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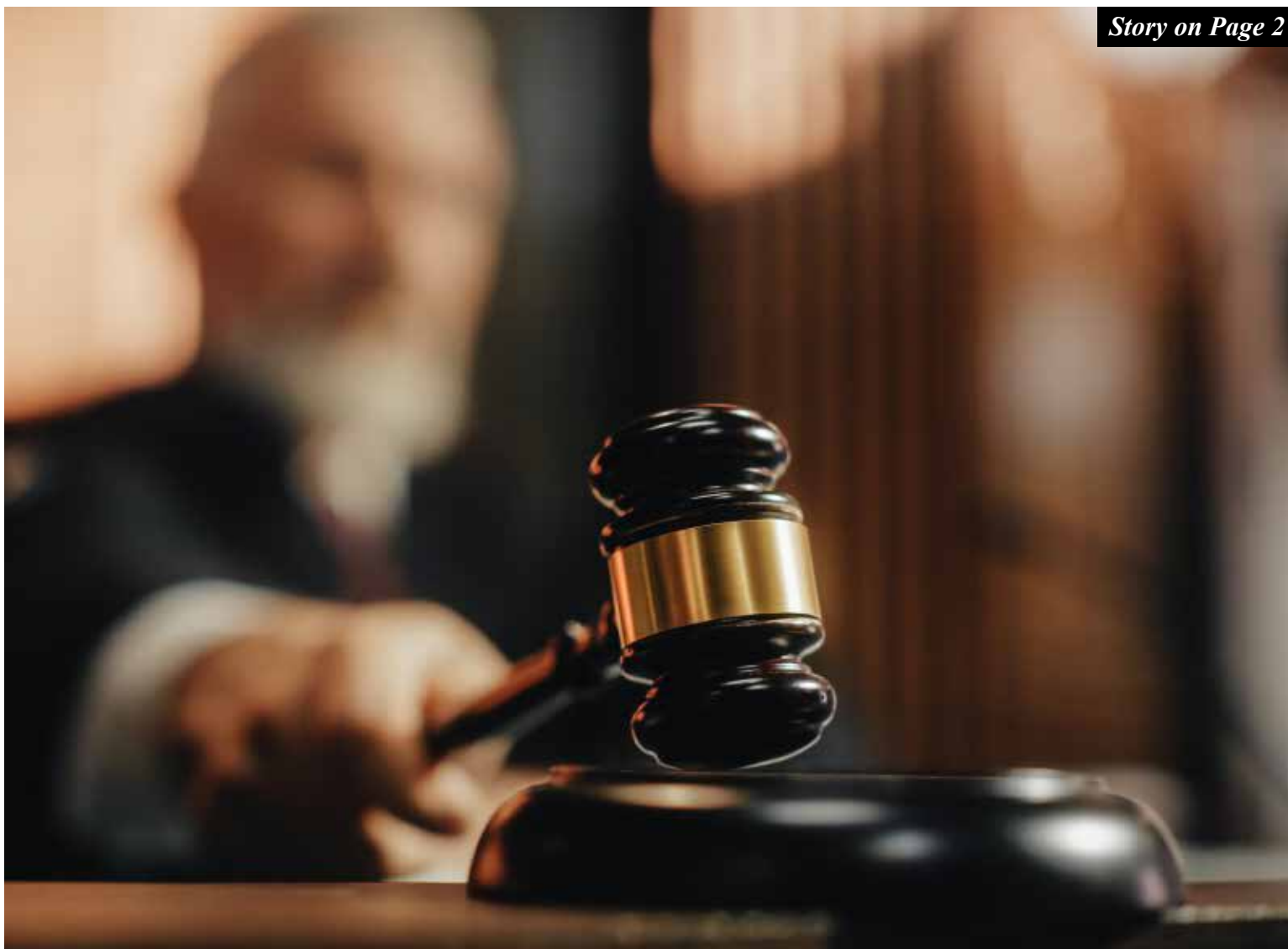
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# JUDGE-ALONE TRIALS TO BE MADE PERMANENT

*Story on Page 2*



# Local News



## Judge-alone trials to be made permanent



Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin

The system of judge-alone trials, introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic through a ‘sunrise legislation’ will be made a permanent feature of the justice system.

This comes as Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin read to the Cabinet a letter he received from the Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court urging the government to retain the measure.

“The head of the court system recommended that the law which permits for a

judge-alone trial be made permanent, eliminating the sunset clause which appeared in the law at first. The Chief Justice applauded Antigua and Barbuda for being the first in the O.E.C.S. jurisdiction to have adopted the law, causing the jurisdiction to join Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, the Turks and Caicos, Belize and Trinidad and Tobago in the region,” according to Cabinet sources.

Other jurisdictions that have adopted the measure include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States also have Judge-alone trials by legislation.

The Cabinet decided that it will cause the amendment to the law to make that kind of trial a permanent feature of the Antigua and Barbuda legal system.

The law setting up the judge-alone trials was due to expire in May, but the Attorney General said consultations have been held with key stakeholders such as the Bar Association, criminal attorneys and others on how the government should proceed on the matter.

“They are all in favour of the system and they are asking us to please continue this new system of judge-alone trials,” Sir Steadroy reported.

Judge-alone trials became necessary when COVID-19 protocols made having juries preside over trials a very difficult task.

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## Cabinet mulls funding for major events this year

Significant funds are needed to upgrade facilities and infrastructure ahead of the international events taking place in Antigua and Barbuda this year, especially events such as ICC Cricket T20 World Cup.

To underscore the need for funding for these events to be made available as soon as possible, the Cabinet received a report from the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Sports and the Creative Industries, Senator Shenella Govia who reported on the planning, execution and funding for a number of events that are on the calendar for 2024.

First and foremost is the T20 World Cup which requires significant upgrade to the facilities that are earmarked for use for the games and for practice. The Sir Vivian Richards Stadium is undergoing significant upgrades with resources coming almost exclusively from the Treasury of the government of Antigua and Barbuda. The Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG) is to become a practice venue for the teams that will play matches at the two official venues—the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium and the Coolidge International Grounds. Significant resources will be required for readying the ARG. The Cabinet made a pledge to secure the resources necessary so that hosting the T20 World Cup Cricket will be a success.

The Cabinet also learned of the significance of fully funding Carnival 2024 since a new standard has been established where prize monies are distributed following the events. Sen Govia outlined a proposal to pay outstanding amounts from previous years a little at a time given resource limitations.

She reported that the Carnival me-



dia launch and sponsorship cocktail will take place on April 25th at the Hodges Bay Club. The overall plans for Carnival 2024 will be presented to Cabinet in two weeks for funding approval.

In a positive development, The Ministry of Sports informed the Cabinet that it has succeeded in arranging full scholarships for two talented and intellectually gifted male students who will have an opportunity to be trained at the prestigious Harrow School in the United Kingdom that specializes in training future professional cricketers.

Matthew Miller of the Antigua Grammar School and Tanez Francis of the Jennings Secondary School will leave at separate times and will be on complete supervision of the schools during their time there. One student will leave next week and the other in June.

Antigua and Barbuda will host SIDS4 in May, ICC T20 World Cup Cricket in June, a women's cricket tournament in July to be followed by the annual Carnival celebrations, CPL Cricket from August to September and a tour by the England Cricket team in November.

## National Trade Council hears reports from stakeholder groups

The National Trade Council convened the second meeting since its establishment on Wednesday when it heard reports from three of the entities that comprise its membership.

Chairman of the NTC and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade, Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim, opened the meeting noting that the NTC was established by the Cabinet and its mission is deeply rooted in the fabric of the nation as it attempts to navigate the intricate pathways of trade, commerce and stirring the nation towards a trajectory of sustainable growth and development.

“Today we meet in this assembly, we are confronted with the responsibility of shaping the future of our nation’s economic landscape and the discussions

slated for this meeting are not just an exercise in rhetoric, rather, they are crucial engagements aimed at providing strategic council on matters pertaining to trade, commerce and industry,” he stated.

Ambassador Pilgrim noted that trade remains a cornerstone of the country’s economic strategy, and in an increasingly interconnected world, it is essential that technicians navigate global markets with skill and foresight. From trade agreements to tariff policies, the NTC’s decisions have far-reaching implications for the competitiveness and resilience of local industries.

The meeting heard a report from the Director of the Prices and Consumer Affairs Division, Orrin Steele on Price Control Measures



Chairman of the NTC and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade, Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim

in the country. He noted that government policy provides relief for consumers on a list of items featured on two separate lists; one is the price control list and the other is the zero-rated list.

He explained that one of the immediate concerns of the division is to recommend to the Cabinet the need to create a single list and then have much more frequent updating of the list in the future so that items can be more easily removed or added.

Additionally, he wants legislation to more clearly define who or what is a ‘wholesaler’ noting that a main driver in price increases is when an item has to go through multiple ‘middlemen’ before reaching the consumer.

Steele said the Prices and Consumers Division has received numerous reports from consumers complaining about ‘dual pricing’. This is where an item

is listed with one price on the shelf but costs another when the consumer reaches the cashier. He said this is wrong and should not continue.

Other reports were presented by Jasiel Murphy of the Environment Division and Chief Fisheries Officer, Ian Horsford.

The NTC comprises representation from the following entities; Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Finance, Customs, Agriculture Headquarters, Ministry of Health, International Trade, Prices and Consumers Affairs, Antigua and Barbuda Bureau of Standards, Labour Department, Veterinary Department, Central Board of Health, Plant Protection Unit, Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority, Statistics Department, Antigua Port Authority, Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank, the Fisheries Division and the Environmental Division.



Director of the Prices and Consumer Affairs Division, Orrin Steele

## Air arrivals up five percent in January compared to January 2019

Tourist arrivals by air are up five percent in January this year when compared with the same month in 2019, the best year on record for tourist arrivals.

The latest figures reported by the Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association show the arrivals for the first month of the year totaling 31,306 compared with 29,669 for January 2019.

The United States continues its perch of the top of the ladder with 14,606 passengers compared with 11,722 for 2019.

The next important source market for visitors is the UK with 7,955 compared with 7,681. Canada is the third most valuable source market for visitors to Antigua and Barbuda with 4,525 recorded this year compared with 5,752 for 2019.

Occupancy for the month was down marginally compared with January 2019. The data shows occupancy at 85.5 percent compared with 86.5, a decline of one percent. The figure for 2023 was 86.4 percent.

The lion share of overnight visitors stay in hotel taking 69 percent of the market with guest houses and homes coming in second and third respectively.

### Arrivals by Air January 2024 versus 2019

Market	2024	(%) of Arrivals	2019	(%) of Arrivals
USA	14,606	47%	11,722	40%
UK	7,955	25%	7,681	26%
Canada	4,525	14%	5,752	19%
Caribbean	1,840	6%	2,273	8%
Italy	256	1%	835	3%
Other	2124	7%	1406	5%
<b>Total Arrivals</b>	<b>31,306</b>		<b>29,669</b>	

5.5% increase in arrivals over 2019

## Statistics Division takes recruitment drive on the road for census staff

The Statistics Division is intensifying its recruitment drive ahead of the planned national census planned for later this year.

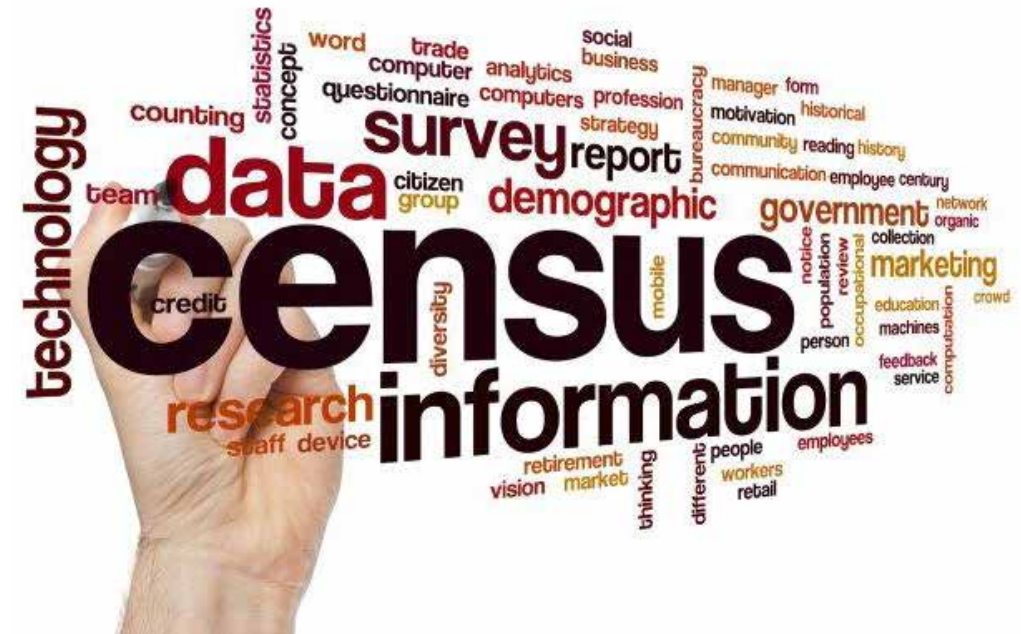
The Census Team will be at the Epicurean Parking Lot on Friar’s Hill Road on Thursday 11th April to facilitate the application process for persons interested in working with Census 2024.

The Division is presently looking for over 600 temporary workers to fill several positions, including enumerators, supervisors, data coders and editors and headquarters officers.

Interested applicants are asked to bring along a valid picture Government issued ID when attending the Recruitment Drive on Thursday.

According to the Division, plans are progressing for the conducting of the 2024 Population and Housing Census in Antigua and Barbuda.

Field officers are presently in the



field conducting a mapping and listing exercise as part of the pre-enumeration stage of the Census.

The Recruitment Drive at the Epicurean Parking Lot will run from 10

am to 3 pm

The Statistics Division continues to encourage the full cooperation of the general public in ensuring a successful Census 2024.

## Two men fined \$24,000 on gun and ammunition charges

Radford Lawrence of College Street, Green Bay, and O’Marie Nedd of Potters were each fined \$12,000 on separate firearm and ammunition offences in the St. Johns Magistrate’s Court. Lawrence was fined \$5000 for unlawful possession of a firearm and \$7,000 for unlawful possession of ammunition.

On March 21, the police executed a search warrant on a property occupied by Lawrence in St. Johnson’s Village and found a modified flare gun, along with



several different caliber rounds of ammunition, including three .380 rounds, three 9mm rounds, one .45mm round and a spent .32mm shell. He was taken into custody and charged.

Meanwhile, O’Marie Nedd was fined \$10,000 for unlawful possession of a 9mm pistol and \$2,000 for two matching rounds of ammunition. On Monday, 8 April around 1:40 am, mem-

bers of the Special Services Unit (SSU) were on patrol duty in the city, when they saw Nedd on Corn Alley behaving suspiciously. As the officers approached him he ran and they gave chase and eventually caught him with the illegal weapon. He was taken into custody and charged.

Both men appeared before Acting Chief Magistrate Dexter Wason on Tuesday, 9 April, and were given three months to pay the fines or serve three months at His Majesty’s Prison.



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## Famous Antiguan female rower sets eyes on new challenge

The name Christal Clashing will always be linked to the historic Team Antigua Island Girls quartet that rowed across the Atlantic Ocean in the world's toughest row race, but Clashing is hoping to put Antigua and Barbuda on the map once again, this time in freediving.

But she needs the help of the public to do so.

“My goal is to become the first female freediver in Antigua and Barbuda to set a national record. I hope to do so at the Deep Dominica freediving competition to be held 28th July - 4th August 2024, and I need your help to turn this vision into a reality,” Clashing posted on her fundraising page [www.sportfunder.com/christal-clashing](http://www.sportfunder.com/christal-clashing)

The 34-year-old will have to train in Dominica for the entire month of July and is seeking the assistance of the public in covering those expenses.

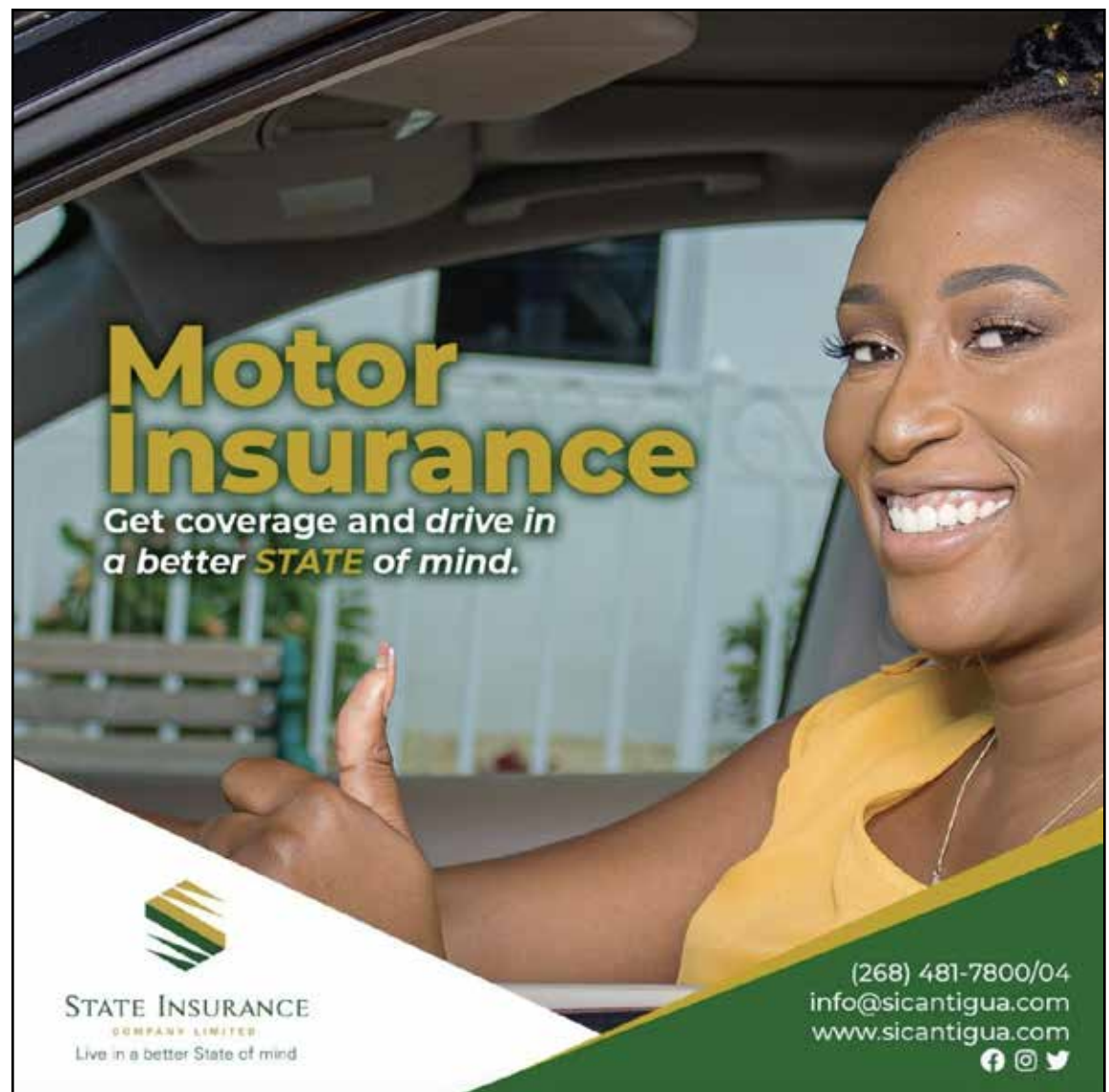
“By supporting me today, you are investing into something bigger than just a fundraiser. You're changing the waterscape for Caribbean athletes like me. I know from my experience as Antigua and Barbuda's first female Olympic swimmer

and being part of the first all-black team to row an ocean, the impact of being a pioneer in aquatic spaces. It lets others in the region see what's possible and provide a benchmark to beat,” she added.

The goal is \$7,000. Thus far just over \$2,000 has been donated.



Christal Clashing



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The man's artwork measured more than a metre in length (stock image)

## German gallery fires employee for hanging own art in exhibition

By Jacqueline Howard

A modern art gallery in Germany has fired an employee after discovering the budding artist had hung his own work in an exhibition.

The 51-year-old man had drilled two holes in a wall to mount his painting in Munich's Pinakothek der Moderne.

Local media reported the man had pulled the stunt in the hope of achieving his artistic breakthrough.

A spokesperson for the gallery said the artwork was not on display for very long.

"The supervisors notice something like this immediately," Tine Nehler told German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung, adding the piece was returned

to the artist.

The man was an employee of the gallery's technical services team and described himself as a freelance artist.

His artwork measured 23in by 47in (60 by 120 centimetres) and was hung in an empty passageway.

In addition to his employment being terminated, he has also been banned from the gallery.

The gallery is one of the largest of modern art in Europe and features works of Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst and Salvador Dalí among others.

A few months ago a similar incident happened in the German city of Bonn.

Staff were packing up an exhibit at the Bundeskunsthalle when they

noticed an extra painting had been put on display by a member of the public.

"We think it's funny and we want to get to know the artist. So get in touch! There's no trouble. Word of honour," the gallery posted on X, formerly Twitter.

The artist in question did get in touch to reveal the painting was hers.

Danai Emmanouilidis said she had always wanted to get one of her paintings into an exhibition. "I smuggled it in with a giant hoodie over my leggings," she told local public broadcaster WDR.

Her female portrait entitled Georgia was eventually auctioned by the gallery and the proceeds given to an art charity called ArtAsyl in Cologne.

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**WE ARE GETTING STRONGER**

## US inflation jumps as fuel and housing costs rise

Consumer prices in the US rose faster than expected last month, in a sign that the fight to slow inflation has stalled.

Prices rose 3.5% over the 12 months to March, up from 3.2% in February, the US Labor Department said.

Higher costs for fuel, housing, dining out and clothing drove the increase.

Analysts warned the lack of progress will force the US central bank to keep interest rates higher for longer.

Higher interest rates help stabilise prices by making it more expensive to borrow for business expansions and other spending.

In theory, that in turn slows the economy, and eases the pressures pushing up prices.

But the Federal Reserve's key interest rate is now set at the highest levels in more than two decades, in the range of 5.25%-5.5%.

Forecasters had expected the bank to start lowering borrowing costs this year, reflecting the fact that the inflation rate, which tracks the pace of price rises, has fallen significantly since hitting 9.1% in 2022.

But recent economic



data, including strong jobs creation figures last week, has raised doubts about how soon those cuts might come.

Analysts, who once expected rate cuts as soon as March, have been rapidly revising bets, with many now not expecting any until later this summer and some predicting the bank could wait until next year.

What the Fed decides to do is likely to shape decisions by central bankers all around the world, said Neil Birrell, chief investment officer at Premier Miton Diversified Funds.

"The Fed has got some head scratching to do and if other central banks

were waiting for the Fed to move, they have got a conundrum on their hands now," he said.

Inflation cooled rapidly over 2023 as pandemic-era supply issues healed and the spike in food and energy prices sparked by the war in Ukraine faded, but it still remains higher than the bank's 2% target.

An uptick in oil prices in recent months has also pushed energy costs higher, while prices for services show little sign of stabilising.

The Labor Department said prices jumped 0.4% from March to February, the same as in February.

Higher petrol and

housing costs accounted for more than half the increase.

Car insurance, medical care and costs for internet also contributed.

So-called core inflation, which is seen by economists as a better indicator of future trends because it does not include more volatile food and energy prices, stood at 3.8%, the same as in February.

"We shouldn't overreact to the jump in headline inflation - which was all about energy," said Brian Coulton, chief economist at Fitch Ratings.

But he added: "The details are not at all reassuring for the Fed."



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**WE ARE GETTING STRONGER**

## Venezuela's ex-oil minister El Aissami reappears - in handcuffs

By Vanessa Buschschlüter

More than a year after he resigned from his post as Venezuela's oil minister, Tareck El Aissami has been arrested accused of corruption.

Mr El Aissami is accused of stealing from Venezuela's state oil company.

Once a powerful ally of President Nicolás Maduro, Mr El Aissami has not been seen in public since his resignation in March 2023.

On Tuesday, Attorney General Tarek Saab shared photos showing the ex-minister being led away in handcuffs.

A former economy minister, Simón Zerpa, and a businessman who had close ties to the Maduro government, Samark López, have also been detained.

Mr Saab, who is an ally of President Maduro, announced the arrests in a news conference on Tuesday, but did not say when they had been carried out.

There had been much speculation about Mr El Aissami's whereabouts after the influential politician, who served as vice-president and minister of industry before becoming oil minister, completely disappeared from public view last year.

The attorney general



The Ministry of Communication released a photograph showing Tareck El Aissami being led away in handcuffs.

said that the investigation into the corruption scheme Mr El Aissami is accused of having lead had taken time, but critics of the government noted his arrest comes just months before the presidential election in which President Maduro will run for a third consecutive term.

Mr Saab said Mr El Aissami had syphoned off money from state-oil company PdVSA.

During his time as oil minister, Mr El Aissami had used some of the money to renovate his houses and sent some of it abroad,

the attorney general alleged.

According to Mr Saab, Mr El Aissami had conspired with PdVSA executives and officials at the Venezuelan government agency overseeing crypto-currency to steal hundreds of millions of dollars.

He is accused of treason and misappropriation. Mr El Aissami has not spoken publicly about these latest allegations.

Last year, when he stepped down from the oil ministry as dozens of PdVSA executives were arrest-

ed for alleged corruption, he said that he was resigning so that a full investigation could take place.

Mr El Aissami and the two other senior politicians arrested on Tuesday were already under sanctions issued by the United States.

In 2017, the US treasury department accused Mr El Aissami of playing a major role in drug trafficking and Samark López of being his frontman.

Simón Zerpa was placed on a US sanctions list in the same year for his alleged role in corruption.

## Guyana reiterates commitment to a peaceful solution of border dispute

CMC - Guyana's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Carolyn Rodrigues- Birkett, has reiterated her country's commitment to a peaceful solution to the border dispute with Venezuela, which is claiming the Essequibo region in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) country.

The UN Security Council met in private on Tuesday to discuss the recent developments regarding the territorial dispute between the two countries at the request of Guyana's President, President Irfaan Ali in an April 5 letter he had submitted to the Council.

The meeting was held under the theme "Threats to international peace and security" with the Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča providing a brief to the Council.

Rodrigues- Birkett in her presentation to the Council provided a thorough overview of the history of the border controversy and highlighted the actions that have been taken by Venezuela in contravention of diplomatic agreements, including the Argyle Declaration, and international law, including the legally binding orders of the International Court of Justice.

She emphasised Guyana's commitment to peace,



the rule of law and to the resolution of the controversy through the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Rodrigues-Birkett underscored the Council's responsibility to ensure respect for the rule of law and adherence to the fundamental principles of the UN Charter.

She called on the Council to impress on Venezuela the need to pursue a peaceful settlement of the controversy by the ICJ, as it is bound to do by the 1966 Geneva Agreement.

Venezuela's Ambassador to the United Nations, Samuel Moncada Acosta, who was present at the session, ruled out any occupation plan by the South American country.

No official statement has so far been issued by the UN Security Council following the meeting at which both Haiti and Suriname ad-

dressed the delegates.

But in a statement posted on 'X' formerly Twitter, the United Kingdom said "Venezuela cannot act unilaterally to disrupt the peace of the region.

"The border was settled in 1899 through international arbitration and must be respected," the UK said.

The Security Council said Guyana had requested the meeting citing Article 35 (1) of the UN Charter, which states that any UN member state "may bring any dispute, or any situation referred to in Article 34 [that is, one that may lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute] to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly".

In the letter requesting the meeting, Ali cited the "Organic Law for the Defence of Guayana Esequiba", which President Nico-

las Maduro signed on April 3.

Ali warned that this action "cements Venezuela's intent to annex more than two-thirds of Guyana's sovereign territory and make it part of Venezuela".

But Maduro described the law as the implementation of the results of the December 3, 2023 referendum, adding that the law "establishes the creation of state number 24, the state of Guayana Esequiba within the political and territorial organization of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela".

The law also reiterated Venezuela's rejection of the validity of the 1899 Paris Arbitral Award and the ICJ's jurisdiction on the matter.

In his April 5 letter, Ali said that the law violates the International Criminal Court's (ICC) December 1, 2023 provisional measures

*cont'd on pg 16*

## Zambia uncovers 'sophisticated' Chinese cybercrime syndicate

By Wycliffe Muia

A “sophisticated internet fraud syndicate” has been uncovered in Zambia, leading to the arrest of 77 people, including 22 Chinese nationals.

It was a “significant breakthrough in the fight against cybercrime”, the authorities said after a multi-agency raid on a Chinese-run company.

The firm employed Zambians who believed they were to be call-centre agents.

Among equipment seized were devices allowing callers to disguise their location and thousands of Sim cards.

Golden Top Support Services, the company at the centre of the raid, has not commented on the allegations.

The swoop on its premises, located in Roma, an



Golden Top Support Services had recruited “unsuspecting Zambians” aged between 20 and 25, the DEC said.

upmarket suburb of the capital, Lusaka, was led by the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) and also involved the police, the immigration department and anti-terrorism unit.

It came after months of intelligence gathering by the agencies following

an alarming rise in internet fraud cases in Zambia, DEC director general Nason Banda said after Tuesday’s raid.

He said Golden Top Support Services had recruited “unsuspecting” Zambians aged between 20 and 25.

They had been tasked

“with engaging in deceptive conversations with unsuspecting mobile users across various platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, chatrooms and others, using scripted dialogues”.

During the operation 11 Sim boxes were found - these are devices that can route calls in a way that bypasses legitimate phone networks.

This enables them to be used “for fraudulent activities, including internet fraud and online scams”, Mr Banda said.

More than 13,000 Sim cards - both domestic and international - were also seized, which underscored “the extent of the operation’s reach”, the DEC head said.

An increasing number  
*cont’d on pg 17*

*cont’d from pg 15*

and expressed concern that given Caracas’ disregard of this order, “Venezuela’s next move would be to implement its plan for the seizure of our sovereign territory”

Ali added that such an act would be a breach of the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter and would contradict the letter and spirit of the Argyle Declaration.

The letter also rejects recent claims made by Maduro that the US has installed bases of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Essequibo, calling it a “dangerous narrative”.

The dispute over the Essequibo region,

approximately 160,000 square km stretch of densely forested land that constitutes two-thirds of Guyana’s territory and is home to roughly 125,000 of its 800,000 citizens, stretches back to the 19th century, when Guyana was under colonial rule.

Venezuela has laid claim to the Essequibo region since 1841, when it argued that the British Empire had encroached on Venezuelan territory in its acquisition of the territory of then-British Guiana from the Netherlands.

It has also challenged the validity of the 1899 Paris Arbitral Award through which the border between Venezuela and British Guiana was decided.



## Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh says three sons killed in air strike

By Vicky Wong

Hamas's political leader Ismail Haniyeh has confirmed that three of his sons and four of his grandchildren were killed in an air strike in Gaza.

Hamas-linked media said the car his sons were travelling in was hit in Al-Shati camp near Gaza City.

Haniyeh said that the incident would not change Hamas's demands in talks aimed at reaching a ceasefire deal.

Israel's military said the sons were members of Hamas's military wing.

The group was reportedly on its way to a family celebration to mark the first day of the Muslim holiday of Eid.

Haniyeh told the broadcaster Al Jazeera that three sons - Hazem, Amir, and Muhammad - had remained in Gaza during the war.

A statement from Hamas later said four of Haniyeh's grandchildren - Mona, Amal, Khaled and Razan - were among those

killed in what they called the "treacherous and cowardly" strike.

Haniyeh said he heard the news as he was visiting wounded Palestinians who had been taken for treatment to the Qatari capital, Doha, which is where the Hamas leader lives.

"The enemy will be delusional if it thinks that targeting my sons, at the climax of the [ceasefire] negotiations and before the movement sends its response, will push Hamas to change its position," he told Al Jazeera.

In comments reported on Hamas's Telegram channel, he thanked God for the "honour" bestowed on him by what he called the "martyrdom of his children and grandchildren".

Israel's military said it had "eliminated three Hamas military wing operatives in the central Gaza Strip", adding that they were the sons of Ismail Haniyeh. The statement did not mention the reported deaths of Haniyeh's grandchildren.



Ismail Haniyeh says that three of his sons were killed in an air strike.

As international pressure to reach a ceasefire deal grows, US President Joe Biden has sent the head of the CIA, William Burns, for the latest round of talks in Cairo.

The latest proposal, which Hamas says it is analysing, reportedly includes the release of 40 Israeli hostages being held in Gaza in return for 900 Palestinians from Israeli jails.

Haniyeh is widely considered Hamas's overall leader and has been a prominent member of the

movement since 1980. He was elected head of Hamas's political bureau in 2017 and the US Department of State designated him a terrorist in 2018.

These are not the first members of Haniyeh's family to have been killed in the war. Another son was reportedly killed in February, while his brother and nephew were killed in October, followed by a grandson in November.

Hamas-led gunmen attacked Israel on 7 October, killing 1,200 people and taking more than 250 hostages.

Israel says that of 130 hostages still in Gaza, at least 34 are dead.

More than 33,000 Gazans, the majority of them civilians, have been killed during Israel's offensive in Gaza since the October attack, the Hamas-run health ministry says.

**cont'd from pg 16**

of Zambians were losing money from their bank accounts through money-laundering schemes, though this scam's alleged "illicit operations extended beyond Zambia's borders", he said.

Evidence indicated people in countries including Singapore, Peru, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and others across Africa had been targeted.

Two firearms and about 78 rounds of ammunition were confiscated and two vehicles, belonging to a Chinese national linked to the business, have been impounded. Mr Banda said the Zambian nationals had been charged and released on bail so they could help the authorities with their investigations.

The foreign nationals - 22 Chinese men and a Cameroonian - remain in custody.



Players of the Attacking Saints football team. (File photo)

## Attacking Saints move up to third place in First Division League

The Attacking Saints have moved into third place on goal difference in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League.

Three players scored twice as the Attacking Saints hammered struggling Fort Road 7-1 at the ABFA Technical Center on Tuesday.

Rashawn Martin scored in the third and 16th minutes, Joshua Samuel had conversions in the 25th and 45th minutes, and Keeron McKenzie scored in the 29th and 37th minutes to give the Attacking Saints an emphatic six-nil lead at halftime.

Ezekiel Thomas scored a consolation goal for Fort Road when he converted a penalty kick in the 59th minute, and Ronaldo Fenton also converted a penalty kick in the 87th minute to score the last goal for the At-

tacking Saints.

Fort Road remains in ninth place on goal difference with 10 points after crashing to their 11th defeat in 15 matches.

Their ninth win in 16 matches carries the Attacking Saints to 30 points, the same as the Police. The Attacking Saints currently have a superior goal difference, but the Police have a game in hand.

The Police clash with First Division leaders Five Islands at the ABFA Technical Center was postponed on Tuesday.

Five Islands are still at the top of the First Division with 40 points from 15 matches, including 13 wins.

Police dropped from third to fourth place as they remain on 30 points from 15 matches, including nine wins.

The First Division encounter be-

tween Jennings United and Lion Hill at Golden Grove was also postponed on Tuesday.

Jennings United will remain in fifth place with 24 points from 14 games, while Lion Hill will remain in sixth place with 18 points from 14 matches.

If a match against Sea View Farm, which ended prematurely at the Princess Margaret School (PMS) playing field on Friday, December 8, 2023, does not resume, Blackburn Palace played their last match in the Second Division on Tuesday.

The Sea View Farm Football Club has indicated that it has received verbal notification from an ABFA official that their game against Blackburn Palace, which ended prematurely due to a power failure at the Princess Margaret

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## Sammy closer to selecting T20 World Cup squad

With the ICC Men's Twenty20 World Cup now less than two months away, West Indies Head coach, Daren Sammy says he has just about settled on his squad for the global showpiece, which will be jointly hosted in the Caribbean and the United States of America (USA).

Sammy, who captained the West Indies in T20 titles in 2012 and 2016, is aiming to cop his first title as a coach and, by extension, lead the regional side to a third crown. As such, he pointed to three Ps – personnel, preparation and purpose – which has guided his decision-making where selecting players is concerned.

“We’ve selected squads and exposed about 22 players over the last year in preparation for this main event that is coming, and fine-tuning and giving clear guidance as to what roles are required in the differ-

ent positions, to help us to be successful,” Sammy told journalists during a press briefing.

“So you would’ve seen ... different guys getting different opportunities over a consistent period of time in different roles, and it has brought us down to probably the final 15, 16, 20 players, and it’s about fine-tuning now.

“I’m probably quite sure as to what my World Cup team will be. It’s based on the measures that we’ve taken and the strategic roles we have given players,” he added.

Sammy expressed satisfaction with the entire thought process that goes into their preparation to ensure that players’ mindset and performances align with their objectives. He also welcomed the fact that the core group of players are already showing a heightened sense of belief, which



West Indies Head coach, Daren Sammy

he believes is vital to their charge.

“Where before 2023 we were averaging six or so runs per over between overs number seven to 15 whereas international teams were going at seven, close to eight, we have now changed that to seven.

“Still, we need improvement but the small measures that we’re taking and the preciseness with which we’re working has enabled

us to take little strides,” Sammy noted.

“Where our team is really strong is in the engine room. What I call the engine room is from number four to seven, where you have your all-rounders coming in and keeping on the pressure. I’m quite happy with where we are as a T20 team as we’re building towards the main event. I see a group of men that believe that they can win,” he declared.

Sammy’s side, to be led by Jamaican Rovman Powell, will contest Group C alongside New Zealand, Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea and Uganda in the preliminary stage of the June 1-29 tournament.

Their group campaign will be spread across Guyana, St. Lucia and Trinidad, and Sammy said much of the planning took into consideration the various venues.

### *cont’d from pg 18*

School playing field on Friday, December 8, 2023, will be completed before the end of the current season.

Both teams were deadlocked at 1-1 at the time when the match was forced to end prematurely. Sea View Farm indicated that the ABFA official has indicated that the match will be completed with the playing of the second half on a date to be determined.

Therefore, in what could have been their final match of the season, Blackburn Palace romped to a four-nil win against

JSC Progressors at the PMS playing field on Tuesday.

Diondre Harrigan scored twice with conversions in the first and 12th minutes; Tarique Gomes had a 23rd-minute conversion; and Sanje Carr scored in the 29th minute for Blackburn Palace.

Their 10th win in 19 matches carries Blackburn Palace from fourth to third place with 35 points.

The JSC Progressors will remain in the cellar of the 20-team round-robin competition with three points after crashing to their 13th defeat in 14 matches.

## CWI President Shallow pleased with region's progress in preparation for T20 World Cup

As the much-anticipated ICC Men's T20 World Cup draws closer, Cricket West Indies president Dr. Kishore Shallow expressed satisfaction with the region's state of readiness for global showpiece, which is jointly hosted by in the Caribbean and United States.

Shallow's remarks followed a recent visit Kensington Oval in Barbados where he was assured that all was on course for the June 1-29 tournament.

Barbados will host nine matches, five in the group stage, three in the Super Eight second stage, and the final on June 29, which will mark the third such ICC marquee game to be staged at the venue following on from the historic One-Day International World Cup in 2007 and the 2010 T20 World Cup.

Though West Indies will not feature in any group stage games at the Kensington Oval, a box office fixture between reigning T20 World champions England and Australia is on the cards for June 8.

Ambassador Noel Lynch, chairman of the National Organising Committee, in a recent media conference, said that the major elements of the storied venue would be delivered to tournament authorities next



President of Cricket West Indies Dr. Kishore Shallow

week while the remaining elements would be completed by month end.

"On the eastern course where there's the party stand and the temporary facility, and all of those facilities that are coming in, we are sure that we'll hand over those on April 30.

"But we'll hand over the

major parts that you know -- the 3Ws, the Greenidge and Haynes, the Media Centre, the field of play, the scoreboards, all of the electronic boards -- will be finished within a week and handed over," Lynch said.

"I think that's ahead of schedule. I think Barbados has done an exceptional job.

It wasn't my job ... when I came back from the US, we were already very far advanced in terms of the progress -- the infrastructural progress at Kensington Oval," he added.

Shallow agreed, as he gave the thumbs up to Barbados and other host venues across the region, who are well advanced in preparation for the tournament.

"Well ahead of schedule. I'm happy with the progress we've made so far with the World Cup and it's definitely going to be a spectacle of an event and something we should all look forward to," Shallow said.

He later revealed that there was one territory that was lagging behind in their preparations, but was reluctant to name the island.

Along with Barbados, games will also be played in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

"Only one facility in the Caribbean, one country (is) probably a couple weeks behind schedule, but we have their commitment that they are going to accelerate. It might take some day and night application but no doubt, by June 1, every country in the Caribbean is going to be ready," Shallow shared.

## Flyers II extend unbeaten run in ABBA's Division II League

EZ Fit Flyers II extended their unbeaten run in the latest rounds of games in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Division II League on Tuesday night.

The EZ Fit Flyers II won for the sixth time in as many games with a 90-39 drubbing of Cecil Charles Cristos United in their encounter at the JSC Sports Complex.

Sadiq Phillip produced 20 points, 14 rebounds, and five steals; Craig Massiah had 20 points, 10 rebounds, and five assists; Donte Trimmingham contributed 12 points, 10 rebounds, and eight assists; and Harry Rashaun chipped in with 10 points and 12 rebounds for the Flyers II.

Thomas Skerrit sank 10 points; Manlight Simons



had 11 rebounds and eight points; Dorian James scored eight points and claimed

seven rebounds; and Mahkail Gomes converted eight points and grabbed eight

rebounds for Cecil Charles Cristos United, who suffered their sixth loss in seven games.

The Old Road Daggers recorded their fourth win in seven encounters with a 67-43 victory against the Honourable Daryll Matthew Ottos Clippers in the second game on Tuesday night.

Kelvin Simon produced 22 points, 15 rebounds, and six steals; Kedar Clarke converted 14 points and grabbed 15 rebounds; and Obediah Browne scored eight points for the Old Road Daggers.

Amare Browne converted 21 points, and Antoine Browne scored eight points and grabbed seven rebounds for the Honourable Daryll Matthew Ottos Clippers, which lost for the sixth time in seven games.

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second match of the tournament at the same venue on Friday, August 30 at 7 pm.

The Falcons remaining home matches will take place against the Barbados Royals on Sunday, September 1, at 10 am; versus the St. Lucia Kings on Tuesday, September 3, at 7 pm; and the Trinbago Knight Riders on Thursday, September 5, at 7 pm.

The Falcons will play away matches against the St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots at Warner Park in St. Kitts on Sunday, September 8, and versus the Barbados Royals at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Wednesday, September 11.

The Falcons will also compete against the St. Lucia Kings at the Darren Sammy Cricket Ground in St. Lucia on Sunday, September 15; versus the Trinbago Knight Riders at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad on Thursday, September 19; and against the Guyana Amazon Warriors at the Guyana National Stadium in Providence on Saturday, September 21.

For the first time since 2019, the event will visit six host countries, with matches set to take place in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

There will be 34 matches in total, with each of the six teams playing 10

group matches. The knockout stages will take place in Guyana, with the home team, the Guyana Amazon Warriors, looking to defend the title they won in 2023.

The tournament will have two legs running concurrently, with all six teams hosting home matches.

Michael Hall, Tournament Operations Director for the Republic Bank CPL, said, "We are looking forward to getting underway in Antigua and Barbuda with matches back in the country for the first time in 10 years.

"It is also very pleasing to be back having home matches for all six teams, with the Biggest Party in Sport set to have an even wider footprint in 2024."



## Antigua to host opening match in 2024 CPL

The first match in Antigua and Barbuda's return to hosting matches in the Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League (CPL) will take place at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium (SVRS) on Thursday, August 29, 2024.

Antigua and Barbuda will host matches in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) for the first time in 10 years because a new franchise, the Antigua and Barbuda Falcons (ABF), will replace the Jamaica Tallawahs in the 2024 edition.

It is a welcomed return of CPL cricket to the islands of 365 beaches since the dismantling of the Antigua

Hawksbill in 2015.

The Antigua Hawksbill franchise, which was based in Antigua and Barbuda, was one of six teams that were established for the inaugural CPL season in 2013. The Hawksbill played in the 2014 CPL before it was dissolved in 2015 and replaced by the St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots.

The fixtures for the 2024 Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League have been confirmed, with the tournament set to run from Thursday, August 29 to Sunday, October 6.

The newest franchise in the Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League

(CPL), the Antigua and Barbuda Falcons, will play a total of five matches at its home base, the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, during this year's premier regional T20 cricket competition.

It is quite fitting that the Antigua and Barbuda Falcons will launch their campaign in the 2024 CPL against their neighbours, the St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots, in the opening match of the tournament at the SVRS at 7 pm.

The Antigua and Barbuda Falcons will face the defending champions, the Guyana Amazon Warriors, in the

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