

# ARVIA TO OVERNIGHT DURING HOMEPORTING VISITS THIS SEASON

*Story on Page 2*



# Local News



## P&O Cruises' Arvia to overnight from the upcoming cruise season

The cruise ship that has helped to anchor Antigua and Barbuda's homeporting push, will start overnighting in the St. John's Harbour from the upcoming cruise season.

This major announcement was made on Tuesday by the new General Manager of the Antigua Cruise Port Ltd., Gasper George, speaking at the Connect Conference organized by ACP.

He described homeporting as 'the new business' and he made an appeal for a unified approach by all stakeholders to ensure the

continued growth and development of this critical sub-segment of the cruise tourism market.

"For the upcoming seasons, we will have 23 homeporting calls from seven vessels and six cruise lines. The good news about all of this is that the Arvia of P&O Cruise Lines will be overnighting during the season. It will arrive on a Saturday and leave the Sunday. For this, we need to be on our 'A' game; we cannot be fighting each other; we have to collaborate as this business means a lot to us; to the people at the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority and to you the stakeholders



as well," he urged.

George, who recently took up his appointment, noted that the homeporting business started just two years ago and already it is showing signs of improvements as it has recorded

more than double in the number of calls over that period.

He noted that there are many people in the country who benefit from this new business and he wants all stakeholders to join hands in protecting and expanding the homeporting operations.

"We need the input of the smaller properties, the merchants, other properties, the airport staff, taxi drivers and everybody coming together to build and preserve this eco-system that can really bring us, Antigua and Barbuda, to the next level," he declared.





## Water-taxi services may soon be an option for tourists

The Ministry of Tourism is exploring all avenues to find ways to transport tourists to and from the cruise ships against the backdrop of increased traffic congestions in St. John's.

And according to Tourism Minister, Charles Max Fernandez, discussions are already taking place with the taxi association on the possibility of introducing water-taxi services for cruise ship passengers. He said this is important as the taxi association and its members will be the ones first in line to get permits to operate these water taxis.

"This is to reduce the pressure on the roadways with the anticipated increase in the number of cruise ship passengers and other tourist visiting the country over the coming months and years," he stated.

Minister Fernandez was at the time



Tourism Minister, Charles Max Fernandez speaking at Antigua Cruise Port Connect Conference held at the Sir John E. St. Luce Conference Centre on Tuesday.

"We have more and more visitors coming to our country with a growing number of cars on our roads which are leading to traffic jams and in the process making it difficult for our taxi-operators to get to and from the cruise port in a timely manner. This is

something we are looking in at and as a matter of fact we are having discussions with the University of the West Indies FIC to see if they can help by using Artificial Intelligence to solve this problem," he reported.

Minister Fernandez said finding ways around traffic jams is critical to the tourism industry as the government does not want a situation like what happens in some countries where their residents march with signs telling visitors to 'go home'.

"Cruise tourism is very important to us as a destination, but we have to find ways in which we can properly manage it. One of things that we are looking at in collaboration with GPH is to see if on special days we can't limit the movement of some vehicles (in and around the city) for specific hours," he stated.

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# Local News



## Antigua and Barbuda enjoying the best tourist season on record

Antigua and Barbuda is enjoying its best season for tourism ever with both air arrivals and cruise passenger numbers showing healthy growth.

Chief Executive Officer of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, Colin C. James provided the update in a presentation to the Antigua Cruise Port's Connect Conference on Tuesday.

"Antigua and Barbuda had a strong start to 2024 with stay-over tourist arrivals recording a growth rate of 17 percent for the first eight months of the year. From January to August in 2023, we had a total of 196,393 passengers. This compares with 229,275 for January to August, 2024. This is also a thirteen percent increase of the benchmark year of 2019," James re-

ported.

A closer look at the figures shows that the United States continues to be the most important source market for tourists to Antigua and Barbuda by accounting for 54 percent of all arrivals. Europe was second with 24 percent with Canada a distant third at ten percent. The Caribbean was nine percent, Latin America one percent and the category 'other' was just two percent.

The increases in arrivals also extended to the critical cruise and yachting sector. According to James that sector saw a twenty-six percent increase in arrival for the first eight months of 2024 compared with the corresponding period for 2023.

From January to August this year the cruise arrivals totaled 566,150 pas-



Colin C. James

sengers. This compares with 442,470 for the same period for 2023.

To supplement the industry, James revealed that there have been significant investments in a number of projects to further enhance the tourism offerings of the country. These include the following;

V.C. Bird International Airport Executive Lounge modern makeover completed

Barbuda International Airport (BBQ) (planned opening by start of winter season)

New Cruise port terminal construction to commence in October 2024, ready for 2025/2026 season

Royalton Chic - overwater bungalows on sale from October 1

The Hut, Little Jumby - Private Island and Restaurant (opening Winter 2024)

Nobu Beach Inn, Barbuda (scheduled to open in 2025)

Nikki Beach Resort and Spa - featuring 90 rooms, 70 branded residences (construction begins 1st quarter of 2025; & 3yrs to complete)

Rosewood Hotel, Barbuda - featuring 50 resort suites and 35 Rosewood Residences (2028)

Moon Gate Hotel and Spa - featuring 49 resort suites

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## OAS team, Sir Ron Sanders visit for OAS GA preparatory meeting

An Advanced Team from the Organisation of American States (OAS), accompanied by Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the organisation, Sir Ron Sanders, are in St. John's to begin preparations for this country's hosting of the OAS General Assembly in June next year.

The team is spending three days in the country meeting with senior officials of government as well as to visit the conference site, the American University of Antigua new conference hall and other facilities.

The Advance Team includes His Excellency Francisco Lainez, Advisor in charge of the Department of Conferences and Meeting Management, Jeannie S Rangel, OAS Chief Protocol Officer, Sandra Guaqueta, Travel Manager, Conference and Venue Specialist



and Fernando Sole, Head of Technical Communications.

At the end of one meeting at the Office of the Prime Minister on Tuesday, Sir Ron spoke with Point Express newspaper.

"This is an Advanced Team from the OAS coming here to look at the conference centre, the hotel sites and various locations where the conference will take place. It will be a confer-

ence of all of the countries of the OAS from Canada in the north to Argentina in the south with the Caribbean in between. We will have the ministers of foreign affairs from these countries, including the US, Canada, Argentina, Colombia etc., all will be here along with their delegations. Those official delegations will likely run up to four hundred and fifty people. However, in

addition to the 450 people from the OAS, we will also have the permanent observers who come from Europe, Africa, Asia etc. who come to the general assembly to participate, even though can only do so in the margins of the meeting. Altogether we expect to have between 1200 and 1600 people here," he explained.

According to Sir Ron, one of the benefits of having the conference is that it will take one of the 'dead' months of the year, June, where the hotels, their workers, the transportation sector and the country generally will benefit.

Sir Ron also noted that some of the people coming to Antigua and Barbuda for the conference will likely stay a few days longer after the conference ends to enjoy what Antigua and Barbuda has to offer, meaning more benefits for the country.



# SIRF Fund climate-resilient hurricane shutters arrive

The Sustainable Island Resource Framework(SIRF) Fund has announced the arrival of its first batch of polycarbonate hurricane shutters, delivered as part of the Climate Change Technologies and Just Transition of the Workforce (JTWF) Programme.

The initiative is geared towards enhancing climate adaptation efforts and supporting workforce transition in Antigua and Barbuda. It is a significant step forward in the ongoing national effort to build climate resilience and protect local infrastructure.

This milestone underlines the SIRF Fund's commitment to introducing climate-resilient technologies and bolstering the preparedness of communities across the nation. The newly arrived polycarbonate sheets are designed to offer superior protection during extreme weather events, making them a valuable addition to homes and businesses in hurricane-prone regions.

## Important Notice for Applicants

Applicants with Submission IDs ranging from 001 to 770 will be contacted with an invoice for their requested number of polycarbonate sheets, which measure 6.8 ft by 8 ft.



Applicants are encouraged to review the sheet dimensions and ensure the requested quantity meets their needs. If any adjustments are necessary, applicants should contact the SIRF Fund promptly via email or phone.

The SIRF Fund will notify all registered applicants of the arrival via email. Participants are advised to review their invoices carefully and complete payments promptly to ensure timely distribution. Payment details will be provided in the notification, and applicants can choose from various methods, including Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) and Over-the-Counter (OTC) deposits.

## Upcoming Deliveries

In addition to the polycarbonate

hurricane shutters, the SIRF Fund confirms that air conditioning units, another essential component of the JTWF Programme, are scheduled to arrive soon. Participants will receive further instructions regarding their assigned distribution number, group, and collection date upon arrival.

## Contact Information

For more details or inquiries, please contact the SIRF Fund office:

- Email: [doesirffund@ab.gov.ag](mailto:doesirffund@ab.gov.ag)
- Phone: 464-5030/1

The SIRF Fund remains dedicated to supporting the climate adaptation and resilience needs of Antigua and Barbuda, ensuring that our communities are equipped and prepared to face the challenges posed by a changing



Hurricane shutters sheets being offloaded from container



Workers offload hurricane shutters sheets



## AT&LU concludes 85th annual conference determined to continue supporting workers' rights

The Antigua Trades and Labour Union (AT&LU), the nation's oldest trade union, concluded its 85th annual conference with a renewed commitment to continue to work diligently for, and on behalf of workers.

A press release issued at the end of the conference noted that at the business session, delegates and AT&LU's officials discussed, in a very candid manner, the union's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

"The four-hours long discussion yielded clear objectives on the way forward and reassured the delegates that the AT&LU will continue to be a vanguard for workers' rights in Antigua and Barbuda," the press statement indicated.

The statement said there were no changes in the composition of the executive committee of the AT&LU during this conference. Election for the executive committee members are held biennially. The current executive committee



Bernard DeNully was elected last year at the AT&LU's 84th Annual Delegates Conference.

AT&LU President Bernard DeNully at the opening ceremony spoke of the need to approach negotiations on future Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) with an eye to attain wage and other benefits for workers, but with some concerns that the union may not be pushing employers into a position where they feel they have to retrench workers.

"Our philosophy further lends to achieve the equitable distribution of the nation's wealth and income through fair employment practices, balanced investment opportunities, and honest negotiations resulting in fair remuneration

to workers. The AT&LU believes that every person is endowed with the God-given gift of dignity, the right to an income, and natural rights to political and economic freedom. The mandate now of the union is to develop a mechanism to bridge the gap between the retrenchment of jobs from the future implementation of Artificial Intelligence and to promote and in some cases to mandate by law the transition of the existing Labour groups that are being affected to other contingencies within the company without loss of benefits," he explained.

Addressing the gathering were chairman of the ABLP – MP, E. P. Chet Greene and the featured speaker, MP Melford Nicholas. The Antigua and Barbuda Trades and Labour Union concluded its 85th Annual Delegates Conference on Monday 30th September 2024 which was celebrated under the theme "Workers Participation is Essential for Sustainable Development".

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# Local News



## Support Antigua and Barbuda's Culinary Team: A LIVE cooking fundraising event

Antigua and Barbuda's culinary scene is gearing up for a spectacular showcase at Taste of Wadadli – A Live Cooking Experience on October 25, 2024, from 6 PM to 10 PM at the historic Weatherills Hotel. This one-of-a-kind event promises an unforgettable evening of culinary brilliance, with some of the island's finest chefs coming together to serve a 6-course tasting menu, expertly paired with wines and specialty cocktails. Guests will also enjoy vibrant cultural performances and live en-

tertainment, making this a must-attend celebration of Antigua's rich culinary and cultural heritage.

This year's Taste of Wadadli is not only an indulgence in delicious cuisine but also a vital cause to support Team Antigua and Barbuda as they prepare for the prestigious Taste of the Caribbean competition in Miami. The event will showcase the team's culinary talents and give attendees a taste of the pride and excellence that will represent the nation on the international stage.

Join us for this live culinary showcase featuring Team Antigua and Barbuda, including:

Ronald Wilson – Chef of the Year 2023 at the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Awards Gala, and Chef de Cuisine/Head Chef at Blue Waters Resort & Spa

Britanya McLaren – Winner of the Taste of Wadadli Pastry Chef Competition 2024 and Pastry Cook at Hermitage Bay

Altino Spencer – Winner of the Taste of Wadadli Mixology Competition 2022/2023

Azarie Crump – Winner of the Taste of Wadadli Junior Chef Competition 2023

Team Antigua and Barbuda's chefs will also be supported by Chef Jean Pierre Tuitt, Young Chef of the Year 2023 at the Antigua & Barbuda Tourism Awards Gala and Executive Sous Chef at Jumby Bay Island and Junior Chef Adrian Browne, take the stage in Taste of Wadadli spectacular live cooking event. Coached by Chef Olvanah Richardson Burnette, Chef Maurine Bowers, and Jesse Thomas, this is a culinary experience you won't want to miss.

The menu will feature an explosion of flavors showcasing Contemporary Antiguan & Barbudan Cuisine that is not to be missed. The courses will include appetizers, beef, fish, lamb, pork, and dessert. A vegetarian option will also be provided by the culinary team. Our mixologist, Altino Spencer, will present cocktails paired with the appetizer and dessert courses.

Tickets are priced at EC\$350 (All Inclusive), guests will experience world-class dishes in a stunning outdoor setting at Weatherills Hotel. This event is perfect for food enthusiasts, cultural lovers, and anyone eager to support Antigua and Barbuda's talented chefs.

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## Sweden names new honorary consul to Antigua and Barbuda

Sweden has named Victoria George as its new honorary consul to Antigua and Barbuda.

George who is originally from Sweden but when has been living in Antigua and Barbuda for the past fifteen years, replaces Sylvia O'Marde who served in the position for thirteen years.

Swedish Ambassador to the Caribbean, Anders Bengtson was on hand to formally present the letter of appointment to George.

At a reception on Monday night, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim offered congratulations to Honorary Consul George on her appointment.

The new honorary consul describes her role as the first point of contact for Swedish nationals in Antigua and Barbuda who are in need of consular services such as the replacement of passport or who may require other forms of assistance.



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## Sean 'Diddy' Combs faces more than 100 new assault allegations

More than 100 people are to sue rap musician Sean 'Diddy' Combs for sexual assault, rape and sexual exploitation, a US lawyer has said.

Texas-based lawyer Tony Buzbee said that some of the alleged victims include minors who were abused when they were as young as nine years old.

"This is an important matter that we intend to aggressively pursue," Mr Buzbee told reporters.

Erica Wolff, a lawyer representing Mr Combs, said the rapper "emphatically and categorically" denies the allegations, saying they are "false and defamatory".

Speaking at a news conference on Tuesday, Mr Buzbee said he and his team "will leave no stone unturned to find potentially liable parties" in the alleged abuse, or "any individual or entity who participated in or benefited from this egregious behaviour".

Ms Wolff said in a statement to the BBC that Mr Combs "looks forward to proving his innocence and vindicating himself in court, where the truth will be established based on evidence, not speculation".

The legal action is the latest against Mr Combs.

Mr Combs was arrested last week and is facing criminal charges of racke-



teering and sex trafficking. He is currently in federal custody after he was denied bail, which he is appealing.

He has denied all allegations of criminal wrongdoing.

According to Mr Buzbee, who is licensed to practice law in Texas and New York, the total number of alleged victims he is representing is 120, with half of them being men and the other half women who hail from more than 25 states across the US.

He added that 25 of the alleged victims he is representing were minors. This marks the first time that Mr Combs has been accused of

sexually abusing children.

The allegations span between 1991 to as recently as this year with the incidents taking place in Los Angeles, New York and Miami, Mr Buzbee said. He added most of the incidents occurred after 2015.

Most of the plaintiffs, he said, allege they were date raped after parties hosted by Mr Combs that were held at well-known venues, as well as private residences and hotels.

Mr Buzbee said the parties were either to mark an album release, or were New Year's Eve parties and US Independence Day parties. Others occurred at what he

said were auditions.

"Many times, especially young people wanting to break into the industry, were coerced into this type of conduct in the promise of being made a star or the promise of having Sean Combs listen to their tape," Mr Buzbee said.

One man, who was aged nine at the time, alleges he was sexually abused by Mr Combs and his associates at a recording studio in New York while trying to land a record deal, according to his lawyer.

"Had he not been in power, I feel I could've been something great. I

*cont'd on pg 11*





## Microsoft: 'Ever present' AI assistants are coming

By Zoe Kleinman

Artificial Intelligence (AI) assistants with "really good long-term memo-

ry" are about a year away, according to Microsoft's head of AI, Mustafa Suleyman.

Products which can recall conversations, projects and problems will encourage users to invest

more time and share more of their personal history with them, he said in an exclusive interview with the BBC.

*cont'd from pg 10*

quit the industry because of what Sean Combs did to me," he said in a statement via his lawyer.

Another man, who was also a minor at the time, alleged he was told by Mr Combs he would be made a "star", but he first needed to visit the rapper alone without his parents.

Once in a private area, his lawyer claimed Mr Combs then requested the boy perform oral sex on him.

Mr Buzbee also raised the case of a then-15-year-old girl who alleges she was flown to New York for a party hosted by Mr Combs and was subsequently raped by him and others.

The lawyer claimed there was a clear

modus operandi with alleged victims typically being offered "laced" drinks before being sexually assaulted.

"The biggest secret in the entertainment industry has finally been revealed to the world," Mr Buzbee said. "The wall of silence has now been broken."

He added that this is not a class action lawsuit and that there will be individual cases filed for each alleged victim.

Andrew Van Arsdale, an attorney at the AVA law group which is working with Mr Buzbee, said his firm had received more than 3,000 phone calls from people alleging abuse by the music mogul.

In addition to the 120 alleged victims, he said his firm were working to vet another 100 cases.

"I think we're moving to a fundamentally new age where there will be ever present, persistent, very capable co-pilot companions in your everyday life," he added.

Critics have voiced strong concerns around this level of integration, including data security, privacy, the possibility of AI tools giving bad advice or wrong information, or displaying inbuilt bias towards the person they are supposed to be helping.

*cont'd on pg 12*



# OpenAI

*cont'd from pg 11*

But AI supporters argue that in order to be truly useful, these tools have to be deeply embedded into our lives: that they can only be really helpful if they know the history and context behind what they are being tasked to do.

For example, an AI diary manager can only organise your diary if it can access that diary, edit it, and retain information about your activities. Mr Suleyman argued that many people's privacy expectations have changed over time.

He said that devices such as TVs, laptops, phones, in-car cameras and earbuds are already "recording continuously everywhere" in ordinary environments, and gave a further example of an iPhone feature called Live View in which video and audio is recorded at the same time as a photo is taken.

"Most people love that feature," he said.

"Some people turn it off but that's a very distinct shift in the default expectation of what a photo is."

He added that the benefits of this kind of tech, whether people felt they could control their use of it, and whether they trusted the provider of it, were important factors in deciding whether to embrace it.

Microsoft has invested billions of dollars in OpenAI, the creator of

ChatGPT, and has emerged as a market leader as the tech giants jostle in the race to develop and control the powerful and rapidly evolving technology.

But some research suggests people are not consistently using it. A poll published by the Reuters Institute in August found that 29% of people in the UK that it spoke to had used ChatGPT, but only 2% used it every day.

Mr Suleyman conceded that perhaps consumer AI tools would never be as globally popular as the smartphone.

"Maybe this is different to the smartphone," he said.

"Nearly 90% of the planet has a smartphone. Maybe that will be different. Maybe 50% will reject [AI tools]."

But he added that so far, AI had been the fastest growing and adopted technology in history, despite its potential risks.

He strongly rejected the idea, posed by many industry watchers including Jim Covello, head of stock research at Goldman Sachs, that AI might turn out to be a bubble, like some tech trends before it.

He told me about a woman he met who said she had set up her business using guidance and motivation from a chatbot he developed called Pi.

"We are clearly producing per-

sonalised, interactive knowledge at your fingertips at zero marginal cost," he said.

"The idea that this could be a bubble is utterly beyond me."

Microsoft has today unveiled a range of new additions to the tech giant's AI assistant range CoPilot, including a voice function, a daily news digest and a slower chatbot for more difficult or in-depth questions called Think Deeper.

It also includes CoPilot Vision, a tool which will sit within its Edge web browser and, when activated, observe web pages and "assist" with online activity.

The firm says Vision will not record or store data, has to be switched on manually and will close at the end of each browser session.

Microsoft says it has chosen to limit which sites it will work with and there is as yet no release date for it.

In the summer the tech giant paused the release of an AI tool called Recall, which takes screenshots every few seconds in order to help users find things they were looking at or working on previously, following a backlash from privacy campaigners and enquiries from the UK's data watchdog about it.

It will be re-launched in November with additional security measures.



## Dominica to implement 'due diligence unit' to bolster CBI programme

Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit has announced the establishment of an Independent Due Diligence Unit for Dominica's Citizenship by Investment (CBI) Programme.

He says the unit will come into effect in October 2024.

Skerrit made the announcement at a press conference on Monday while addressing what he calls an attack on Dominica's CBI programme.

Dominica's main opposition, United Workers Party (UWP) filed legal action against the Dominica government over the CBI programme citing a lack of transparency and accountability in managing the CBI funds.

Skerrit however, calls the lawsuit an "attack on the programme" which has been a pillar in the Dominican economy.

He says his government has always been upfront about the administration of the CBI.

"We run a very robust and very transparent CBI programme. This programme has helped the country in times of natural disasters and in ordinary times," he said.

Skerrit says CBI funds have mainly been used for infrastructural developments and government investments as his government took a decision early



Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit addressing Monday's press conference.

on not to use the funds for recurrent expenditure.

However, following Hurricane Maria and with the dwindling of revenue during the Covid-19 pandemic CBI funds had to be used for salaries and other recurring expenses.

Recognising the need to enhance the programme, Skerrit indicated that government continues to work with regional and international partners to address any issues that the CBI may encounter.

This includes working with the United States Department of Treasury which recently concluded a roundtable in Grenada to discuss the implementa-

tion of the six CBI Principles by the five countries in the region where the programme is run.

Further to this, he explained that the five CBI countries have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to further strengthen their programmes.

However, he said Dominica on its own is taking steps towards strengthening its CBI programme, hence the establishment of a CBI due diligence unit.

"One of the major things which will come into effect on the 1st of October is the establishment of an independent due diligence unit which will be under the aegis of the FIU [Financial

Intelligence Unit]. They will be responsible for reviewing all of the files and advising on which applicant is successful or not depending on the due diligence report and based on the report from the GRCC," he remarked.

He said all of the employees for the unit have been vetted by the Regional Security System (RSS) and the GRCC so that the highest standards are maintained.

Skerrit says while he is not opposed to anyone raising questions about the programme, he believes every Dominican should condemn attempts made at undermining the integrity of the CBI.

# Regional News



## British Virgin Islands to remove visas requirement for Guyanese travellers

By Dillon De Shong

The Guyanese passport's strength will improve, as the British Virgin Islands has decided to eliminate visa requirements for travellers from the southern Caribbean nation.

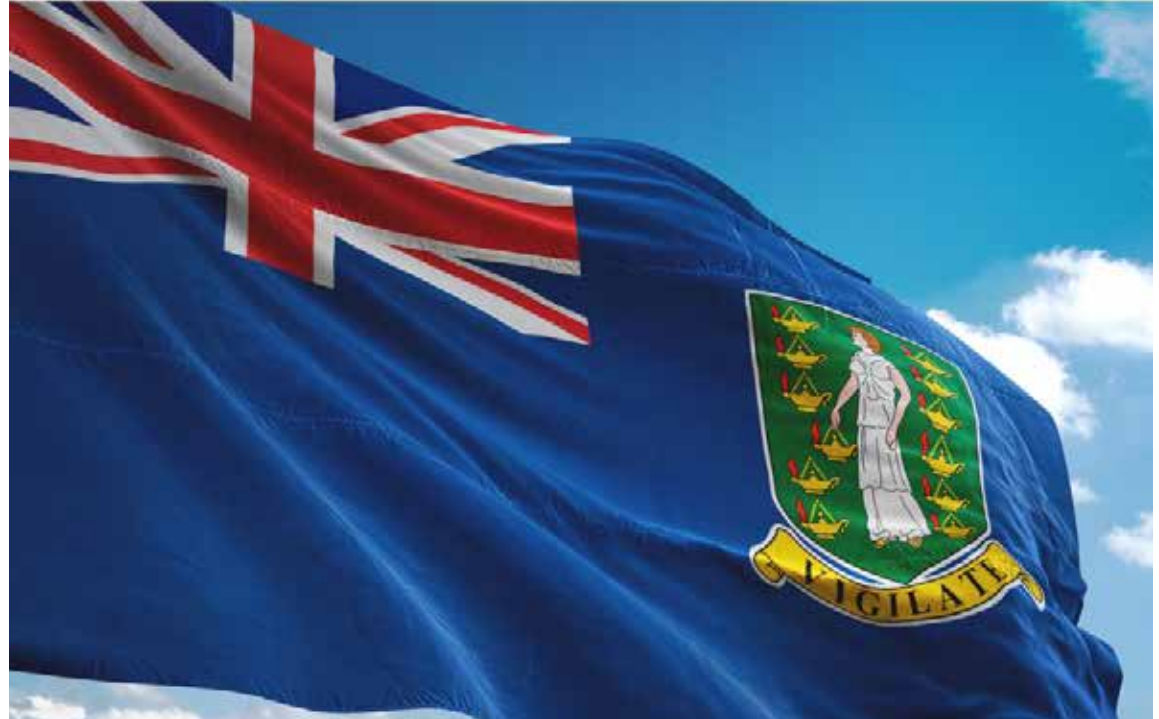
Premier and Minister of Finance Dr Natalio Wheatly announced the development yesterday during a media conference.

"This step strengthens the bond between our countries and the region. Facilitating greater ease in travel, trade, tourism and investment," the premier said.

"It underscores our shared vision of regional cooperation and opens new opportunities for people-to-people exchange. Many of our Caribbean brothers and sisters already benefit from visa-free access to the BVI and we are pleased to extend this reciprocal courtesy to Guyana, a giant in our Caribbean community."

He noted several Caribbean territories and states such as Trinidad and Tobago, The Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, the US Virgin Islands and Grenada currently enjoy visa-free access to the BVI.

The only Caribbean



countries whose passport holders must apply for a visa to enter the BVI are Suriname, Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba.

This decision was months in the making after a BVI trade delegation visited Georgetown last year.

Wheatley explained that the timing of the visa waiver was influenced by Guyana's economic growth, driven by its expanding petrochemical and mining sectors, as well as its leadership in global affairs.

"For the BVI, this makes Guyana a key partner for collaboration and investment," the premier said.

"Guyana has become a model for sustainable growth and international diplomacy. Guyana's election to the United Nation's security council places it in a pivotal position to influence global policies on peace and security.

"Guyana has become a focal point for global investment driven by its significant oil reserves and growing non-oil sectors."

Regarding when visa access will begin, Wheatley said he has to speak with the Immigration Department and the Ministry for Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development.

Wheatley, who is the minister responsible for immigration said, "the

Cabinet decision was passed and the implementation should take place quickly."

A team led by Deputy Premier and Minister for Financial Services, Labour and Trade Lorna Smith is also working with their Guyanese counterparts on a Memorandum of Understanding for deepening cooperation between both countries.

Meanwhile, the premier said a BVI trade team will be looking at other opportunities to partner with its Caribbean neighbours.

Wheatley said a BVI team will engage officials from the Dominican Republic to begin the trade talks.





Israeli tanks had been assembling close to the border with Lebanon for several days in advance of the ground incursion.

# Israel launches ground invasion in Lebanon

Israel has launched a ground invasion in southern Lebanon, in what it has described as “limited, localised and targeted” raids against Hezbollah.

Lebanese civilians are being warned not to use vehicles to travel south across the Litani river, located 20 miles north of the Israel-Lebanon border, and residents in around 25 villages have been told to evacuate and head north.

According to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the operation is aimed at the Iran-backed group’s “infrastructure”, which it says poses “an immediate threat to Israeli communities in northern Israel”.

An Israeli senior security official told the BBC earlier that ground forces had only ventured a “very close walking distance” into Lebanon, but Hezbollah deny claims that troops are in the coun-

try.

The militant group said its fighters were “ready for a direct confrontation” but there had been no direct clashes between them and Israeli forces, a claim confirmed to the BBC by an Israeli source.

Hezbollah has also claimed to have fired at the headquarters of Mossad, the international arm of Israel’s intelligence service, in Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon are continuing.

Israel’s Defence Minister Yoav Gallant previously implied the army was ready for a ground operation, telling troops near the Lebanese border Israel was prepared to use forces “from the air, sea and land” to target Hezbollah.

In a statement posted on X at 02:00 local time on Tuesday morning, the IDF

confirmed troops had moved across the border following a build-up of tanks and other armour in northern Israel.

The Lebanese army is pulling back troops stationed on its southern border to at least 5km (3 miles) north, according to Reuters news agency, which cited a Lebanese security source.

Lebanon’s prime minister, Najib Mikati, said on Tuesday that his country was facing “one of the most dangerous phases” in its history.

Around one million people had been displaced across Lebanon since Israeli air strikes began last month, he added.

Speaking during a meeting with United Nations organisations, Mikati issued an “urgent call” for more aid to help support them.

The IDF’s Arabic spokesperson Av-  
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# International

AROUND THE WORLD



*cont'd from pg 15*

ichay Adraee has also listed 25 villages in southern Lebanon, telling residents there to evacuate immediately.

He added: "Any home used by Hezbollah for its military needs is expected to be targeted."

On Monday, Gallant told Israeli troops at the border that Israel's military would use all "the means at our disposal" to allow displaced people to return home in the north of the country.

In a short video, he said the "elimination" of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut on Friday "is a very important step, but it is not everything".

He added that "everything that needs to be done - will be done" and that "we will use all the forces from the air, sea and land".

The Israeli government has pledged to make it safe for tens of thousands of its citizens to return to their homes after nearly a year of cross-border fighting, which began with Hezbollah firing rockets at the start of the war in Gaza.

The Lebanese armed group - which is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the US, UK and other countries - is known to have extensive tunnel networks as well as bunkers and other military infrastructure just over the border from Israel.

Hezbollah's deputy chief Sheikh Naim Qassem said the group - which is thought to have tens of thousands of well-trained fighters - was ready for an Israeli ground offensive. He described their attacks on Israel so far as the "minimum", adding that the battle could be long.

Hezbollah - which is backed by Iran - has experienced mass casualties from exploding paggers and walkie-talkies, a wave of assassinations of its military commanders and devastating air strikes which have killed civilians, as well as the use of bunker-busting bombs in Beirut, which killed the group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, on Friday.

Explosions lit up the night sky on



Monday as airstrikes hit Hezbollah's stronghold of Dahieh, in Beirut's southern suburbs, near the airport.

The attacks came shortly after the Israeli military warned residents to evacuate buildings it said were linked to the group.

In southern Lebanon, there were reports of heavy shelling in the border town of Aita al-Shaab.

And near the city of Sidon, officials say a strike hit a building in a crowded Palestinian refugee camp, the first time it has been attacked in this conflict.

Lebanese officials say more than 1,000 people have been killed in the past two weeks, while around a million may now be displaced.

On Monday, US President Joe Biden said "we should have a ceasefire now".

"I'm more aware than you might know and I'm comfortable with them stopping," Biden told reporters when asked if he was comfortable with Israeli plans for a cross-border incursion.

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy spoke to his US counterpart Antony Blinken on Monday, with the US State Department saying they discussed efforts to resolve the conflict. Both men stressed the need for a ceasefire and that the hostages taken by Hezbollah's Palestinian ally Hamas in the 7 October attack

on Israel need to be returned home.

The European Union's member states have called for an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said "any further military intervention would dramatically aggravate the situation and it has to be avoided".

Meanwhile, Israel and Hamas have both confirmed the killing of the head of Hamas in Lebanon, Fateh Sherif Abu el-Amin, in Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon. Israel's military said Sherif was "responsible for co-ordinating Hamas's terror activities in Lebanon with Hezbollah operatives".

Another Israeli strike in the central Beirut neighbourhood of Kola early on Monday killed three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Palestinian armed group said in a statement.

The statement named those killed as military security chief Mohammad Abdel-Aal, military commander Imad Odeh and fighter Abdel Rahman Abdel-Aal. The previously sporadic cross-border fighting between Israel and Hezbollah escalated on 8 October 2023 - the day after the unprecedented attack on Israel by Hamas gunmen from the Gaza Strip - when Hezbollah fired at Israeli positions, in solidarity with the Palestinians.





The bus, carrying dozens of primary school age children, was returning from a trip north of Bangkok.

## Twenty children dead after Thailand school bus fire

The bodies of 20 children and three teachers have been recovered after a bus transporting school pupils crashed and caught fire outside Bangkok.

The bus was returning to the Thai capital after a school trip to the north of the country.

Videos from the scene showed flames engulfing the bus as it burned under an overpass, with huge clouds of dense black smoke billowing into the sky.

The driver handed himself in to police 100km (61 miles) north of Bangkok, according to local media.

Footage taken shortly after the fatal crash showed the driver attempting to extinguish the fire but he reportedly fled the scene.

Witnesses say the bus crashed into the concrete barrier dividing the highway just north of Bangkok, after a front tyre burst.

The bus was quickly consumed

by an intense fire, and many on board were unable to get out. The cause of the fire is still unknown.

Nineteen children and three teachers are reported to have survived, sixteen of whom are being treated in hospital for their injuries.

Transport Minister Suriyahe Juangroongruangkit said the bus was powered by “extremely risky” compressed natural gas.

“This is a very tragic incident,” Mr Suriyahe told reporters at the scene.

“The ministry must find a measure... if possible, for passenger vehicles like this to be banned from using this type of fuel because it’s extremely risky.”

Piyalak Thinkaew, who was leading the search, said it was hard to identify the bodies because they were so badly burnt.

“Some of the bodies we found were very, very small,” he told report-

ers at the scene, adding that the fire started at the front of the bus.

“The kids’ instinct was to escape to the back so the bodies were there,” he said.

Forensic police said of the 23 bodies found, eleven were male, seven female and a further five were unidentifiable.

The ages of the children on board remains unclear, but the school caters for pupils between three and 15 years old.

Thailand has one of the worst road safety records in the world, with unsafe vehicles and poor driving contributing to roughly 20,000 fatalities a year.

Thailand’s Deputy Prime Minister, Anutin Charnvirakul, said an investigation was underway. “We have to investigate the trace of driving from the tire marks, the burning trace, and CCTV footage,” he said.



Indian players celebrate with the trophy after winning the two-match Test series against Bangladesh in Kanpur, India, Tuesday, October 1, 2024. (AP)

# India complete series sweep over Bangladesh

KANPUR, India (AP) — India sealed a 2-0 series win over Bangladesh on Tuesday after a dramatic turnaround in the second cricket test following 2 1/2 days of play lost because of rain or a wet outfield.

Chasing 95 for victory, India finished on 98 for three in 17.2 overs to win the match on Day 5 by seven wickets.

Yashasvi Jaiswal (51) and Virat Kohli (29 not out) put on 58 off 67 balls for the third wicket of the second innings. India lost Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill cheaply, but had no major issues chasing down the target before tea.

Paceman Jasprit Bumrah and spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin had each taken three wickets to help bundle Bangladesh out for 146 earlier Tuesday in the second innings, leaving India two sessions to get the runs required to complete a series sweep.

Ashwin was named player of the series for 11 wickets in two Tests, and a match-winning hundred in Chennai. He tied Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan for most player of the series awards in Test cricket — 11.

"Once we lost 2 1/2 days, we wanted to get them out quickly on Day 4 and see what we could do with

the bat ... it was about how many overs we needed in the second innings, which meant we had to try and up the run rate, scoring as many (runs) as possible quickly," India captain Rohit Sharma said.

"This pitch didn't have a lot for the bowlers. To make a game of it then was a superb effort from the bowlers. And the batters of course, they bought into the mindset of attacking and getting runs as quickly as possible."

India set up a series sweep when it scored runs quickly and declared at 285 for nine late on Day 4 — blitzing

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# Sports News

PAGE 19

## Richie's Shooterz get third win in Business Basketball League

Richie's Shooterz recorded their third win in four matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Cool and Smooth Business Basketball League on Monday evening.

Richie's Shooterz romped to a 75-60 victory against Lava Smoke Shop in the opening game of a triple header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Tavarus Benta produced 19 points, six rebounds, and four assists; Ariel

Quallis had 15 points, six rebounds, and five assists; Kwame Brathwaite sank 11 points and snatched seven rebounds; and Nickon McGregor contributed 11 points and eight assists for Richie's Shooterz.

Lincoln Weekes shot a game-high 32 points, and Michael Barton sank 11 points and grabbed 14 rebounds for Lava Smoke Shop, which suffered their fifth loss in six games.

Defending champions Antigua and Barbuda Trans-

port Board claimed their third win in six matches with a 63-53 victory against the Antigua Power Company.

Devorn Benjamin shot a game-high 30 points, and Ndegwa Malone scored 10 points for the Transport Board.

Sergio Symister converted 14 points and claimed six rebounds; Akeem Davis produced 12 points, 10 assists, seven rebounds, and four steals; and Ezekiel Francois scored 15 points

for the Antigua Power Company, which lost for the second time in five games.

Sledge O'Ballerz recorded their second win in five matches with a 72-44 drubbing of Christos Supermarket United.

Kareem Edwards had 29 points, 16 rebounds, and five steals, and Coy Quinland sank 12 points and grabbed seven rebounds for the Sledge O'Ballers.

Daijon George converted nine points, and Neville Chambers scored eight points and grabbed 10 rebounds for Christos Supermarket United, which suffered their fifth loss in as many games.

The business basketball league will continue with a double header at the JSC Sports Complex on Wednesday (today).

The Lava Smoke Shop will oppose Christos Supermarket United at 7:00 pm, and Lion Feast will challenge Richie's Shooterz at 8:00 pm.

### cont'd from pg 18

Bangladesh's bowling from the start and recording the fastest 50 in Tests off only 18 deliveries — to take a first-innings lead of 52.

Mehidy Hasan Miraz took two for 44 and dismissed both Sharma (8) and Gill (6) in India's otherwise comfortable run chase. He also had a leg-before-wicket decision against Kohli turned down on review.

Player of the match Jaiswal hit eight fours and a six in his second half-century of the Test after 72 in the first innings. He was caught off Taijul Islam on the cusp

of victory.

Rishabh Pant scored the winning runs. Kohli's 37-ball knock included four boundaries. Momentum had gone in India's favor on the fifth morning of the match.

Jadeja took three for 34 as Bangladesh lost four wickets for three runs and eventually lost their last seven wickets for 110. Ashwin claimed three for 50, and Bumrah snared three for 17 in 10 overs.

India won the first Test by 280 runs. A three-match Twenty20 series between India and Bangladesh will start on Sunday.



**2024**  
**CPL**  
**MATCH SCHEDULE**

WED 2 OCT QUALIFIER - 1<sup>ST</sup> v 2<sup>ND</sup> 7:00 PM GUYANA

# Sports News



## Antigua and Barbuda win second match in LICB one-day competition

Antigua and Barbuda notched up their second win in defense of their Leeward Islands Cricket Board's (LICB) Senior Men's 50-Over Championship in St. Kitts on Monday.

After launching their title defense with a five-wicket victory against the Combined Islands at Warner Park on Sunday, opener Tyrone Williams Jr. hit an unbeaten century as the Antiguans cruised to a seven-wicket win against Nevis at the Conaree Cricket Center.

Antigua and Barbuda achieved their victory target of 255 for three with nine overs to spare, with Williams hitting 125 not out off 115 balls, including 11 fours and five sixes.

Williams shared a 105-run opening stand with Ka-deem Henry, who struck 47 off 52 balls, including six fours and a six. Captain Karima Gore cracked 35 off 43 balls, and Kofi James scored 24 off 33 balls.

Nevis made 254 for five off their allotted 50 overs after winning the toss and opting to bat. Opener Ross Powell hit a top score of 95 off 135 balls, including nine fours and a six.

Powell also shared a 112-run opening partner-



Tyrone Williams Jr.

ship with Jamie Cornelius, who made 45 off 64 balls with five fours and two sixes.

Shelton Forbes struck 50 off 69 balls, including three sixes and a four, and

all-rounder Colin Archibald made 22 off 17 balls, with two sixes and a four. Fast bowler Kelvin Pitman captured two for 46.

It was the second loss for the Nevisians after los-

ing their opening game against Anguilla by 35 runs at the Conaree Cricket Center on Sunday.

Hosts St. Kitts launched their campaign with an emphatic nine-wicket win against Anguilla at Warner Park on Monday.

Anguilla were dismissed for 185 in 44.3 overs after losing the toss and being sent in to bat. Jaidel Richardson hit a top score of 39 not out off 56 balls; opener Chesney Hughes made 36 off 56 balls; and Mark Gokarran got 22 off 26 balls. There was also a contribution of 29 extras, including 25 wides.

Jerrickson Louis took three for 25, Tariq Newman claimed three for 35, and Tristan Hanley picked up two for 19.

St. Kitts coasted to victory at 189 for one with 20.2 overs to spare. Opener Mikyle Louis slammed 94 off 65 balls, including seven sixes and seven fours.

Mikyle Louis shared a 116-run first-wicket partnership with fellow opener and captain Larry Audain, who hit 36 not out with three fours and a six.

Terence Warde struck 52 not out off 48 balls, including eight fours and a six.



## Australia beat Windies Women in T20 World Cup Warm-up game

The West Indies Women suffered a 35-run loss to defending champions Australia as they continued their preparation for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The 2016 champions won the toss and chose to field first in their second warm-up encounter at the Sevens Stadium in Dubai on Tuesday morning.

Annabel Sutherland led the way with a 28-ball 38, while Ash Gardner made a run-a-ball 31 as the Australians made 144 for eight from their 20 overs.

Alana King provided a spark down the order with 21 not out, while captain Alyssa Healy was the only other Australian batter to get into double figures with 20.

Aaliyah Alleyne took two for 24 from three overs for the Windies and was supported well by Afy Fletcher, who grabbed two for 36 from her full quota of four overs.

In reply, the West Indies were then restricted to 109 all out off 17.5 overs. Hayley Matthews and Qiana Joseph made 42 and 36, respectively, to be the only West Indian batters to score more than 10 runs.

The Caribbean side were in a good position at the halfway mark of the chase at 69 for one, with Matthews and vice-captain Shemaine Campbelle at the crease.

The Windies women then lost their final nine wickets for just 50 runs as Alana King and Tayla Vlaeminck ripped through the batting.

King was the pick of the bowlers with four for 30 from her 3.5 overs of leg spin, while Vlaeminck took three for 33 from her four overs of pace bowling.

The West Indies lost their first warm-up game to India on Sunday.

The Caribbean side will look to bounce back from these losses when they open their group stage campaign against South Africa at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Friday.



Annabel Sutherland, right and Ash Gardner led the Australian women's batting in their ICC Women's T20 World Cup warm-up match against the West Indies in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on Tuesday, October 1, 2024. (ICC via Getty Images)

## Browne retains title in Robert Peters Two-Stage Race

Teenager Tahje Browne of the Wadadli Cycling Academy retained the 2024 Robert Peters Two-Stage Race, which was hosted by the Antigua and Barbuda Cycling Federation (ABCF) on Sunday.

Like last year, Browne conquered the field in the first stage, an individual time trial from the Pan Am Base to the Jabberwocky on the Jabberwock road, and in the second stage, which was a criterium or circuit race at the Pan Am Base.

Browne claimed the title by clocking the best overall time of one hour, 26 minutes, and 50.30 seconds in winning the junior male class, in which he was the lone competitor.

Browne won the individual time trial in nine minutes and 32.75 seconds and claimed victory in the criterium race in one hour, 17 minutes, and 17.55 seconds.

Delvin Peters claimed second place overall after winning the elite male divi-

sion with a total time of one hour, 31 minutes, and 35.48 seconds.

Marcus Ozuna finished second in the elite male class, and Newell Mack claimed third place ahead of Conroy Thomas.

Telesha Choy won the female division with an overall time of one hour, 18 minutes, and 38.55 seconds. Brenda Taylor came in second with an overall time of one hour, 31 minutes, and 32.74 seconds.

Wayne Henry won the masters division by clocking an overall time of one hour, 29 minutes, and 18.57 seconds. Jason Adams finished in second place, and Vaughn Gomes came in third.

Lone competitor Miguel Williams captured the sports class with a time of one hour, 17 minutes, and 59.65 seconds.

A total of 14 cyclists participated in the two-stage race, which was supported by APUA Inet and Gatorade.



Wadadli Cycling Academy's Tahje Browne retained the title after winning the 2024 Robert Peters Two-Stage Race, which was hosted by the Antigua and Barbuda Cycling Federation on Sunday, September 29. (File photo)