and Key Partners in Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Anthony said the region has

made significant progress in reducing mortality, but must now intensify efforts to curb new infections.

He highlighted significant progress in the Caribbean's fight against Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), noting a more than 60 per cent decline in AIDS-related deaths since 2010, while warning that new infections, particularly among young people aged 15 to 24, remain a major concern.

Recent years have seen remarkable progress being made in the fight against AIDS, Minister Anthony shared. In the Caribbean in particular, mortality rates among those affected by AIDS have declined significantly, with Dr Anthony noting that AIDS-related deaths have fallen by more than 60 per cent.

This, he added, is one of the fastest declines seen internationally, stating, "According to UNAIDS, AIDS-related deaths have declined in our region, falling from 2010 by more than 60 percent. This is one of the steepest declines we have seen across the world," he added, "In 2010, nearly 12,000 persons in the Caribbean died from HIV or AIDS-related illnesses. Today, that number has fallen to less than 5,000 persons."

This shift, Dr Anthony emphasised, was not accidental, but rather a result of sustained work and investment by regional governments in treatment, prevention and care.

However, while the region has made significant strides in reducing mortality rates, infection rates continue to rise. As Minister Anthony explained, the rate of infection continues to grow steadily, while efforts to curb the spread of AIDS are not yet where the region needs them to be.

"While we have made significant progress, there is still much to be done. Because while deaths have fallen dramatically, we have seen new infections, and they are not declining as fast as we would like them to be in the region," the minister said.

Growing infection rates, he added, are specifically impacting the region's youth, with an estimated 15,000 persons being infected every year.

"Perhaps what is even more troubling is that one in four of those new infections occurs between the ages of 15 and 24 years. That means while we celebrate that we have been saving lives, we are seeing that the epidemic is going to continue in the new generation," he warned.



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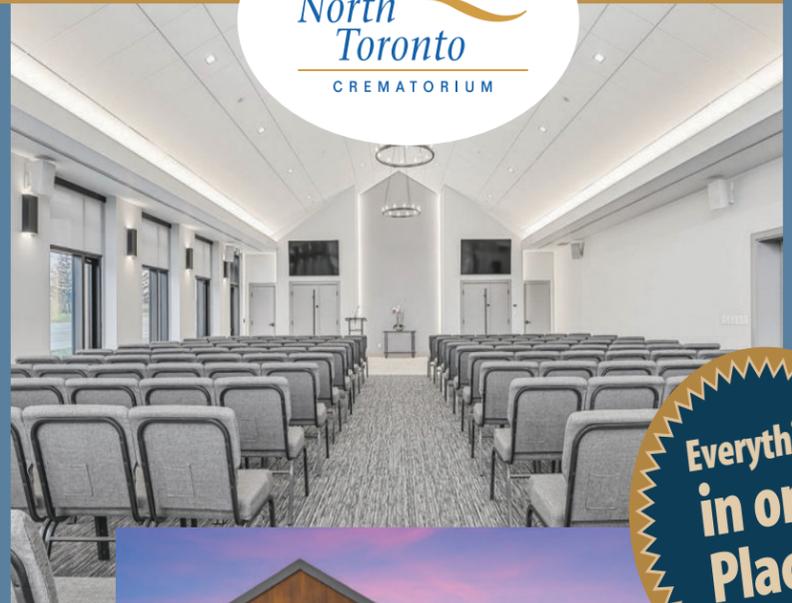
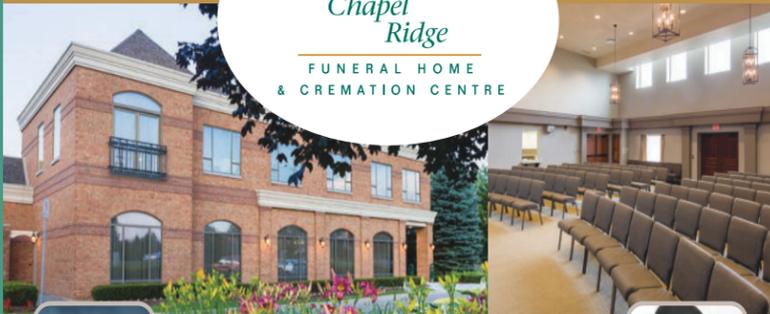
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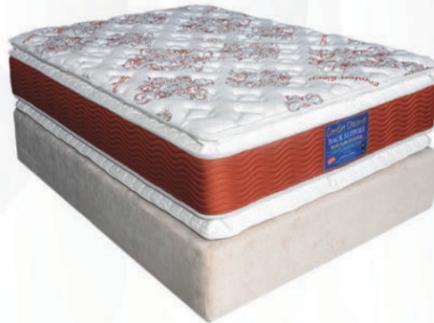
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Exxon reports \$146B spent with local suppliers in 2025, Guyanese now 70% of workforce

EXXONMOBIL Guyana spent approximately \$146 billion with local suppliers in 2025, as the company highlighted continued expansion of local participation in the country's oil and gas sector.

The figure was disclosed by ExxonMobil Guyana President, Alistair Routledge, during a press briefing at the company's Ogle headquarters on Thursday, when he outlined the company's latest local-content performance and broader economic impact.

According to Routledge, some 2,000 suppliers were engaged in supporting operations last year, reflecting what he described as a steadily expanding local supply chain.

Cumulatively, since 2015, ExxonMobil estimates that spending with Guyanese businesses reached approximately \$753 billion.

The figures come as Guyana's oil and gas industry continues to scale rapidly, with multiple offshore projects in operation and several more under development, creating sustained demand for goods and services across a wide range of sectors.

Beyond supplier engagement, ExxonMobil also reported continued progress in workforce localisation.

Routledge disclosed that approximately 9,000 persons are currently employed in Guyana's oil and gas industry, with Guyanese now accounting for about 70 per cent of that workforce, a notable increase from the early



President of ExxonMobil Guyana Alistair Routledge

years of production.

"Absolutely fundamental that we not only deliver money into the Natural Resource Fund... but... deliver as much benefit to people through jobs and business opportunities as we possibly can," he said.

He noted that this upward trend reflects sustained investment in training and capacity building by ExxonMobil, its prime contractors, and local companies, enabling Guyanese workers to take on more advanced and higher-paying roles.

"It reflects the level of investment... giving people the opportunity to take more and more senior, more

complex roles and to ultimately be better paid," Routledge explained.

The expansion of local employment is widely seen as a key pillar of Guyana's Local Content Act, which aims to ensure that citizens and businesses derive tangible benefits from the country's petroleum resources.

Routledge emphasised that the growth of the local supplier base is not only strengthening the oil and gas sector, but it is also creating spill-over benefits for the wider economy.

With thousands of Guyanese businesses now integrated into the supply chain from logistics and transportation to catering, fabrication and environ-

mental services, the sector is increasingly acting as a catalyst for broader private-sector development.

The cumulative \$753 billion spent locally since 2015 represents one of the most significant injections of capital into the domestic economy in recent history, positioning local companies to expand capacity, invest in technology, and compete at higher standards.

As part of efforts to recognise local participation, ExxonMobil hosted its second supplier-recognition ceremony on February 5, acknowledging companies that have demonstrated strong performance and commitment in meeting industry standards.

Among those recognised was Environmental Technical Solutions (ETS), a 100 per cent Guyanese-owned company that has expanded significantly through its engagement in the oil and gas sector.

Represented by Director and General Manager Shane Singh, the company has leveraged a five-year contract with ExxonMobil to invest in workforce development, including internship programmes, staff training, and external certification.

Notably, ETS has become one of the first companies in Guyana capable of safely handling certain types of low-level, naturally occurring radioactive materials associated with oil production, work that requires specialised procedures and strict safety protocols.

Guyana Diaspora Council launched

The Guyana-Canada Diaspora & Community Council has been launched as a national platform to strengthen cultural, educational, generational, and people-to-people ties between Guyana and Canada.

The Council unites leaders, professionals, youth, and community advocates across Canada to celebrate Guyana's culture and heritage, foster youth engagement, and provide opportunities for diaspora expertise to contribute to the country's growth. Reflecting the diversity of the diaspora across generations, it also supports youth leadership, mentorship, and professional development.

As a non-partisan national organization, the Council will collaborate with the Consulate of Guyana in Toronto, other Diplomatic missions from the Caribbean region and community partners to advance initiatives in culture, education, tourism, and diaspora engagement. Through community programs, partnerships, and national outreach, it will support major Guyanese commemorations in Canada, while inviting broader Canadian and community participation.

With Guyana's global profile rising and rapid national growth, the Council aims to keep the diaspora, including first-generation settlers and their children and grandchildren, actively connected to Guyana's heritage, opportunities, and national story. By fostering generational engagement and sharing professional expertise, the Council strengthens the bridge between Guyana and Canada while empowering the diaspora to contribute meaningfully to development both in Guyana and Canada.

The following perspectives reflect the collective vision of the Council's Officers and Executives, whose leadership represents a broad cross-section of the Guyanese Canadian diaspora, stakeholders, and professionals across generations, and guides the organization's national mission of strengthening cultural, generational, and people-to-people ties between Guyana and Canada while encouraging the sharing of diaspora skills and expertise.

Through partnerships, collaboration, and outreach, the Council is building a vibrant, enduring bridge between Guyana and Canada while celebrating the culture, heritage, and achievements of the Guyanese people. Further announcements regarding leadership, programs, and national initiatives will be made in the coming months.



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Guyana to start large-scale cocoa, coffee production –President Ali

PRESIDENT Dr. Irfaan Ali has announced that Guyana will soon begin large-scale production of cocoa and coffee.

Speaking at the annual general meeting of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) last week, President Ali said that within the next few weeks, large-scale cultivation of cocoa and coffee will commence, alongside broader investments in agricultural and food systems.

He outlined a series of initiatives aimed at transforming the sector, including expanded aquaculture, manual cultivation projects, and the completion of a national food terminal and hub. These developments, he noted, are part of a wider strategy to position Guyana as a key player in regional and global food production.

“Within the next few weeks, we will have large-scale cocoa cultivation, cocoa as we call it, we will have large-scale coffee cultivation, manual cultivation, expansion of aquaculture, the completion of the food terminal, a food hub,” the President said.

He highlighted growing interest from major private-sector players, who are increasingly investing in food production and agro-processing.

The Head of State stressed that such investments are critical as the world continues to grapple with high food and transportation costs.

“More and more and more, we’re seeing the large private-sector organisations in Guyana moving towards investment in food, investment in agro-processing,” he said, adding: “This is what is important for the future of our country, as we see today, the cost of food, cost of transportation, to move that food in a region and a world that is still recovering from COVID, still reeling from the impact of the Russian-



Guyana will begin large scale cocoa and coffee production soon

Ukrainian war, now having to navigate these challenges, we are equally committed to providing relief to consumers, because a strong consumer base is the foundation of a strong partner.”

Earlier this month, President Ali had met with RIZEK Cacao, a renowned Dominican Republic (DR) processing and export company of cocoa and its products, which has expressed interest in expanding its operations to Guyana.

“The world is watching. The world is investing in Guyana. The world is recognising what we already

know that this is, this is a country on the rise, and as we rise, we must rise together, because growth that excludes is growth that fractures, but growth that includes is growth that endures,” President Ali said.

First established in 1905, Rizek Cacao is said to be an expert in processing and exporting cocoa and its products, adhering to international norms and standards to satisfy the needs and expectations of consumers.

Back in 2025, Guyana and the DR had inked an agreement to establish approximately 200 acres each of coffee and cocoa in Region One (Barima-

Waini), as part of the country’s broader efforts to boost economic diversification, enhance rural livelihoods, and expand regional trade.

That agreement had underscored the importance of sustainable agriculture and technical co-operation and will support the development, cultivation, processing and marketing of both crops. It will also pave the way for joint research and development programmes, as well as value-added production and trade facilitation in the cocoa and coffee sectors.

‘Guymati’ - Guyana’s first aromatic rice variety launched

In another bold step to cultivate a competitive rice industry in Guyana, the Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Agriculture, on Tuesday launched the ‘Guymati’ (GRDB-19) aromatic rice variety.

With initial research commencing in 1997, scientists attached to the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) have worked tirelessly to develop a variety that can withstand the climatic and other conditions present in Guyana, which would usually pose a challenge to the optimal productivity of aromatic varieties.

While speaking at the launch, Agriculture Minister Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha noted that, over the years, the government’s investment has been a major driver of growth and stability in the rice sector, focusing on supporting farmers, improving production, and expanding exports. He further stated that, in 2025, rice production in

Guyana reached a record high of 810,299 metric tonnes, with yields of 6.6 tonnes per hectare, also the highest ever recorded.

“From 1997 to 2025, we’ve released eighteen (18) rice varieties, which have significantly increased national productivity, from 4.0 tonnes per hectare in 2005 to an average of 6.6 tonnes per hectare in 2025. We are now targeting production of eight tonnes per hectare. These developments show that we are not stagnant. Every time we launch a new variety, its characteristics are better than any variety we would have released before. This aromatic variety that we are launching today has even more potential. It is high-yielding and will attract preferential prices. It has the potential to improve your livelihoods because, as farmers, you depend on this industry,” he said.

Minister Mustapha said that, with its extra-long slender grain, this aromatic variety is classified as a premium product.

“This variety is blast-resistant and has tolerance to lodging. It requires the same cultivation and agronomic practices as the other GRDB rice varieties and, therefore, will not require any additional cost of production. Not many countries in the world have achieved this, so it is a remarkable accomplishment by our scientists. Today, we thank our Chief Scientist and the GRDB team for their dedication to the rice in-

dustry,” Minister Mustapha explained. Minister Mustapha also said that while the government is working to increase rice production, farmers are also being empowered to diversify. He challenged farmers to work with the ministry to dedicate small acreages for the production of high-value crops.

“While we are encouraging you and making the resources and infrastructure available for diversification, let us look at ways in which you, as rice farmers, can diversify.”

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A foundation for justice

Editorial from the Guyana Chronicle, March 24 2026

GUYANA stands at a defining crossroad. With unprecedented economic expansion driven by oil production and broader structural transformation, the country is being rapidly reshaped.

But amid the optimism reflected in projections from the International Monetary Fund, which anticipates sustained double-digit growth in the years ahead, one truth must remain firmly in focus: Economic progress without a strong legal foundation is ultimately unsustainable.

The recent launch of the revised Laws of Guyana 2022 and the Guyana Law Reports (2008–2021) is, therefore, far more than a ceremonial milestone.

It is a critical investment in the Rule of Law, institutional integrity, and public confidence, pillars without which no modern state can endure, much less thrive.

At its core, law is not merely a collection of statutes; it is the machinery through which governance is exercised and accountability enforced.

As legal scholar V. C. R. A. C. Crabbe aptly observed, legislation transforms policy into enforceable rules that shape economic, social, and political life. In a democracy, those same laws serve as a check on power, ensuring that leaders remain answerable to the people.

Yet, laws, however well-crafted, are only as effective as they are accessible. A legal system that is fragmented, outdated, or difficult to navigate undermines justice itself. Citizens cannot assert rights they do not understand, nor can businesses operate with confidence in an environment where legal certainty is elusive.

The United Nations has long underscored that access to justice is a fundamental component of the Rule of Law; without it, rights exist only on paper.

This is where the significance of the law revision exercise becomes clear. By consolidating, updating, and modernising legislation, the State has taken a necessary step towards making the law intelligible and usable.

Removing repealed provisions, harmonising language, and integrating amendments are not mere technical exercises; they are acts that bring clarity and coherence to the legal system.

Equally important is the revival and continuation of law reporting. In common law jurisdictions such as Guyana, judicial decisions are not secondary, they are a primary source of law.

The doctrine of precedent, or *stare decisis*, ensures consistency and predictability by requiring courts to follow established rulings. Without reliable and accessible law reports, this system falters, leaving judges, attorneys, and scholars without the tools needed to interpret and apply the law

effectively.

The publication of the Guyana Law Reports (2008–2021) addresses a long-standing gap. For decades, the sporadic nature of law reporting hindered the development of jurisprudence and limited the accessibility of legal reasoning.

By systematically compiling decisions from the High Court, Court of Appeal, and the Caribbean Court of Justice, this initiative strengthens the intellectual and practical foundations of the legal system.

History reminds us that this challenge is not new. From the scattered and unpublished laws of the early 19th Century to incomplete revision efforts in the colonial era, Guyana has long grappled with the task of organising its legal framework.

Even in more recent times, long gaps between revisions and reports created inefficiencies and inconsistencies. That these issues persisted for generations underscores the magnitude of the achievement represented by the current project.

It must also be acknowledged that such undertakings are neither simple nor inexpensive.

Significant public investment, international collaboration, and sustained institutional effort were required to bring these volumes to fruition. But the cost of inaction would have been far greater. A weak or inaccessible legal system discourages investment, stifles innovation, and

erodes public trust.

As Guyana positions itself as a major economic player, the importance of legal certainty cannot be overstated.

Investors, whether local or foreign, seek environments where rules are clear, stable, and fairly enforced.

Citizens, too, demand a system where justice is not delayed, denied, or obscured by complexity. In this regard, the revised laws and updated reports are not merely legal tools; they are instruments of national development.

The challenge now is to sustain this momentum. Law revision and reporting must not be episodic exercises undertaken decades apart, but continuous processes embedded within the State's institutional framework.

Training legal professionals, strengthening the capacity of the Attorney-General's Chambers, and embracing digital accessibility will be key to ensuring that the law remains a living, evolving instrument.

Ultimately, the success of Guyana's transformation will depend not only on the wealth it generates, but on the strength of the systems that govern it. The Rule of Law is not an abstract ideal, it is the bedrock upon which economic prosperity, social cohesion, and democratic governance are built. In launching these revised laws and reports, Guyana has reaffirmed a simple but profound principle: That justice, to be meaningful, must be accessible, and that progress, to be lasting, must be anchored in law.

Dr Jagan understood 'realpolitik'

Dear Editor,

MUCH has been said and written by persons who seemingly have some claim to predictive knowledge about how former President, Dr Cheddi Jagan would have responded to current developments in the world today, were he still alive.

These are merely speculative and are in no way reflective of the changing dynamics of the global environment.

There are for example speculations on how he

may have responded to the current situations in Cuba and Venezuela, both of which are currently experiencing severe economic and social challenges following the extradition of President Maduro and his wife to the United States. Cuba, which relied heavily on Venezuelan oil, has now become a major casualty, with the country's energy grid almost grinding to a halt.

It is true that Dr Jagan was sympathetic to the cause of the Cuban revolution. But he was also

someone who understood 'realpolitik,' especially in the context of a changing global dispensation after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the world socialist system in the late 1980s.

I thought of sharing some thoughts on this subject, especially at this time when Guyanese from all walks of life celebrate his life and work, and his monumental contributions to the cause of a better world.

Hydar Ally



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Federal workers to see 2.4% rise in minimum wage starting April 1

By Milan Maharaj

LJI REPORTER

The federal government has announced an increase to the federal minimum wage, raising it to \$17.75 per hour effective April 1, 2026, according to a release from Employment and Social Development Canada.

The adjustment represents a 2.4 percent increase from the current rate of \$17.30 per hour. The federal minimum wage is updated annually based on changes in the national Consumer Price Index, known as CPI, a measure of inflation calculated by Statistics Canada.

The federally regulated minimum wage applies to workers and interns employed in sectors under federal jurisdiction, including banking, telecommunications, interprovincial transportation and federally regulated Crown corporations. The government states that this group represents approximately 26,000 employees across the nation.

Under federal labour rules, if a province or territory has a minimum wage rate that is higher than the federal rate, employers in federally regulated industries must pay the higher of the two. This means that workers in some regions may continue to receive a wage above the new federal minimum depending on local legislation.

The government introduced the federal minimum wage in 2021 as part of amendments to the Canada Labour Code. At the time, the rate was set at \$15 per hour, with provisions requiring annual adjustments tied to inflation to maintain purchasing power over time.

According to the announcement, the latest increase is based on the national CPI for 2025, reflecting overall changes in consumer prices. The CPI tracks the cost of a fixed basket of goods and services, including food, housing, transportation and other household expenses.

Statistics Canada calculates the Consumer Price Index by tracking price changes across a range of goods and services purchased by households. The index is commonly used by governments to guide adjustments to wages, pensions, and other forms of income support.

Federal officials say indexing the wage to inflation is intended to ensure

that earnings for workers in federally regulated sectors keep pace with rising living costs. The announcement notes that the adjustment mechanism provides a consistent framework for annual update without requiring separate legislative changes.

The minimum wage applies to full time, part time, and temporary workers in federally regulated industries. It also extends to interns who are entitled to wages under federal labour standards.

In practice, the federal minimum wage affects a relatively small share of the national workforce, as most workers fall under provincial or territorial employment standards legislation.

Each province and territory sets its own minimum wage rate and may also adjust it periodically based on economic conditions or inflation measures.

For example, several provinces such as Ontario and British Columbia, have minimum wage rates that are already higher than the federal level. In these cases, federally regulated employers operating within those provinces must comply with the higher provincial wage floor as opposed to the

Graphic courtesy The Fraser Institute

federal minimum.

The announcement by the government does not include other policy changes related to wages or employment standards beyond the upcoming increase. It also does not outline any modifications to enforcement of existing labour regulations.

Labour economists have pointed out that indexing minimum wages to inflation is one approach used by governments to maintain real wages over time, though the impact can vary depending on regional cost of living differences and broader market conditions.

The increase to the minimum wage amount comes as inflation rates have been moderated compared to previous years but continue to influence household expenses. Statistics Canada data indicates that prices for essentials such as food and housing remain elevated relative to pre-pandemic levels.

The federal minimum wage remains distinct from living wage calculations, which estimate the hourly income required to meet basic needs in specific communities in which daily

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Black Belly Sheep population surpasses 3,000 heads

The Government of Guyana, through the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), is making remarkable progress in developing a regional brand of mutton through its Black Belly Sheep programme.

During a meeting with a delegation from Barbados, headed by Barbados' Minister of Agriculture and Food and Nutritional Security, Hon. Dr. Shantal Munro-Knight, Agriculture Minister Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha disclosed that since the project was launched in Region Five in March 2022 by H.E. President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, significant progress has been made, with the national herd exceeding 3,000.

"I know one of the main areas we have to discuss is the progress of the Black Belly Sheep programme. In August 2022, we received the first tranche of sheep, totaling 131. We later received three other sets. The second tranche totaled 342, the third, 234, and the fourth, 293. To date, we've increased the stock to over 3,000," Minister Mustapha explained.

He also noted that the cross-breeding component of the initiative has commenced as the government advances its efforts to develop a regional brand aimed at reducing the importation of mutton from New Zealand. Recently, the first offspring—nicknamed "Ruth"—was born at GLDA's Headquarters, Mon Repos. This, he added, is in keeping with CARICOM's "25 by 2025 + 5" Initiative, which seeks to reduce the regional food import bill by 25% by the end of 2030.

As part of the initiative, the GLDA is also implementing an ongoing programme through which sixty (60) farmers from Region Five have each benefited from five-acre production plots. These plots will function as controlled small-ruminant production units dedicated to the rearing and finishing of sheep under the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Project. To date, fifty-four (54) farmers have been allocated their respective plots and are expected to commence production by the second quarter of 2026.

Minister Mustapha noted that this structured approach is expected to generate several strategic outcomes.

"First, it will contribute to the development of a standardized sheep production model that can be replicated across other regions. Second, the



concentration of finishing operations will enhance supply chain efficiency, thus facilitating coordinated slaughter, processing, and distribution systems. Third, by producing consistent, high-quality lamb and mutton, the initiative will strengthen the reliability of domestic supply while positioning Guyana to capitalize on emerging regional and extra-regional export opportunities," he explained.

The minister said that one core objective of the project is to increase

local mutton production to over 7,000 tons by the end of year five and to reduce the regional importation bill by 25%.

In 2022, His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali launched the major Black Belly Sheep Project in Region Five, with the aim of making the region the Livestock Capital of Guyana while improving the social and economic well-being of its residents.

The Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Project in Guyana represents a strate-

gic initiative aimed at strengthening the livestock sector, enhancing regional food security, and expanding economic opportunities for farmers. The project, launched by the Government of Guyana in collaboration with the Government of Barbados, forms part of a broader regional effort to reduce reliance on imported meat products and to develop a sustainable sheep production industry within the Caribbean.

Guyana's Digital School now serving 27,000 students across the Caribbean

MINISTER of Education, Sonia Parag, has noted that Guyana's flagship Digital School is now serving more than 27,000 students across the Caribbean as the platform is continuing to expand its reach and offerings.

Parag made this known while delivering the keynote address at the closing ceremony of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) Ministerial Forum, during which she said the initiative, fully funded by the Government of Guyana, is being made available free of cost to participating CARICOM countries.

"The Digital School was not only established for Guyanese, it was also established for the wider CARICOM region," Parag said.

To this end, she noted that several territories, including Barbados, Grenada, Belize and St Kitts and Nevis, are already benefitting from the platform.

She said that the Digital School delivers live interac-

tive classes aligned with the CXC framework, supported by digital tools that allow for personalised learning and continuous engagement, which positions it as a critical tool in modernising education delivery across the region.

According to the minister, the platform currently provides content for Grades 10 and 11, with expansion in the works. "In three weeks, we will be able to have the content for Grades Seven to Nine, and in the months to come, we will have the entire primary [level] on the Guyana Digital School," she said.

Parag emphasised that the initiative was born out of the challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when countries were forced to rapidly transition to online learning. Against this backdrop, she stated that rather than treating digital learning as a temporary solution, Guyana moved to make it a permanent feature of its education system.



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‘No one is above the law’ — President Ali warns against abuse of power

President Dr Irfaan Ali on Monday issued a strong warning against the abuse of power and disregard for legal systems, declaring that no individual should believe they have a right to manipulate or undermine the rule of law.

Speaking at the launch of the Revised Laws of Guyana, the President emphasised that respect for the legal system is fundamental to maintaining order and justice in society.

“We have to deal with people who believe they have this God-given right to abuse access and abuse systems,” President Ali said. “I don’t believe that can be tried anywhere else.”

His comments follow last week’s widely publicised incident in which the United States (US) sanctioned Azruddin Mohamed, who arrived at the Attorney General’s Chambers with two wheelbarrows, one filled with small-denomination \$20 and \$100 bills and another packed with coins in an attempt to settle court-ordered costs.

The move was criticised by Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs Anil Nandlall, who described it as a “mockery” of the justice system and warned that it struck at the core of the country’s legal framework.

According to reports, Mohamed attempted to pay millions owed using small-denomination bills and coins, but a significant portion of the coins could not be accepted under the law, effectively rendering the attempt unsuccessful.

“I don’t think any individual can wheelbarrow coins into the Attorney General’s office in the United States or anywhere else.... and I’ve called a few places”, Dr Ali said.

President Ali, without naming Mohamed directly, used the moment to reinforce a broader principle, that the rule of law must be upheld consistently and without exception.

“To be a law-based society is to embrace a system in which power is never absolute and authority is never arbitrary,” he said.

He stressed that laws are designed not only to guide behaviour but to restrain excesses and protect citizens, warning that any erosion of these principles could have far-reaching consequences.

“Without law, there is no order. Without order, there is only chaos,” the Head of State said.

The President also stressed that justice must be applied equally, cautioning that the selective application of the law undermines public trust and weakens institutions.

“A law that is applied differently depending on who you are undermines



The wheelbarrows of cash and coins with which Azruddin Mohamed showed up at the courts

justice itself,” he noted.

The Attorney General had similarly warned that attempts to ridicule or defy court orders would not prevent enforce-

ment, signalling that legal action would proceed to recover outstanding sums owed.

President Ali said Guyana must

continue to build a system where laws are respected, enforced and understood, ensuring that rights are protected not by influence, but by principle.

\$2K ‘exit bonus’, free airfare offered to Jamaicans to return home from USA

The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has launched a high-visibility social media campaign specifically designed to reach undocumented Jamaicans living in the U.S., with an offer of a \$2,600 “exit bonus” and free airfare to return home.

The advertisements, which have appeared extensively on platforms like Instagram and X (formerly Twitter), use nostalgic travel-poster aesthetics and phrases such as “Fly to Jamaica for Free” to encourage voluntary departure. This effort is part of a broader \$200 million global marketing strategy under the department’s “Project Homecoming,” which has deployed similar targeted ads for undocumented nationals from India, Mexico, and Guatemala.

The program addresses a significant demographic within the United States. According to 2023 data from the Center for Migration Studies, there are approximately 87,300 undocumented Jamaican nationals currently residing in the U.S. These individuals form part of a larger Caribbean undocumented population estimated at 473,000.

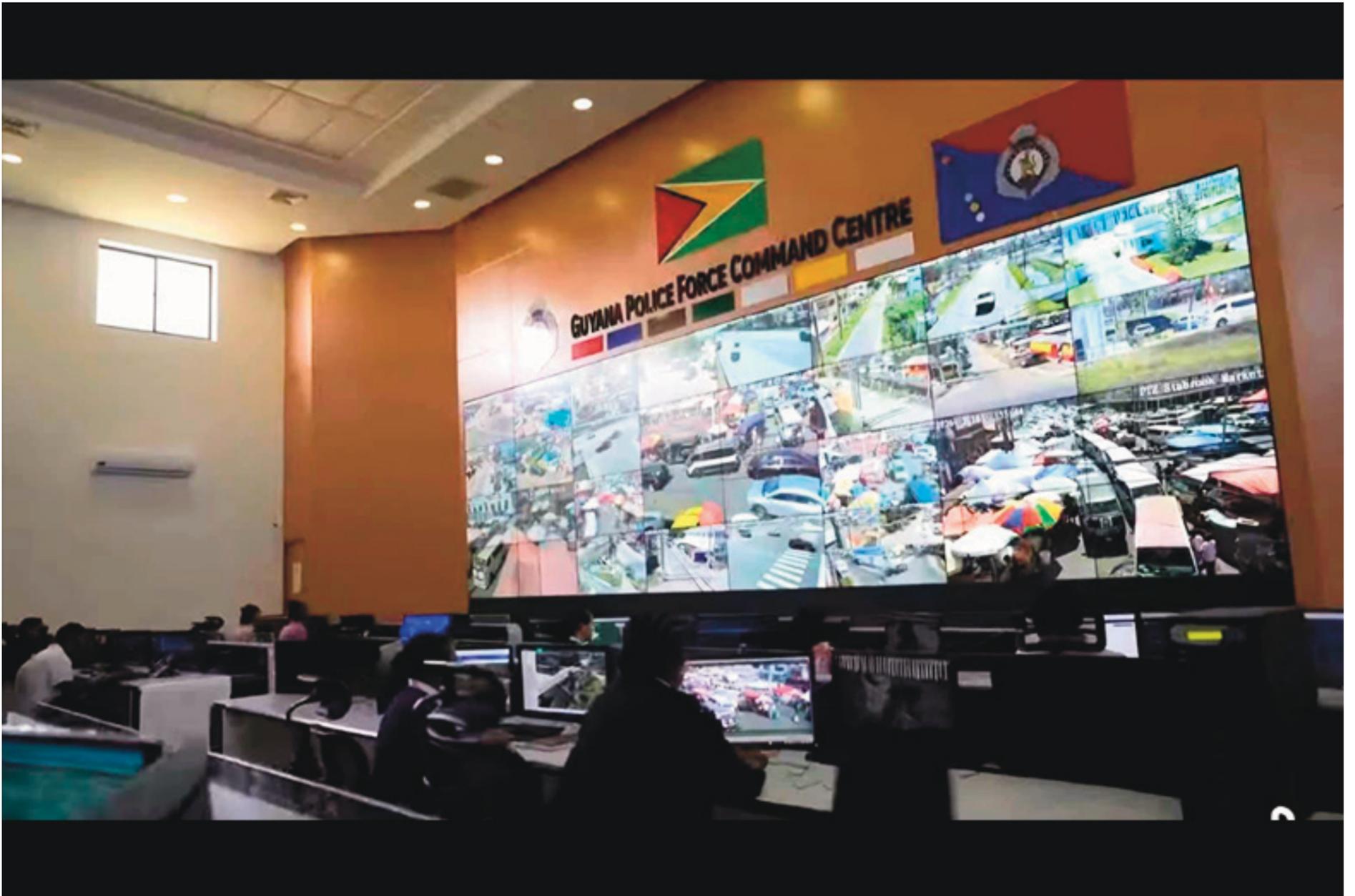
Most Jamaican nationals in the U.S. are concentrated in Florida and New York, states that are now seeing an influx of these specific DHS advertisements. Nationally, the undocumented population in the U.S. reached a record 14 million by mid-2025, prompting the current administration to seek more cost-effective removal methods.

Under the direction of the DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, the “exit bonus” was increased on January 21, 2026, from an initial \$1,000 to the current \$2,600. The department states that a “self-deportation” managed through the newly launched CBP Home app costs the U.S. taxpayer approximately \$5,100 per person. In contrast, a traditional enforced removal is estimated to cost \$18,245.

To participate, individuals must download the CBP Home app—which replaced the previous CBP One interface—and submit a “selfie” along with basic biographical details. Once vetted, participants are promised “DHS Airlines” travel arrangements within 21 days and the forgiveness of any civil fines related to their immigration status.

The Jamaican campaign is not an isolated effort. DHS has already reported that tens of thousands of individuals have utilized the app globally, contributing to what the department claims its total of 2.2 million voluntary departures since January 2025.

The administration has framed the program as a “gift” and a “dignified return,” though its primary function remains the rapid reduction of the undocumented population through financial persuasion. For those who choose not to utilize the app, Secretary Noem the DHS has warned of “strict enforcement and penalties,” including permanent bans on future re-entry to the United States.



The Digital Brain behind high-tech policing efforts in Guyana

GPF's Command Centre 'Digital Brain' powers intelligence-led policing

THE Guyana Police Force Command Centre has emerged as the "Digital Brain" of the Force, with a shift to a high-tech, intelligence-led era of policing.

The transformation did not happen overnight. The story of the Command Centre dates back to its beginnings as the National Emergency Response Operations Centre, once managed through the NDMA and operated by the Guyana Defence Force. What began as a modest emergency hub has now evolved into a national powerhouse for real-time policing.

Step inside on any given day or night, and you will find no pause, no lull. A team of 911 call takers, dispatchers, IVS operators, supervisors, and duty officers rotate in twelve-hour shifts, ensuring that Guyana is never without eyes, ears, and support.

The phones ring constantly. Some calls are urgent, some frantic, some hopeful. In 2025, almost 890,000 calls

passed through these lines. More than 5,600 became active cases of crime, fire, medical emergencies, traffic incidents, and other public-safety concerns. Even when the prank calls came by the hundreds of thousands, the discipline of the ranks never wavered. Behind every ring is a possibility of life, and so every call matters.

But the Command Centre's strength is not limited to the lines it answers, it is also found in the vast network of cameras stretching across the country. Born out of the Safe City programme and now expanding into Safe Country, this network covers strategic points in Regions Three, Four, Five, and Six, with Regions Two and 10 currently being outfitted under new phases.

Hundreds of camera sites have been installed, each location fitted with PTZ cameras, facial recognition units, license plate readers, and traditional bullet cameras. Every camera, every angle, tells a story.

Inside the Centre, operators watch these stories unfold in real time. A suspicious figure pacing at a street corner. A sudden gathering that seems to grow too quickly. A vehicle that doesn't belong in the place it's spotted.

A fight breaking out near a shop. A motorcyclist weaving recklessly through traffic. Moments like these are detected in seconds, and divisional patrols move out with clear intelligence guiding them. The cameras do not just record, they prevent, they protect, they interrupt.

Many breakthroughs in recent policing operations in have unfolded because of what the Command Centre observed. In several instances, intelligence gathered through the camera network has assisted investigators in tracing the movements of vehicles and persons of interest, enabling ranks to respond swiftly and effectively.

What may appear to be minor activity captured on camera can often pro-

vide critical leads, prompting further investigation and operational response. The cameras acted as both witness and guide.

And the Centre's capabilities only continue to grow. Today, more than 11 million facial snapshots and over 30 million license-plate images sit securely in the system's databases.

When investigators need to track a suspect, confirm a vehicle's presence, validate a timeline, or extract footage for court, the Command Centre becomes the anchor of the case. The number of investigations strengthened by video evidence over the past year is in the hundreds, and rising.

Yet, perhaps the most impressive part of this operation is not the technology itself, but the people who use it. Every camera feed is interpreted by trained eyes, every alert is assessed by a professional who must decide, often in a split second, what action is required.

(Guyana Police Service)

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US, UK partner with Guyana to advance anti-corruption, accountability efforts

THE US Embassy Georgetown, in collaboration with the British High Commission, on Monday, opened a three-day anti-corruption workshop under the jointly funded U.S.-UK Criminal Justice Reform Project.

According to a press release from the US Embassy, the programme brings together 25 investigators and prosecutors from Guyana’s leading investigative agencies and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to strengthen skills for investigating, prosecuting, and preventing corruption.

During the March 23 – 25 workshop, participants will focus on financial investigations, case-building, and international best practices for managing complex corruption cases.

As the first Guyana-based initiative under the multi-year project, which also supports criminal justice partners across Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, the workshop advances the project’s broader objectives to modernise laws and practices, expand technical expertise, and reinforce effective interagency collaboration.

At the opening ceremony, US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, John Crippen, highlighted the persistent threat corruption poses to good governance and encouraged participants to apply the skills and interagency relationships developed during the workshop to address complex cases collaboratively.

Liam McShane, Chargé d’Affaires at the British High Commission in Georgetown, welcomed the agencies’ enthusiastic participation, which, he said, reflects strong commitment to the “continued improvement and success” of



The US Embassy Georgetown, in collaboration with the British High Commission, on Monday, opened a three-day anti-corruption workshop under the jointly funded U.S.-UK Criminal Justice Reform Project

Guyana’s criminal justice system.

He added that, “this commitment to justice and public service is essential to the strengthening of Guyana’s institutions, as well as to the confidence and trust that citizens place in them.”

Commissioner of the Guyana Police Force, Clifton Hicken, encouraged the participating officials to uphold accountability across the justice sector, uphold high character in their work, and apply

the lessons of the training workshop.

The United States and United Kingdom both underscored that corruption fuels transnational organised crime, hinders development, and weakens public trust.

Both nations said they look forward to strengthening co-operation with Guyana to improve accountability, criminal deterrence, and shared security.

The US Department of State’s Bu-

reau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs provided the US funding under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, a US security co-operation programme with Guyana and 12 other Caribbean countries to degrade and dismantle transnational criminal organisations, curb illicit narcotics, and deepen regional security co-operation.

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

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

Key priorities of the WGC include:

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

World Guyanese Congress

5200 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor
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To find out more about World Guyanese Congress and our goals and priorities. Scan the QR code, or visit www.wgc-org.com

If you have any questions feel free to get in touch:
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PAHO, Global Affairs Canada renew CAD\$15M partnership

THE Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) have renewed their partnership through a CAD\$15 million agreement to strengthen sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for women and adolescent girls living in situations of vulnerability in six countries in the Region of the Americas.

According to a press release, the collaboration, which spans 2026–2030, builds on a long-standing alliance between PAHO and Canada.

Through the Closing the Gaps in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights by Strengthening Health Systems for Women and Adolescent Girls (C-Gaps) project, the partnership will continue supporting efforts in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, and Peru.

Aligned with Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy and PAHO’s Strategic Plan (2026-2031), the initiative focuses on strengthening service delivery, advancing women’s and girls’ leadership and agency, and promoting enabling environments for SRHH.

While countries in the Region of the Americas have improved coverage



The partnership will advance women's and adolescents' health in the Americas

of services with a focus on primary health care, barriers to access persist, particularly among populations in situations of vulnerability.

Addressing these gaps is essential to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensure access to

sexual and reproductive health and rights for all women and girls.

Guided by a gender equality and health equity strategy, the initiative, the partners said, prioritises populations experiencing more than one form of discrimination and structural exclusion, including migrants, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and women with disabilities.

It will address key challenges such as maternal and neonatal mortality, adolescent pregnancy, gender-based violence, and access to contraception, while strengthening primary health care and generating evidence to inform regional action.

This renewed agreement builds on a strong and results-driven partnership

between PAHO and Global Affairs Canada. Previous joint initiatives—such as the Improved Health of Women and Adolescent Girls in Situations of Vulnerability Project—have strengthened health workforce capacity, supported the development of national protocols and policies, and empowered thousands of women and adolescent girls to engage in community decision-making on sexual and reproductive rights.

“The new investment reflects Canada’s sustained leadership in advancing gender equality and PAHO’s mandate to strengthen health systems across the Region. Together, the partnership will accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that no woman or adolescent girl is left behind,” the release stated.



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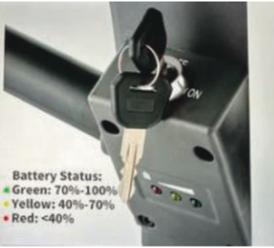
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Type	BLION-EW1500	Pallet Capacity	3300 Lbs
Serial No		Weight Without Battery	258.5 Lbs
Lift Height	7.5 inch	Allowed Battery Weight	16.5 Lbs
Battery Capacity	20 Ah	Service Weight	275 Lbs
Battery Voltage	48 V		

Charging Time: 3HR

Working Time: 6HR

Work Shift: 24HR



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Advancement of Guyana, US military partnership to enhance protection of EEZ

WHILE affirming strong ties with the United States of America (USA) and expansion of security and capacity-building partnerships, President Dr Irfaan Ali has affirmed that discussions have not focused on the establishment of a US military base in Guyana.

The President made these remarks on the sidelines of the launch of the Revised Laws of Guyana, while engaging the media, on Monday.

“We are not discussing those matters, but as I said, our partnership is strong, and our partnership includes training, technology, transfer of knowledge, integration of assets,” he said, noting that this is common among nations seeking to bolster its security capabilities.

While highlighting the broad security partnership Guyana and the US shares, the Head of State said: “Our military and security partnership has a long list with the US.”

The engagement held with the US was on building out a system to address and monitor the use of the country’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the President said, noting that these types of infrastructure can be costly.

He added that Guyana also has partnerships with other nations to build its capacity, including with Brazil and Colombia, noting “So we’ll continue those partnerships that enhance our capability and capacity and that builds our ability to respond effectively to business.”

Last year December, senior officials from the United States Department of War reinforced Washington’s commitment to deepening security co-operation with Georgetown and supporting stability across the Caribbean and South America.

Discussions centred on strengthening bilateral defence co-operation, safeguarding Guyana’s territorial integrity, and expanding joint efforts to confront transnational threats.

According to a US Embassy statement, the visit formed part of the United States’ broader efforts to bolster regional partnerships at a time of increasing geopolitical tension and heightened security challenges in the hemisphere.

Earlier this year, President Ali and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, reaffirmed their nations’ deepening security partnership as both leaders committed to enhancing co-operation to counter transnational crime, protect re-

gional stability and safeguard Guyana’s sovereignty.

According to a statement issued by the US Department of State and attributed to Principal Deputy Spokesperson Tommy Pigott, Secretary Rubio spoke with President Ali to discuss strengthening bilateral security co-operation, commending the Guyanese Head of State for his leadership as a regional security partner and for Guyana’s expanding role in promoting stability across the Western Hemisphere.

Both leaders committed to maintaining close engagement on the issues discussed, as well as other areas of mu-

tual interest, signalling continued momentum in Guyana–US relations anchored in security co-operation, democratic governance, and regional stability.

The United States and Guyana have steadily expanded defence co-operation in recent years through joint training exercises, intelligence collaboration, and maritime security operations.

Washington has positioned Georgetown as a key strategic partner in ensuring stability in the Caribbean Basin and countering illicit networks that operate across borders.

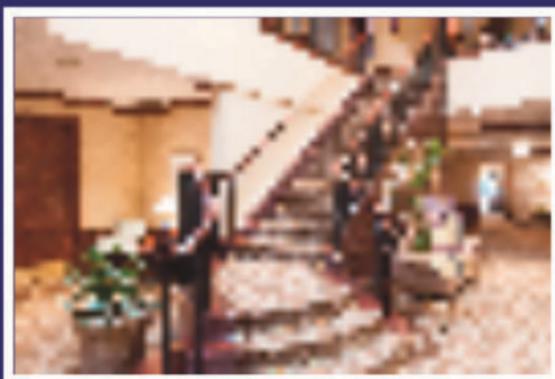
Guyana’s rapidly growing economy and its rising geopolitical importance, driven by the global attention on its oil sector and its role in hemispheric security, have further strengthened bilateral ties.

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E-Wallets, digital payments to go live in six months, ease reliance on cash

LONG lines at Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) could soon be eliminated, as Guyana prepares to introduce a digital payment system, easing reliance on cash transactions and the need to carry large sums of money.

This was announced by President Dr. Irfaan Ali during his address at the opening ceremony for Demerara Bank's new Beterverwagting, East Coast Demerara branch on Monday.

The Head of State emphasised how Guyana is quickly adapting to enhance its financial ecosystem.

"In the next six months, I've advised the Governor of the Central Bank that we must be in a position that a national payment platform must be fully operational, and we must have access to digital wallets at a national level and international scale," the President said.

While Dr. Ali underscored the importance of upgrades to the banking sector's physical infrastructure, he noted that the very nature of banking is being transformed.

"As we celebrate this physical expansion of banking, you must also recognise that banking itself is changing. It was a time when banking meant standing in long lines. People would go into a branch, deposit money, withdraw cash, or pay bills. The bank was a place you had to visit. The model is changing," he said.

The President added: "The future of banking is digital. The future of banking is online banking. The future of banking is cashless transactions. We're moving towards a time when fewer people will need to come into a branch for routine transactions, deposits, transfers and bill payments,



President Dr. Irfaan Ali at the opening of the new Demerara Bank's branch

these will increasingly, be done electronically."

He further emphasised that modernising Guyana's financial architecture is critical to its broader economic ambitions.

"We cannot fully integrate into the global marketplace if we do not modernise our financial systems. That is why the government is committed to building a financial ecosystem that will gradually move us towards the reliance on technology and electronic means of setting accounts," Dr. Ali

said.

To this end, the government is actively working to build a financial ecosystem that supports greater reliance on technology and electronic methods of settling transactions.

Rather than creating entirely new digital accounts for every citizen, President Ali said the administration has opted for a more practical and cost-effective approach by leveraging existing bank accounts.

These accounts are already being used to distribute old-age pensions,

National Insurance Scheme (NIS) benefits, public sector salaries, utility payments and, more recently, cash grants.

"We are using bank accounts to deliver old age pensions, NIS benefits, salaries of government workers, payment of utility bills and now the cash grant. This approach is cheaper; it is more orderly and is more convenient for citizens," the Head of State said.

He noted that this also strengthens financial inclusion.

The President said: "When people receive payments through the banking system, they become part of that system. They are more likely to save, to transact and to access all the financial services."

Meanwhile, Dowlath Parbhu, Demerara Bank's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) noted that the new facility, which replaces its previous location at Le Ressouvenir is outfitted with the most modern technologies to support efficient, safe and digital banking services.

The new facility spans 23,000 square feet and features a spacious banking hall, safety deposit box services, and specialised sections for credit services and new accounts.

The branch is equipped with three intelligent ATMs, one drive-through, and two walk-up units, capable of cash withdrawals and deposits.

"We look to continue to build on the strong foundation, guided by our sheer vision, driven by excellence and commitment to making a meaningful impact across the communities we serve," he said. He noted too that the bank contributed approximately 50 per cent of all lending growth in the banking system last year.

Venezuelan accused admits role in Regent Street blast

PAPER committal proceedings in the case surrounding the deadly explosion at the Mobil Service Station at the corner of Regent and King Streets, Georgetown, were expected to commence on Monday, March 23, 2026, but took a significant turn after one of the accused indicated his intention to admit full responsibility for the incident.

The matter, being heard before Acting Chief Magistrate Faith McGusty at the Georgetown Magistrates' Court, involves Venezuelan nationals Daniel Alexander Ramirez Poedemo, 33; Johnny Boodram, 27; and Alexander Bettencourt, 44, along with 33-year-old Guyanese Krystal LaCruz, all of whom are charged with terrorism.

During Monday's proceedings, Poedemo, who is alleged to be the mastermind, spoke through a translator, indicating his willingness to accept full responsibility for the explosion.

According to the translator, he said that whatever decision is taken rests with the court, while maintaining that

the other accused were not involved in the incident and should be released.

He added that he wanted to bring the matter to a swift conclusion so that "the innocent persons can be out".

The translator further related that Poedemo stated he was prepared to admit to everything, explaining that he was given the materials by a Guyanese/Venezuelan individual, and placed them where instructed.

He maintained that the others had no involvement, insisting that he alone was responsible for the entire incident.

Following the disclosure, Prosecutor Mandel Moore informed the court that he had advised Poedemo's attorney that a formal proposal must be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Shalimar Ali-Hack, SC, for consideration.

Attorney Shellon Boyce, who represents Poedemo, indicated that she would require two weeks to prepare the proposal. As a result, the matter was adjourned to April 20 for report.

The explosion, which occurred on October 26, 2025, claimed the life of six-year-old Soraya Bourne and left several of her relatives injured, including Jenica Hooper, 27; Yvonne Jonas, 71; Seddia McIntosh; and 11-year-old Reshard Lord.

Several vehicles and nearby buildings were also damaged in what authorities have described as one of the country's most serious national security incidents in recent years.

The case had been poised to begin paper committal proceedings on Monday, following an earlier delay after two of the accused secured legal representation. Attorney Boyce had previously entered an appearance for Poedemo and requested time to review the disclosure materials and consult with her client, while attorney Melvin Duke, representing Bettencourt, also sought time to examine the evidence and obtain instructions. Both requests were granted.

The development follows the re-

cent completion of disclosure by Moore, who presented a comprehensive bundle of evidence the State intends to rely on, including witness statements, forensic analyses, electronic and telecommunications data, and other documentary material. Samples collected from the scene were also sent to India for advanced forensic testing.

Paper committal proceedings mark a critical stage in indictable matters, during which a magistrate determines whether the evidence is admissible and sufficient to establish a prima facie case to commit the accused to stand trial in the High Court.

Authorities have described the explosion as a coordinated terrorist act, alleging that Poedemo entered Guyana around 08:00 hrs on the day of the attack carrying an explosive device in two bulky black plastic bags, as seen on surveillance footage. Minutes after entering the gas station compound, the device detonated.



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3.99 each



Shavuot Ginger Tea Bag 20's

2/\$5



Dixee Original Crackers 276 g

2.29 each



Maggi Season-Up All Purpose Seasoning 2 kg

24.99 each



Grace Jamaican Honey Jerk Seasoning 340 g

1.99 each



Grace Browning 142 ml

2/\$5



Rogers Lantic Granulated Sugar 2 kg

2.99 each



Grace Corned Beef Regular Only 340 g

3.99 each



NuPak Sardine in Tomato Sauce assorted 155 g

2/\$1



Grace Flavored Fritter Mix 270 g

1.99 each



Catelli Macaroni 400 g

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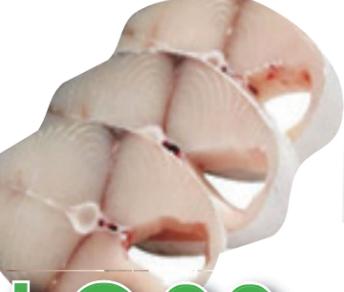
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(Drumsticks)



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lb as is

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Snapper



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lb as is

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President Ali calls for structural reforms to tackle crime

President Irfaan Ali has identified substance abuse and mental health challenges as major drivers of repeat offending, calling for a deeper, structural approach to reforming both Guyana’s education and prison systems.

Speaking at the opening of the Guyana Prison Service Annual Correctional Officers Conference, the president said tackling crime requires more than improved infrastructure and technology. Instead, he stressed the need to address the underlying social and psychological issues that often push individuals into conflict with the law.

“Substance abuse and mental health” are among the most critical factors affecting both first-time and repeat offenders, Ali said, noting that these issues frequently go unaddressed until individuals enter the criminal justice system.

He argued that prevention must begin within the education system, questioning whether schools have any structured or meaningful approach to dealing with these challenges. Without early intervention, he warned, prisons will continue to face increasing pressure from a growing number of young offenders.

The president also raised concerns about the normalisation of risky behaviours, including vaping, which he said is



Barriers to Rehabilitation in Guyanese Prisons – MNS Disorders in Guyana’s Jails

increasingly linked to mental health issues.

Beyond this, Ali pointed to broader social concerns, including the declining role and confidence of men across the Caribbean. He said insufficient attention

has been given to men’s development and positive influence in society, describing it as a longstanding structural issue in the region.

Ali maintained that meaningful prison reform must go beyond physical

upgrades, and instead include sustained investment in mental health services, substance abuse prevention and early social interventions aimed at reducing crime and repeat offending over time.

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Guyana's Ali warns Middle East tensions could disrupt global economy

Guyana President Irfaan Ali is warning that the ongoing war in the Middle East, particularly escalating tensions affecting the Strait of Hormuz, could have far-reaching consequences for the global economy, including Guyana.

Addressing the 136th General Meeting of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI), Ali said disruptions to the critical energy corridor are already impacting global markets and could worsen in the months ahead. He added that he supports international calls for dialogue and peaceful engagement to stabilise the situation.

"I also want to join with President Trump in the United States in calling on all parties in the Gulf to move towards dialogue and to have constructive conversations in normalising the situation in the Gulf that is affecting all of us," Ali said.

The United States and Israel launched an attack against Iran on February 28, targeting missile infrastructure, military sites and leadership in the capital, Tehran, and across the country. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, who had led the country since 1989, was killed during the first wave of strikes.

In response, Iran has directly targeted locations linked to U.S. forces and has increasingly struck energy and maritime infrastructure across the Gulf. Iranian actions near the Strait of Hormuz, including threats to shipping and reported attacks, have reduced tanker traffic and heightened concerns about global energy supply disruptions.

Ali noted that the Strait of Hormuz is among the most strategically important shipping routes globally, carrying roughly 20 to 25 per cent of seaborne oil trade, along with significant volumes of natural gas.

He said disruptions in the region are already affecting global markets, pointing out that 17 per cent of Qatar's liquefied natural gas (LNG) capacity has been impacted in recent days.

The situation has also driven up costs across several sectors, including a 25 per cent increase in fertiliser prices, which could have direct implications for agriculture and global food production.

"These are the important ingredients for manufacturing, industrial development and most economies around the



President Irfaan Ali

world," Ali told the business community, warning that even if hostilities were to cease immediately, the damage to energy infrastructure could take years to repair.

"So already this is not a short-term situation. Even if the war stops tomorrow, you already have on our hands five years of challenge," he said, citing rising freight and transport costs, along with increased shipping and insurance rates due to heightened regional risks.

Ali stressed that maintaining open trade routes through the Strait of Hormuz is critical to global economic stability.

"That is why we support every effort to have the Strait of Hormuz open and functional and every effort in bring-

ing the war to an end," he said, adding that the government is closely monitoring developments and stands ready to make policy adjustments to safeguard the economy.

The president also used the forum to renew calls for the establishment of an oil refinery in Guyana, describing it as a national security priority amid growing global energy uncertainty.

"Now, I believe we should return to the conversation of a refinery for national security," Ali said, noting that despite Guyana's emergence as an oil-producing nation, it remains heavily dependent on imported fuel, particularly for electricity generation.

He said the fuel bill for Guyana Power and Light Inc. remains significant

and could increase further with global price shocks. Investing in refining capacity, he argued, would give the country greater control over fuel supply, pricing and long-term energy security.

Ali also pointed to broader efforts to expand national energy infrastructure, including the gas-to-energy project, which is expected to reduce reliance on imports and lower electricity costs over time. He emphasised that closer collaboration between government and the private sector will be key to navigating global uncertainty while sustaining Guyana's economic growth.

"We are closely monitoring the situation. We are vigilant, we are responsible, and we stand ready to make the necessary adjustments," he said.



A student walks past the campus of the University of Southampton in Delhi, India

UK universities flock to India - but will they succeed?

On the shores of Mumbai's Powai lake - a rare pocket of serenity in the bustling metropolis of more than 20 million people - a glitzy new campus of the University of York is getting its final finishing touches.

The institute has begun recruiting students for the 2026-27 academic year, and operations are set to commence in the next few months.

"We're looking at an intake of around 270 students in the first year... and that should go up to 3,000-4,000 students each year over the coming years," Lindsay Oades, provost of the University of York in Mumbai, told the BBC.

York is among nine UK universities that are setting up campuses in India following announcements last year during Sir Keir Starmer's visit to the country. Others include the University of Aberdeen, University of Bristol, University of Liverpool, Queen's University Belfast and Coventry University.

The University of Southampton has already opened a campus in the capital Delhi and along with York, focuses primarily on business, management and engineering programmes.

In 2020, India's National Education Policy announced that foreign universities would be allowed in the country and rules were notified in 2023, creating a legal mechanism for these institutions to set up shop.

Ostensibly, the proposition appears like a win-win for UK universities facing severe fiscal pressures at home, as well as for Indian students starved of quality education locally. However, expanding on the ground will be easier said than done.

University of York Mumbai will admit 270 students in the first year

According to UK government's figures, India has 40 million university students and would need at least 70 million places in the decade to 2035, opening up an incremental market opportunity of 25-30 million seats for British universities.

Moreover there's a clear supply gap in high-quality education.

"Eleven million students complete Grade 12

[final school year in India] each year, with roughly 1.5-1.7 million falling within the top academic bracket. India's top-tier institutions admit only about 200,000 of them annually," Aritra Ghosal of OneStep Global, which helps foreign universities enter the Indian market, told the BBC.

"From an affordability standpoint, an estimated four-five million students can realistically consider degree programmes priced above £10,000 per year," said Ghosal.

That's essentially the aspirational upper middle class and not the mass market, but a large enough gap for British universities to exploit.

According to Oades, fees at York's Indian campus will be priced at around 50% of what it would cost to study at the university's campus in the UK.

While still much more expensive than many Indian private universities, there is a straight-up "quality justification" for the premium, he says, adding that universities like York follow global standards and focus on the demand for employability skills and industry partnerships.

The courses will also allow students to opt for hybrid learning between the Mumbai and York campuses, a model followed by other British universities as well.

But will this be enough?

For decades millions of Indian students have opted to study abroad, taking loans and using up family savings, mainly to migrate for better work opportunities.

Mumbai-based Ankita Kejriwal, whose son Vivaan is hoping to study finance and economics in the US next year, says most of his friends and cousins are choosing to go abroad primarily for international work exposure.

"That is the main draw. They may choose to come back in a few years, but not without working there at least for a while," says Kejriwal.

An India-delivered UK degree will not be a substitute for these students. Tighter immigration rules, however, could encourage some to opt for the foreign university experience in India.



ARIES (March 21 - April 20): Saturn in your sign will put you to the test this week, so don't be surprised if you have to rewrite your plans as you go along. Anything that has not been properly thought out will have to be reviewed and revised if it is going to work.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21): There may be moments when you feel dispirited by how slowly things are coming together, but the situation isn't as bad as it seems. It could be the universe's way of making you pay attention to the little things that help make the big things work.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21): It's not like you to resist change but you could be more conservative in your attitude today. That may in fact be a good thing as it will act as a counterweight to the overly optimistic outlook that has been your go-to stance in recent weeks.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23): It would be easy to believe that you have blown your chances of success but it would also be wrong. Cosmic activity in the area of your chart that governs your professional standing is about to give you yet another chance to excel. Make this one work!

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23): You don't lack for confidence and for once you seem to be balancing it with a large dose of common sense as well, so expect some seriously good things to happen over the next few days. It's not about luck, it's about creating new opportunities.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23): There will be signs today that something you thought was moving ahead nicely is about to hit a wall, and you must not ignore them. There is nothing wrong in admitting that you made a bad call, so long as you follow it up with a good one.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23): If you let a rival get inside your head today they won't hesitate to play on your doubts and fears. This is one of those occasions when you would be wise to erect a barrier between yourself and the outside world, albeit a temporary one.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22): There will be a lot of added pressure on the work front this week as your bosses and colleagues expect you to deliver above and beyond the call of duty. Do what you can to meet their expectations but don't overdo it. Know when to say "No".

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21): If a project of some kind is not going as well as you wanted it to you may be tempted to give up on it altogether. Don't. You are closer to a breakthrough than you realize, so keep at it and don't stop believing in your creative abilities.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20): You may not be getting the level of support you think you deserve but don't take it personally. Loved ones have issues of their own to deal with and don't have the time to look out for your interests too. You're big enough to look after yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19): Someone whose opinions are the opposite of your own may annoy you intensely but if you are smart you won't let it show. You are going to need their assistance before the end of the week, so pretend you agree with them for the time being.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar. 20): There is no such thing as easy money and if you don't quite believe that now you will believe it by the end of the week. If nothing else, Saturn's influence in the financial area of your chart will force you to mend your spendthrift ways.

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US expands visa bond program to 50 countries, including Grenada

The United States (US) Department of State says it is expanding its visa bond program to apply to a total of 50 countries, including Grenada, on April 2, in a move aimed at “combat illegal overstay rates”.

The State Department said on Wednesday that the program will require foreign nationals from these countries to post a bond of US\$15,000 before receiving B1 or B2 visas for business and tourism in the United States.

“The bond will be returned to visa recipients who return home in compliance with the terms of the visa and the bond or does not travel,” the State Department said.

Besides Grenada, the State Department said the new countries included in the visa bond programme are Cambodia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, and Tunisia.

The State Department said these countries join 38 nations that are already included in the visa bond programme.

The Caribbean countries already included are Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and Cuba.

Others, which are largely African countries, comprise Algeria, Angola,



Applicants will be required to post a \$15,000 bond to secure a visa

Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Cote d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Fiji, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mauritania, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

“The visa bond programme has already proven effective at drastically re-

ducing the number of visa recipients who overstay their visas and illegally remain in the United States,” the State Department said.

It said nearly 1,000 foreigners have been issued visas under the programme, and that 97 per cent of bonded travellers have returned home from the United States on time.

The State Department said it may continue to place visa bonds on countries based on a range of immigration

risk factors.

“The expanded visa bond program saves the American taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars every year,” it said, noting that it costs the US taxpayer over US\$18,000 on average to remove an immigrant illegally present in the United States.

“The Department of State is saving US taxpayers up to US\$800 million per year that would otherwise be required to remove these aliens who

Hundreds of TT asylum seekers sent back from the UK

Hundreds of Trinidad and Tobago nationals who travelled to the United Kingdom and sought asylum have been repatriated, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs Sean Sobers confirmed to the Trinidad Express.

Sobers said in an interview that between 90 and 97 per cent of the more than 700 nationals who had applied for asylum have returned to Trinidad over the past few months.

The developments follow the UK government’s announcement just over a year ago, on March 12, 2025, that all Trinidad and Tobago nationals would require a visa to enter the UK, even for short visits. The move was in response to a “significant increase” in nationals arriving as visitors and subsequently claiming asylum.

Between 2023 and 2024, a total of 797 asylum applications were filed by Trinidad and Tobago nationals. At the time, former Minister of National Security Fitzgerald Hinds noted that local criminals were fleeing to the UK to avoid legal accountability, a factor cited in the introduction of the visa requirement.

An explanatory memorandum pre-



sented to the UK Parliament on March 12, 2025, highlighted the surge in claims. From the first quarter of 2023 to the fourth quarter of 2024, there were 797 claims, including dependants, compared with an annual average of 49 claims between 2015 and 2019.

The Home Office also noted that most claims were made at UK ports of

entry, placing operational pressure on border staff and diverting resources from other priorities. It added that Trinidad and Tobago’s visa status would continue to be reviewed, particularly in relation to asylum claims and the internal security situation at home.

On March 5, 2026, the UK Home Office issued a Facebook update citing

widespread abuse of the asylum system. The post stated that by introducing visit visas for tourists from Jordan, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Botswana, over 6,000 potential asylum claims were prevented. Nicaraguans and Saint Lucians were also added to the list of nationals now required to obtain visit visas.

Holness: Manley-led 'socialist experiment' was 'wrong path' for Jamaica

Prime Minister Andrew Holness says Jamaica is maintaining a strong and strategic foreign policy while holding firm to what he described as core national values, including his position that gender is limited to male and female.

Contributing to the Budget Debate in Parliament on Thursday, Holness said that although Jamaica continues to adapt to global changes, there are fundamental principles that will not shift.

"There were those saying these imperialists imposing global financial things on us, mek wi resist it. And what? Lose access to the international banking system? That's the logic of the argument. Yes, there are things we must resist when it comes to our values. There are things that define us as Jamaicans that we not going to change. Man is a man and a woman is a woman. We are not going to change on that," he declared, drawing applause as he struck the podium.

The prime minister framed his remarks against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving global landscape, pointing to shifts in the balance of power within the multilateral system. He noted that more countries are now exercising military, economic, technological and normative influence, resulting in increased competition and less automatic consensus on global issues.

According to Holness, this growing fragmentation underscores the need for reform of the global multilateral system, rather than its abandonment.

"We cannot abandon it, but it must be reformed to take into consideration the new power dynamics that have emerged," he said.

He emphasised that in this complex foreign policy environment, Jamaica must remain strategic and avoid what he described as ideological rhetoric.

"Foreign policy is about having a clear framework of principles and values within which we pursue our interests, while treating with the interests and powers of others with whom we engage," Holness stated.

Holness insisted that his administration has ensured Jamaica's foreign policy serves the country's economic interests, arguing that the current approach has delivered measurable benefits.

"There has been no other era during which foreign policy has delivered as much economic benefit for Jamaica," he said, adding that all decisions must support the country's ability to recover quickly and build resilience.

"Jamaica will always take the necessary actions to ensure that it is compliant under the multilateral system, but we will act in our own interest."



Jamaica Prime Minister Andrew Holness

Holness also pointed to history as a lesson in leadership, criticising the People's National Party under former Prime Minister Michael Manley for what he described as a misguided foreign policy direction.

In the 1970s, Manley, leading the People's National Party, pursued "democratic socialism" and built close relationships with Fidel Castro and Cuba. That included cooperation in health, education and security, but also alarmed the United States during the height of the Cold War. Jamaica leaned toward the Soviet bloc and socialist-leaning countries, even while formally part of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The period coincided with significant economic challenges, including capital flight, high inflation, and interventions by the International Monetary Fund. It also gave rise to accusations—still debated—of U.S. pressure or destabilisation linked to Jamaica's ideological direction. Critics argue Manley's policies deepened the crisis, while supporters maintain that external forces played a major role.

"This period coincided with the collapse of the Jamaican economy, our first debt crisis, the hollowing out of the middle class, and the emergence of widespread political and gang violence.

"Many of the challenges we face today are anchored in that period of our history," Holness said.

"What I've said here is not opinion. These are the facts. If you ask me for my opinion, I will give you my opinion. My opinion is that I admire Michael Manley's intellect. I admire his willingness and challenge, but I also question his judgment."

"As it turned out, by 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, and the multilateral system entered a unipolar phase

dominated by the U.S. The global socialist experiment for which the PNP diverted Jamaica had been defeated and proven to be the wrong path to be pursued," Holness said.

"Michael Manley, and this is part of why I admire him, would come back to power as a reformed man in 1989, abandoning the policy of democratic socialism and pursuing closer ties with the United States. Why did we go down that path? That's the question that keeps bothering me."



Antigua and Barbuda to hold general elections within 90 days

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has announced that Antigua and Barbuda will hold general elections within the next 90 days, urging supporters of the ruling Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) to prepare for an early poll.

Speaking on his weekly radio programme on Saturday, Browne called on party candidates and supporters to intensify their mobilisation efforts ahead of the vote.

“I have asked all of the Labour Party candidates who will contest the next general elections to utilise the next few weeks to go door-to-door and to get the people out to do the re-registration so that they can have their cards in time for the upcoming general election,” Browne said.

“So you know general elections are coming. I think it is known. So, I’m also appealing to the people of Antigua and Barbuda to do the responsible thing to get re-registered as soon as possible because yes, there will be general elections,” he told radio listeners.

Browne, who became the country’s first prime minister to be elected to three consecutive terms, said the timeline for the polls could be sooner rather than later.

“I would say within 90 days, and the earlier you go to get your card, the better.

“So I’m now announcing that general elections would take place within 90 days and I’m asking my colleagues in particular, the candidates of the Labour Party to go out on the road for the next three weeks in particular to make sure that we get our supporters registered,” he added.

The announcement follows recent political developments that analysts say may have strengthened the ABLP’s position. Last week, Barbados-based pollster Peter Wickham suggested Browne consider calling a snap election to capitalise on what he described as growing momentum for the ruling party.

That momentum follows the ABLP’s decisive victory in a by-election in the St. Philip North constituency, where candidate Randy Baltimore retained the seat long held by veteran politician Robin Yearwood, who recently retired from active politics.

Baltimore secured 924 votes, or approximately 69.5 per cent of ballots



Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

cast, defeating Alex Browne of the opposition United Progressive Party, who received 406 votes, or about 30.5 per cent. Voter turnout was estimated at 70 per cent.

The results also marked an improvement for the ABLP compared to the 2023 general election, when Yearwood won the same seat by a margin of fewer than 100 votes.

Wickham also weighed in on the state of the opposition, suggesting that UPP leader Jamale Pringle should con-

sider stepping aside, citing a series of setbacks under his leadership. These include the loss of the St. Peter’s constituency, the departure of several candidates, and internal concerns within the party.

“The party should be allowed to decide in a special conference whether to stick with the current leadership or move on, especially with other candidates waiting in the wings,” Wickham said.

In the last general election held on

January 18, 2023, the ABLP won nine of the 17 seats, while the UPP secured six. The Barbuda People’s Movement won one seat, and the remaining seat went to an independent candidate.

Subsequent political shifts altered that balance, including a by-election victory by UPP candidate Rawdon Turner following the murder of opposition legislator Asot Michael. Later, UPP legislator Anthony Smith crossed the floor to join the ABLP and was appointed Minister of Agriculture.

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Sandals extends closure of three Jamaica resorts for US\$200M transformation

Three Sandals resorts in Jamaica will remain closed longer than initially planned, as Sandals Resorts International (SRI) undertakes a major US\$200 million transformation project.

Sandals Montego Bay, Sandals Royal Caribbean and Sandals South Coast were originally scheduled to reopen on May 31 following Hurricane Melissa. However, as restoration work progressed, the company decided to expand the scope of upgrades, pushing reopening dates to later in 2026.

According to SRI, the extended closure will allow for a full-scale reimagining of the properties under its Sandals 2.0 vision, rather than standard repairs.

“The opportunity to completely reimagine three resorts at this scale, with full focus and without compromising the guest experience, is extraordinarily rare,” said Adam Stewart, Executive Chairman of Sandals Resorts International.

“With our doors closed, we were given something we almost never have in hospitality, a true blank canvas and having that clarity changed everything.

“We spent time walking the properties, speaking with our team and thinking about our guests. At a pivotal moment, it became clear: we shouldn’t simply restore what was there. We should dream bigger. When we welcome our guests back, they’ll see the transformation and they’ll feel exactly why we chose to use this moment to create something worthy of their loyalty.”

The three resorts are now expected to reopen in phases toward the end of 2026. Sandals South Coast is slated to reopen on November 18, followed by Sandals Royal Caribbean and



Sandals Royal Caribbean Resort

Sandals Montego Bay on December 18.

SRI said the upgrades will touch nearly every aspect of the guest experience, including redesigned arrival areas with views of the Caribbean Sea, new accommodation categories, reimagined pools, and upgraded social and lounge spaces. The company added that it will

retain the distinct character of each property while introducing modern enhancements.

Food and beverage offerings are also set to be expanded, with new restaurant concepts and bar experiences planned across all three resorts.

Despite the closures, Sandals confirmed that most of its Jamaica proper-

ties remain operational. Sandals Royal Plantation, Sandals Ochi, Sandals Dunn’s River, Sandals Negril and Beaches Negril continue to welcome guests. The company said the investment underscores its long-term commitment to Jamaica and positions the three resorts for a new era when they reopen in late 2026.

Antigua Opposition leader denies reports of resignation

Jamale Pringle, Political Leader of the United Progressive Party (UPP) and Leader of the Opposition in Antigua and Barbuda, has strongly rejected recent claims suggesting he intends to step down, describing them as false and politically motivated.

In a statement to supporters and the public, Pringle emphasized: “I remain your Political Leader. I remain committed to holding the Gaston Browne Administration Government accountable. And I remain committed to building this Party into an organization worthy of leading this Nation.”

Pringle accused the source of the rumors—linked to the Prime Minister—of attempting to destabilize the opposition and distract from the party’s ongoing work. He affirmed that both he and senior party figure Harold Lovell remain focused on serving their constituencies and rallying supporters ahead of the upcoming general elec-

tion.

Addressing criticisms surrounding the recent St. Philip’s North by-election, Pringle noted that the UPP’s support for candidate Alex Browne was never intended to guarantee victory. Rather, it demonstrated the party’s engagement and commitment to voters seeking change. He pointed out that the UPP has never held the seat in its 50-year history, calling attempts to use the by-election result to challenge his leadership “misleading” and “disrespectful” to party members.

Pringle also invited open dialogue within the party, welcoming genuine disagreement and discussions on strategy, direction, and renewal.

He reassured the public that the UPP remains focused on building a credible and united opposition, prepared to hold the governing Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party accountable.

“Therefore, the work of this party



Jamale Pringle

continues. And I continue with it,” he concluded, reaffirming his leadership

and commitment to the UPP’s mission.

St. Lucia government touts relief, security gains in first 100 days

The Government of Saint Lucia is highlighting a series of economic relief measures, security investments and development projects completed within its first 100 days in office, following the swearing-in of a new Cabinet on December 12, 2025, under Prime Minister Phillip J. Pierre.

In a statement released Tuesday, the administration said it moved with “purpose and urgency” to translate its electoral victory into tangible outcomes, focusing on easing financial pressure on households while advancing national development.

Among the headline measures, taxes were removed for pensioners and allowable income tax deductions were increased from \$30,000 to \$40,000. Public sector workers also received a one-time \$500 bonus. The government additionally introduced the country’s first VAT-Free Shopping Day, which it said provided direct relief to consumers while boosting commercial activity.

“These measures were not slogans,” the statement noted. “They were meaningful interventions designed to put money back into people’s hands and stimulate the economy.”

On national security, the administration pointed to the opening of the Administrative Block of the Northern Divisional Police Headquarters and the launch of a Backlog Reduction Court aimed at improving the pace of justice. The Royal Saint Lucia Police Force was also bolstered with 96 new recruits and two electric vehicles added to its fleet, alongside a previously announced \$3.1 million investment in ballistic vests.

The government framed these actions as part of a broader push to



Phillip J Pierre

strengthen public safety through sustained investment rather than “empty rhetoric.”

Infrastructure and long-term development also featured prominently in the report. Progress was cited on multiple projects spanning education, roads, fisheries, drainage systems, and port development across communities, including Mon Repos, Soufrière, Dennery South, Micoud North and Vieux Fort.

The administration also advanced its Universal Health Coverage initiative, unveiling an official name, logo and

website as part of efforts to formalize and expand access to healthcare.

Addressing environmental and sector-specific challenges, the government said it procured equipment to manage sargassum seaweed affecting coastal communities such as Praslin, while also moving forward with legislation to upgrade aging water infrastructure. Additional projects were geared toward supporting fishers, farmers, students and families.

In culture and sports, the government noted the launch of Julien Alfred

commemorative stamps and continued investment in community and sporting facilities.

Overall, the administration described its first 100 days as “broad, deliberate, and national in scope,” emphasizing a continued focus on economic relief, opportunity and development.

“The first 100 days made one thing plain: a deeper mission to deliver relief, expand opportunity, and keep Saint Lucia moving forward,” the statement said.



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West Indies fined for slow over-rate in opening Women's T20I

West Indies have been fined 10 per cent of their match fees after being found guilty of maintaining a slow over-rate during the first Women's T20 International against Australia in St. Vincent on Friday.

The sanction was imposed by Reon King of the Emirates ICC International Panel of Match Referees after the regional side was judged to be two overs short of the required rate, once time allowances had been taken into account.

The punishment was handed down in accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which states that in minimum over-rate offences, players are fined five per cent of their match fee for every over their team fails to bowl within the allotted time.

With West Indies ruled two overs behind, the team received a total fine of 10 per cent of its match fee.

Captain Hayley Matthews admitted the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, meaning the matter was resolved without the need for a formal hearing.

The charge was laid by on-field umpires Lauren Agenbag and Jacqueline Williams, along with third umpire Candace La Borde and fourth umpire Maria Abbott.

The over-rate penalty came in the



The West Indies women huddle before their match against Australia

wake of an Australian victory in Friday's opener, with the visitors again showing their control in a closely fought second

match a few days later.

The two teams are scheduled to meet once more in the final T20I Tues-

day, before shifting to Basseterre for a three-match One-Day International series.

Holder honoured for stellar all-round performance

Cricket West Indies (CWI) has officially congratulated Jason Holder for his remarkable display at the recently concluded ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which culminated in his selection to the tournament's prestigious Team of the Tournament.

The 34-year-old Barbadian, a veteran of West Indies' 2016 World T20 triumph, was the sole representative from the Caribbean side to earn this distinction, a reflection of his sustained excellence with both bat and ball.

Holder's campaign was a model of consistency and impact. Over the tournament, he captured 10 wickets and scored 141 runs at a blistering strike rate of 174.07, maintaining an impressive batting average of 35.25. His innings often came in high-pressure situations, showcasing his ability to shift the momentum for West Indies.

One standout performance came during a group-stage clash against England, where Holder struck 33 from just 17 balls. His explosive effort helped propel West Indies to a competitive 196 for six, a total that the Caribbean side successfully defended for a 30-run victory.

He also played a pivotal role in setting a tournament record, joining forces with Romario Shepherd to establish a world-record eighth-wicket partnership of 89 runs against South Africa in Ahmedabad's Super Eights stage.

Holder's 49 off 31 balls rescued the innings after West Indies had slumped to 83 for 7, proving his capacity to deliver under pressure.

Against eventual champions India, Holder once again delivered a late flourish, scoring 37 from 22 balls to push West Indies to a formidable 195 for four, underscoring his role as a match-turner for the team.

Speaking about the honor, Holder expressed both pride and humility.

"This is a proud moment and achievement in what was really my first full T20 World Cup, as surprising as it may sound," he said. "I just felt like everything for me was in alignment. My game is in a good place, I kept things simple, lived in the moment and contributed whenever the team needed me."

CWI's Director of Cricket, Miles Bascombe, lauded Holder for his influence both on and off the field.

"Jason's impact on the team and its performance during the tournament was undeniable. His selection to the Team of the Tournament is richly deserved and reflects the quality, experience and composure he continues to bring to West Indies cricket," Bascombe said. "His ability to influence games with both bat and ball, particularly in key moments, speaks to his value and his leadership. We are extremely proud of his performances..."



Jason Holder

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CWI confirms safe return of entire West Indies World Cup contingent

After days of uncertainty and travel complications, every member of the West Indies delegation that competed at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in India has safely returned home.

The confirmation came in an official statement released Saturday by Cricket West Indies, which announced that the full 26-member contingent, comprising players and team management, had successfully completed their journeys back to their respective destinations across the Caribbean and beyond.

The development brings a welcome end to a tense logistical situation that left the squad stranded overseas for more than a week.

Following the conclusion of their tournament campaign, the West Indies group remained stuck in Kolkata for nine days after regional conflict in West Asia triggered widespread disruptions to international air travel.

Chartered flights initially arranged through the International Cricket Council were ultimately canceled, forcing officials to scramble for alternative arrangements.

In the end, commercial flights were secured earlier in the week, allowing players and support staff to gradually depart India and begin the long journey home.

In its statement, Cricket West Indies confirmed that the situation has now been fully resolved.

"Cricket West Indies wishes to advise that, as of today, Saturday, March 14, 2026, all players and members of the Team Management Unit (TMU) who were part of the West Indies men's squad at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in



The West Indies team — safely home after harrowing trip

India have returned home safely," the organization said.

"Following the previously outlined challenges relating to cancellations of chartered flights coordinated by the International Cricket Council (ICC), commercial travel was successfully secured for the members of the squad earlier this week. The final group of players and support staff completed their journeys over the past several days and have now safely arrived at their respective destinations."

CWI also acknowledged the many

stakeholders who assisted in resolving the situation.

"Cricket West Indies extends its sincere appreciation to the ICC, regional cricket boards, and other stakeholders who assisted in facilitating the safe return of the team. We also thank West Indies fans and the wider cricketing community for their concern and well-wishes."

The governing body emphasized that player safety remained the top priority throughout the ordeal.

"The well-being and safety of our

players and staff remain paramount, and we are grateful that the matter has now been brought to a safe and satisfactory conclusion," the statement added.

With the final members of the traveling party now safely back across the region, the episode closes a difficult chapter for Caribbean cricket during the tournament.

What began as a routine departure from India turned into an extended travel ordeal, but one that ultimately ended with relief for players, officials, and fans alike throughout the West Indies.

Sammy's future as coach secure until 2027 World Cup

Despite the West Indies' disappointing campaign at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 in India, Dr Kishore Shallow has reassured fans that there are no immediate plans to dismiss head coach Daren Sammy.

The Caribbean side had hoped to claim their first T20 World Cup title in 10 years and their third overall, but they were eliminated at the Super Eights phase for the second consecutive tournament, sparking questions about Sammy's long-term tenure.

Speaking on iSports i95.5 FM, Dr Shallow emphasized that Sammy's contract remains secure, extending beyond the upcoming ICC 50-over World Cup in 2027.

"At this point Daren has a contract that runs beyond this World Cup. His contract goes up until at least the 50-over World Cup, that is the current status," Dr Shallow stated.

While the CWI president confirmed there will be a performance assessment of the T20 World Cup showing, he made it clear that there is no immediate consideration for termination.

Dr Shallow candidly admitted that the West Indies fell short of their ultimate goal of lifting the trophy.

"Ultimately we didn't go to the World Cup to reach the Super Eights. We went to win the World Cup



Daren Sammy

and we didn't win, so we can't say that we are comfortable with that. I'm certainly very disappointed that we didn't win," he said.

However, he highlighted that the team showed encouraging signs, winning five out of seven matches and competing strongly in most contests. "So, it was a credible performance, but still we wanted to win," he added.

Dr Shallow confirmed that post-tournament discussions will focus on understanding what went wrong

and identifying areas for improvement.

"I certainly took note of the fact that we showed some improvements in all areas; the matches that we won we did so convincingly and barring the one game against South Africa we really competed. There's work to be done, and we will look at the reasons why we didn't win the tournament and try to identify those areas for improvement going forward," he said.

He also stressed that players like Shai Hope and Sammy himself are fully aware of the team's shortcomings and are equally motivated to improve.

By maintaining Sammy in his position for now, Dr Shallow is signaling a long-term approach aimed at building consistency and strengthening the team ahead of future international competitions. While fans may have hoped for immediate action following another early exit, the CWI president believes measured evaluation and targeted improvements will better serve the team in the years ahead.

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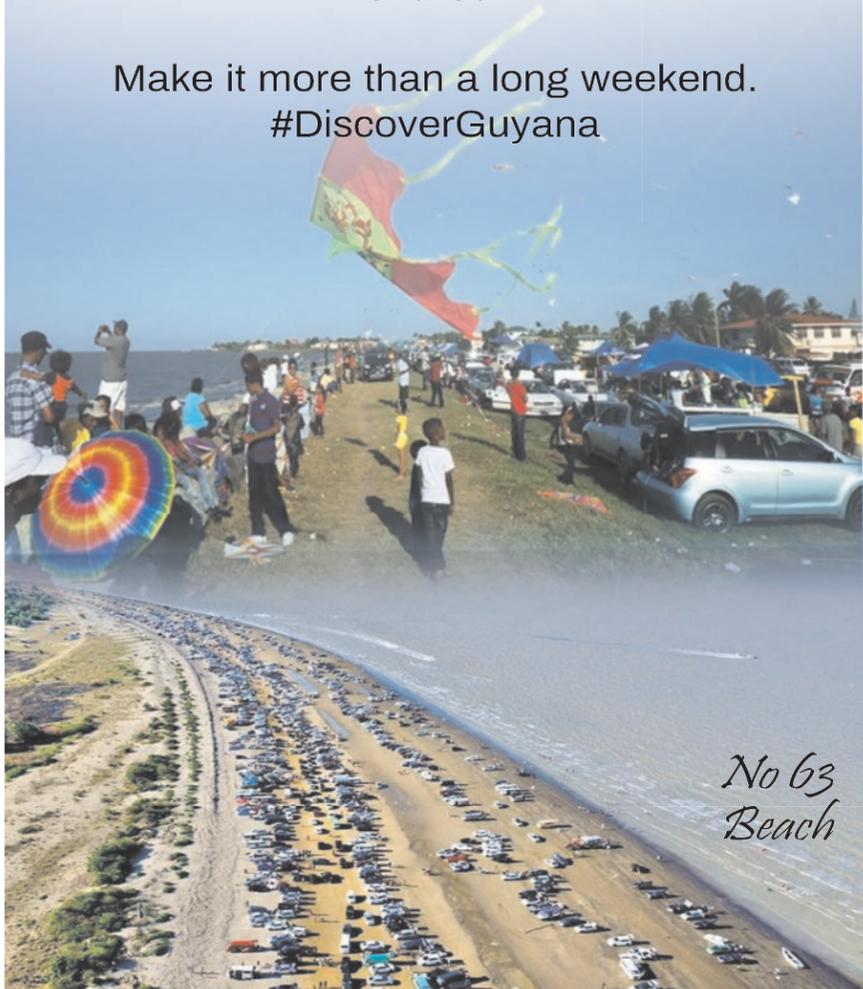


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