

■ Guyana govt assures farmers:

No less than \$4,000 a bag for paddy this crop

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THE Guyana government is assuring rice farmers that they would be receiving no less than GUY\$4,000 for a bag of paddy for the first crop of 2025.

Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha said following weeks of negotiations between President Irfaan Ali, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Guyana Rice Development (GRDB) and local rice millers, an official agreement was inked on Tuesday setting out the price to farmers.

Mustapha told rice farmers that President Ali had engaged the rice millers on several occasions after they, the farmers, had raised concerns about the prices being offered for paddy for the current crop.

'The President engaged the millers on several occasions to determine how we can work together to keep the price of paddy at a stable rate. The millers were a bit reluctant to maintain the last crop's price because they said it is being influenced by the world market price.

'We were finally able to reach an agreement where the millers will not purchase farmers' paddy for less than GUY\$4,000 per bag. This means we'll also have to make a contribution. We did it before, and we'll do it again. 'Like any other responsible government, we are always ensuring that we bring relief to people. The farmers know that this government...has and will always ensure farmers get a fair deal,' he added. Ali had recently said rice production had increased significantly and that the government has been investing to upgrade the infrastructure to support enhanced production and ease the burdens on farmers. 'Guyana's agricultural sector has achieved significant milestones. Rice production has expanded, with more than 227,000 acres under cultivation producing more than 600,000 metric tonnes annually, supported by high-yield seed varieties.

'Over GUY\$70 billion has been spent on improving infrastructure to support enhanced production, higher yield, and ease to the burdens of our farmers. As a government, we will continue to evaluate global situations, including price changes and price differentials, and you can be assured that this government will work towards making necessary adjustments so that our farmers will not be burdened and will not feel the weight of changes in the international trading and market conditions,' Ali had noted.

Mustapha said for the first crop of this year, approximately 230,000 acres of land were cultivated, and an estimated 9,000,000 bags of paddy are expected to be harvested. He also said rice production for this year is projected to be 804,000 metric tonnes.

He told the farmers the government has been making the necessary investments to transform the agriculture sector.

'Over the last four years, we've transformed the agriculture sector and the rice industry. You all can recall that when the price for paddy was down and the millers were reluctant to pay farmers a particular price, we abolished the sales commission. That was over GUY\$498 million.

Mustapha said President Ali met with the millers, and instead of paying that money to the GRDB and that 'on two occasions, we gave farmers almost two billion dollars in fertiliser.

'We are making seed paddy available; we are building the infrastructure. We gave flood relief. This government has not abandoned you, so do not be tricked by those who want to take advantage of a global situation for political gain.

'This government never promised farmers GUY\$9,000 for a bag of paddy and then said rice was a private business. We never increased the cost of land rentals and D&I charges. These are the things we have to remember,' he added. In 2024, rice production surpassed its target and reached an all-time high of 725,282 metric tonnes. **-CMC**