

\$1.9 BILLION BUDGET FOR 2024

Story on Page 2



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

\$1.9 billion Budget proposed for 2024

The Antigua and Barbuda government is proposing a National Budget of \$1.9 billion for the fiscal year 2024.

Prime Minister and Finance Minister Gaston Browne presented the government's fiscal plans for the upcoming year during the national budget presentation to the House of Representatives last Friday.

He told parliamentarians and the nation the total revenues and grants for 2024 will amount to \$1.2 billion which represents 18.7 per cent of GDP. Total expenditures, excluding amortization payments, will amount to \$1.3 billion or 20 per cent of GDP. Amortization payments have been tagged at \$569.5 million or 8.9 per cent of GDP and the country's net financing requirements is \$649.7 million or 10.1 per cent of GDP.

PM Browne explained that in or
cont'd on pg 3



Members of Parliament at the Budget presentation last Friday



cont'd from pg 2

der to meet the net financing requirements for Budget 2024, the government will primarily rely on the issuance of securities on the Regional Government Securities Market, which will amount to \$250 million, and disbursement of loans and advances amounting to \$210 million.

Two of the main highlights of the budget presentation were the announcement from the prime minister of adjustments to several of the taxes charged to individuals and businesses. The other is the widening of the list of items that are zero rated for the additional two percent increase in the rate of the Antigua and Barbuda Sales Tax (ABST).

PM Browne was quick to note that despite the adjustments, Antigua and Barbuda remains the country with the lowest rate of taxation in the OECS region and beyond within the CARICOM community.

“It should be noted that even with the revenue reforms; tax to GDP, to include organic revenue growth will, only increase by 0.7 percent to 15.7 percent; we will still have the lowest tax to GDP ratio and revenue to GDP ratio in the region,” he detailed.

The adjustments in the taxes include the following;

- Implementing the increased property tax rate on properties valued at \$3 million or

more.

- Implementing a 10% excise tax on alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis products.
- Increasing the Money Transfer Levy from 2% to 5%.
- Broadening the ABST tax base by enhancing the list of services that would attract the ABST – including online streaming services. We will also end the concessionary ABST rate applicable to several transactions, most notably in the tourism sector.

- Increasing the ABST rate from 15% to 17% and applying this rate to the tourism sector, which currently attracts a rate of 14%.

Meanwhile, government will continue to pursue its social relief programme by extending the ABST zero-rated items.

These items include:

- most fruits and vegetables to include but not limited to bananas, oranges, grapes, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower and lettuce
- baby products
- dry goods and oils to

include pasta, sugar, corn meal, flour, rice, and cooking oils

- chicken, fish, local produced meats, eggs, canned sardines and tuna
- bread
- cereals, cheese and milk
- water
- medicine, pharmaceutical supplies, and adult diapers

Additionally, exempt supplies for use in the agriculture and fisheries sectors will not be affected by the change in the ABST rate, he added.

Job Offer

Fly All Ways

TRAINEE CABIN ATTENDANT

At Fly Allways, we move the people who move the world
Keep climbing and apply to join us today!

Fly Allways, a young and dynamic airline company is looking for Trainee Cabin Attendants for Freelance.

Requirements for the position of TRAINEE CABIN ATTENDANT

- Experienced in Aviation is an advantage
- Must be between 23 and 30 years of age
- Length of ladies between 1.65 – 1.85 meters, Preferred weight 48-65 kg
- Length of gentlemen 1.72 – 1.85 meters, Preferred weight 60-75 kg
- Representative overall pleasing and well-groomed appearance with no visible piercings, tattoos, or dental decorations
- Non-smoker with an excellent overall health
- Not afraid of flying! Swimming skills are required
- Fluent communication in English, verbally and in writing. Spanish or Portuguese or another language is an advantage
- Junior college educated with 1 or 2 years of experience in the hospitality branch
- Available to work flexible/extended hours and able to work in a physically demanding role
- Must pass the required psychological test, medical test, alcohol and drugs test
- Willing to be home-based in Antigua or nearby. Accept assignment to any base after training graduation and relocate or commute (i.e. standby travel) to and from the assigned base location

Application

Ready to join the exciting world of Fly Allways? Please send your CV with a photo before **15 January 2024** to the **HR Team flyallwayshrm@gmail.com/ secretary@flyallways.com /+597 8815522**

Construction boom in hotel sector continues apace

Led by the continued expansion and development of the Peace, Love and Happiness (PLH) project in Barbuda, the country's hotel sector is undergoing a renaissance with several properties expected to commence operation over the next twelve months.

This upbeat assessment of what lies ahead for the key sector came from Prime Minister Gaston Browne when he presented the 2024 National Budget for Antigua and Barbuda in the House of Representatives on Friday.

PM Browne said PLH is already transforming the landscape in Barbuda and more is to come in the weeks and months ahead. "Over US\$700 million has already been spent on this development and a further US\$200 million should be spent in 2024. By the end of the month, twenty-four (24) of the residential luxury properties will be completed and more than two hundred (200) guests will vacation at the resort," he revealed.

Already, PLH employs over four hundred and forty persons, more than half of whom are Barbudans.

Turning to other developments, PM Browne added that Sunwing International's Royalton Chic at the site of the former Halcyon Cove is nearing completion. It boasts 235 rooms, a number of suites and over-water bungalows and is set to open in April 2024.

Noting that the Barrett Group continues to play a significant role in the tourism sector, he said in the coming year, renovation of nearly 400 rooms at Jolly Beach will be completed, an additional twelve units will be added to Hammock Cove, and development



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

will start on a 30-room wellness spa at Mango Bay.

"The total investment in these properties will be around US\$30 million," he disclosed.

The country's leader named the expansion of the Hermitage Bay hotel as another exciting project to be undertaken in 2024.

He reported that the design and preparatory work for the US\$250 million Nikki Beach Resort and Residences should soon be completed and the construction phase of this project is expected to begin the second half of 2024.

Also in the cards is a US\$100 million project for the phased expansion of Carlisle Bay Resort. The project was delayed due to environmental issues but work will resume

shortly.

Starting in 2024, a 150-room hotel will be constructed near Yepton's Beach in Five Islands.

The high-end property will be developed under the Marriott International Brand and will certainly provide increased employment opportunities for members of the surrounding communities and beyond.

One of the major announcements over the past two weeks has been the news that the ultra-exclusive Rosewood Hotels and Resorts franchise will be opened on Barbuda.

The Rosewood Barbuda project, will be undertaken by Murbee Resorts and will include fifty resort suites, thirty-five Rosewood Residences, Asya Spa and other impres-

cont'd on pg 5

Foreign Minister highlights A&B welcoming posture towards migrants

Antigua and Barbuda's migration legacy has always been one of welcoming others to its shores whether due to economic hardship, natural disasters, or the more benign reasons of tourism and investment opportunities.

Those were the sentiments expressed by Antigua and Barbuda's Foreign Affairs Minister E. P. Chet Greene speaking on the topic; *"The ambition of migrants to contribute to Antigua and Barbuda's sustainable development"*. It formed part of a series of similar discussions being held by the United Nations' International Organisation for Migration (IOM) entitled: *Conversations on Migration in the Caribbean*.

According to the foreign minister, whatever the reasons, migrants have been empowered and, in many instances incentivized to become fully-fledged and productive members of the Antigua and Barbuda society.

"The rights of liberty, justice, respect and representation are ingrained in our constitution and in governmental policy, since we recognize that nation-

al wellbeing can only be realized by the combined efforts of all its residents, regardless of country of origin," he stated.

Greene noted that over the past one hundred or more years, thousands of Antiguan and Barbudans have ventured abroad to seek opportunities to improve their own and their families' lives.

"In doing so, they have contributed immensely to the development of many nations. From the Panama Canal, to the Windrush generation and the reconstruction of Europe after WWII, to the further development of the sugar and manufacturing industries in Cuba and the Dominican Republic as well as North American industries, Antiguan and Barbudans have left positive marks for civic responsibility, hard work and dedication, and a willingness to embrace other cultures," he added.

In return, Greene suggested that the nation has itself benefited tremendously from remittances, acquired knowledge and skills, technology transfers, together with a growing awareness



Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P. Chet Greene speaking on the issue of migration in the Caribbean last Friday

of national responsibility to fostering understanding and cooperation with different cultures.

Additionally, he noted

that the country has been fortunate not to have been beset by sectarian classes or systematic discrimination against migrants.

cont'd from pg 4

sive amenities.

This beachfront property will be situated on 85 acres and is expected to generate employment opportunities for over 300 workers during the construction phase which is slated to

commence in 2024.

Other major new hotel developments include a Silver Sands resort – to be constructed on Barbuda.

The One and Only Hotel Brand, one of the most celebrated ultra-luxury resorts in the world, is expected

to commence construction at Half Moon Bay in the latter part of 2024.

Additionally, the Government and a private investor group will partner to develop an upmarket resort at Morris Bay commencing in 2024.

Hell's Gate 4-A-Side pan competition is on!



Khan Cordice

One of the country's oldest surviving steel bands, Caribbean Union Bank Hell's Gate Steel Orchestra, returns with its popular 4-A-Side pan competition slated for December 30 at its pan yard on Bay Street in the Point.

One of the leaders of the steel band, arranger, Khan Cordice, said the competition is held biennially and this year marks the fifth staging of the event.

"It started as an internal developmental initiative for arrangers, individual players and band management. It has since been extended to the wider community," Cordice ex-

plained.

He said he anticipates that between 12 and 16 pan sides will participate in the competition. He added that the competition, while focusing on the development of younger pannists, has no age-limits as anyone can join a team and compete fully.

"We want to develop pan players and arrangers and to build capacity in the wider steelpan community," he stated.

Cordice is extending an invitation to pan enthusiasts from across the island to attend the 4-A-side competition as it promises to offer a high caliber of skills by the participating pannists.

STUDENT SAFETY POLICY

STATE INSURANCE
COMPANY LIMITED

Live in a better State of mind

www.sicantigua.com
info@sicantigua.com
1 (268) 481-7800/04

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter icons



THE GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA FESTIVALS COMMISSION AND DWO PRESENTS:

DRUESDAY
19
DEC.



Ricardo Drue

OF MEMORIES
his melody and hits will **PLAY ON...**

RICARDO DRUE

CELEBRATION OF LIFE AND **CANDLE LIGHT VIGIL** FOR SOCA AMBASSADOR

CARNIVAL CITY
(Antigua Recreation Grounds)
7pm

PERFORMANCES BY
CLAUDETTE PETERS, TIAN WINTER, KIMMY ISLAND PRINCE, PSYCHO, YOUNG LYRICS, EZZY RATTIGAN & MANY MORE
HOSTED BY: **IBIS AND SUPA DYMOND**



For more information and support please contact **727 9201**.

Top local soca artistes and entertainers sign up for Ricardo Drue memorial event

Several top local soca artistes and entertainers have signaled their availability to participate in a special event to celebrate the life of the late soca icon, Ricardo Drue, who died suddenly last Tuesday.

The event dubbed *Celebration of Life and Candlelight Vigil* takes place at the Antigua Recreation Grounds on Tuesday (December 19) to honour the memory of Ricardo Drue, regarded as the Soca Ambassador. It is being organized by the Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission in collaboration with DW, a company associated with Ricardo Drue.

“Ricardo Drue, a true son of the soil who carried the spirit of Antigua and Barbuda to every corner of the globe through his infectious soca rhythms. His passion, creativity, and enduring mark on our hearts will always be remembered. Ricardo, your work will forever inspire us. Rest in peace,” said the promotional material for the event that is being circulated.

A “Who’s Who” of the local soca fraternity have signed up to participate in the event. These include, but are not limited to the following:

Claudette Peters @cpthediva
Tian Winter @tianwinterofficial

Island Prince @islandprince_official

Kimmy @meetkimmy
Psycho @xx.psycho268__
Young Lyrics @iamyounglyrics
Ezzy Rattigan @ratti_gan

Two popular entertainers - Ibis @steveibis and Super Dymond @supadymond – will serve as joint hosts of the event. The programme starts at 7:00 pm.

The Festivals Commission said it anticipates that many more artistes will sign on to participate, as Ricardo Drue was a highly respected and well loved member of the soca fraternity in Antigua and Barbuda and beyond.



Caribbean Union Bank

VACANCY RISK AGENT

THE ROLE:

Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) is seeking to fill the position of Risk Agent. The Risk Agent will provide strong administrative support to the Manager in the implementation of the enterprise risk management framework of the Bank and the monitoring of specific areas of risk.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED:

- › Bachelor's degree in Banking, Finance, Accounting, or a related field and a minimum of three years of banking experience. Alternatively, a minimum of 6 years of banking experience at a senior administrative level.
- › Certification in Risk Management
- › Excellent analytical skills
- › High level of accuracy & attention to detail
- › Excellent interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving skills
- › Strong organizational and prioritizing skills

APPLICATIONS

Applications can be submitted via email to human.resource@cub.ag or alternatively, hand-delivered to the Branch Ambassadors at our Friars Hill & Starling Branches. The deadline for application is **Friday 22nd December, 2023**.

Please note that only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

KEY AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY:

- › Assist in the monitoring of the following specific areas of risk: Credit, Market, Liquidity, Operational, Compliance/Regulatory, Reputational, and Legal.
- › Prepare the quarterly prudential reports.
- › Preparing monthly reports on risk positions under purview with recommendations or follow-ups
- › Assist with investigating and reporting risk events as assigned.
- › Assisting in conducting investigations
- › Assist in the preparation of risk assessments on new/modified/expanded products/services as assigned.

Deverel ‘Big Brother’ Forde has died

Deverol Forde, who gained the moniker, Big Brother, while a student at the Antigua Grammar School and who spent most of his working life in the aviation industry, has died.

Reports are that he died Sunday morning at home from what is suspected to have been a heart attack.

Forde was a trained airline engineer who worked for some twenty-five years with BWIA, the Trinidad and Tobago-owned carrier

that has since been replaced by Caribbean Airways Limited (CAL). Following his tenure with BWIA, he took up an appointment as Director of Safety and Security at the VC Bird International Airport until 2018.

He was father of the ECCB Country Manager in Antigua and Barbuda, Karel Forde-Harrigan and brother of Director of Administration (ag) at UWI FIC, Hiram Forde.

He was 64 years old.



Deverel Forde widely known as Big Brother



STATE INSURANCE
COMPANY LIMITED

STORM READY
2023 HURRICANE SEASON
JUNE 1 - NOVEMBER 30

COVERAGE FOR
HOME | BUSINESS | FAMILY | MOTOR

www.slcfinancial.com

ECAB LAUNCHES CREDIT AND DEBIT CARD REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

Press Release

St. John's Antigua, December 18, 2023 – Commencing December 20, 2023, the Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank Limited (ECAB) will launch its Card Replacement Program. The initiative focuses on the replacement of debit and credit cards distributed during the integration phase and legacy ECAB USD cards with an expiry date between January to March 2025.

Over the last few months, extensive investigations and testing have been undertaken to determine the root cause of the card performance challenges and intermittent system disruptions. Based on the findings, our card vendor has confirmed that a production error occurred which caused the chip in the affected cards to deactivate during specific transactions. To resolve the chip performance issue and increase card reliability for our customers, debit and credit cards issued during the integration process and legacy ECAB cards with expiry dates January to March 2025 will be replaced. **Please note, if you previously received a replacement or renewal card, you will NOT be required to collect a card.**

We continue to work with the relevant vendors to address the intermittent system disruptions and we sincerely apologize for the inconvenience caused over the past few months. Steps to minimize such during the upcoming card replacement program will be taken.

Kindly note the below two groups of ECAB customers who will be impacted by the new card rollout:

- Former Scotiabank (BNS) customers who would have received debit cards during the integration phase. (Note that credit card replacement for former BNS customers has already commenced with the issuance of the AAdvantage Renewal cards.)
- Legacy ECAB customers who received renewal USD credit cards with an expiry date between January and March 2025.

To simplify the collection process, the following additional measures have been implemented:

- A schedule will be released to guide customers on the collection of the new cards. Please be advised that cards will be distributed based on last names and must be collected at the named location within the specified time frame.
- Special accommodations to manage the distribution of cards to overseas card holders, senior citizens and business clients have been put into action.
- Regular updates will be available via email, radio, television, social media and the bank's website to further direct customers.

Customers may contact our Customer Support and Digital Banking team at 480-6186 for more information on the card collection process. Customers can also email cardcollection@ecabank.com or call 480-1541 to request collection of their card at a different location.

MANAGEMENT

Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank Limited (ECAB)





COLLECT YOUR REPLACEMENT CARD

WHO SHOULD COLLECT

- Former **Bank of Nova Scotia (BNS)** customers who received debit and credit cards during the integration process.
 - Legacy ECAB** customers who received renewal USD Credit Cards with expiry date **January to March 2025**.
- !** Note: Persons who previously received a replacement or renewal card will **NOT** be required to collect a card.



Bring your existing card and ID

				COLLECTION PERIOD	
	Woods (Former Scotiabank)	High Street	Redcliffe Street	FROM	TO
LAST NAME STARTING WITH	A	D	R	Wed, Dec 20, 2023	Sat, Dec 30, 2023
	B	E	S	Tues, Jan 2, 2024	Fri, Jan 5, 2024
	B	F	S	Mon, Jan 8, 2024	Fri, Jan 12, 2024
	C	G	T, U, V	Mon, Jan 15, 2024	Fri, Jan 19, 2024
		H, I	W	Mon, Jan 22, 2024	Fri, Jan 26, 2024
		J	X, Y, Z	Mon, Jan 29, 2024	Fri, Feb 2, 2024
		K, L		Mon, Feb 5, 2024	Fri, Feb 9, 2024
		M		Mon, Feb 12, 2024	Fri, Feb 16, 2024
	N, M, O, P, Q		Mon, Feb 19, 2024	Fri, Feb 23, 2024	

Card Collection Hotline

To request collection at an alternate location
Call 480-1541 or email cardcollection@ecabank.com



(268) 480 6186



info@ecabank.com

Find us on



Bajan pride, people and possibilities

By Tony Deyal

If, as the poet Robert Browning wrote, “Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,/ The house for me no doubt, were a house in the city-square;/ Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!” In Trinidad, we have to keep the windows shut, armed, even more alarmed than we are, burglar-proofed and linked to security companies.

Whether the city is square, round or rectangle, because of the murder rate and constantly increasing crime in Trinidad, if I had the money, I would be a ‘polygon’ to Barbados. In fact, if I had money, enough and to spare, the place without doubt for me would be Barbados.

Many years ago, I had written that, if I had the dinero to spare, I would be in Bridgetown watching cricket. Now, while cricket is important to me and my son Zubin, who with his sister Jasmine were born in Barbados, if I were a Brit like those 34,000 the BBC says live there, I would buy and fly my own plane, not so much for the cricket but to live there immediately or until Trinidad becomes the home it used to be for all of us - blacks, whites, Indians and mixes of all types, regions and religions. It is not that I am so willing to part with Trinidad that I would join the flying-fish and coucou posse. It will hurt to

leave the land of my birth. But it is worse to see so many empty houses for sale in what used to be “posh” areas, and read the newspapers with murders every day.

It is what came to me on Sunday when I went with about 200 Trinis to the Queen’s Park Savannah in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, to join a group of people who were concerned about the possibility of 600 murders in Trinidad this year, despite that there were 605 last year. In fact, many of us expect it to be 700 or more by the time we get ready to celebrate or defecate from fear for the New Year. While the Carpenters could sing that it’s Only Just Begun, we in Trinidad are stuck with ‘it’s only just big-gun’. That is why, if I had the bread, I will just be-gone.

BARBADOS IS THE BEST

In all the places in the world that I have lived, including Trinidad, once you can afford it, Barbados is the best. It is like the old joke about how to become a millionaire. First, you become a billionaire and then you buy an airline. In my case, it is even simpler. Become a billionaire and then move to Barbados.

Maybe I am exaggerating somewhat about the cost of living in Barbados. However, I am telling the plain truth in declaring my love for that country. I lived there happily for many years and



Tony Deyal

left there reluctantly. Interestingly, unlike Trinidad, nobody in Barbados ever called me a “Coolie”.

When I first went to Barbados to work for the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), I was impressed by the names of some of the communities like Duppies, Husbands and Great Head. In one case, I shouted loudly “Balls! Balls!”.

It was not that I was prone to vulgarity but I was on my way to a cricket match and ‘balls’ was where I was heading. It is the name of a plantation in Barbados which now houses the Barbados Horticultural Society.

It caused me to recall a Dorothy Parker pun, “You can lead a horticulture but you can’t make her think.” I was driving my ‘mini-moke’ machine, a canvas-covered car without doors and windows that had

cost me BDS\$1,000. However, when I was told that the insurance was \$1,500. I angrily asked the salesman, “So, what you want me to do? Sell the car to pay for the insurance?”

This was when I worried that one of the neighbourhood dogs which chased after me every morning would jump into the car and bite me. I saw myself taking the ball by the horns and going to the hospital for treatment. “Sir,” the very mannerly Barbados nurse would ask, “what happen?” Me, “A dog bite me.” Nurse, “How that happen?” Me, “Well I was driving my car, somewhere between Coverly and Newton I came to a plantation and a big dog rush out, jump into my car and bite me.” Nurse, “Balls”. Me, “No. Ankle.” Nurse, “No the place you get bite. Balls.” Me, not knowing in

cont’d on pg 13

cont'd from pg 12

those early days that Balls was a village or plantation and not an anatomical reference, stressed loudly, "Nurse, not there! If it was there, I would be useless. It is my ankle where I get bite. Nowhere else!"

BARBADOS PM

Even now, while we know that the Barbados prime minister is above all the other prime ministers in the Caribbean, I find the Bajan use of the word "above" is still over my head. When I first went to Barbados, I needed a few T-shirts to wear and went to the well-known and better named "Broad" Street.

Having been introduced earlier to Baxter's Road I realised that there were more "Broads" in Baxter's, especially in the late evening, than there would ever be on Broad Street despite its reputation as the commercial centre of the country.

I went to the only place I knew and enjoyed, Cave Shepherd. I asked one of the salespeople where I would find plain work denims. She told me just go above and I would find them. I took the escalator and went to the next floor. None. I went to the floor above that one.

Same khaki pants. So I went back to the ground floor and told the lady that I went to both floors above and I didn't find any. It is then I learnt that "above" in Barbados is further in front of you. Had I asked for "below" it would have been behind me or where I had just come from.

I also learnt that, in Barbados, the word "unfair" is used as a verb. One day, a player who believed that he was given what in Trinidad would be called a "bad" out, was so upset he came off the field and complained, "The umpire unfaired me."

In this context, an Englishman on

a Caribbean tour who had just left Jamaica and arrived in Barbados was even more unfaired. He asked the bartender for an Appleton Estate rum, claiming it was the best in the world. The angry bartended told him, "Look, buddy, no other country in the world has better rum than Barbados."

The astronauts carried one of our rums to the moon. Commander Armstrong himself made sure our rum was there. Now, ever so often the rum affects the moon." When the Englishman questioned the veracity of the statement and cast doubt on its authenticity, the bartender said triumphantly, "Listen, you never hear about the moon in eclipse?"

Tony Deyal was last seen going into a Bridgetown flower shop. This is because the comedian Tommy Joseph asked, "What is better than roses on a piano?" and cracked up the audience with, "Tulips on the organ."

KFC

FESTIVE FEAST

Festive Feast Wow Box!!

- Burger • Fries
- 1pc Leg/Thigh
- Med Drink

\$ 28.50

Festive Feast Bucket

- 6 Pieces of Chicken (2 legs; 2 thighs, 1 rib, 1 wing)
- 2 Corn; 2 Biscuit
- Mashed Potatoes

\$ 54.50

FOR PICKUP/DELIVERY

Available on the App Store

Available on Google Play

@kfcanu

Regional News



Essequibo dispute: Venezuela and Guyana agree not to use force

Guyana and Venezuela have agreed to not “use force” to settle their dispute over the oil-rich region of Essequibo.

After meeting Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro, Guyanese President Irfaan Ali reaffirmed his commitment to peace in the region.

But he said Guyana had the right to exploit their sovereign space.

In a statement on X, Mr Maduro said it had been an “excellent day of dialogue”.

Mr Ali and Mr Maduro



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro (right) with the President of Guyana, Irfaan Ali.

met in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

In a three-page joint declaration, the coun-

tries agreed they would “not threaten or use force against one another in any circumstances” and would “continue dialogue”.

They also agreed to establish a joint commission of foreign ministers to address any matters arising over the contested area, and will meet again in Brazil to discuss Essequibo.

Guyana says the issue will be resolved by the International Court of Justice, in The Hague, but Venezuela does not recognise the court’s jurisdiction.

Essequibo, a 160,000 sq-km jungle region, covers two-thirds of the Guyanese territory.

It has been the subject of historic dispute between the two countries.

Venezuela renewed its claim to the land following the discovery of oil in waters off Essequibo’s coast
cont’d on pg 15



NO CASH? NO WORRIES!

WE ACCEPT CARDS AND CHEQUES!




YOU MAY BE REQUIRED TO PRESENT ID FOR CARD PURCHASES

 DEWS
  dewspro
  info@dewspro.com
  729-3397/ 729-1210

US Coast Guard seizes cocaine, nabs drug smugglers in Caribbean

CMC - The United States Coast Guard says the crew of its Cutter Diligence returned to homeport in Pensacola, Florida on Thursday after a 52-day counterdrug patrol in the Caribbean Sea in which crew members seized millions of dollars in cocaine and apprehended six suspected drug smugglers.

During the patrol, the US Coast Guard said Diligence's crew worked in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South) within the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of responsibility to interdict and deter the smuggling of illicit narcotics.

The US Coast Guard said Diligence's crew disrupted about 700 kilograms of cocaine with an estimated street value of over US\$20.3 million dollars and apprehended six suspected smugglers.

"Stopping the flow of drugs to the United States is a challenging mission that requires a significant



US Coast Guard.

amount of teamwork," said Commander Nolan Cain, Diligence's commanding officer.

"The Diligence crew had the opportunity to work alongside our Department of Defense and international partners in this unified effort. The dedication and hard work of the Diligence crew and our partners is incredibly inspiring."

In a statement on Friday,

the US Coast Guard said detecting and interdicting illegal drug traffickers on the high seas involves "significant interagency and international coordination."

It said JIATF-South in Key West, Florida, conducts detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs.

"Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the

operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the US Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension process," the statement said.

The US Coast Guard said interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by its members under the authority and control of the Coast Guard's Seventh District, headquartered in Miami.

cont'd from pg 14
in 2015.

Mr Maduro previously said he would permit oil exploration in the contested territory but Guyana has already made deals with investors including oil and gas giants Exxon Mobil and Chevron.

At the meeting, Mr Ali wore a bracelet showing a map of Guyana

that includes Essequibo and reiterated the dispute must be solved through the ICJ.

"Guyana is not the aggressor, Guyana is not seeking war, but Guyana reserves the right to work with all our partners to ensure the defence of our country," he said.

Guyana's economy is booming largely due to offshore oil reserves,

and its output is expected to triple to more than 1.2 million barrels per day by 2027.

Venezuela, which contains the largest proven oil reserves in the world, is in the midst of an economic crisis.

This has been exacerbated by US sanctions imposed on its oil sales over the 2018 election of Mr Maduro.

Israel Gaza: Hostages shot by IDF put out 'SOS' sign written with leftover food

Three Israeli hostages mistakenly killed by soldiers in Gaza on Friday had used leftover food to write signs pleading for help, Israel says.

The men had been staying at the building next to where they were shot "for some period of time", according to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Officials have admitted that killing the men who were holding a white flag was a breach of "rules of engagement".

Israel is under increasing pressure for a deal to free more hostages.

About 120 are believed to be still in captivity in the Gaza Strip.

They were seized by militants during the 7 October Hamas attacks that killed around 1,200 in southern Israel.

Israel has launched a massive retaliatory operation it says is aimed at destroying Hamas.

More than 18,000 people have been killed in Gaza since, according to the local health authorities, with hundreds of thousands of others pushed out of their homes.

The hostages - Yotam Haim, 28, Samer Talalka, 22, and Alon Shamriz, 26 - were killed in the Shejai-



Left to right: Alon Shamriz, Yotam Haim and Samer Talalka.

ya neighbourhood of Gaza City on Friday as Israeli troops face stiff resistance.

According to an Israeli military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the men emerged shirtless from a building, with one carrying a stick with a white cloth.

One of the soldiers, the official added, felt threatened, as the men were at a distance of tens of metres, declared them "terrorists" and opened fire. Two were immediately killed while the third, wounded, returned to the building.

A cry for help was heard in Hebrew and the battalion commander ordered the troops to cease fire. The wounded hostage later re-emerged, and was shot and

killed, the official said.

It is not clear if the hostages had been abandoned by their captors or escaped.

On Sunday, the IDF said a search of the building was carried out, revealing the messages "SOS" and "Help, 3 hostages" written on fabric.

Officials believe the hostages had been there for some time.

Since the end of a temporary ceasefire between Israel and Hamas earlier this month, families of the hostages have urged the Israeli government to reach a new truce for at least some of the captives to be freed. The initial deal led to the release of more than 100 hostages, in exchange for Palestinians held in Israeli

jails.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has deflected the calls, insisting "military pressure is necessary both for the return of the hostages and for victory".

Amid mounting Palestinian civilian casualties, Israeli authorities have come under growing international pressure, including from the country's main ally, the US.

On Sunday, France's Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna went to Israel calling for an "immediate and durable truce".

Her Israeli counterpart Eli Cohen said a ceasefire would be an error, describing it as a gift to Hamas.

The UK and Germany *cont'd on pg 17*

More than 60 migrants feared drowned off Libya, IOM says

More than 60 migrants are believed to have drowned in a shipwreck off the coast of Libya, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said.

Citing survivors, the UN agency said on Saturday the vessel left the city of Zuwara with around 86 people on board.

It said high waves swamped the boat and that 61 migrants, including children, were missing and presumed dead.

Libya is among the main departure points for migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean and enter Europe.

The IOM estimates that more than 2,200 people have drowned while attempting the crossing this year alone, making it one of the most dangerous migration routes in the world.

The agency said most of the victims of the latest incident were from Nigeria, Gambia, and other African countries, the AFP news agency reports.

It also said 25 survivors had been transferred to a Libyan detention centre and



Migrant boats in the Mediterranean (file pic) are often overcrowded and unstable. Migrants were being given medical support.

Writing on X, formerly Twitter, an IOM spokesperson called the death toll for this year a “dramatic number which unfortunately demonstrates that not enough is being done to save lives at sea”.

In June, at least 78 people died and another 100

were rescued after a fishing boat sank off southern Greece.

The Mediterranean crossings frequently see scores of migrants crowded onto boats too small to safely hold them.

Those making the trip are typically hoping to land in Italy before making their way to other countries in

Europe, some escaping conflict or persecution, others in search of work.

More than 153,000 migrants have arrived in Italy this year from Tunisia and Libya, according to the UN’s refugee agency.

On Saturday, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had talks in Rome with his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni and Albania’s PM Edi Rama on how to reduce illegal migration to Europe.

At the start of this year, Mr Sunak made stopping small boat crossings in the English Channel one of the five key priorities of his government.

cont'd from pg 16

have also called for a “sustainable ceasefire”, whilst stopping short of saying it should be immediate.

Vast areas of the Gaza Strip have been destroyed by the Israeli bombardment, and the United Nations has warned of a humanitarian catastrophe amid widespread shortages of basic supplies.

Images on social media on Sunday showed Gaza residents climbing on aid lorries. With no let-up in the fighting, the IDF published images of what it said was Hamas’s largest attack tunnel so far.

The tunnel - in some places wide enough for cars to pass through - was some 400m from the Erez border crossing with Israel, the IDF said.

BECOME A

GERM BUSTER

GERMS ARE EVERYWHERE!
WASH YOUR
HANDS
REGULARLY
WITH SOAP.



GRAFINKZ



For more information or assistance:
Call (268) 462-5522
or visit us on Lower High Street,
St. Johns, Antigua.



Australia thrash Pakistan by 360 runs in first Test

PERTH (Reuters) - Spinner Nathan Lyon joined the illustrious 500-wicket club on Sunday, picking up two for 14 on a seam-friendly Perth Stadium surface to help Australia bowl Pakistan out for a paltry 89 and cruise to a 360-run victory on day four of the first Test.

Defending 450, Australia's much-vaunted pace attack ripped through Pakistan's batting lineup in the afternoon, allowing Lyon to trap tail-ender Faheem Ashraf lbw and celebrate his milestone before the tourists folded inside 31 overs.

"I don't think it's hit me yet, but there's obviously been a lot of hard work go into the journey... It's pretty special to take 500 in my first Test back," Lyon told reporters.

The world Test champions, now 1-0 up in the three-Test series, had declared after lunch on 233 for five in 63.2 overs, having posted 487 earlier and bowling the visitors out for 271 in the first innings. Pakistan's fourth innings run-chase started in shambolic fashion as they were reduced to 48 for four inside 15 overs before tea, and it did not get any better.

Josh Hazlewood (3-13) and Mitch-



Australia's Nathan Lyon, center, holds the ball aloft after dismissing Pakistan's Faheem Ashraf to claim his 500th Test match wicket during play on the fourth day of the first cricket Test between Australia and Pakistan in Perth, Australia, Sunday, Dec. 17, 2023. (AP)

ell Starc (3-31) inflicted the most damage, but all eyes were on Lyon as he sought to join Shane Warne (708) and Glenn McGrath (563) among Australians with 500 wickets, and become the eighth player overall to reach the figure.

The 36-year-old lost a caught-behind review in the 26th over, but got his man in the 28th, going upstairs

again to send Ashraf on his way for five, with Hawk-Eye showing contact with the stumps.

The off-spinner, returning from a torn calf which left him sidelined for most of this year's drawn Ashes series in England, held the ball aloft and accepted the embrace of his team mates, and then clean-bowled Aamer Jamal (4) later in the over for good measure.

LICB wraps up Under-15 trials for CWI Rising Star Tournament

The Leeward Island Cricket Board's (LICB) one-week Under-15 trials will conclude in Nevis today.

According to a media release from the LICB, this initiative, which is being held from December 11 to December 18, aims to iden-

tify and nurture the region's emerging cricket talents, providing a platform for young players to showcase their skills.

The trials comprised several days of intensive training sessions, culminating in three crucial tri-

al matches.

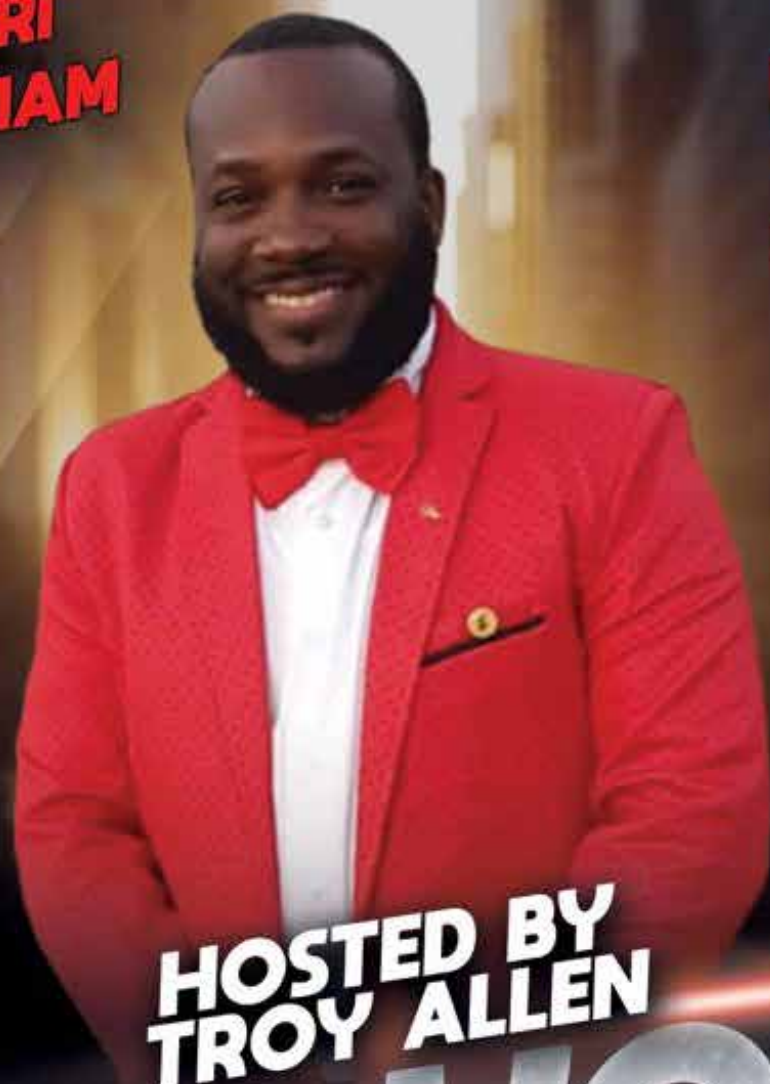
The release also states, "The LICB is committed to ensuring a comprehensive evaluation process to select the most promising players for the upcoming Cricket West Indies (CWI) Rising Star Tournament,

which is slated to be played during the Easter Holidays in 2024."

A total of 32 talented young cricketers from Antigua and Barbuda, St. Maarten, St. Kitts, and Nevis were chosen to participate in the trials.



**MON - FRI
9AM TO 11AM**



**HOSTED BY
TROY ALLEN**

TALK YOUR MIND

**CALL: 562-3989 OR 562-2991 | US: 718 285 7889
FACEBOOK LIVE @ POINTE FM99.1**

WE ARE GETTING STRONGER



The Sea View Farm football team. (File photo)

SVF, Real Blizzard and F. Ville claim wins in Second Division League

Sea View Farm (SVF), Real Blizzard, and Freemans Village (Freemansville) recorded wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's Second Division League on Thursday.

Markland Wright scored twice as Sea View Farm claimed their second win in three outings by snatching a 2-1 victory against Celtics at the Sea View Farm playing field.

Wright scored a penalty kick in the 3rd minute and had a 27th-minute conversion for Sea View Farm, while Jodi Joseph scored in the 51st minute for the Celtics, who lost for the second time in three matches.

Real Blizzard got their first win in two matches via a 4-0 drubbing of bottom-team Young Warriors at the New Winthorpes playing field.

Joshua Joseph scored an own

goal in the 30th minute, Tahari James had a 31st-minute conversion, Millique London scored in the 68th minute, and Andre Henry completed the scoring with an 84th-minute conversion.

It was the second loss in as many games for the Young Warriors.

Kahlique Kellman scored twice as Freemans Village moved to the top of the Second Division with a 2-1 victory against TAMO FC at the Golden Grove playing field.

Jaheim Grant scored in the 22nd minute for TAMO FC, which lost for the first time after winning their previous two matches.

English Harbour and Belmont FC battled to a 1-1 draw at the ABFA Technical Center. Oshane Blackwood scored in the 83rd minute to snatch an equalizer for English Har-

bour after Iandre Hodge's 30th-minute conversion gave Belmont FC a one-nil halftime lead.

Blackburn Palace and Soccer Academy played to a goalless draw in their second-division encounter at the Princess Margaret School playing field.

Five Islands secured their second win in three matches with a 4-0 drubbing of promoted newcomers Jennings United in a First Division affair at the Five Islands playing field.

Jamal Joseph opened the scoring in the 6th minute; Hamilton Joseph doubled the lead with a 38th-minute conversion; Jaheim Jeremy made it three-nil with a strike in the 48th minute, and Travaughn Anthony completed the scoring with a goal in the 80th minute.



PLATINUM Fm
We Entertain You **97.9**

MON - FRI
10AM - 12PM

HOSTED BY CARLENA KNIGHT

PLATINUM
SPORTS CENTER

CALL: 562 - 9790
FACEBOOK LIVE @ PLATINUM FM 97.9

Villa Lions get second win in Premier Division league

The Villa Lions secured their second win in three outings when the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division resumed on Saturday following a break the previous weekend.

Cardel Roberts struck the winner in the 58th minute as the Villa Lions overcame a one-nil deficit to snatch a 2-1 win against the Pigotts Bullets in the opening game of a Premier League triple-header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Tyrique Thwaites gave Pigotts Bullets the lead with a 14th-minute conversion, but Tyrik Hughes scored Villa Lions' equalizer by converting a penalty kick in the 42nd minute as both teams reached halftime deadlocked at 1-1.

Roberts' winner ensured that Villa kept their unbeaten run intact as the Lions advanced to seven points



Players of the Villa Lions football team. (Photo courtesy ABFA)

from three matches, while the Pigotts Bullets remain on three points after suffering their second loss in three outings.

Promoted newcomers John Hughes recorded their second win in their third appearance by snatching a 2-1 win against former Premier League champions SAP in the second game on Satur-

day.

Deno Bryan's 8th-minute strike gave John Hughes a one-nil halftime lead, but his teammate Tyrece Green allowed SAP to equalize by scoring an own goal in the 51st minute.

However, John Hughes reclaimed their lead in the latter stages when Bryan Burton scored the winner

in the 87th minute. The win lifted John Hughes to six points, the same as SAP, who suffered their first loss after winning their two previous matches.

Swetes picked up their first point in the competition by salvaging a 1-1 draw with the Ottos Rangers in Saturday's feature match.

Following a goalless first half, Josue "Naymar" Arias gave the Ottos Rangers the lead with a 62nd-minute conversion, but Shalon Knight scored in the 82nd minute to snatch a late equalizer for Swetes, who lost their previous two matches. The draw carries the Ottos Rangers, who had won their two previous matches, to seven points. All Saints United will tackle Parham in the last third-round match in the Premier League on Monday at 6 pm.

cont'd from pg 24
win.

It was another poor bowling performance by Russell, who finished with one for 50 in 3.4 overs. Holder's bowling also suffered as he picked up one for 52 in four overs, and Joseph conceded 50 runs off his four overs.

Earlier in the first innings, England had the ideal start when Brandon King, the Caribbean side's hero from the last game, fell for just eight runs, while his opening partner Kyle Mayers was dismissed for a duck.

But Pooran was in the mood for a

big score, and the wicketkeeper-batter cleared the ropes six times to go with his six boundaries, ably supported by skipper Rovman Powell (39), who hit three sixes.

Shai Hope chipped in with 26 off 19 balls, all-rounder Shane Rutherford contributed 29 off 17 balls, and Holder hit 18 not out off just five balls.

Leg-spinner Adil Rashid claimed two for 32, and Sam Curran picked up two for 34. Both teams will clash in the fourth T20I at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Trinidad on Tuesday at 4 pm. The fifth and final match will be played at the same venue and time on Thursday, December 21.

England beat Windies to keep T20I series alive

GRENADA (Reuters) - England kept their five-match CG United Twenty20 International (T20I) Series against the West Indies alive after winning the third game by seven wickets with a ball to spare, thanks to Phil Salt's unbeaten 109 in a mammoth run chase at the National Cricket Stadium in St George's, Grenada, on Saturday.

Put in to bat by England skipper Jos Buttler, the West Indies posted 222 for six on the back of Nicholas Pooran's 82 off 45 deliveries.

Chasing a record T20I score at the National Cricket Stadium, Salt went all guns blazing with nine sixes and four boundaries, building a 115-run opening stand with Buttler (51) before Harry Brook (31 off seven balls) finished things off in style with a six.

The West Indies are now 2-1 up in the series, with two matches in Trinidad left to play.

"Great to keep the series alive; a fantastic win. Any time you chase 220 is a fantastic innings; credit to Phil Salt," Buttler said.

"Phil Salt has such great



England's batsmen Harry Brook, left, and Phil Salt celebrate defeating West Indies by seven wickets with one ball remaining during the third T20 cricket match at National Cricket Stadium in Saint George's, Grenada, Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023. (AP)

intent from ball one. It's something we've asked him to do, but for him to go on and stay in the game a bit longer, it can surprise you how much he can do in the end."

The opening pair had looked well set to guide England home before Buttler was caught in the deep soon after he had brought up his half-century, thanks to some brilliant teamwork for a relay catch.

Akeal Hosein caught

Buttler's top edge off Andre Russell near the rope, and just as his momentum threatened to take him over, he tossed the ball to Alzarri Joseph, who completed the catch.

Will Jacks returned to the pavilion without troubling the scorers, while Gudakesh Motie once again put the brakes on England's scoring rate with 1-30 in four overs, leaving the tourists to chase 83 in the final five overs.

But Liam Livingstone, who struck 30 off 18 balls, provided some impetus with fireworks of his own, while Salt brought up his century in 51 balls, becoming only the fifth Englishman to score a T20 international ton, to give England hope.

When Livingstone departed, Harry Brook came in and smashed four sixes, which included three in the final over from Andre Russell when they needed 21 to

cont'd on pg 23