

# A&B SEEKS CLOSER TIES WITH SAUDI ARABIA

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Regional heads of government accompanied by their foreign ministers participated in a retreat at the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads to Government of the Caribbean Community.

## **Birthday Celebration Event for “the Monarch, King Short Shirt” Sir Dr. MacLean Emanuel on the occasion of his 82nd Birthday**

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| 6:15AM - 6:30AM   | - Morning News                                 |
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| 9:00AM - 12:00 PM | - Man Hunt “Tribute to a Cultural Icon”        |
| 12:00PM - 12:15PM | - Midday News Brief Package                    |
| 12:20PM - 2:00PM  | - Man Hunt “Tribute to a Cultural Icon”        |
| 2:00PM - 3:00PM   | - Point On the Street“ Tribute to the Monarch” |
| 3:00PM - 6:00PM   | - Bad Company                                  |
| 6:00PM - 12:01AM  | - Blinds “Tribute”                             |



## Antigua and Barbuda and Saudi Arabia commit to deepen ties

Antigua and Barbuda, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have committed to strengthen the existing ties between the two countries.

The pledges came during bilateral discussions held at the margins of the 46th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads to Government of the Caribbean Community, now taking place in Guyana.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne engaged in dialogue with His Excellency Adel Al-Jubeir, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Climate Envoy surrounding opportunities for trade and investment between both countries.

The Prime Minister thanked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its support given towards the expansion of the University of the West Indies, Five Island Campus. He further endeavoured to strengthening relations between both nations, while mentioning that Saudi Arabia has shown global leadership based on mutual respect and shared values.

Minister Al-Jubeir also praised Prime Minister Browne's leadership on the global stage, and pledged Saudi Arabia's support for the existing partnership between the two countries, with a vision for mutual investment opportunities to



Prime Minister Gaston Browne, left, engaged in dialogue with His Excellency Adel Al-Jubeir, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Climate Envoy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

benefit both societies.

Both parties also discussed support and contributions towards SIDS4 which

would greatly contribute to SIDS countries achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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## Antigua and Barbuda endorses Ghana's candidacy for SG post

Antigua and Barbuda is the second CARICOM country to publicly endorse Ghana's nominee for the position of Secretary General of the Commonwealth grouping when the elections are held in October this year.

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent and equal countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific.

It is home to one-third of the world's population and includes both advanced economies and developing countries.

Earlier this month Ghana's Foreign Affairs Minister, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey launched a bid to replace the Dominican-born Dame Patricia Scotland, who served two terms at the head of the London-based Commonwealth grouping.

So far, no other contender has emerged for the top post ahead of the scheduled October 22 election.

Grenada earlier this month said it would en-

dorse Botchwey after President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of Ghana addressed a joint sitting of the Grenada Parliament.

Now, Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who held talks with Botchwey on the margins of the 46th regular meeting of CARICOM leaders, has signaled that Antigua and Barbuda will follow suit.

A government statement said that during their discussions, Botchwey said that she would reposition the London-based Commonwealth Secretariat with priority given to areas such as trade and investment; climate change; youth, education, skills, innovation and start-ups; mobility and labour markets; and the plight of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

In his response, Browne outlined his administration's support for Botchwey as he commented on the historical ties between Antigua and Barbuda, and Ghana which have also resulted in harmo-



Prime Minister Gaston Browne, right, speaks with Ghana's Foreign Affairs Minister, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey.

nious diplomatic relations between both countries.

"He also committed to strengthening relations between Ghana, and Antigua and Barbuda through more people to people exchanges through increased air linkages between the African continent and the Caribbean region, which the government has been committed to.

"Further, Prime Minister Browne used the occasion to extend an invitation to the Honourable Nana Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana to the upcoming 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States which will be held from 27-30 May, 2024 in Antigua and Barbuda," the statement added.

## Malta offers moral support for Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda continues to expand its circle of friends within the international community.

The latest step in this direction came when Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Greene, held discussions with his Maltese counterpart, Ian Borg, at the margins of the World Trade Organisation meeting in Dubai.

During the discussions both Min-

ister Greene and Minister Borg signed a Memorandum of Understanding on water cooperation. "Our shared challenges as small island states paved the way for collaboration on climate change and fostering a deeper understanding of vulnerabilities," the Maltese minister proclaimed in a social media post.

Minister Borg said he is enthusias-

tic about the MOU and he now awaits the next step in the relationship.

"We also endorsed Antigua and Barbuda's aspiration for increased cooperation with the European Union as we eagerly await the SIDS conference in May. Malta fully supports Antigua and Barbuda's leadership in this field. I look forward to welcoming Minister Greene in Malta very soon," he added.

# Local News



## Privy Council rules in favour of Barbuda duo

The London-based Privy Council has ruled in favor of John Mussington and Jackie Frank that will now pave the way for legal challenges against the granting of a development permit for construction of an airport in Barbuda.

The case taken before the Law Lords late last year, challenged whether the Court

of Appeal was correct to conclude that the Appellants (Frank and Mussington) did not have standing to pursue judicial review proceedings against a decision to grant a development permit for the construction of a new airport runway.

Mussington and Frank secured an injunction in the High Court in 2018 to prevent

construction of the runway, claiming in part that the work being carried out was causing major damage to the island's wildlife and eco-system.

This after the Development Control Authority granted approval to the developer who was required to make several improvements to the plan.

The injunction was sub-

sequently lifted by the Appeals Court.

A new application was made in September 2018 at the High Court that sought to restrain key parties from granting permission for work to continue until the outcome of a judicial review.

That injunction was refused in February 2020, but attorneys for Mussington and Frank appealed to the Supreme Court on six grounds but it was denied.

They then filed for permission to take their case to the Privy Council. The matter was heard on 8th November, 2023.

In its ruling, the Privy Council found "the Court of Appeal erred in taking too narrow an approach to the issue of standing".

In citing why there was standing, the Judges outlined among other matters, the concerns expressed by Frank and Mussington about the effects the runway and airport can have on aquifers and the water table, due to the close proximity between the airport and residences.

The failure to follow due process, noting construction work commenced before a permit was granted and that residents were not given the opportunity to make proper representation.

Further, the Privy Council cited the concerns expressed by Mr Mussington in his capacity as a marine biologist about the negative impact to Barbuda's ecology and the breaches to the 2023 Act raised by the application for the development permit.



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## Queen camp empowers aspiring carnival queens and teens for success

The 2023 Queen of Carnival, Ms. Ischikelle Corbin, led a transformative Queen and Teens Camp in collaboration with the Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission under the theme Envision, Realize, Become. The camp was held on February 25, 2024, at the prestigious John E. ST. Luce Building. The aim of the camp was to engage with Queen and Teen hopefuls, providing them with essential knowledge and skills to excel in the desired path in carnival pageantry.

The day-long session was intense and interactive, offering participants a comprehensive learning experience. Hosted by the esteemed Queen of Carnival, Ms. Ischikelle Corbin, the camp featured greetings and remarks by Senator the Hon. Shenella Govia, the Junior Minister of Carnival. Senator Govia expressed her pleasure with the attendance, stating, "I am pleased with the turnout at the Queen Camp and look forward to witnessing the journey of these young ladies. I was rather impressed with the offerings of the camp. The key areas addressed are on-point in preparing young ladies as-



piring for Queen of Carnival, allowing for personal self-interpretation for further development."

Distinguished former Queens of Carnival facilitated the camp sessions, each bringing their expertise and experience to the table:

1. Etiquette by Ms. Raynel Carroll, Ms. Queen of Carnival 2013:

Participants were immersed in the art of etiquette, learning the importance of proper behavior, manners, and social conduct expected of a queen. Ms. Carroll, a seasoned expert in etiquette, shared insights on how to carry oneself with grace and poise in various social situations, emphasizing the significance of making a positive impression on others.

2. Pageantry and Life Balances by Ms. Heidigail Francis, Ms. Queen of Carnival 2014:

Ms. Francis delved into the intricacies of balancing the demands of a pageant lifestyle with personal responsibilities and self-care. Participants received guidance on managing their time effectively, setting priorities, and nurturing their well-being to achieve success both on and off the stage.

3. Understanding the Criteria by



Ms. Petley O'Kieffe, Ms. Queen of Carnival 1997:

Ms. O'Kieffe provided participants with valuable insights into pageant judging criteria. Participants gained a deeper understanding of what judges look for in a queen, including poise, confidence, intelligence, and stage presence. This knowledge equipped participants with the tools needed to showcase their best selves during competitions.

4. Vision Boarding by Ms. Terri-Ann Richardson, Ms. Queen of Car-

*cont'd on pg 6*



*cont'd from pg 5*  
nival 2003:

In this interactive session, participants engaged in the creative process of vision boarding to visualize their goals and aspirations. Ms. Richardson guided participants in crafting vision boards representing their dreams and ambitions, helping them clarify their objectives and stay motivated on their path to success.

5. Healthy Habits and Body Maintenance by Mrs. Range Laronde-Thomas, Ms. Queen of Carnival 2012:

As a former Queen, Mrs. Laronde-Thomas emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and caring for one's body. Participants learned about the significance of proper nutrition, exercise, skincare, and overall well-being to enhance their physical appearance and confidence on stage.

6. Confidence on and off the stage by Ms. Ayana Dorsette Ms. Queen of Carnival 2017:

Ms. Dorsette shared strategies for building confidence both on and off the stage, empowering participants to exude self-assurance in all aspects of their lives. Participants engaged in confidence-building activities and



exercises designed to help them overcome self-doubt, project authenticity, and radiate inner strength during public appearances.

7. Approaching Interview by Ms. Ischikelle Corbin, the reigning Ms. Queen of Carnival:

Ms. Ischikelle Corbin, the 2023 Queen of Carnival, provided participants with valuable insights and tips on approaching interviews in the pageant world. Participants learned how to prepare for and excel in pageant interviews, including strategies for articulating their thoughts clearly, showcasing their personality, and answering questions with confidence and poise.

8. Walking 101 by Mrs. Brucella Marsh-Sutton, Queen of Carnival Sub Committee Chairperson: Mrs. Marsh-Sutton conducted a workshop on the art of walking gracefully on stage, focusing on posture, poise, and stride. Participants received personalized coaching on how to command

attention with their walk, exuding elegance and confidence during pageant presentations and appearances.

The Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission intends to make this Queen Camp an annual event, irrespective of whoever the reigning Queen is at the time. This initiative aims to empower young women and provide them with the necessary tools to succeed in the world of carnival pageantry.

Each session at the Queen Camp was carefully designed to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to succeed in the world of carnival pageantry.

Each participant received a certificate of participation, acknowledging their commitment to learning and growth. The camp was designed to give potential hopefuls a deeper understanding of the journey and requirements for becoming the next Ms. Queen of Carnival.



## Heart and Stroke Foundation says there's more public awareness about heart health

The Heart and Stroke Foundation says it is pleased with the growing awareness about heart health, the need for proper diets and how to recognize the symptoms of stroke.

This is the assessment of the President of the Foundation, Dr Georgette Meade following the organisation's symposium to mark its fifth anniversary last weekend. The occasion was the 5th Annual Cardiac Symposium with reflections on societal strides and a commitment to further advancements.

President and Consultant Cardiologist, Dr. Georgette Meade, expressed joy and pride with the progress made over the past five years. "Looking back, we've surpassed milestones. Yet, as we evaluate, there are areas where we excel as a society and others where improvement is needed," Dr. Meade noted.

The growing attendance each year signifies a positive trend, with participants expressing satisfaction with the symposium's topics and the expertise of the speakers. "This continued enthusiasm is a significant plus, and we aim to build upon it," Dr. Meade emphasized.

In a bid to continually engage the community, the Foundation actively seeks input from participants, conducting surveys to identify topics of great interest. "We strive to provide relevant and impactful information that resonates with our diverse audience," Dr. Meade explained.

The initial goal of the symposium, as the President highlighted, was to raise awareness about the important role of the heart in the body. "Reflecting on our five-year journey, we've witnessed a positive shift in societal

awareness. More individuals are embracing healthier lifestyles, monitoring their diet, and becoming proactive in understanding stroke symptoms," Dr. Meade shared.

Progress is not only measured in numbers but in real-life changes. Dr. Meade acknowledged the positive feedback received, even from the younger generation.

"Children are becoming more vocal about healthy choices, exemplified by my daughter expressing a desire for strawberries and apples. The message is reaching the next generation," Dr. Meade, as a mom, proudly stated.

Nonetheless, Dr. Meade expressed deep concern about the underestimation of hypertension, its silent nature and potential to cause severe health issues.

"I am gravely concerned. I think more people need to be mindful of hypertension. It does not cause symp-

toms, and so a lot of us take it lightly. And it is the number one cause for a hemorrhagic stroke, which is a bleeding type of stroke. Your heart may become enlarged. Your kidneys may fail. And so, by simply checking your blood pressure and monitoring your blood pressure, your life could be saved."

As the Heart and Stroke Foundation continues its mission to promote heart health, the 5th Annual Cardiac Symposium stands as a testament to the progress made and the ongoing commitment to empowering individuals with useful information for a heart-healthy lifestyle.

The Foundation has expressed its appreciation to the sponsors A.S. Bryden & Sons, Novartis, Sagikor Life Inc., Antigua and Barbuda Medical Council, Medical Benefits Scheme, Servier, OmniCare Pharmacy, Falmouth Harbour Marina, Cool & Smooth and the West Indies Oil Company.



# HEART & STROKE FOUNDATION

— Antigua & Barbuda —

## CIBC's Walk for a Cure donates \$90,000

The charitable initiative started by CIBC bank twelve years ago – Walk for a Cure – through which monies are raised to help fight cancer, has made a donation of \$90,000 towards the Oncology Department of the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre and Breast Friends.

A formal presentation ceremony was held at the Galley Bay Resort on Tuesday when the cheque for the amount was presented to representatives of the SLB-MC on behalf of the several organisations that assisted with the campaign.

Speaking on behalf of Good Humans 268, a group representing persons with disabilities, was its founder, Joshuanette Francis, who noted that the organization mobilised 400-young people to participate in the event in 2023 and she is promising that this number



will certainly increase for 2024.

Cancer survivor, Luccette James, underscored the importance in having fundraisers and for the corporate community to donate to these causes as many

people who do not have the finances nor medical insurance usually die early into the diagnosis because as she puts it ‘cancer care is an expensive, expensive undertaking’.

“The support which

CIBC has been giving to cancer care over these years is invaluable. We appreciate you and we thank you. This work is a labour of love and through your kind donations every year you are able to support the Oncology Department and Breast Friends,” she stated.

Michele Lynch, a member of Breast Friends also spoke of her experiences, noting that she is a 15-year

*cont'd on pg 9*





## Rotary Clubs extend outreach to the nation's primary schools

Primary schools across Antigua and Barbuda will receive school supplies, as a result of a collaborative effort between the Rotary Club of Antigua and its partners of 16 years, the Bellvue Breakfast Rotary Club and the Kirkland Downtown Rotary Club.

On Tuesday, the Clubs made a presentation to Director of Education, Clare Browne at a brief ceremony, which took place at Rotary House. The donation included: ink, coloured pencils, dry markers, folders, pencils and other supplies. The programme forms part of the Education Through Technology initiative, which has been ongoing for the last 16 years.

Local Project Coordinator and Past President of the Rotary Club of Antigua, Cordell Josiah explained that the contribution comes as a result of talks between the Clubs and the Ministry regarding the needs of primary schools in the education system.

“We are always looking for ways to give back to our community and especially



with this programme, Education through Technology, focusing on the overall development of education, transformation and keeping our young minds equipped and nurtured,” he said.

Past President of the Bellvue Breakfast Club, John Martinka, noted that the donation of over \$3000 US will be used to furnish all primary schools in the twin island state with the needed supplies.

Director of Education,



Browne, expressed thanks to the Clubs for their continued dedicated interest

in the educational development of young minds in Antigua and Barbuda.

**cont'd from pg 8**

survivor of breast cancer. She noted that the money from the donation comes in ‘very handy’ especially to assist patients who have to travel abroad for treatment in light of the closure of the Cancer Centre almost a year ago. According to Lynch cancer patients

often get assistance from the government but she added that funding is necessary to help family members accompany cancer patients when they travel overseas.

The \$90-thousand cheque was accepted by the head of the department, Dr. Hanybal Yazigi, who also thanked

CIBC and its partners for making the donation to the hospital.

The Walk for the Cure initiative within the bank is jointly chaired by Natasha Charles and Khadijah James, who announced the launch of the 13th installment of the programme for 2024.

## Governor General receives visit from Millennial Academy Students

His Excellency Sir Rodney Williams, Governor General shares details of his role and work as Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda, with Grade 6 students of The Post Millennial Academy who visited Government House as part of their Government and Citizenship coursework and preparation for the Grade 6 National Assessment.

Photo, courtesy Wayne Marriette, features the Governor General and students from the Post Millennial School along with their teacher Ms. Xena Joseph.



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## Jam Master Jay: Godson and childhood friend guilty of Run-DMC star's murder

By Mike Wendling

The godson and a childhood friend of Run-DMC star Jam Master Jay have been convicted of his murder in New York City more than two decades ago.

Karl Jordan Jr, 40, and Ronald Washington, 59, targeted the musician at his recording studio after being cut out of a drug deal, the trial heard.

The hip-hop pioneer, real name Jason Mizell, was 37 when he was shot in the head in Queens on 30 October 2002.

Jordan and Washington now face 20 years to life in prison.

"Y'all just killed two innocent people," Washington yelled at the jury after the guilty verdict, according to the Associated Press. Jordan's supporters also began shouting and cursed the jury.

Mizell formed Run-DMC with friends Joseph Simmons and Darryl McDaniels, all of whom grew up in the Hollis neighbourhood in the New York borough of Queens.

The group became one of the most influential hip-hop acts of all time and had a string of hits in the 1980s including tracks such as It's Tricky, It's Like That and Aerosmith collaboration Walk This Way.

Although the group was publicly against drug use and made anti-drug pub-



Jam Master Jay's murder shocked the music world in 2002.

lic service announcements, Mizell turned to cocaine trafficking as their popularity began to fade in the 1990s.

Prosecutors said Jordan, Mizell's godson, and Washington, a childhood friend who was staying with Mizell's sister, thought they would be part of a drug deal worth nearly \$200,000, and were angered when they were cut out.

During a four-week trial, defence lawyer Ezra Spilke called the prosecution's account of events "one version of many".

The defence also challenged the accuracy of eyewitness testimony after so many years.

But prosecutors called dozens of witnesses, introduced forensic evidence and said the accused carried out an "execution" that was "motivated by greed and by

revenge".

Although the two defendants had been suspected in the case for years, the murder remained unsolved before they were charged by federal prosecutors in 2020.

Two key eyewitnesses denied they could identify the killers for years until they changed their stories after the case was reopened in 2016.

Uriel "Tony" Rincon testified that he was playing a video game with Mizell when Jordan walked into the room, shook hands with the hip-hop star and then started shooting.

"And then I see Jay just fall," he said.

A woman who worked for Mizell's JMJ Records label, Lydia High, also witnessed the shooting and said Washington ordered her to the floor as the killers made their escape.

Both witnesses said fear prevented them from identifying the killers earlier.

"I felt that [Mizell's] wife and his children needed closure, and I felt that they should know what took place," Mr Rincon testified during the trial.

Other witnesses testified that Jordan bragged about carrying out the killing.

"The witnesses in the recording studio knew the killers, and they were terrified that they would be retaliated against if they cooperated with law enforcement," US prosecutor Breon Peace told reporters after the verdict.

Another man, Jay Bryant, is facing a separate trial in relation to this case.

He is expected to appear in court in 2026, accused of letting Jordan and Washington through the back door of the studio Mizell was in.

## PlayStation to axe 900 jobs and close London studio

By Tom Gerken

Sony has announced it will lay off 8% of PlayStation employees globally, amounting to approximately 900 people.

In addition to cuts in the US and Japan, the gaming giant said this would mean closing PlayStation's London Studio entirely.

In a blog post sharing an email sent to employees, boss Jim Ryan called the move "sad news" and said it was "a difficult day at our company".

"We have concluded that tough decisions have become inevitable," he said.

"The leadership team and I made the incredibly difficult decision to restructure operations, which regrettably includes a reduction in our workforce impacting very talented individuals who have contributed to our success."

The cuts come a month after rival Microsoft revealed plans to lay off 1,900 people in its gaming division, which included those at recently-acquired Activision-Blizzard.

"Sony is one of the big pillars of UK game development culture so it's massive to see the legendary Sony London studio close in particular," said Halli Bjornsson, head of UK developer Lockwood Publishing.



Insomniac Games, which developed Spider-Man 2, is one of the studios affected by the cuts.

"It's a challenging time for our industry as it continues to go through major changes.

"However, UK games talent and heritage is world class, and if we continue to foster it, we'll rebound and be in a good place to build upon the opportunities that are on the horizon."

Sony's London Studio was founded in 2002 as a result of the merging of two other London-based studios under the PlayStation brand.

Over the past two decades, it created several series including karaoke game SingStar and 2000s football title This Is Football.

More recently, it made virtual reality (VR) games exclusive to Sony's headset, including VR Worlds

and the well-received shooter Blood & Truth.

According to LinkedIn, the studio has between 51 and 200 employees, and it was working on "an unannounced online co-op combat game" set in London before the announcement.

Sony's PlayStation 5 has sold more than 50 million units worldwide, more than double Microsoft's Xbox Series X/S sales.

But another gaming rival, Nintendo, which released its Switch console three years earlier, has sold almost 140 million units worldwide.

And Sony said in its earnings report in February that it now expected to sell four million fewer consoles than expected by the end of March.

Despite PlayStation's revenue being up by 16% compared to the same period one year earlier, its operating income had fallen by a quarter.

"Sony Interactive Entertainment becomes the latest in a long list of games companies that have laid off a significant number of staff in the last 12-18 months," said Piers Harding-Rolls, gaming industry analyst at Ampere Analysis.

"The cost of developing big-budget games has reached unsustainable levels and these costs have come when the games sector is going through an adjustment post-pandemic.

"Many companies have been responding to that more commercially risky market."

## Suriname to be added to inter-island regional ferry route

Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley said plans are moving forward for the “imminent” launch of an inter-island regional ferry service, with the intention to add Suriname to the route.

The Office of the Prime Minister said Dr Rowley joined regional leaders in Georgetown, Guyana for the 46th Regular Meeting of the CARICOM Heads of Government on Monday.

The conference will run from February 25-28, 2024.

“Maritime transportation, specifically the imminent launch of an inter-regional cargo ferry that will operate the Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Guyana routes, also engaged leaders during [Monday] morning’s session.

“It is expected that Suriname will be added to the ferry’s route.”

“Prime Minister Rowley said he



was pleased with the level of interest generated by the decision to launch the ferry and assured that the Government is committed to ensuring the commercial preparatory work is completed.”

“He said while the Government will facilitate the incubation of the project, it is hoped that the private sector will play an integral role in the ex-

pansion of the ferry service.”

The OPM said Dr Rowley also held bilateral discussions with Canada’s Minister of International Development, the Hon Ahmed Hussen, with talks focussing on matters of national security, travel protocol and employment opportunities.

The Prime Minister also met with the Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Omar Shehadeh.

A commitment was made by both parties to enhance cooperation in the areas of aviation and the creation of a legislative framework to respond to the emerging issues related to the increased usage of Artificial Intelligence.

The OPM said heads also received a detailed report on the progress the region has made towards increasing food production in member states. CARICOM has embarked on a mission to reduce the region’s import bill by 25 per cent by 2025.

Accompanying the Prime Minister to Monday’s meetings was the Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, Dr Amery Browne.

The OPM said regional heads and Foreign Ministers will meet in caucus at a special retreat on Tuesday - among the issues to be examined during this session are Haiti, the Caribbean Development Bank and the CSME.





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The barge capsized off the shore of Tobago.

## Oil spill spreads across Caribbean from Tobago to Bonaire

By Vanessa Buschschlüter

Oil leaking from a capsized barge off the coast of Tobago has spread hundreds of miles to reach the Caribbean island of Bonaire.

Officials on Bonaire, which is located 50 miles (80km) north of the Venezuelan coast, said the oil posed a “serious threat to both humans and nature”.

The island is the latest to have been contaminated with oil from the barge which ran aground earlier this month.

It is still unclear who owns the barge and what may have caused it to sink.

The authorities on Bonaire, which is a special municipality of the Netherlands, said the island’s east coast, including Sorobon, Lac and Lagun, had been polluted.

They also warned that the island’s mangrove, fish and coral ecosystems

were at risk.

The oil leak was first spotted by the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard on 7 February. They traced it to a barge which had become lodged on a reef about 150m (500 ft) off Tobago’s southern coast.

There was no crew on board the barge and the Coast Guard said it had not received any distress signals. They did, however, spot the name “Gulfstream” painted on the side of the vessel.

Trinidad and Tobago authorities said the barge had originated in Panama and had been towed by a tugboat. They said it appeared “to have been bound for Guyana”.

An investigation conducted by online investigative journalism site Bellingcat suggests the barge stopped in late January in Pozuelos Bay, a Venezuelan port used by the state-owned PdVSA oil company.

According to Bellingcat, the barge may have started leaking oil as early as 3 February. The whereabouts of the boat which had tugged the barge are not currently known.

The prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago declared a national emergency on 11 February. The country’s Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management has been trying to contain the spillage but oil has been continuing to leak from the barge.

The Trinidad and Tobago Weather Center said satellite images suggested the oil slick had spread into the marine area of Grenada as early as 14 February.

From there, it appears to have been carried further westward to Bonaire.

Officials on Bonaire are particularly concerned for the mangroves, which are among the best preserved in the Caribbean.

## Nato allies reject Emmanuel Macron idea of troops to Ukraine

Several Nato countries, including the US, Germany and the UK, have ruled out deploying ground troops to Ukraine, after French President Emmanuel Macron said “nothing should be excluded”.

Mr Macron said there was “no consensus” on sending Western soldiers to Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has warned of direct conflict if Nato troops deploy there.

Russian forces have recently made gains in Ukraine and Kyiv has urgently appealed for more weapons.

Mr Macron told a news conference on Monday evening: “We should not exclude that there might be a need for security that then justifies some elements of deployment.

“But I’ve told you very clearly what France maintains as its position, which is a strategic ambiguity that I stand by.”

The French leader was speaking in Paris, which is hosting a crisis meeting in support of Ukraine, attended by heads of European states, as well as the US and Canada.

A full-scale invasion of Ukraine launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin is now in its third year, with no signs that the biggest war in Europe since



World War Two could end soon.

Mr Macron’s comments prompted responses from other European and Nato member countries.

US President Joe Biden believes the “path to victory” is providing military aid “so Ukrainian troops have the weapons and ammunition they need to defend themselves”, a White House statement said.

“President Biden has been clear that the US will not send troops to fight in Ukraine,” it added.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said there had been no change to the agreed position that no European country or Nato member state would send troops to Ukraine.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s spokesman said the country had no plans for a large-scale military

deployment to Ukraine, beyond the small number of personnel already training Ukrainian forces.

The office of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said Italy’s “support does not include the presence of troops from European or Nato states on Ukrainian territory”.

Mr Peskov, on behalf of the Kremlin, called Mr Macron’s suggestion “a very important new element” adding it was absolutely not in the interests of Nato members.

“In that case, we would need to talk not about the probability, but about the inevitability [of direct conflict],” he said.

Earlier, Nato secretary general Jens Stoltenberg denied considering whether troops would be sent to Ukraine, although he insisted the alliance would con-

tinue to support Ukraine, which is not a Nato member.

That position has been echoed by a number of Nato member states including Spain, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Russia has an abundance of artillery and is a far bigger military force than Ukraine, whose troops are critically dependent on modern weapons being provided by Western allies, particularly the US.

On Tuesday, Mr Biden urged congressional leaders to approve \$95bn (£75bn; €69bn) US aid package, which includes \$60bn for Ukraine, during a meeting in the Oval Office.

The package has been facing an uphill battle in the US House of Representatives. Republican House speaker Mike Johnson held

*cont’d on pg 17*



## Dutch mega-trial exposes brutal gangland underworld

By Anna Holligan

Three members of a drug cartel involved in a series of gangland killings have been jailed for life, in the biggest criminal trial in Dutch history.

The gang's "undisputed" ringleader, Ridouan Taghi, was for years one of the Netherlands' most-wanted fugitives.

Taghi was jailed for murder, firearms offences and aggravated robbery.

Two other men, Said R and Mario R - whose full names cannot be revealed under Dutch law - were also given life sentences.

They were convicted of complicity in murder, attempted murder, preparation for and complicity in murder.

In total, 17 people were handed sentences ranging from life in prison to one year and nine months.

The nature and scale of this case is unprecedented in the Netherlands.



Armed police guarded the "Bunker" high-security courthouse in Amsterdam.

It took 142 hearing days spread over almost six years, 800 pages of pleadings and more than 3,000 pages of documents from the lawyers to arrive at today's verdicts.

From the outset the "mega-trial" - which began on 11 March 2021 - has been shrouded in secrecy and security.

The court president said the "Marengo" trial -

named after the codeword for the police operation which led to the arrests - was about "ruthless, disruptive violence".

"When we read the messages in the file, we end up in a world where human life has no value," he said.

The trial has captivated a country that has recently been forced to confront its violent underworld.

The gang's murders were well prepared by using "spotters" or using sophisticated sounding beacons.

According to the court, the organisation counted not only gunmen and drivers among its many members, but also corrupt officials who provided vital insider information.

Taghi, 46, was found guilty of being the undisputed leader of the criminal organisation, which is thought to have been one of the Netherlands' biggest drug cartels.

He was the subject of an international arrest warrant and was eventually arrested in Dubai in 2019, where he had been living below the radar in a suburban villa.

Under his leadership, *cont'd on pg 18*

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firm in the meeting insisting on more border reforms first.

Mr Johnson has said the crisis on the Mexico-US border is his priority and Mr Biden had already offered to include the reforms in the package - but the Republicans are holding out.

Senate Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said it was the "most intense" Oval Office meeting he had ever been part of.

The US is by far the largest contrib-

utor of military aid to Ukraine and had committed €42.2bn (£36bn; \$45bn) as of 15 January, Kiel Institute data showed.

Germany ranks second with commitments of €17.7bn in the same time period, followed by the UK which provided €9.1bn of military aid.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who took part in Monday's meeting in Paris by video link, said that "everything we do together to defend against Russian aggression adds real security to our nations for decades to come".

# Sports News



## Fearless Crew and Spanish Heat II win in ABBA's Second Division

Jim Nance Jan Serv Fearless Crew and Spanish Heat II made winning starts to their respective campaigns in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) second division on Monday night.

Both teams recorded wins during a Division II double header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Fearless Crew prevailed 48-41 against the Daryll Matthew Ottos Clip-

pers in the first encounter.

Rafiki Harris produced 15 rebounds, nine assists, eight points, and six steals; Ryan Shepherd had 12 rebounds and seven points; and Takeem Martin chipped in with 12 rebounds and six points for the Fearless Crew.

Amare Browne converted a game-high 17 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, and Jules Fredericks scored eight points for the Ottos Clippers, who

lost for the first time after beating the Pointville Ballers in their first encounter.

Jesus Emmanuel produced a game-high 40 points and grabbed 13 rebounds as Spanish Heat II claimed an 88-81 victory against Court Martials in Monday's second game.

Rohland Hamilton had 16 points, 16 rebounds, and five assists, and Gabriel Perez chipped in with 11 points and five rebounds for Spanish Heat II.

Baldwin Anthony sank 21 points and snatched 13 rebounds; Leon Josiah scored 15 points; DeLornge Jules converted 14 points and claimed eight rebounds; and Victor Horsford scored 10 points for Court Martial.

The second division basketball league will continue today when Da Project takes on the Gaston Browne Pointville Ballers at the JSC Sports Complex at 6:45 pm.

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five people were assassinated over the course of 18 months. There were also two attempted murders and more were planned.

An attack was also prepared on a "spy shop" selling sophisticated surveillance gear where the gang were regular customers.

For years, Taghi and his gang seemed to operate with impunity - their crimes shrouded by a culture of fear and silence.

Criminal rivals, associates who defaulted on debts or talked to the gang's enemies or the police were all at risk of ending up on a death list.

Taghi's methods belonged to a new type of Dutch mobster that grew up in the vacuum left behind by the notorious old-school Dutch gangsters like Willem Holleeder - and signalled a worrying escalation in the drugs war.

The ease with which Taghi decided that someone should be killed was described by the judges as "shocking" and ruthless.

In some cases, young children

were present when their fathers were shot dead.

Taghi was not among the eight suspects who attended court on Tuesday.

Those who did were brought to the high-security courthouse - nicknamed the "Bunker" - in armoured vehicles. Heavily armed police stood guard outside the building, wearing body armour and balaclavas as surveillance drones buzzed overhead.

The court noted it was significant that none of the surviving relatives of the gang's victims made use of the right to speak or submitted a claim as an injured party, such is the fear and vulnerability they still feel.

One person who did speak out was a man called Nabil B, who became the key witness at the heart of the mega-trial. Court cameras only filmed him below the neck, so as to conceal his identity.

Nabil B was found guilty of being complicit and an accessory to murder, but handed a lesser sentence of 10 years due to personal circumstances and the role he played in

bringing his former accomplices to justice.

Just before reading out the verdict, the court reflected on three targeted killings of people close to Nabil B - which all occurred while the investigation was under way.

A week after it became public knowledge, in early 2018, that Nabil B had turned informant and cut a deal with prosecutors as a key witness, his brother was shot dead.

A year later, Nabil B's lawyer, Derk Wiersum, was murdered outside his home.

Then, in July 2021, his confidante, the investigative journalist Peter R de Vries, was shot on a summer evening after leaving a TV studio in central Amsterdam. He died soon after.

Nabil B called the Marengo case "the most diseased and poisoned trial ever".

Before the sentences were read out today, the court said these three killings added a "dark edge" to the proceedings. Those murders are now being dealt with in separate trials.

## Browne wins overall title at Warm-Up Race in Aruba

Antigua and Barbuda's young cyclist Tahje Browne captured the overall title at the 10th Annual Warm-Up Race, which is hosted by the Velocity Cycling Team, in Aruba over the weekend.

Browne, who rode for International Racers and won every race in the Junior Men category in the three-stage event from February 23-25, claimed the title by recording an overall total of 80 points.

Jeon Fernandez of Outlaw RMS also amassed 80 points to win the kids category, but his division competed over much shorter courses in terms of distances.

Velocity Cycling Team's Joshua Krozendijk, who competed in the Elite Men division, claimed the overall runner-up spot behind Browne by accumulating 77 points.

Browne won the Junior Men Category in the Criterium Race, which was the first event of the three-stage race, on the opening day.

Browne won the race to claim 25 points for first place, ahead of Jeannick Ras of Islanders CT in second and Gregory Wernet of Outlaw RMS in third place.

Krozendijk won the Elite Men division, while Fernandez claimed the Kids category for boys.

Browne, who participated in the Pre-Junior Men



Antigua and Barbuda's young cyclist Tahje Browne captured the overall title at the 10th Annual Warm-Up Race, which is hosted by the Velocity Cycling Team, in Aruba from February 23-25. (Photo courtesy of Velocity Cycling Team)

Division the previous two years and won the category in 2023, won the 20-kilometer individual time trial on the second day of this year's three-stage race.

The teenager, who is a student at Antigua Grammar School, clocked the best overall time of 29 minutes and 49 seconds to win the junior boys division in the individual time trial.

Ras came in second in the division with a time of 35 minutes and 29 seconds, while Wernet finished third in 38 minutes and 25 seconds.

Krozendijk finished second in the Elite Men division time trial in a time of 31 minutes and 33 seconds. Franklyn Gomes of SFCC won the time trial in the

Elite Men class by clocking 31 minutes and seven seconds.

Leider Barrios of International Racers came in third in 31 minutes and 52 seconds. Fernandez won the time trial with a time of 18 minutes and 10 seconds.

Browne, a member of the Wadadli Cycling Academy in Antigua, then capped a fine display by producing another fine performance to win the Circuit Race, which is the final event of the three-stage race, clocking the overall fastest time to claim the Junior men division.

The young Antiguan completed the 70-kilometer race, comprising 14 laps of the course, in a time of one

hour, 59 minutes, and eight seconds. Ras came in second in the junior boys category by clocking two hours and 19 seconds. Wernet finished a distance third in two hours, 14 minutes, and seven seconds.

Krozendijk won the race in the Elite Men division by clocking two hours and eight seconds, while Fernandez won the Kids category for boys by completing the eight-lap course in one hour, 17 minutes, and 26 seconds.

As in previous years, Browne was accompanied by coach St. Clair Williams, who functions in the dual roles of president of the Antigua and Barbuda Cycling Federation (ABCF) and the WCA.

## Antiguan men's duo miss on medaling at ECVA beach volleyball tournament

Antigua and Barbuda's Adrian Constant and Jamarie James missed out on claiming a medal by finishing fourth in the men's division of the Eastern Caribbean Volleyball Association's (ECVA) Senior Beach Volleyball Tournament at Cul de Sac Bay in St. Lucia over the weekend.

The Antiguan female pair of Sharifa Simmons and Jassania Joseph also missed out on claiming a medal as they lost all their matches and bowed out of contention in the women's division at the quarterfinal stage of that competition.

Constant and James were beaten 2-0 in the play-off for third place by Jamaar Cropper and Ronaldo Franklyn of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 16-21, 21-



Joseph Clercent, right, and Sheldon Descartes celebrates after retaining the men's division title of the Eastern Caribbean Volleyball Association (ECVA) Senior Beach Volleyball Tournament at Cul de Sac Bay in St. Lucia on Sunday, February 25, 2024. (NORCECA)

23.

The Antiguan pair was relegated to play for the

bronze medal after losing 2-0 (19-21, 14-21) in the semi-finals against St Lu-

cia's Team Two, comprising Rio Victor and Darnell Eudoxie.

Constant and James booked their spot in the semifinals by recording a 2-0 (21-19, 21-14) win over Grenada's Darren Oxford and Isaac Nelson in the quarterfinals.

The Antiguan men's pair, who lost their first two matches in pool play, won their third encounter 2-0 (21-18, 21-19) against Bermuda's Kyle Hamilton and Benjamin Barnett to book their spot in the quarterfinals.

St. Lucia's Team One, represented by Joseph Clercent and Sheldon Descartes, who were the defending

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Winners of the ECVA's Senior Beach Volleyball Women's Championship. From left to right: Bronze medal winners Dominica's Zahidu Henry and Nyla Edmund, Champions Grenada's Thornia Mitchell and Renisha Stafford, center, and Silver medal winners St. Lucia's Team One of Chenoa Evans and Denila Prospere.

## US falls to Mexico for the second time ever, losing in the Women's Gold Cup

CARSON, Calif. (AP) -- Mexico beat the United States for the second time ever, getting goals from Lizbeth Ovalle and Mayra Pelayo for a 2-0 victory Monday night in the CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup.

The US entered the game 40-1-1 against its rival, with its only previous loss a 2-1 decision during Women's World Cup qualifying in 2010.

It was the first loss for the US under interim coach Twila Kilgore, who took over after the team's dramatic exit from the Women's World Cup last summer in the round of 16. Emma Hayes will take over for Kilgore this spring.

Mexico, which failed to

qualify for last year's World Cup, finished atop Group A in the Gold Cup, while the United States finished second. Both teams advanced to the knockout round.

"They went out and they were bold, they were brave with the dream of playing a good game against the United States," Mexico coach Pedro Lopez Ramos said.

This is the first-ever Women's Gold Cup, created to give women's teams in the CONCACAF region more competitive matches. Twelve teams played group-stage matches across three cities: Carson, San Diego and Houston.

Argentina beat the Dominican Republic 3-0 earlier Monday in Group A. The



Mexico midfielder Mayra Pelayo-Bernal, right, celebrates her goal with defender Karen Luna during a CONCACAF Gold Cup women's soccer tournament match against the United States, Monday, Feb. 26, 2024, in Carson, Calif. (AP)

teams will be re-seeded following the group stage, so Mexico and the United States will have to wait to learn their opponents in the quarterfinals.

### cont'd from pg 20

champions, retained the men's division title. But they were required to come from a set down to take gold in the men's final.

In an all-St. Lucia finale, Clercent and Descartes beat St. Lucia's Team Two, composed of Rio Victor and Darnell Eudoxie, 2-1 (14-21, 21-15, 15-4), playing unbeaten in the tournament to finish with five wins.

Before reaching the final, Clercent and Descartes prevailed against St. Lucia's Team Three of Jevauny Roberts and Peter Emmanuel 2-0 (21-12, 21-11) in the quarterfinals.

They then had a 2-0 (21-16, 21-

16) trouncing over the St. Vincent and the Grenadines duo of Jamaar Cropper and Ronaldo Franklyn in the semi-finals.

Victor and Eudoxie beat Antigua and Barbuda's Adrian Constant and Jamarie James in their semifinal pairing. Before that, they overcame St. Kitts and Nevis' duo of Elkreen Morton and Clerique Ward 2-1 (21-16, 18-21, 15-10) in the quarterfinals.

Cropper and Franklyn, in combination, beat Yahn Florent and Ray Robinson of Dominica 2-0 (21-17, 21-11) in their quarterfinal encounter.

Meanwhile, the pair of Thornia Mitchell and Renisha Stafford took

gold, as Grenada bossed the women's segment of the tournament.

Mitchell and Stafford kept their perfect record intact, defeating St. Lucia's Team One of Chenoa Evans and Denila Prospere 2-1 (22-10, 17-21, 15-9) in the final to take the gold medal. The Grenadians thus avenged their loss in the 2023 final, when they fell to Evans and Prospere.

En route to the final, Mitchell and Stafford won 2-0 (21-17, 21-17) over Bermuda's Megan Hands and Hailey Moss in the semifinals and overcame Saquanna Duncan and Shanadia Sylvester of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2-0 (21-9, 21-16).

## Benna Boys get second win in Concacaf qualifiers

Host Antigua and Barbuda Benna Boys claimed their second win in Group B of the Concacaf Men's Under-20 Championship Qualifying Tournament on Tuesday.

The Antiguan snatched a narrow 2-1 victory against the bottom team, the Turks and Caicos Islands, in the second game of a double header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Following a goalless first half, Antigua and Barbuda took the lead in the 54th minute via a strike by striker Jevaughn Jarvis. Substitute forward Christopher Douglas scored in the 82nd minute to give the Benna Boys a two-nil lead.

But the Turks and Caicos Islands scored a late consolation goal when they were awarded a penalty after Antigua and Barbuda's midfielder Tyrik Hughes committed a foul in the 90th minute.

Christopher Louisy converted the penalty kick to score the first goal of the tournament for the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The win allows Antigua and Barbuda to advance to six points from three



The Antigua and Barbuda Benna Boys starting XI against the Turks and Caicos Islands at the ABFA Technical Center on Tuesday, February 27, 2024. (ABFA)

matches in the five-team round-robin Group B contest.

Earlier, Suriname made it two wins in as many games by recording a 4-1 victory against Guyana in the opening game of Tuesday's Group B double-header.

The win allows Suriname, who defeated Antigua and Barbuda in their opening encounter on Sunday, to join the Benna Boys on six points.

Their second loss in three matches has left Guy-

ana second from the bottom of Group B on one point, which they gained from salvaging a 2-2 draw on Sunday with El Salvador, the other team in the group.

El Salvador, who hammered the Turks and Caicos Islands 7-0 in their first encounter, are currently third in the standings with four points from two matches.

The Group B competition will resume on Thursday with another double header, the penultimate round of matches, at the ABFA Technical Center.

The Turks and Caicos Islands will tackle Guyana in the first game at 10:30 am, and Suriname will clash with El Salvador at 3:30 pm in a match that will play a decisive role in determining which one of the teams advances to the Concacaf Men's Under-20 Championship in Mexico in July.

Only the winner of the group will advance to the Concacaf Men's Under-20 Championship, which will take place in Mexico from July 19 to August 4.