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# GOV'T OVERCOMES ANOTHER ALFA NERO LEGAL HURDLE

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Thirty-three (33) people, including farmers and Ministry of Agriculture Extension Officers, benefitted from a two-day training on climate-smart agriculture (CSA), including nature and ecosystem-based solutions to enhance resilience. *Story on page 6.*



# Local News



## Government overcomes another legal hurdle over the Alfa Nero

A High Court judge, on Thursday, rejected an application for an injunction seeking to halt the sale of the super yacht, Alfa Nero.

The development is the latest in a series of legal successes following the government's announcement of its plans to sell the vessel by way of a closed-bid auction. The auction was completed earlier this month, before a LIVE television and radio audience.

The applicant, Yulia Gurieva Motlokhov, a

Russian citizen asserting ownership rights over the yacht, was denied the injunction.

This victory adds to the Government's string of legal successes, as they had previously emerged victorious in all court proceedings against Flying Dutchman Overseas Limited, whose attempt to secure an injunction also failed.

The several legal challenges included one that was filed before the Privy Council in London and



Alfa Nero

was similarly dismissed.

The Antigua and Bar-

buda government passed legislation, giving it the right to seize the vessel, as it posed an economic and environmental threat to the country. With the hurricane season approaching, the government said this action was necessary so that the vessel could be moved from the Antigua Yacht Marina where it had been abandoned for over a year.

Before proceeding with the sale, the government had to first obtain legislation from the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), as the vessel was believed to have been owned by a Russian oligarch whom the US placed on the sanctioned list, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine last year February.

The legislation, adopted by the government to proceed with the seizure and eventual sale of the

*cont'd on pg 5*

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## PM Browne to underscore importance of the region's services sector

Prime Minister Gaston Browne will underscore the importance of the region's services sector highlighting that after fifty years of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the sector is now the most dominant in regional economies.

PM Browne is scheduled to deliver a major statement on the Services Sector as part of the celebrations marking CARICOM's 50th Anniversary, under the theme 'Advancing the Services Agenda within CARICOM.' Prime Minister Browne is the lead Spokesman on Services in the Quasi Cabinet in CARICOM.

In his prepared remarks made available ahead of its delivery today, the prime minister pointed to the data to support his contention regarding the regional services sector.

"Given the data, it is my settled view that the Services sector has been and remains the largest sector in the regional economy, during the first fifty years of regional integration. The sector has also been a critical earner of foreign exchange, contributing a persistent surplus on the services account which has partially offset an equally persistent deficit in trade in goods," PM Browne reports.

He revealed that in 2019 alone, the most recent nor-

mal year, the Services sector contributed US\$65.2 billion, or 74.4% of total output (GDP), within the Community.

It also generated a surplus of US\$4.3 billion on the services account of the Balance of Payments, which to some measure helped to offset a deficit in trade in goods for the same period.

Labour force data up to 2015, indicated that the Services sector accounted for 75% of total employment.

Further, according to the Caribbean Development Bank, MSMEs represent between 70-85% of Caribbean businesses and con-

tribute between 60-70% of the Gross Domestic Product. Critically, they account for an estimated 50% of total employment.

The Antigua and Barbuda leader wants the region to continue to leverage opportunities for achieving the Community's objectives of full employment of labor and other factors of production and enjoying future sustainable economic growth and development by boosting the international competitiveness of both its goods and services production and trade.

"Notwithstanding what I have reported, our Community is still to harness the

full potential of the regional services sector and, as we enter the next fifty years, our task is to set that ambition for the next generation of leaders.

"We continue to face major structural constraints in the Community which slow the pace of implementation and ultimately the achievement of the intended benefits of regional integration," he suggested.

The services sector includes the wholesale trade, hotels and restaurants, transportation and communications, health care and education, financial services, and the creative sector.


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# Local News



## Antigua and Barbuda to open embassy in Saudi Arabia

Antigua and Barbuda is to take advantage of its growing close ties with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by opening an embassy in Riyadh, the Saudi capital.

Chief of Staff in the Office of the Prime Minister Lionel Max Hurst said there are several advantages to such a move.

“When this embassy is established, the Antigua and Barbuda government will be able to utilize that presence, not only to stimulate investment into the country but also to do like some other Caribbean countries, which have Citizenship By Investment programmes, have done, which is to utilize Saudi Ara-

bia as a base for selling citizenship to people in that region,” he stated.

Hurst noted that many individuals live in Saudi Arabia or other neighbouring countries who need a second passport, and having an embassy in Riyadh will help to facilitate this.

Antigua and Barbuda wants to use the embassy to position itself to maximize on the flow of resources from this wealthy oil-producing state.

This comes as Hurst reports on a ZOOM meeting held on Wednesday, between the Cabinet and Sheik Rafik of Saudi Arabia who is interested in providing seed money for a Caribbean

an Development Fund.

It is expected that the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority will be a major functionary in extracting capital from the Development Fund.

Hurst said the amount of money that Sheik Rafik intends to invest in the country has not yet been determined, but some of that money will go towards expanding the UWI FIC as well as Antigua and Barbuda Institute for Continuing Learning (AB-ICE).

He indicated that the government also wants to explore the possibility of using some of these funds to go into hotel developments.

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## Final day of government vehicle audit today

Public officers who have been assigned government-owned vehicles have until the end of today (Friday, June 30) to have the vehicles they are driving, included in the government audit.

The verification audit is being conducted due to the many persons who continue to drive government-owned vehicles long after they ought not to.

The Ministry of Works has announced plans to streamline the government's expenditure on vehicles and therefore has found it fit to conduct the audit. A senior government official noted that expenditures on government-owned vehicles are quite substantial as these include annual insurance, fuel, and the replacement

of parts.

There are close to twelve hundred government-owned vehicles of all types. But with one day to go, it is unclear just how

successful the audit has been at this stage.

“Those employees who are driving Government-owned vehicles and have not taken them to the

vehicle inspection station are advised to do so today, at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium where the audit is taking place,” said the government official.

*cont'd from pg 2*

vessel, was carefully followed by the Antigua Port Authority, the executing agency with the advice of a team of young legal professionals in the Office of the Attorney General.

The Attorney General's Chambers anticipates a prompt resolution of the remaining legal matters.

The winning bid for the vessel has been made by American billionaire Eric Schmidt, who acquired it for a sum of US\$67.06 million.



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# Local News



## Technical, tangible support help farmers transition to climate-smart practices

Thirty-three (33) people, including farmers and Ministry of Agriculture Extension Officers, benefitted from a two-day training on climate-smart agriculture (CSA), including nature and ecosystem-based solutions to enhance resilience.

The training was facilitated by Richard Rampersaud, Value Chain and Agri-business Specialist

from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) Trinidad and Tobago Delegation.

The CSA farmer training was a part of the IICA-Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) project to strengthen coastal and marine climate resilience, through upland and coastal ecosystem-based adaptation and community en-

gagement, implemented in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Tobago. The IICA-CBF EbA project is funded by the CBF EbA Facility, supported by the German Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety and the International Climate Initiative (IKI).

The classroom and practical field CSA sessions

shared information and simple tools to help farmers to better recognize and differentiate climate hazards from non-climate stressors which may compromise exposure and vulnerability of their farming operations. A new and simple 'SELFIE' hazard-based and color-coded tool was introduced to farmers to help them self-assess the climate hazards and other farming challenges they face, and score their vulnerability, impact readiness, and adaptive capacity. It was designed to also be useful to farmers with literacy challenges.

The practical session took place at the Ras Freeman farm, a local producer group with a mixed production system of cannabis, vegetables, and fruit trees. Based on the 'SELFIE' tool, participants were able to relate to the importance of situational awareness, by identifying hazards on their farm and its immediate surroundings.

Planting vetiver grass was demonstrated as a good practice to stabilize the soil, below a newly built greenhouse, to be used to produce the group's seedlings. This demonstration reinforced the IICA-CBF EbA project's objective to promote nature-based solutions as an integral part of the toolkit for resilient and sustainable farming systems.

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# Unlocked, the dance event, is this weekend

The Shiva School of Dance is putting on its highly anticipated dance show this weekend at the Dean William Lake Cultural Centre in St. John's.

Under the theme 'UNLOCKED,' the dance show celebrates ancestral energies, cultural fusion, and artistic expression.

UNLOCKED, is set to captivate audiences this Saturday and Sunday with a mesmerizing blend of diverse cultural influences and breathtaking performances.

Hosted by The Shiva School of Dance, this annual event showcases the talent and dedication of approximately 200 students, ranging from the tender age of 3 to an incredible 80 years old.

"This year's theme, 'UNLOCKED,' focuses on the powerful concept of unleashing our ancestral energies, untapping our potential, and embracing our unique gifts and abilities.

"The show promises to be a magnificent celebration of dance, movement, culture, and aesthetics, seamlessly blending the rich traditions of the African, East Indian, and Caribbean diaspora, with an international flair reminiscent of Broadway and

theatrical artistry," founder and chief choreographer Tavia Hunte explained.

Renowned guest teacher, Kieron Sargeant, has graced the show with his exceptional choreography skills.

He has expertly crafted a Bele Dance Suite and a Jig Dance, hailing from the vibrant island of Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, students will showcase their talent in African Contemporary Dance, beautifully fusing traditional and modern elements. The inclusion of Sargeant's work adds an exciting dimension to this year's presentation.

Tavia, the visionary founder, and director of The Shiva School of Dance, continues to utilize the power of dance as a transformative tool, breaking barriers and nurturing personal growth.

Recognizing that dance instills discipline that transcends the studio walls, she believes that its benefits extend to all areas of a child's development—socially, psychologically, and spiritually.

Through her unwavering dedication, Hunte empowers her students to reach new heights and embrace their individuality.

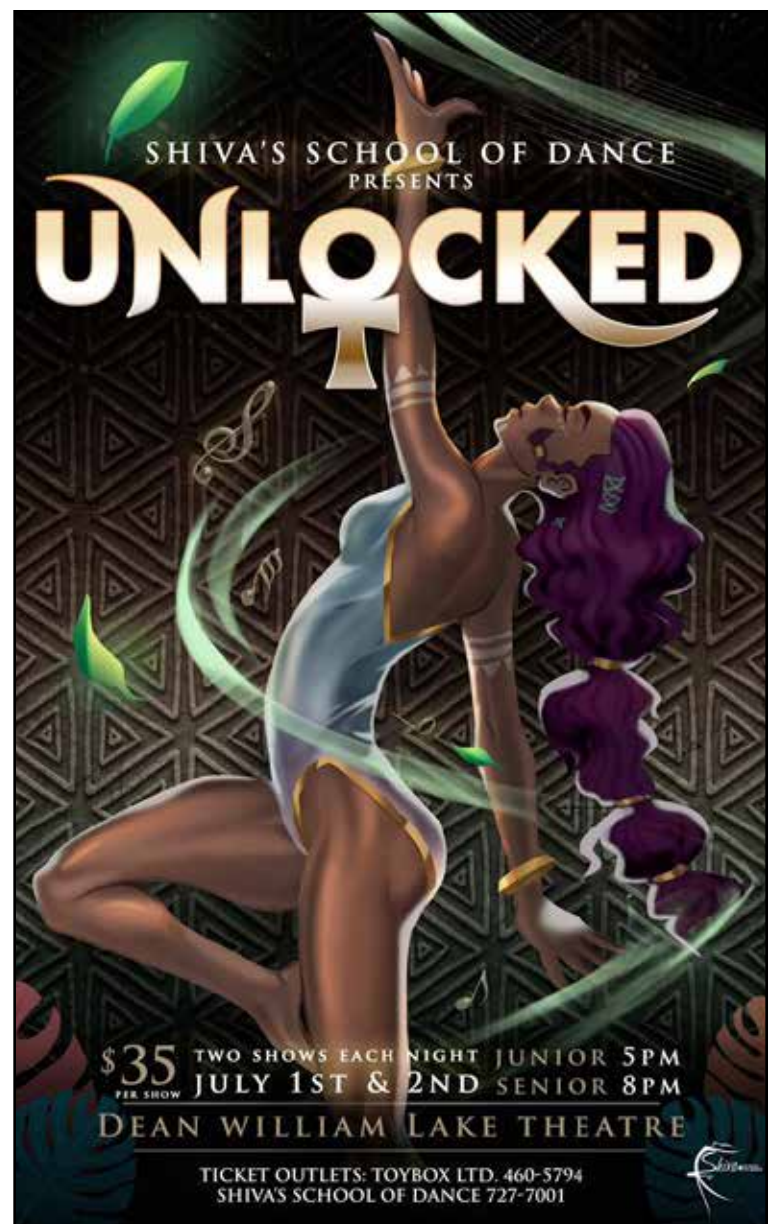
The Shiva School of

Dance proudly embraces diversity, fostering an inclusive environment that welcomes individuals from all cultures, races, backgrounds, ages, and talents.

Their motto, "Creating Unity Through Diversity," exemplifies their commitment to embracing and celebrating the richness of each unique heritage.

UNLOCKED promises to be an awe-inspiring showcase of talent, culture, and artistic expression.

Don't miss the opportunity to witness this extraordinary display of unity, as performers unlock the beauty within their ancestral roots and dance their way into the hearts of the audience.





# Commentary

## LGBTQ+ activist says police officers need GBV training

**By Makeida Antonio**

**WAR Communications Consultant**

Law enforcement officers need mandatory training to handle gender-based violence (GBV) reports involving LGBTQ+ individuals in Antigua and Barbuda.

'Angel', a 25-year-old transgender resident, was killed by her lover Timothy Jackman during an argument while moving from a Potters Village apartment they shared in 2018.

Jackman was originally charged with murder, but is now serving 11 years and nine months at His Majesty's Prison after pleading guilty to the lesser charge of manslaughter.

According to an article published by The Daily Observer newspaper, Angel's close friend Stansha Barbie, who is also transgender and is a well-known social media personality, disclosed that her "best friend" was experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) while mourning on Facebook Live.

The news publication also detailed the inadequate LGBTQ+ training of Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda lawmen which led to a "lack of awareness of the situation". Former RPFAB Public Relations Officer Lester Baggot initially reported the deceased as female, but later said that "a man was stabbed to death" after Angel's relatives confirmed her birth name as Arnold Joseph.

A more inclusive, gendered approach to law enforcement could have provided more clarity to the nature of the investigation earlier on in the case - expediting the process of delivering justice.

To add further, knowledge of the correct gender identity in reporting could have made the language and expressions used by the media less inac-



curate and insensitive.

IPV, also called domestic violence (DV), occurs when a person uses abusive tactics to assert power and control over their current or former partner(s). Types of IPV include physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse and sexual abuse.

Los Angeles LGBT Center Chief Impact Officer Terra Russell-Slavin says "more than 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ people experience intimate partner violence over the course of their lives", making IPV one of the most critical health issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community.

Jennan P. Andrew explains in his 2020 thesis 'Intimate Partner Violence in LGBTQ Relationships in Jamaica' that fear associated with being 'outed' as LGBTQ+ prevents many from seeking support from health workers, counsellors, police officers and relatives because the culturally ingrained homophobia and gender norms/stereotypes result in same-sex IPV being taken less seriously.

Orden David is one local activist seeking to change attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals and other vulnerable populations.

Last year, Orden was successful in his challenge of the controversial



anti-buggery law found in the Sexual Offences Act (1995) with assistance from local and regional action groups including Women Against Rape (WAR), Meeting Emotional and Social Needs Holistically (MESH) and Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity (ECADE).

The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC) in St. Kitts and Nevis ruled the offence made by two consenting adults having anal sex carried a penalty of 15 years in prison and the offence of serious indecency which carried a five year prison sentence as unconstitutional.

Antigua and Barbuda gained independence from the British Empire in November 1981. Activists like Orden argue that keeping colonial-era laws reflecting 'Christian values' on the books criminalizes LGBTQ+ individuals and emboldens individuals to express homophobic beliefs and attitudes.

One year later, Orden says he is feeling "jubilant", as the LGBTQ+ community in Antigua and Barbuda continues to educate the general public

*cont'd on pg 9*



# Commentary

*cont'd from pg 8*

to understand and accept differences among individuals by educating, advocating and becoming their own allies and activists - all in an endeavour to continue pushing for the fulfilment of all LGBTQ+ persons.

"This has created a new light in my life where society can be empowered and grow.

It has made me realize how important it is to stand firm and fight for my rights, my community, and what I believe in."

He outlines some of the future outcomes he would like to see reflected as society moves towards more inclusive attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals.

"I hope to see the LGBTQ+ enjoy representation in local parliament and decision-making from an LGBTQ+ person as a board member. [I am] also hoping for equality, rights, acceptance, and respect."

Orden also illustrates why there is

little awareness or response on IPV in same-sex relationships locally using his experience in the field providing health and counselling services in his community.

"There are challenges in raising intimate partner violence awareness in same-sex couples. Reports are not taken seriously when reported. Community and churches are still hesitant in accepting same-sex couples and negative statements are made on social media about same-sex topics once those topics are being highlighted."

Orden supports mandatory training for service providers such as law enforcement officers who are usually the first responders in situations involving gender-based violence.

"Law and policies should be immediately amended to address GBV faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. The pleas are usually not taken seriously with regard to harassment and violence. Mandatory training sessions when are dealing with

LGBTQ+ people should be put in place as a policy."

He believes the country's education officials should set a policy conveying messages of acceptance, respect, and tolerance.

"It's also imperative that we introduce a gender-based violence curriculum and/or courses in schools that include the right treatment of a person who is still figuring out their sexuality."

LGBTQ+ Pride Month is celebrated during June in several countries across the world commemorating the contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals.

Activists and allies also highlight and share experiences of homophobia, discrimination and other issues commonly faced by the LGBTQ+ communities.

Additionally, suggestions and recommendations on inclusion and anti-discrimination policies are offered to policymakers for consideration.



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# Opinion

## CARICOM at 50: There is still hope

**By Sir Ronald Sanders**

*(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States and the Organization of American States. The views expressed are entirely his own. Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sirronaldsanders.com](http://www.sirronaldsanders.com))*

July 4, 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, the foundational document that brought the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) into existence. With high hopes and lofty ambitions, the heads of government of the four largest independent Caribbean countries at the time embarked on a journey towards regional integration. They were later joined, to varying degrees of commitment, by 10 other countries.

Reflection on the past five decades reveals that CARICOM has fallen short of its initial promises and failed to deliver the deep and meaningful integration that was envisioned, leading to the often-repeated phrase, "CARICOM and CARI-GONE."

While CARICOM experienced some initial success, establishing institutions like the Caribbean Development Bank and making progress in trade, its history has been characterized by sporadic bursts of activity followed by prolonged periods of inaction. This inconsistent pattern has eroded confidence and faith in the CARICOM project among various sectors of Caribbean society.

Nevertheless, the fact that CARICOM's framework continues to exist is a testament to the enduring belief in the benefits of regional integration. No government dares to withdraw from it, fearing a popular backlash from within its own population.

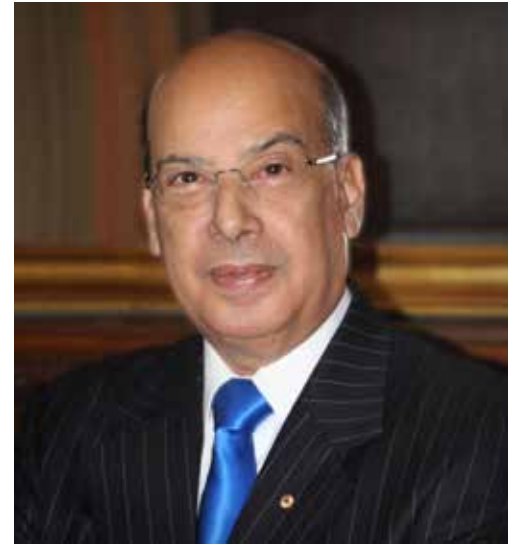
Despite the revision of the CARICOM Treaty in 2001, which aimed to

establish a Single Market and Economy (CSME), progress towards these goals has been painfully slow. The establishment of a Customs Union, let alone a Common Market, remains unrealized. The lack of a comprehensive regional economic framework has hindered the potential for genuine free trade, cross-border company establishment, and the free movement of labour—a vision that once excited the people of CARICOM.

By 2011, the CSME had effectively stalled, with little progress made in advancing regional integration. In 2022, CARICOM leaders acknowledged that trade barriers, particularly non-tariff barriers, were major obstacles to the development of a regional market for agricultural produce, as well as inter-regional transportation. The inability to overcome even these challenges, especially air transportation, which suffered as a consequence of closed borders during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, highlights the significant capacity that CARICOM states have yet to collectively build.

Comparatively, the countries of the European Union (EU), which embarked on integration efforts around the same time as CARICOM, have made significant strides. The EU expanded its membership, established a single currency, dismantled border barriers, and empowered a central Commission to make decisions collectively for all member countries. In contrast, CARICOM has limped along, burdened by inadequate implementation of decisions, mistrust among leaders, institutional decline, and a weak and underfunded Secretariat.

Numerous reports and commissions have carefully examined CARICOM's failures and offered recommendations for improvement. The 1992 West Indian Commission's sem-



inal work, "Time for Action," led by Caribbean luminary, Shridath Ramphal, called for the establishment of a Caribbean Commission similar to the European Commission. Despite the acceptance of some recommendations, crucial proposals regarding governance structures, including the creation of a Caribbean Commission, were largely ignored.

In 2016, the Jamaican government commissioned a review of its relations with CARICOM, headed by Bruce Golding. The commission recommended explicit provisions in the CARICOM Treaty to enforce member states' obligations and ensure timely implementation of decisions. Yet, once again, these recommendations were largely disregarded, further highlighting the challenges of implementing meaningful reform within CARICOM.

In 2021, a CARICOM Commission on the economy revived discussions on regional integration. It suggested that interested member states should proceed with integration, leaving the door open for others to join at their own pace. However, this report, like its predecessors, has not spurred the necessary action.

The dominant characteristic of  
*cont'd on pg 11*



*cont'd from pg 10*

CARICOM has been the jealous retention of sovereignty by individual governments.

In their international bargaining, CARICOM governments have achieved success only when they act together. But there is no established machinery for joint relations with external powers and agencies. Thus, ad hoc collective activities have produced beneficial results, but these have been spectacular exceptions, not the consistent rule.

This inclination to maintain decision-making power at the national level has hindered progress. Bureaucrats, too, have perpetuated this culture of nationalism, often prioritizing their countries' interests over collective regional welfare. Consequently, CARICOM has struggled to implement regional decisions effectively and act in unison, hampering its ability to achieve its objectives.

The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) serves as a notable example of this contradiction. Established in 2001 to replace the British Privy Council as the region's final court of appeal, the CCJ has struggled to gain the full support of member states despite the demonstrated high quality of its jurisprudence. Some countries have been hesitant to embrace the CCJ due to concerns over losing sovereignty and fear of political interference. As a result, the region has been unable to unify under a single legal system, preventing the CCJ from fulfilling its potential as a symbol of Caribbean unity and independence.

The consequences of limited integration have been significant for CARICOM countries. Research conducted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicates that deeper regional integration could bring substantial economic benefits. By reducing non-tariff barriers and trade costs, CARICOM countries could stimulate

trade, restructure their economies, and generate net employment gains. Integration would also allow member states to tap into global value chains, attract foreign investment, and enhance their economic potential. The failure to seize these opportunities has come at a cost to the region's development and prosperity.

As CARICOM reaches its 50-year milestone, new challenges face each of its member states that none can manage effectively alone. Among them are the impact of climate change including more frequent and intense disasters; new pandemics for which they are ill-prepared; increasing transnational crime; gang violence and the spread of deadly weapons; and narrowing windows to much needed development funds. All of these developments require more integration, not less.

CARICOM needs a renewed commitment from member states to prioritize collective interests over narrow

national concerns. This shift in mindset should be accompanied by concrete actions, such as the removal of remaining trade barriers, harmonization of regulations, and the establishment of effective governance mechanisms that can enforce regional decisions.

CARICOM must also invest in revamping its institutions, providing them with the necessary expertise, authority, and resources to drive the integration agenda forward. Enhanced regional cooperation and coordination, with a focus on effective implementation and enforcement, will be vital to restoring confidence and generating tangible benefits for the people of the Caribbean.

Hopefully, 50 years of lessons will not go unlearned. The vision of a fully integrated Caribbean, where borders are irrelevant, and collective strength prevails, can still be realized.

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## L'Oreal-UNESCO throw support behind Caribbean women scientists

By Luke Douglas

Female scientists in the Caribbean are receiving further support to pursue careers in their field with the launch of the young talents Caribbean region L'Oreal-UNESCO for Women in Science programme on June 27.

The inaugural programme aims to promote and encourage the participation of Caribbean women in sciences and identifies and rewards young talented researchers in the formal sciences.

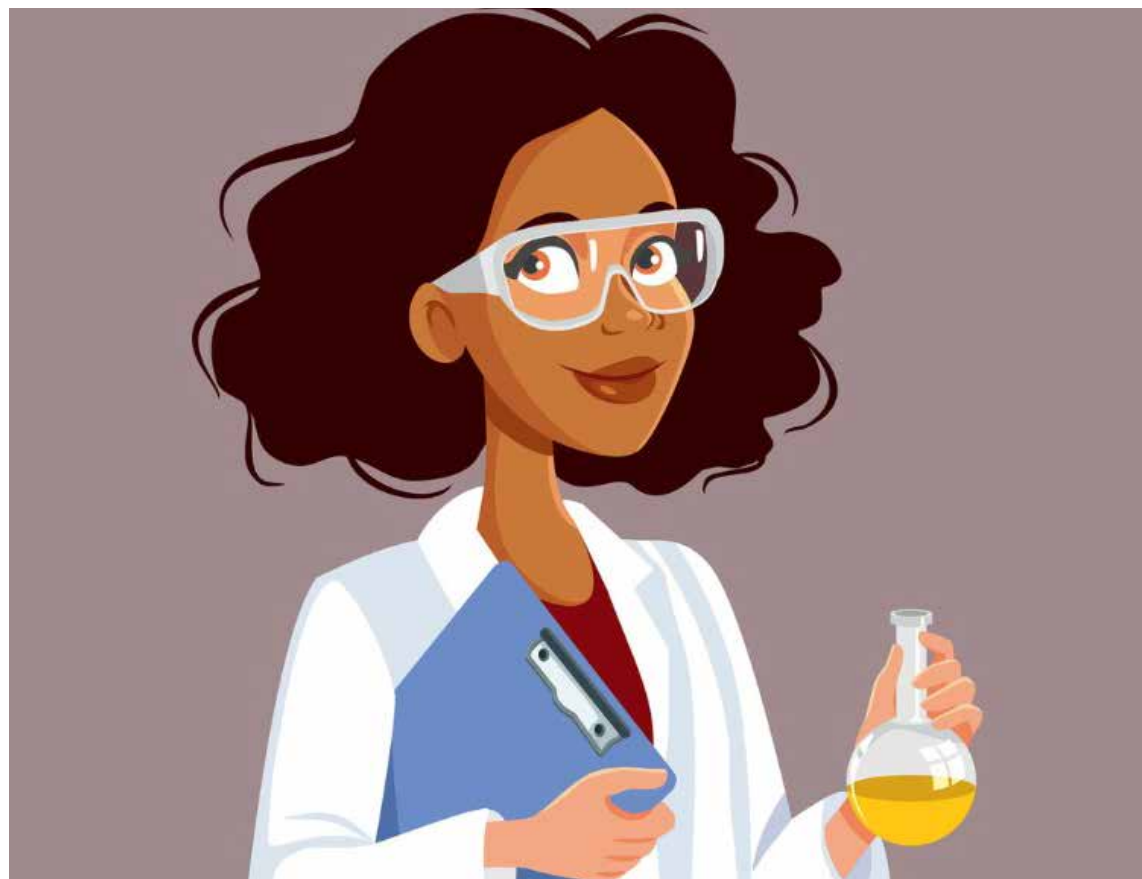
Two endowments will be given to young researchers in doctoral, postdoctoral programmes or in the early stage of a scientific research career. They must be nationals of one of the countries and territories in the Caribbean region.

Applications for the endowments of \$US10,000 are open until July 15.

Speaking at the launch at the University of the West Indies' Headquarters Professor Marcia Roye, UWI lecturer and the first Jamaican to receive the L'Oreal-UNESCO fellowship for women in science said her greatest challenge is always "attracting resources to do the research that I have in my head".

She said the fellowship enabled her to go to Paris, France three times to continue her research.

"It was a personal grant



to pay the babysitter, to buy baby diapers while my students and I could work in the lab doing research. It was incredible", Professor Roye said.

Speaking of her legacy, Professor Roye disclosed that each year she holds a genetic workshop in collaboration with the Scientific Research Council which has influenced many girls to pursue careers in science to the doctoral level.

Dr Marvadeen Singh, UWI lecturer in inorganic chemistry and crystallography, and initiator of the UWI UNESCO Walking in Her Footsteps programme noted that only 12 per cent of the membership in national academies on science

were female, and this needed to change.

"Fellowships like these are bringing the stories of women who have broken down the stereotypes. Many of us (women) have to travel in the summers to be away from our families to do research. But women like these have done it, so we have to continue to expand programmes like Walking in Her Footsteps" Dr Singh said.

The International Women in Science Awards was created 25 years ago to spotlight women in science and to recognize their outstanding contributions to science and society.

The For Girls in Science initiative was launched in

2014, while the first Global Network for Women in Science was created in 2019. The network now has 4,000 women scientists who are at the forefront of critical research, addressing the world's most challenging issues and inspiring future generations.

It was noted that the percentage of women scientists globally has risen from 27 per cent in the 1990s to 33 per cent today.

Each year five outstanding women researchers are celebrated and awarded from five regions of the world, in life sciences, physical sciences, and mathematics or computer science. The value of the awards is 100,000 euro (\$16.8 million).



## Saharan dust present for some Caribbean islands

Persons with allergies and respiratory issues should take the necessary precautions as Saharan dust is affecting some Caribbean islands.

The Antigua and Barbuda Meteorological Services in its latest Air Quality update says from Wednesday night (last night) until Monday for Antigua and Barbuda, the air quality is down to moderate levels as a result of particulate matters 2.5 and 10, associated with a fresh surge in the Saharan Dust.

The threat of health problems is expected to be elevated, for mainly unusually sensitive people, such as asthmatics, and could po-



tentially cause them limited health impacts.

Meanwhile, the Montserrat Disaster Management Coordination Agency said moderate concentrations of Saharan Dust was present

in the atmosphere across Montserrat on Wednesday due to a fresh surge in the Saharan Dust.

The Disaster Management Coordination Agency (DMCA) advised residents

who are unusually sensitive to dust particles to be vigilant, due to moderate concentrations of Saharan dust in the atmosphere.

It said residents with respiratory issues such as asthma should keep windows and doors closed as much as possible.

The DMCA further advised residents to limit dust entering their system as best as possible by using masks and protective eyewear.

And, The Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Office on Wednesday said an increase in Saharan dust from mild concentrations to moderate is expected from Thursday, June 29, and over the weekend.

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# Regional News

## Turks and Caicos swears in Governor Dileeni Daniel-Selvaratnam

Dileeni Daniel-Selvaratnam was sworn in as the sixteenth Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands at the House of Assembly in Grand Turk today.

The Governor will spend her first weekend in Grand Turk and will complete a tour of its two constituencies, including Salt Cay.

In the upcoming weeks, she will be visiting each constituency and getting to know the people across the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The Governor will also visit each ministry and host a series of meetings with various government officials on key issues including national security, irregular migration and disaster preparedness.

Speaking at her swearing-in, Her Excellency commented:

“As I embark on my Governorship, I will seek to serve firmly the interests of the Turks and Caicos Islands and commit to taking forward my duties with humility, integrity, and openness.

She also stated in her speech: “I am acutely aware of some of the issues on your minds, in particular national security, irregular migration and the economy.

“My meetings with elected representatives, communities, officials and bodies, over this coming month, will equip me with what I need to focus my priorities to best serve the interests of the Turks and Caicos Islands.”



*Swearing in ceremony of Dileeni Daniel-Selvaratnam as the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands.*

## Former Cayman Islands premier charged with rape and indecent assault

A legislator and former premier of the Cayman Islands was charged Wednesday with rape and indecent assault, according to authorities.

McKeeva Bush pleaded not guilty to charges that police said stem from 2000. Police issued no other comment aside from a brief press release noting that the “senior politician” appeared in court via Zoom.

Bush told The Associated Press in a statement that he rejected, denied and pleaded not guilty to what he called “this evil plot” and “malicious accusation.”

“All I have to say in relation to this, the latest



*Former Cayman Islands premier McKeeva Bush.*

in the series of malicious charges against me is the “Truth will come out,” he wrote. “This is done by someone I have never had any contact with.”

The arrest was the for-

ed not guilty to groping a female employee at a casino in Florida in 2017, and the charges were later dropped.

Bush pleaded not guilty after being charged with indecently assaulting two women last year at a regional tourism event held in the Cayman Islands, a British overseas territory in the western Caribbean Sea. He is awaiting trial in that case.

Bush stepped down as premier in December 2012 after facing a no-confidence vote.

He resigned as speaker of Parliament in October 2022 following accusations of sexual harassment, which he denied.

mer premier’s most recent brush with the law.

Bush was investigated and found not guilty nearly a decade ago on charges including theft and abuse of office. He also plead-



## Hundreds in Puerto Rico protest proposed increase in electricity bills

AP - Hundreds of people including religious leaders, economists, teachers and retirees on Wednesday protested a proposed increase to already high electric bills that a growing number of people in the US territory are struggling to pay.

The crowd marched toward the governor's mansion, where they hoisted Puerto Rican flags up high and held up signs warning that an increase in power bills would lead to an unsustainable rise in the island's already expensive cost of living.

The proposed increase is part of a debt restructuring plan to pull Puerto Rico's power company out of bankruptcy, an effort that has failed multiple times as bondholders threaten to sue to recuperate their investments. If approved, the current residential rate of 25 cents per kilowatt hour would nearly double over the span of 30 years.

A federal judge overseeing the bankruptcy process held a hearing Wednesday on the issue after delaying approval of the proposed debt restructuring plan.

Residential electricity rates in Puerto Rico are currently almost double those in the US mainland, while industrial and commercial rates are more than twice as high, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

The fear of possibly higher power bills prompted many to join Wednesday's protest, including Reverend Lizzette Gabriel, bishop of Puerto Rico's Methodist Church.

"The higher the energy costs, the less money a family has to survive, and not everyone has money to install a solar system," she said.

She worried that more expensive power bills would also force small



People protest in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Wednesday, June 28, 2023. Hundreds of people including religious leaders, economists, lawyers, teachers and retirees protested a proposed increase to already high electric bills that a growing number of people in the US territory are struggling to pay. (AP Photo/Alejandro Granadillo)

businesses to close and churches to cut back on their services. More than 40 per cent of Puerto Rico's 3.2 million inhabitants live below the poverty rate, compared with a 19 per cent rate for Mississippi, the poorest US state.

Many in Puerto Rico also are outraged about the proposed increase given ongoing power outages blamed on a crumbling power grid that was not properly maintained and has not been rebuilt since Hurricane Maria ravaged the US territory in September 2017. Power outages were reported across the island on Wednesday amid heavy rain and lightning produced by a strong tropical wave in the region.

Cristina Miranda Palacios, executive director of the nonprofit League of Puerto Rican Cities, said the proposed increase is not fair or acceptable.

"It's inconceivable that the people, including the most marginalised and economically disadvantaged populations, have to bear this cost for a highly questionable quality of service," she said.

Puerto Ricans say they are not responsible for the actions of government officials who for decades accumulated more than \$70 billion in public debt through corruption, mismanagement and excessive borrowing.

In 2015, the US territory's government announced it was unable to pay its debt, and in 2017, it filed for the biggest US municipal bankruptcy in history.

The debt of nearly all the island's government agencies has since been restructured, except that of Puerto Rico's power company. It is the largest held by any state agency at more than \$10 billion.

## Sweden Quran burning: Protesters storm embassy in Baghdad



Police intervene as people react to a burning of a copy of the Quran in Stockholm on Wednesday.

**By Alys Davies**

Dozens of people have stormed the compound of the Swedish embassy in Iraq's capital, Baghdad, after a Quran was burnt during a protest in Sweden.

Salwan Momika, said to be an Iraqi living in Sweden, set fire to a copy of Islam's holy book outside Stockholm's central mosque on Wednesday.

The Quran burning was condemned by many Muslim-majority countries.

A crowd gathered outside the embassy in Baghdad on Thursday after a powerful cleric called for an "angry" protest.

Videos posted on social media appeared to show dozens of protesters walking inside the courtyard.

An AFP news agency photographer at the scene said the crowd briefly entered the building and remained inside for about 15 minutes before leav-

ing when local security forces were deployed.

Muslims consider the Quran the sacred word of God and view any intentional damage or show of disrespect towards it as deeply offensive.

The Quran burning on Wednesday took place as Muslims around the world celebrated the first day of Eid al-Adha, one of the most important festivals in the Muslim calendar.

Swedish police had given Mr Momika a permit for the protest, in accordance with free-speech laws. But later police said the incident was being investigated for incitement of hatred.

The incident has also sparked anger in other Muslim-majority nations including Turkey - a Nato member which has a say over whether Sweden also gains membership.

Turkey - which was also angered by a Quran burning protest earlier this

year - said it was "unacceptable" to allow such "anti-Islamic actions" to take place "under the pretext of freedom of expression".

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said: "We will eventually teach the arrogant Westerners that insulting Muslims is not freedom of thought."

Middle Eastern nations including Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt strongly criticised the burning.

Morocco and Jordan have recalled their ambassadors to Stockholm, and Morocco has also summoned Sweden's charge d'affaires in Rabat.

Iraq said the incident was "a reflection of a hateful aggressive spirit that has nothing to do with freedom of expression."

Iran echoed Iraq's criticism, calling the act of burning the Quran "provocative" and "unacceptable", while Egypt

*cont'd on pg 17*



## Travis Scott will not face criminal charges over Astroworld crowd surge

By Sam Cabral

A grand jury in Texas has declined to charge rapper Travis Scott over a deadly crowd surge at the Astroworld music festival nearly two years ago.

The jury met Thursday as part of a criminal probe into Scott and others involved with the planning of the concert, which left 10 people dead.

Scott's lawyer Kent Schaffer said the decision comes as "a great relief" to his client.

The rapper still faces multiple civil suits stemming from the Houston show.

Scott, one of the biggest names in rap music, launched Astroworld with concert promoters Live Nation in 2018.

Thousands were injured at the 5 November 2021 event when panic broke out as the over-capacity crowd pressed towards the front of the stage during Scott's headline performance.

Ten people, ranging in age from nine to 27, were killed by compressive asphyxiation.

The rapper has said the



Travis Scott

tragedy left him "distracted" but that he was not aware of its extent until coming off stage.

Critics have accused him and fellow rapper Drake of continuing to perform despite accounts of "lifeless bodies being passed through the crowd in full view of the stage". Houston's fire chief had stated that Scott should have halted the show much earlier.

Both federal officials and Houston police have been

investigating whether Scott, festival promoter Live Nation and others implemented adequate safety measures for the event.

Scott's attorney, Mr Schaffer, confirmed in a statement that the jury met but chose not to indict his client, adding that he did not know what charges had been considered.

"He never encouraged people to do anything that resulted in other people being hurt," Mr Schaffer said.

While he felt sympathy for victims of the crowd surge, Mr Schaffer added: "Travis is not responsible. Bringing criminal charges against him will not ease their pain."

Lawsuits filed by multiple victims remain active in Texas state courts.

The family of one victim settled with Scott, Live Nation and others in October 2022, although the terms of the agreement have not been disclosed.

Robert Hilliard, the attorney representing another victim's family, said Thursday "both criminal and civil accountability are critical to ensure that those responsible for the loss of innocent lives understand the permanent devastation they caused these families".

**cont'd from pg 16**

described it as a "shameful" act which was especially provocative as Muslims mark Eid al-Adha.

Saudi Arabia - the destination of around 1.8m worshippers on the annual Hajj pilgrimage this week - said "these hateful and repeated acts cannot be accepted with any justification."

Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said the Quran burning was "legal but not appropriate".

Plans to burn copies of the Quran have sparked riots in Sweden in recent months.

Police had rejected similar protest applications recently, but courts then ruled that they should be allowed on freedom of expression grounds.

# At least a dozen dead as heat dome bakes southern US

By Bernd Debusmann Jr

At least a dozen people have died of heat-related causes in Texas and Louisiana as extreme temperatures continue to plague the country.

Eleven of the deaths took place in Texas' Webb County on the Mexican border, according to local officials.

Hundreds of other Texas residents have been sent to emergency rooms, breaking previous records.

The current weather is the result of a heat dome, in which high pressure is trapped because of wind patterns.

In Webb County - which is centred on the city of Laredo - the heat-related fatalities ranged in age from 60 to 80.

"We don't see this in our county," county medical examiner Dr Corinne Stern said at a meeting of local officials on Tuesday.

"Laredo knows heat. Webb County knows heat. And I think our county was caught a little off guard.

"These are unprecedented temperatures here due to this dome of high pressure."

The dead have also included a man and his stepson, 14, who died while hiking in Texas' Big Bend National Park.

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Con-



A migrant woman being treated for heat exhaustion in the Texas city of Eagle Pass on 26 June.

trol and Prevention (CDC) shows that Texas averaged about 837 heat-related visits per 100,000 visits between 18 and 24 June, compared to about 639 during the same time period last year.

Two other deaths - a 62-year-old woman and a 49-year-old man - were also as a result of the heat in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, according to CBS, the BBC's US partner.

And five bodies were found in a busy human smuggling corridor in three parts of the New Mexico desert. Officials have not disclosed whether those deaths were directly attributable to the heat.

The current heat wave is the result of a relatively rare "heat dome", which only occurs every few

years in the southern US. During a heat dome, high pressure is trapped in a particular area because of wind patterns, stretching 5 to 10 miles (8 to 16km) in altitude and across hundreds or thousands of miles horizontally.

Meteorologists expect the heat wave to continue to spread over the coming days, particularly in the southern US and Mississippi Valley.

Swathes of Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama, Kansas and Missouri and other states continue to be under heat advisories. Hotter than average temperatures are also expected for the rest of the week in New Mexico, Georgia and Florida.

The heat has prompted warnings from the federal

health officials and the National Weather Service that people in affected areas should limit outdoor activities and remain in air-conditioned areas as much as possible.

An average of 702 heat-related deaths occur in the US every year, according to CDC statistics, with nearly 68,000 people sent to emergency rooms.

Heatwaves have become more frequent, intense and last longer because of human-induced climate change, scientists say.

The world has already warmed by about 1.1C since the industrial era began and scientists project temperatures will keep rising unless governments around the world make steep cuts to emissions.



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# Sports News



## Three teams vying for two spots in semis of Dave Joseph contest

Three teams will be vying for the two remaining spots in the semi-finals of the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League's Dave Joseph Limited Overs Competition this weekend.

Defending champions Police, Dreams 2 Reality Sea View Farm, and Mahico all have the chance of clinching one of the two remaining spots in the semi-finals during the last phase of preliminary round matches tomorrow.

Sea View Farm and Police will clash at Sea View Farm, with the winners advancing to join leaders Freetown and National Parks/Cool & Smooth Masters, who have already booked their places in the semi-finals.

Mahico must beat Old Road in their last preliminary round encounter at Old Road on Saturday to keep alive their hopes of clinching the remaining spot in the semi-finals.

Victory against Old



Road will allow Mahico to finish the preliminary rounds tied on 24 points with the losers of the encounter between the Police and Sea View Farm.

As a tiebreaker, the team that finishes the preliminary rounds with the highest net run rate will advance to complete the semi-final line-up.

Masters will take on Urlings at the Urlings playing field in their last preliminary round encounter on Saturday.

Masters will enter their game at Urlings on 32 points, eight points behind leaders Freetown, who have already completed their quota of matches in the preliminary rounds.

Urlings, currently on eight points, and Old Road, who are without a point, have both been eliminated from the semi-finals.

Llewellyn Simon and Dallis Adams will umpire the match at Sea View Farm; Oliver Benjamin and Julion Daniel will officiate at Old Road; and Dirk Schouten and Bertel Baltimore will be the umpires at the encounter in Urlings.

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## Taylor pleased to make 150th ODI appearance

West Indies legend Stafanie Taylor marked another milestone in her illustrious career when she made her 150th appearance in the 50 over format on Wednesday.

The match was, however, dampened by rain as only 52 balls were possible as the second CG United One-Day International between West Indies Women and Ireland Women ended in a no result.

In a contest reduced to 20 overs per side after persistent showers delayed the start at the Darren Sammy Cricket Ground for nearly six hours, Ireland Women reached 36 for five in the ninth over before the weather intervened for the final time.

Taylor said, "It's very special and it reminds me of how old I'm getting. I'm really happy to be back on the park playing and representing West Indies. A couple months ago I wasn't sure if I would be able to be playing again, but this is the best I've felt in a long time, even in my previous years when I was fit."

She added, "I feel strong and the work I've been putting in with Asia Joseph (strength and conditioning coach) the last four-five months has been really good. I had a good knock in the first game, to be out there with Hayley supporting her, it feels really good. It's really nice to be back in the Maroon."

Having donned the maroon jersey for over a de-



*West Indies legend Stafanie Taylor bats during the first One-Day International against Ireland at the Darren Sammy Cricket Ground in St. Lucia on Monday, June 26th, 2023. (CWI Media)*

cade, Taylor's journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. With her unwavering dedication and immense talent, she has rewritten records and etched her name in the annals of West Indian cricket history.

Most notably, Taylor has amassed 5,422 runs in ODI, the third highest in women's cricket, which is a testament to her exceptional batting prowess and invaluable contributions to the side.

From her debut in 2008 as a 17-year-old prodigy, to captaining the West Indies women's team to victory in the 2016 ICC Women's T20 World Cup, Taylor has consistently exhibited her leadership skills, technical finesse, and ability to deliver under pressure.

Her aggressive, yet elegant batting style, coupled with her ability to take crucial wickets with her off-spin, has made her a formidable force on the field.

Back on the field, West Indies won the toss and chose to bowl. They made

and Shamilia Connell (two for 14) capturing the early wickets.

The Irish slipped to 16 for four in the fourth over before Orla Prendergast (13 not out) and Leah Paul (5) put on 20 to steady the innings. Matthews broke the stand at the end of the eighth over before the rains returned to rule out any further chance of play.

The final CG United ODI is scheduled for Saturday at the same venue. West Indies won the first match by 58 runs at the same venue on Monday.



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Members of the national domino team engage in practice sessions at the ABNDA's headquarters in Ottos during this month. (ABNDA)

## ABNDA halts domestic contests to prepare for world domino championship

The domestic competitions of the Antigua and Barbuda National Domino Association (ABNDA) are currently on a break to facilitate the training and preparation of its national team to contest the World Council of Domino Federation's (WCDF) Championship in Guyana in August.

The AS Bryden & Stingray City Bolans Revellers won the first domestic Team Three-Hand competition, while Everyday Service Station Double Six Diamonds won the second one. Willikies Super Stars won the first and second Team Four-Hand contests.

The Public Relations Officer of the ABNDA, Carol-Faye Bynoe, said the final domestic competition will be held in September after the national team returns from participating in the World Domino Championship, which will be hosted at the Guyana National Stadium in Providence from August 12th to 21st.

"Our physical year is not completed as yet because during the year we run several tournaments. I would say we basically have four tournaments every year, but in a year when we are having a world tournament, it is cut down to three.

So we already had two out of the three," Bynoe said.

"Now we are in the phase of training for the world tournament that will be held in Guyana in August. So upon our return from Guyana, the third and final competition will be held from September to December."

Bynoe said a 45-member team comprising male and female players has already been selected from trials and it is currently training three times a week at the association's headquarters in Ottos in preparation for this year's world championship in Guyana.

"We had several weeks of trials, and you had over 100 players testing in the trials. A total of 45 players, comprising 25 males and 20 females, were selected from the trials to represent the national team at the world tournament in Guyana," Bynoe said.

"In addition to that, we will have the manager, the coach, and referees because each island is supposed to make sure that we have about three or four referees.

"So we are actually in our third week of training. So the 45 people who have been selected are undergoing training now, and what we are doing is using the nights we usually utilize for the local tournaments for training.

"So we will be down there training on Thursday nights, Friday nights, and Sunday afternoons."

### cont'd from pg 24

Hawks will meet the Pigotts Crushers at the Pigotts playing field. The All Saints Pythons will face the Bolans Blasters at the Bolans playing field.

The Jennings Tigers will begin their campaign against the Wes Rising Sun

Spartans at the Jennings playing field, and the Bethesda Golden Eagles will clash with the Empire Nation at the King George V Grounds.

All matches, which will be a maximum of 40 overs per side, will commence at 11 am on both days.

## Black Hawks aim to retain Super40 title

The defending champion, the PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks, will be going all out to make a successful defense of their Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Super40 championship, which is slated to begin this weekend.

Coach Wilden "Pollo" Cornwall said the Black Hawks will be aiming to retain the Super40 Cup after relinquishing the Cool & Smooth T20 Explosion title, which was won by Empire Nation earlier this year.

"After the Cool and Smooth (T20 Explosion Tournament), in which we invested in some young cricketers and (the) Jennings (Tigers) beat us (in the semi-finals), we decided that we are going to push real hard to win the remaining tournaments during the season," Cornwall said.

"We have made some plans, and we have decided that we were going to use what we have and push real hard in the remaining tournaments and try to come away victorious at the end.

"We have already made preparations for the Super40



The PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks' all-rounder Karima Gore holds the Super40 trophy with President of the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee Paul Chet Greene after winning the limited overs competition last year. (File photo)

and I am wishing good luck to all of the teams that are taking part in this year's Super40."

Captain Kenrick Scott said Empire Nation, which lost by four runs to the Black Hawks in last year's semi-finals, is also looking forward to the start of the limited-overs competition.

"The Super40 is starting this weekend. We had two hard days of cricket in the two-day final against Liberta. So we had two rest days and started training again in the middle of the week to go through some simple plans

on how we want to play the cricket in the 40-over and just go out there and execute," Scott stated.

Nine teams will be contesting this year's ABCA Super40 limited-overs competition, which will commence with four opening-round matches tomorrow (Saturday).

The Liberta Black Hawks will begin their title defense against the Wes Rising Sun Spartans at the Rising Sun playing field. The Empire Nation will launch their campaign against the New Winthorpes Lions at

New Winthorpes.

The Pigotts Crushers and the All Saints Pythons will clash in their opening affair at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints Village, and the Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles will host the Bolans Blasters at the Bethesda playing field in their opening encounter.

The one-day cricket competition will continue with four more matches across the twin-island-state on Sunday.

The Liberta Black Hawks will begin their title defense against the Wes Rising Sun Spartans at the Rising Sun playing field. The Empire Nation will launch their campaign against the New Winthorpes Lions at

*cont'd on pg 23*