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The Inland Revenue reports record intake

Story on Page 2



Dorbrene O'Marde, with Pelican Award in hand, along wife, Ingrid and two sons

Story on Page 6

The Inland Revenue reports record intake

The Inland Revenue Department is reporting record intakes for the year just ended as actual collections surpassed the budget amounts in all major categories.

Commissioner of Inland Revenue, Ralph Warner, revealed that overall

revenues for 2024 totaled \$671 million. This compares with \$559 million in 2023, and increase of \$112 million.

He identified six taxes where the actual intakes surpassed the budgeted amounts for the year.

These are the ABST, Corporate Income Tax, Travel Tax, Insurance Levy, Money Transfer Levy and Telecommunications Licence.

The full statement issued by IRD is published below.



GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Ministry of Finance

Inland Revenue Department

Woods Centre, Friars Hill Road
St. John's, Antigua, W.I.
Telephone: 1(268)468-9471.
Email: ralph.warner@ab.gov.ag

Re: A summary of the Inland Revenue Department Fiscal Performance in 2024

The Inland Revenue Department consolidated accounts for 2024 revealed that the department collected \$671 million dollars in 2024 compare to 559 million in 2023. This represents an increase in revenue collection of 112 million dollars more in 2024, when compared to 2023.

The following taxes have surpassed the budgetary allocation for 2024.

	Budget 2024	2024 Actual	2023 Actual
ABST	413,629,746	418,306,185	330,347,571
Corporate Income Tax	108,287,990	112,742,245	101,424,663
Travel Tax	8,644,482	9,821,434	8,921,912
Insurance Levy	6,978,147	8,972,197	7,253,409
Money Transfer Levy	1,917,413	4,024,872	803,509
Telecommunication Licenses	1,236,874	2,157,224	80,487

Commissioner Inland Revenue

Cabinet says Louie Hill housing project will proceed

There will be no wavering by the government in its determination to undertake a housing development project in Barbuda at the Louie Hill site.

This comes despite protestations last week from elements associated with the Barbuda Council, who blocked the roadway to prevent the movement of equipment that will be used to clear the site of vegetation.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne said publicly the project will proceed as the

beneficiaries will be the people of Barbuda.

According to the Cabinet Notes from Wednesday's meeting, the Cabinet held a discussion on the construction of homes in Barbuda at Louie Hill and the work being done to prepare the land for the construction of these homes.

The Notes said although the perimeters of the Louie Hill site have been determined, the blocks and parcels have not yet been surveyed. The Cabinet agreed that the surveys will take place over



time and that the removal of vegetation is to be carried out in accordance with the survey plan. The project will eventually feature 200

homes, a shopping mall, and other amenities to be negotiated.

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Police Continue To Search For Missing Bolans Resident



Police are continuing their search for Orden “Passo” David of Bolans, who went missing last Saturday.

A number of persons, including relatives and close friends have been interviewed by the police as to his whereabouts; however, no information leading to his location has proven successful.

The police have also deployed the use of technology and other resources at their disposal to locate the missing Bolans resident.

The 39-year-old was last seen wearing a red

vest and a grey pair of short jeans pants. He was driving a black Honda Fit motor car, registration number A60870. The vehicle has not yet been found.

At Wednesday’s Cabinet meeting, the Deputy Commissioner of Police provided an update via a telephone call.

“The Minister of Legal Affairs and Justice received by telephone a report from the Deputy Police Commissioner on the search that the Royal Police Force has been conducting to locate a missing adult—39-year old Orden “Passo” Da-

vid. The Police reported that they have been out every day utilizing the K-9 Unit, a drone, foot patrols, and doing everything that could possibly be done to locate the missing person whose family is grateful for the immense support. This report was received around midday on Wednesday, and the work was due to continue into the afternoon,” according to the Cabinet Notes.

Meanwhile, members of the Concerned Citizens Group on Wednesday

mounted several search parties to comb areas where David is known to have frequented. The Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force provided technical assistance for the teams but in the end their efforts were futile. David has not been found nor has the vehicle he was driving on the night he disappeared.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Bolans Police Station at 462-1080 or the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913.



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Japanese group makes presentation to Cabinet



The Cabinet continues to explore ways to address the water challenges that Antigua and Barbuda faces.

To this end, the Cabinet invited the WOTA Group (from Japan) to address members on the issue of waste-water treatment by small plants that can serve households, businesses, schools, and other places where APUA water is regularly discharged.

It was explained that the small plants would receive greywater (not black water), remove the pollutants and other impurities from

the wastewater, and transform the greywater into pure, potable water that can be used by humans, or used in gardens, or put to other uses.

According to the Cabinet Notes the team included officials from the Department of the Environment who have been integral to placement of the experimental plants on Antigua. Three of these plants have been undergoing testing at three separate locations in Antigua since sometime in 2024. The presenters reported that the plants work extremely well.

They presented two sealed bottles of water, one from a regular supplier and the other from their wastewater plant. The quality was indistinguishable, as was the smell and (the Cabinet was told) the taste. The WOTA Group revealed that the output is tested each week, air-shipped to Japan to a laboratory there.

The cost of each unit is pricey, the Cabinet found, but perfect for use in the National Housing projects that have been located in several places around Antigua, and soon in Barbuda.



Dorbrene O'Marde presented with the UWIAA Pelican Award

Dorbrene O'Marde, well-known for his works in culture and the arts, and who has served as the chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Reparation Support Commission, has been presented with the University of the West Indies Alumni Association's Pelican Award.

The event took place on Wednesday at the UWI Five Islands Campus with the Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams and officials of the university participating.

The Pelican award is the **highest award that a UWIAA Chapter may bestow**. It is thus high-

ly prestigious. The Pelican Award is a special alumni accolade and indicates how very proud the fellow alumni of the awardee are, of his/her, national, regional and/or international success and renown.

In conjunction with his chairmanship of the ABRSC, O'Marde also serves

as the Deputy Chairman of the Caribbean Reparation Support Commission.

O'Marde is a playwright, author, calypso writer, trainer of calypso judges in Antigua and Barbuda and across the region. He has been a constant voice in support of Caribbean identity and culture.

High profile investors announce the opening of HQ Resort and Residences at Hodges Bay Club, Antigua



HQ Hotels and Residences, the groundbreaking, innovative lifestyle hospitality brand spearheaded by visionary entrepreneur Sam Nazarian through a strategic alliance with Wyndham and its Registry Collection Hotels brand, announced the opening of its debut resort: Hodges Bay Resort and Spa, a HQ Luxury Resort and Residences.

Sam Nazarian's sbe, along with partners, Marc Anthony and Wyndham Hotels and Resorts are coming together to undertake the project.

Nestled on the coast of Northern Antigua, its arrival sets the stage for an ambitious pipeline of future HQ openings and marks the start of what is expected to quickly become a carefully curated portfolio of luxury lifestyle hotels and

resorts—each meticulously tailored to the needs of the modern traveler.

Founder & CEO of sbe Sam Nazarian observed: "As it begins its new chapter, Hodges Bay Resort and Spa will be transformed into a global beacon, attracting a new generation of aspirational travelers through an unrivaled social hub, unbeatable atmosphere and memorable vacation experiences, particularly for Wyndham's over 110 million enrolled loyalty members. Expect the best of what sbe is known for: world-acclaimed dining concepts, unmatched wellness and longevity offerings, best-in-class entertainment, and of course vibrant nightlife."

Geoff Ballotti, CEO of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts: "Owners today are looking for turn-key solu-

tions and that's exactly what HQ Hotels offers, combining sbe's legendary lifestyle experiences with the unmatched scale and resources of Wyndham, the world's largest hotel franchisor. It's a one-of-a-kind offering and one we believe has the potential to dramatically change the luxury lifestyle landscape."

Jeff Wellemeier, Chairman of Hodges Bay Resort and Spa: "We are thrilled to bring sbe's energy, imagination, and expertise to Hodges Bay. Antigua and Barbuda is on the cusp of becoming a premier destination in the Caribbean, and we are excited to combine sbe's operational excellence, world-class restaurant concepts, and unparalleled service to establish Hodges Bay as one of the most sought-after destinations in the region."

The Hon. H. Charles Fernandez, Minister of Tourism for Antigua and Barbuda: "This strategic and internationally renowned alliance will not only bolster the quality of the Hodges Bay brand but will firmly cement Antigua and Barbuda's tourism product as first world and top class in accommodations. We welcome the partnership, and we urge you to invest in the elevation of your existing human resource capacity as this and infrastructural development goes hand in hand for the continued advancement of our tourism industry.»

Hodges Bay Resort and Spa sits within eight acres of lush tropical gardens among some of the world's most pristine coral sand beaches. Leveraging over two decades of sbe's expertise and proven success in lifestyle hospitality and entertainment, HQ Hotels will bring a plethora of innovative culinary and mixology experiences as well as entertainment programming to the property from sbe's subsidiaries, Disruptive Restaurant Group and Everybody Eats. Concepts will include the debut of Katsuya Beach by Chef Katsuya Uechi and Hecho Libre by Chef Wes Avila, as well as the highly anticipated return of storied day-nightlife and dining establishment XIV Beach Club.

Civic Pride in Action: The Level Up Team Brings Hope to St. Mary's North



Ms. Terri London and her Level Up team

In a heartwarming display of community spirit, Ms. Terri London and her *Level Up* team continue to transform lives through their Civic Pride Initiative, a program dedicated to uplifting and beautifying neighborhoods across the St. Mary's North constituency.

As part of their ongoing efforts, Ms. London and her team recently provided five gallons of paint to a

family of six whose home was in dire need of a fresh coat. The initiative, which focuses on fostering pride, dignity, and a renewed sense of belonging, has been making a tangible difference in the lives of residents, one project at a time.

“This is more than just a paint job it’s about restoring hope and ensuring that every family, no matter their circumstances,

can feel proud of the place they call home,” Ms. London shared.

The Civic Pride Initiative is fueled by a dedicated group of volunteers who work tirelessly to improve living conditions for those in need. From home repairs to community clean-ups, the Level Up Team is committed to empowering residents and strengthening the bonds of togetherness in St. Mary's North.

Community members have expressed deep gratitude for the initiative, highlighting how small acts of kindness can create a ripple effect of positivity throughout the constituency. “It’s not just about the paint it’s about knowing that people care, that we are not forgotten,” said one of the beneficiaries.

With each brushstroke and every act of service, Ms. London and her team continue to lead by example, proving that when a community comes together, real change is possible.

For those who wish to support or get involved in the Civic Pride Initiative, Ms. London encourages residents to reach out and be part of the movement toward a brighter, stronger St. Mary's North.

Golden Grove Primary Hosts Exciting Road Race to Commence its 2025 Inter-House Competition



The students of Golden Grove Primary School showcased their athleticism and determination on Wednesday as they participated in the school's highly anticipated annual road race. The event saw both boys and girls taking on the challenging route, which wound its way through the picturesque community of Golden Grove. Parents, guardians, and well-wishers lined the course, cheering enthusiastically as the young athletes pushed themselves as they represented their house, namely Yellow, Red and Green to the finish line. Their support added to the lively and encouraging atmosphere, making the race not just a test of endurance but also a celebration of school spirit and community pride.



The road race, a staple in the school's calendar, promotes physical fitness, discipline, and perseverance among students. It also fosters camaraderie and sportsmanship, values that are integral to the holistic development of young learners. Golden Grove Primary School extends heartfelt gratitude to all participants, supporters, and organizers who contributed to the success of the event. Special thanks go to the volunteers and community members who ensured a smooth and safe race for all involved.

As the students crossed the finish line, smiles of achievement and satisfaction lit up their faces, reinforcing the event's importance in building confidence and resilience. Golden Grove Primary remains committed to nurturing well-rounded students through initiatives that encourage both academic and extracurricular excellence.

Road Race Winners

- Kindergarten and Grade One*
- 1st Kenisha Simon-*
- 2nd Jaden Alexis-Green house*
- 3rd Lex Alexis- Red house*
- Grades 2 and 3*
- 1st Aze Martin – Yellow house*
- 2nd Allick Matthew- Yellow house*
- 3rd Neriah Charles -Red house*
- Grades 5 and 6*
- 1st Kehmar Lloyd – Red house*
- 2nd J'Ceon Welch- Red house*
- 3rd Ajani Willock- Yellow house*



Tribute on the Passing of Sir Fitzroy “Roy” Augier

On behalf of The University of the West Indies (The UWI) community, Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Hilary Beckles shares the following tribute to Caribbean Renaissance Man and Professor Emeritus of History, Sir Fitzroy ‘Roy’ Augier on his passing.

The University of the West Indies extends sincere condolences to Lady Augier and their family on the passing of iconic Caribbean educator, administrator and historian Sir Fitzroy “Roy” Augier on Sunday, January 26, 2025.

Just a few weeks ago, we celebrated his centenary, and the occasion afforded us a moment to reflect on his stellar contributions to how we, as a Caribbean people, began the process of nation-building and regional integration. He was a stalwart of both processes. I reflect also on the African proverb that says “until the lion tells the story, the hunter will always



The University of the West Indies (The UWI) Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Hilary Beckles and Professor Emeritus of History, Sir Fitzroy ‘Roy’ Augier



be glorified”, and this is the narrative that Sir Roy and his colleagues changed forever with seminal historical works such as *The Making of the West Indies*; *Report on the Rastafari-*

an Movement; *Sources of West Indian History* and the UNESCO-sponsored project *General History of the Caribbean*.

At The UWI, his former students and colleagues stretch back to the 1950s

when his teaching, writing and administration assisted the decolonisation of the academy and facilitated the rise of the Caribbean Examinations Council. Slight in frame, with a soft but resonant voice, his intellectual expositions about a region he loved made regionalists of many.

We shall remember the passion in his voice as he challenged the status quo on scholarly or administrative issues, his steadfastness on the importance of academic quality, and his inter-disciplinary knowledge, which constitutes the infrastructure on which The UWI and regional education delivery now rest.

Walk good Sir Roy, innings well played.

To Leila – Lady Augier, Richard, Simone and Kenneth, and the entire family, our hearts reach out in solidarity with you.

Hilary Beckles

Vice-Chancellor

Trump's Digital Dollar Rejection: Bold Strategy or Costly Misstep?



by Professor C. Justin Robinson

In a financial era defined by digital innovation, the Trump administration's outright rejection of a U.S. Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) has sparked fierce debate. President Donald Trump's Executive Order on January 23, 2025, titled "Strengthening American Leadership in Digital Financial Technology" banned the "establishment, issuance, circulation, and use" of a CBDC within the United States. Was this a masterstroke fostering private innovation and US leadership in Digital Finance or a strategic blunder that could cost the United States its financial dominance?

Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs), at their core, promise a range of benefits, including enhanced financial inclusion, more efficient transactions, and greater monetary policy control. The Trump administration has rejected embracing a state-backed digital currency and has instead doubled down on strengthening the private banking sector and promoting stablecoins as an alternative. Stablecoins, which are digital assets pegged to the dollar but issued by private entities, are viewed by some as a mar-

ket-friendly alternative to a Federal Reserve-controlled digital currency. The logic? Keep financial power decentralized, minimize government intervention, and allow private innovation to flourish. However, critics argue that this approach could leave the U.S. playing catch-up as global financial systems evolve.

The Trump administration's aversion to CBDCs appears deeply rooted in ideological concerns over privacy and government overreach. A U.S. CBDC would mean transactions monitored by the Federal Reserve, potentially paving the way for increased government surveillance—a scenario libertarians and conservatives view as dystopian. Trump's rejection of a CBDC was marketed as a win for individual freedom: no government tracking your spending, no Fed acting as both referee and player in the financial system. It was a nationalist, libertarian dream rolled into one. But was it also a strategic miscalculation?

While Washington opts out of CBDCs, the rest of the world is accelerating. China's digital yuan is already reshaping global trade, the European Union is laying the groundwork for a digital euro, and smaller economies are experimenting with their CBDCs to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar. Imagine a world where Africa embraces the digital yuan for trade, Europe cements a digital euro-led economic bloc, and Latin America pivots toward blockchain-based financial settlements. If the U.S. stands still, does it risk losing its economic influence to a fragmented, increasingly multipolar financial order? Some see this as economic decentralization, an overdue shake-up of a dollar-dominated world. Others see chaos - a fi-

ancial Wild West where competing digital currencies undermine stability. Either way, the stakes couldn't be higher: the future of money itself hangs in the balance.

By rejecting a government-controlled digital currency, Trump has bet on America's private sector to maintain its financial edge. Stablecoins, fintech disruptors, and decentralized finance are expected to keep the U.S. competitive. But will that be enough? While Silicon Valley tinkers with blockchain breakthroughs, China is forging trade alliances, Russia is reinforcing alternatives, and Europe is setting regulatory frameworks.

The dollar remains the undisputed king of global finance—for now. The coming decade will decide whether the U.S. remains the world's financial superpower or becomes one major player in a digital, decentralized financial order. The debate over CBDCs is far from settled, but it underscores the need for thoughtful, collaborative policymaking as the financial world transitions into a digital future.

Prof. C. Justin Robinson, a Vincentian and UWI graduate, holds a BSc in Management Studies, MSc in Finance and Econometrics, and PhD in Finance. With over 20 years at UWI, he has served in various leadership roles, including Dean and Pro Vice Chancellor, Board for Undergraduate Studies. A Professor of Corporate Finance with extensive research publications, he is actively involved in regional financial institutions and is currently the Principal of The UWI Five Islands Campus in Antigua and Barbuda.

Body found in shallow grave

Two men described as “well known to the police” were taken into custody yesterday following the discovery of a body in a shallow grave in Dibe, Long Circular, St James.

Police said that from approximately 6 a.m., a team of 50 officers descended into the community. They left just after 12.30 p.m.

Police said that, based on “certain information,” they

went into the area, and using drones as well as visiting the homes of some residents, they were able to track down the location of the buried body.

Police said that around 9.14 a.m. the body, believed to be that of a man, was found buried in a grave located off the right side of Dibe Road just before an area known as “The Creek.”

Police then called in a

district medical officer as well as the Crime Scene Unit, members of which examined the area near the body for evidence, following which the body went to a funeral home in East Port of Spain.

Investigators told the Express that due to the condition of the body, they could not identify it and would have to use Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing to confirm the man’s identity.

They added that the two men detained may not have been involved in anything about the body found but may have key information on those responsible.

Included in the operation were officers of the Region One Homicide Bureau, K-9 Unit, Anti-Kidnapping Squad, Guard and Emergency Branch, Western Division Task Force and the police Aerial Unit. (*Trinidad Express*)

Caribbean Airlines denies passengers being subjected to searches in US

Caribbean Airlines (CAL) has denied social media reports claiming that its passengers arriving in the United States are subject to “mass secondary screenings” by US authorities.

In a statement, CAL addressed the circulating reports alleging that its passengers are subjected to mass secondary screenings upon entry into the United States, specifically in Orlando, Florida.

“The airline can confirm, following thorough checks with its senior personnel in Orlando, that no such screening exercise involving Caribbean Airlines passengers was conducted,” the statement read.

Furthermore, CAL stated that it has received no notification or advisory from US authorities indicating that such an exercise has taken place or is being considered.

Since taking office on January 20, US President Donald Trump has signed



executive orders initiating a widespread crackdown on illegal immigration, leading to the arrest and deportation of thousands of undocumented immigrants.

The Trump administration has declared illegal immigration a national emergency, vowing to halt unauthorized entry and deport millions of undocumented immigrants to their

home countries.

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has carried out widespread raids, arresting over a thousand illegal immigrants.

Hundreds have been deported on military aircraft, sparking outrage among immigrant communities and advocacy groups. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

Manslaughter investigation open after fatal crash in Dominica



A judicial investigation into involuntary manslaughter has been launched by authorities in Martinique following a tragic plane crash in Dominica that claimed the lives of four French nationals.

The crash occurred on Sunday when a small aircraft, en route from Douglas-Charles Airport to Martinique, went down in the mountains near the southeastern village of La Plaine.

The investigation, led by the prosecutor of Fort-de-France, focuses on potential breaches of safety or prudence that may have contributed to the incident. French authorities aim to uncover the full circumstances surrounding the crash and whether gross negligence or recklessness played a role.

A specialized team from Paris' Air Transport division, along with the Brigade of Gendarmerie of Air Transport in Lamentin, has been tasked with the investigation.

As of the latest updates, the team was en route to Martinique to begin their work. Recovery operations have been complicated by the rugged terrain, with efforts set to begin on Tuesday, January 28, led by specialized teams from the Martinique Fire Brigade (SIS972).

The plane, a Cessna 172, took off at 3:46 p.m. on Sunday and crashed later that day, with no signs of life found near the wreckage. The victims have been identified as pilot Jean-Benoit A. (23), co-pilot Marving B. (41), and passengers Kylian B. (23) and Marceline M. (25).

In response to the tragedy, French authorities have arranged for psychological support services for the families of the victims, beginning Tuesday.

The investigation into this devastating crash continues as authorities work to piece together what led to the loss of four lives. (*Loop Caribbean*)

VACANCY INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Antigua Public Utilities Authority is now seeking applications from suitably qualified persons for the position of Internal Auditor:

The Internal Auditor's (IA) prime responsibility is to independently evaluate the effectiveness of internal controls and risk management processes and makes recommendations for improvements. This process includes the preparation of an audit plan, conducting risk assessments, conducting audit tests on various facets of APUA's operations, then reporting on the findings. The IA also conducts special audits and internal investigations at the request of the Board of Commissioners or Management.

Key duties include:

- Develop structured work plans to review controls, policies, operations, and accounts.
- Assess internal controls for adequacy and compliance, reporting findings and recommendations.
- Appraise the effectiveness of policies and resource management.
- Audit accounts and ensure accurate financial records.
- Safeguard assets through random inspections of cash, inventory, and equipment at all locations.
- Facilitate business risk management and value-for-money reviews.
- Collaborate with leadership to identify and analyze risks annually.
- Report to the Audit Committee and Management on activities and findings.
- Coordinate with external auditors and ensure mutual understanding of work.
- Review the accuracy and relevance of management-provided financial and other information.
- Protect billing system data integrity and document control weaknesses with recommendations.
- Conduct additional reviews requested by leadership while maintaining audit independence.

The successful candidate MUST possess the following:

- Bachelor's Degree in Accounting, Finance or related field.
- Recognized professional accounting designation (CPA/CA/CIA/ACCA).
- Knowledge of internal controls and enterprise risk management frameworks.
- Sound IT skills (proficiency with the full MS Office suite of applications).
- At least three (3) years' experience in audit/accounting at a senior level.
- Must be able to work independently, and formulate work plans.
- Excellent written and oral communications skills.

Interested persons are asked to apply in writing to:

RE: INTERNAL AUDITOR VACANCY
 The Corporate Secretary - APUA Board of Commissioners
 Cnr. High Street & Independence Avenue
 St. Johns, Antigua

OR Email: jdublin@apua.ag with subject captioned:
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Bahamas: Man arrested for indecent assault of elderly woman



A Bahamian man has been placed behind bars after indecently assaulting a 68-year-old woman on Saturday, January 25, 2025.

According to reports, the woman was reportedly at a grocery store on Crooked Island Street, when Sidney Cooper rubbed his erect privates against her.


The registered sex offender pleaded 'not-guilty' at his arraignment before Assistant Chief Magistrate Carolyn Vogt-Evans. Bail was denied due to Co-

per's extensive criminal history.

He has been re-

portedly in and out of prison for indecent assault since 2000. Co-

per's trial is set for February 3, 2025. (*Loop Caribbean*)



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Police say at least 30 people have died in a stampede at the massive Maha Kumbh festival

At least 30 people were killed and many more injured in a stampede at the world's largest religious gathering early Wednesday, police said, as millions of pilgrims rushed to dip in sacred waters during the Maha Kumbh festival in northern India.

Police officer Vaibhav Krishna in Prayagraj city said another 60 injured were rushed to

hospitals.

Wednesday was a sacred day in the six-week Hindu festival, and authorities expected a record 100 million devotees to engage in a ritual bath at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers. Hindus believe that a dip at the holy site can cleanse them of past sins and end the pro-

cess of reincarnation.

The stampede happened when pilgrims tried to jump barricades erected for a procession of holy men, Uttar Pradesh state's top elected official, Yogi Adityanath, said in a televised statement.

The event's main draw is the thousands of ash-smearing Hindu ascetics who make massive

processions toward the confluence to bathe.

Indian authorities took more than 16 hours to release casualty figures, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledged the loss of lives, calling the incident "extremely sad" and extending his condolences. (*Associated Press*)

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Trump health pick Kennedy under attack for vaccine views in contentious Senate hearing



Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President Donald Trump's pick to lead the top U.S. health agency, came under attack for his anti-vaccine views at a contentious Senate confirmation hearing on Wednesday, with one senior Democrat saying he embraced conspiracy theories and "quacks" to dissuade use of life-saving medicines.

Kennedy sought to defend his record before the Senate Finance Committee, which is responsible for advancing his nomination to the full Senate, promising lawmakers that he was not against vaccines.

"I believe that vaccines play a critical role in healthcare. All of my kids are vaccinated," said Kennedy, 70, who appeared at the hearing with his wife Cheryl Hines and some of his children.

The environmental lawyer is seen as a controversial

pick on both sides of the aisle chiefly for having spread misinformation around the safety of vaccines in the past.

"The receipts show that Mr. Kennedy has embraced conspiracy theories, quacks (and) charlatans, especially when it comes to the safety and efficacy of vaccines. He has made it his life work to sow doubt and discourage parents from getting their kids lifesaving vaccines," said Democratic Senator Ron Wyden in an opening statement before the hearing.

The Republican-controlled Senate has not rejected any of Trump's nominees so far. His controversial defense secretary pick, Pete Hegseth, squeaked by in a 51-50 vote after Vice President JD Vance was needed to break a tie on Friday, despite concerns that the nominee was not qualified for the position, and allegations of sexual assault and

alcohol abuse.

Kennedy's nomination also will put Republican lawmakers' loyalty to the test, as the former Democrat holds a range of unorthodox positions that could alienate both conservatives and liberals.

Healthcare coverage advocacy group Protect Our Care organized a rally against Kennedy ahead of his confirmation hearing, in which they displayed gravestones to represent deaths in 2019 in Samoa following a measles outbreak there. The group says that Kennedy visited the area and spread misinformation about vaccines, which fueled the outbreak.

On two separate occasions, protesters disrupted Kennedy's hearing. One shouted, "He lies," before being removed from the room, while another later said, "Vaccines save lives." Some supporters of Ken-

neddy wore "Make America Healthy Again" hats.

Republican Senator Bill Cassidy, who chairs the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee that Kennedy is set to appear before on Thursday and also sits on Finance, previously called the nominee "wrong" on vaccines. But he said they had a "frank conversation" during Kennedy's Capitol Hill tour aimed at winning support. Cassidy is one of a handful of Republicans seen as undecided on the nomination.

While most of the opposition to Kennedy is driven by his stance on vaccines, some Republicans also object to his comments in support of abortion rights, as well as his perceived stance against the pharmaceutical industry.

In written testimony to the Finance Committee, Kennedy said he is not anti-vaccine or anti-industry. However, he helped found the anti-vaccine group Children's Health Defense.

Kennedy says he wants to work to end chronic disease, break any ties between employees at the U.S. drugs regulator and industry, and advise U.S. water systems to remove fluoride.

He has decried the U.S. food industry for adding ingredients he says have made Americans less healthy.

Kennedy needs the support of at least 50 senators, which would allow Vance to cast another tie-breaking vote and confirm his nomination if needed. (Reuters)

Harvey Weinstein's retrial on rape charges in New York is set for April 15

Harvey Weinstein, the disgraced Hollywood mogul whose sexual misconduct helped fuel the #MeToo movement, will face retrial in New York on rape charges on April 15, a judge announced Wednesday.

Weinstein, 72, was convicted in 2020 in New York of the third-degree rape of one woman and a first-degree criminal sex act against another woman and sentenced to 23 years in prison. That conviction was overturned last April after a state appellate court, in a 4-3 decision, determined that the trial judge had erred by allowing women to testify about allegations that were not part of the case.

In September, a New York City grand jury indicted Weinstein on new charges.

Judge Curtis Farber said Wednesday that Weinstein's retrial will include a new allegation involving a woman who wasn't in the original case. The woman alleges he forced oral sex on her at a Manhattan hotel in 2006.



Weinstein is being held at the Rikers Island jail complex. He arrived in the Manhattan courtroom Wednesday in a wheelchair amid a litany of health issues. NBC News was first to report last year that he has chronic myeloid leukemia.

During the court hearing, Weinstein pushed for an earlier trial date, citing his health.

"I won't be there for April," he said. "I can't

wait for tomorrow. I can't hold on anymore. I am holding on because I want justice ... I want this to be over with."

Farber said he has another trial scheduled but would do his best to accommodate a date a week earlier if all parties agree. The judge also denied Weinstein's attorney's motion to dismiss the new indictment against him.

A spokesperson for Weinstein said in a

statement after the hearing that "Judge Farber demonstrated exceptional responsiveness, and we deeply appreciate his thoughtful consideration of Harvey's condition and circumstances. We remain confident in a swift and efficient trial process and firmly believe that Harvey will be fully exonerated."

In addition to the New York case, Weinstein was found guilty of one count of rape and two counts of sexual assault in 2022 in Los Angeles and sentenced to 16 years. Weinstein's legal team is appealing that conviction.

In all, more than 80 women have accused Weinstein of sexual assault or harassment. He has repeatedly denied the claims, insisting the encounters in question were consensual.

The charges against Weinstein were first reported in 2017 by The New York Times and The New Yorker. The articles inspired a wider reckoning in the entertainment and other high-profile industries. (NBC News)

Ukrainian drone strike hits second Russian oil refinery in a week

Ukraine says its forces successfully hit an oil refinery in the Russian town of Kstovo, around 800 kilometres (500 miles) from the front lines in eastern Ukraine.

Four drones hit a Lukoil company depot, Ukrainian media said, adding that the facility suffered significant damage.

Videos posted on social media showed large flames rising over an industrial facility.

Regional governor Gleb Nikitin said that drone debris had fallen over the industrial zone, and that no casualties had been reported at the scene.

Separately, the governor of the region of Smolensk, Vasily Anokhin, said on Telegram that a “massive” drone attack against “civilian infrastructure” had occurred in his region, although no casualties were immediately reported.

Anokhin said one of the drones had been shot down when attempting to hit a nuclear power facility. The BBC has not been able to verify this information independently.

A mother and her toddler were killed in the border region of Belgorod, which has come under frequent attack from Ukraine since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022. Vyacheslav Gladkov, the governor of Belgorod region, said another child and his father were also injured

in the strike.

The strike on Kstovo, Smolensk and Belgorod were part of a larger overnight attack, in which Russia said it brought down more than 100 Ukrainian drones and which led the airports of St. Petersburg and Kazan to suspend operations overnight.

It is one of the largest Ukrainian operations of its kind during the war and the second massive drone attack this week. On Friday, Ukraine hit another Russian

oil refinery and targeted Moscow during an attack involving a wave of at least 121 drones.

As Ukrainian drones swarmed Russia’s skies, Moscow launched an overnight attack of its own, triggering air alerts in various Ukrainian regions.

The Ukrainian army said it shot down 29 Russian drones over nine regions. As the third anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine approaches, the conflict grinds on.

Russia is making regular small advances in the east of Ukraine, edging ever closer to the strategically important city of Pokrovsk, which plays a crucial role as a logistics hub used by Ukrainian forces in the region.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian forces continue to hold on to several hundred square kilometres of territory in Russia’s western Kursk region, where they launched a lightning offensive in August. *(BBC News)*

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Sports News



Narrow wins for Buckley's and Post Millennial Academy in school basketball

The Buckley's Primary and Post Millennial Academy snatched one-point wins in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League on Tuesday.

Both teams secured victories by the narrowest of margins in the Mini-boys Primary Division of the exciting competition at the JSC Sports Complex.

Buckley's Primary prevailed 10-9 against Cedar Grove Primary, with Isiah Simon scoring six points and Adonis Colborne shooting four points for the victors.

Khai Charles and Emeka Daniels each converted four points for Cedar Grove Primary.

Post Millennial Academy pulled off a 7-6 victory against last year's playoff and league champions, Sea View Farm Primary.

Teferi Howell sank four points for Post Millennial Academy, while Jimani Anderson and Antwone Henry each scored three points for Sea View Farm



The players of the Buckley's Primary Miniboy's Primary Division team listen to their coach prior to the start of their game against Cedar Grove Primary in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday. (Photo courtesy of the school basketball league)

Primary.

There were also wins for Potters Primary, Greenbay Primary, Mary E. Pigott, and Golden Grove Primary schools.

The Potters Primary romped to an emphatic 20-4 victory over the Five Islands Primary School. Derick Perez scored all 20 points for the Potters Primary, while Adirron Samuel converted all four points for Five Islands Primary.

The Greenbay Primary secured a 13-5

victory against T.N. Kirnon Primary. Justin Biggs sank six points, and Raylin Rodriguez scored five points for Greenbay Primary, while Jayden Ephraim converted four points for T.N. Kirnon Primary.

Ezekiel George scored all four points as Mary E. Pigott notched up a 4-0 victory over the Villa Primary School.

The Golden Grove Primary prevailed 8-1 against the J.T. Ambrose Primary School.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
A.D. 2025

AUCTION SALE NOTICE

Instructed by the ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA DEVELOPMENT BANK of 27 St. Mary's Street, in the City of Saint John, in the State of Antigua and Barbuda, I will sell by public auction on Wednesday 5 February 2025 at 11:00 a.m. on site, the under mentioned wooden residential dwelling registered in the name of Shemeca Colbourne of Golden Grove Ext. St. John's, Antigua.

The Chattel Dwelling House is located in Golden Grove Extension, St. John's Antigua, and comprises of a 700 sq. ft. duplex situated on 0.10 acre of leasehold land owned by William D. Martin. Each of the duplex units consists of an open living/ dining room, kitchen, 1 bedroom, and 1 bathroom. The service lines for potable water, electricity and telephone which are provided by A.P.U.A are accessible to the property.

The leasehold land is registered under the Registered Land Act, 1975 as follows: -

REGISTRATION SECTION: Five Islands
BLOCK: 54 1489A
PARCEL: 1729

Leasehold Parcel No. 1729 of Block No. 54 1489A is bounded by the following:

- On the North by: Parcel 1728;
- On the South by: Access Road;
- On the East by: Parcel 1152;
- On the West by: Parcel 1726 & 1728

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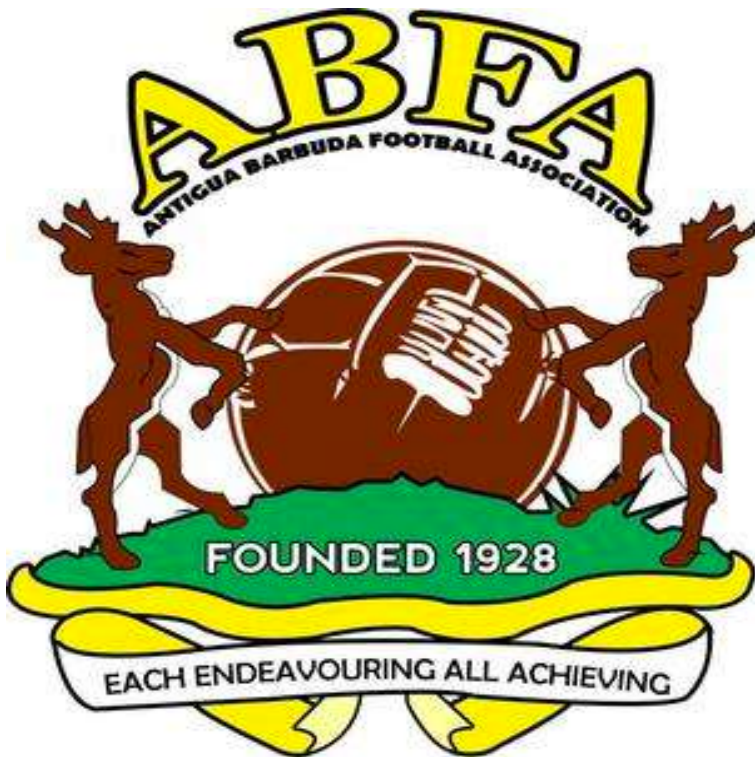
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Trevor "Teddy" Santos
Real Estate Agent/Auctioneer
Trevor Teddy Santos Inc
(268)464-7653 Cell/Whats app
(268) 562-7653 Office

Sea View Farm extend lead at the top of Second Division League



Sea View Farm extended their lead at the top of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League on Tuesday.

Sea View Farm won against the CPTSA Wings and opened up a five-point lead over their nearest rivals, National Parks English Harbour, which could only draw with the Young Lions of Old Road during the latest round of matches.

Sea View Farm claimed their 11th win in 13 matches with a 2-0 victory against the CPTSA Wings at the St. Johnstone's Village Stadium.

Rhezal Gomes' 40th-minute conversion gave Sea View Farm a one-nil advantage at half-time, and Dequan Reid doubled their lead with a strike in the 50th minute to wrap up the victory.

It means the CPTSA Wings will remain on 14 points after suffering their

fifth loss in 11 matches. The result allows Sea View Farm to consolidate their lead at the top of the Second Division by advancing to 34 points from 13 matches.

English Harbour remains in second place but fell five points behind Sea View Farm after dropping crucial points in a 2-2 draw with the Young Lions at the Old Road playing field.

Goals by Akeem Weekes in the 13th minute and Delroy Simpson in the 19th minute gave English Harbour a two-nil lead at half-time. But the Young Lions hit back in the second half as Zavier Joseph scored twice with conversions in the 57th and 63rd minutes to salvage the draw.

The result allows English Harbour to move on to 29 points after recording their second draw in 12 matches, while the Young Lions advanced to 18 points after securing

their second draw in 11 encounters.

Golden Grove notched up their ninth win in 12 matches with a 2-1 victory against Guydadli at the Golden Grove playing field.

Stephen Hughes scored in the 10th minute to put Golden Grove ahead, and Michael Peters scored an equalizer for Guydadli in the 32nd minute as both teams reached halftime deadlocked at 1-1.

However, Golden Grove snatched victory via a conversion by Arnel Emmanuel Walsh in the 76th minute.

The result allows Golden Grove to consolidate their position in fourth place by advancing to 27 points from 12 matches. Guydadli will remain in sixth place on 18 points after suffering their fifth defeat in 11 matches.

Warrican headlines Windies players climbing ICC Test Rankings



West Indies left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican celebrates with the match ball after claiming a match-haul of nine for 70 against Pakistan on the third day of the second Test in Multan, Pakistan, on Monday, January 27, 2025. (Getty Images)

The West Indies left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican has made a significant leap in the International Cricket Council (ICC) Men's Test Bowling Rankings, as he leads a group of Caribbean players who have inched up the charts after their performances in the recent Test series against Pakistan.

Warrican, who was named Player of the Match for his remarkable nine-wicket haul in the second Test in Multan, has surged 16 places to 25th in the rankings.

His stellar series, which saw him claim 19 wickets, also earned him the Player of the Series award and a total jump of 28 spots across the two

matches.

Fellow West Indian pacer Kemar Roach has also improved, moving up one place to 18th, while left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie climbed six places to 58th.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Noman Ali made history by becoming the first spinner from his country to take a Test hat-trick in a match haul of 10 for 121, pushing him up four spots to a career-best fifth position with 806 rating points.

He is now the only Pakistani bowler in the top 20 of the rankings. Team-mates Sajid Khan (up two places to 21st) and Abrar Ahmed (up two places to 50th) have also made gains.

On the batting front, West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite has also benefited from his second-innings half-century in the Windies' 120-run victory, moving up eight places to 44th.

On the Pakistan side, wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan has edged closer to the top 10, climbing from 17th to 15th.

Meanwhile, In the Men's T20I Rankings, England's leg-spinner Adil Rashid has reclaimed the number one spot in the T20I Bowling Rankings, ending West Indies' Akeal Hosein's 44-day reign at the top.

Rashid's economical spells of one for 14 and one for 15 in the second

and third matches of the series helped England close the gap to 2-1 in the series.

This marks the second time Rashid has led the rankings, having previously held the top spot for a year between December 2023 and December 2024.

India's Tilak Varma has surged to a career-best second position after an unbeaten 71 in the second T20I against England. His 832 rating points are the fourth-highest by an Indian batter in the format, trailing only Suryakumar Yadav, Virat Kohli, and KL Rahul.

At just 22 years and 82 days old, Varma is only 23 rating points behind top-ranked Travis Head, giving him a strong chance of becoming the youngest player ever to top the T20I batting rankings. The current record is held by Babar Azam, who was 23 years and 105 days old when he first claimed the No. 1 spot in January 2018.

Other notable movers include Liam Livingstone (up five places to 32nd) and Abhishek Sharma (up 59 places to 40th) among batters, while in the bowling rankings, Varun Chakravarthy (up 25 places to a career-best fifth), Jofra Archer (up 13 places to sixth), Axar Patel (up five places to 11th), and Hardik Pandya (up eight places to 43rd) have all gained ground.

Dujon questions CWI over ‘surprise’ axing of coach Coley



Jeffrey Dujon



Andre Coley

The West Indies cricket legend Jeff Dujon voiced strong displeasure with the decision taken by Cricket West Indies (CWI) to remove Andre Coley as the head coach of the West Indies Test team.

CWI announced Coley’s impending departure during a media briefing in St. Vincent, which was attended by President Dr. Kishore Shallow, directors of the board, and Miles Bascombe, the director of cricket.

Speaking on Tuesday night on the Mason & Guest show in Bridgetown, Dujon said the region’s governing body can ill-afford to part ways with Coley, who recently guided the team to an extraordinary comeback victory in the series in Pakistan.

Ahead of the trip to Pakistan, CWI announced that Coley’s contract would not be renewed and that Daren Sammy would take over the team, coaching the West Indies senior men’s team in all formats.

Sammy took over the West Indies white-ball teams in 2023 after West Indies failed to qualify for the ICC Men’s World Cup. The former Windies captain engineered a reviv-

al of the team’s fortunes in the T20 format which resulted in the team moving up the ICC rankings.

However, the team failed to achieve the stated goal of qualifying for the final four of the ICC T20 World Cup, which was played on Caribbean soil last year.

It is against this background that the decision to have Sammy replace Coley has stunned the former West Indies wicketkeeper/batter.

“I’m surprised that they replaced Andre Coley, and I’m even more surprised by the replacement,” Dujon said.

“In terms of experience, Andre is the most experienced coach we have in the Caribbean, and he is being replaced by someone who has nowhere near that experience as a coach.

“So, it strikes me as being very strange. I don’t see any reason why Coley should have lost his job at this point. I don’t see anyone at this point who can do a whole lot better.”

Dujon is rated as the greatest wicket-keeper/batsman in West Indies Test history. He played 81 matches

between 1981 and 1991 – the era of world dominance under Clive Lloyd and Sir Viv Richards. He scored 3,322 runs with five centuries and held a record 267 catches and five stumpings.

Dujon added, “At the Test level, we don’t have a settled situation. Players come and go determined by their determination of their availability. As far as I can see, that doesn’t lend to you building... there is nothing for you to build on.”

Coley’s tenure has been mixed. He masterminded the famous win against Australia at the Gabba a year ago -- the first win in Australia since 1997, and the recent heroics in Pakistan -- the first win there since 1990. In between the team suffered defeats away to England and at home against South Africa, while drawing 1-1 with Bangladesh on home soil.

The West Indies next assignments are white-ball tours of Ireland and England in May and June, followed by a three-Test home series from June 25 to July 16 against Australia for the Sir Frank Worrell trophy.

Sports

THURSDAY 30TH JANUARY 2025



Second phase of Premier League to start this weekend

The second phase of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division, which will feature all 14 teams, will commence this weekend.

The teams have been divided into two zones based on their placing in the first round to contest a group or second stage of the competition at the ABFA Technical Center.

Contesting Group 1 will be current Premier League leaders, Sandals and APUA Inet Jennings Grenades, Terminix Pigotts Bullets, FC Aston Villa Lions, Island Original John Hughes, Green City, Willikies Warriors, and Cool and Smooth Greenbay Hoppers.

In Group 2 are defending champions Special Security Services and Bitar Pizza All Saints United, Old Road, Garden Stars, Potters Tigers, Attacking Saints, Five Islands, and Parham.

Points achieved in the first phase, which was completed last Sunday, will be brought forward and added to the points gained in the group stage.

The team with the highest amount of points at the end of the group stage or second round will be declared champions of the 2024/25 ABFA's Premier



Players of All Saints United and Five Islands (red and yellow uniform) compete in the Premier Division League at the ABFA Technical Center in October 2024. (ABFA Media)

Division League.

The teams that finished in the 11th, 12th, 13th, and 14th positions will be automatically demoted to the First Division next season.

The team that finished in 10th place will contest a playoff with the third and fourth place finishers in the First Division. The winner of that round-robin playoff will compete in the Premier Division next season.

Starting this weekend, each team will play a total of six matches against the other teams in their respective groups.

The group, or second phase, will commence with a Premier League triple header at the ABFA

Technical Center on Saturday.

FC Aston Villa Lions will face Green City at 4 pm, Pigotts Bullets will tackle the Willikies Warriors at 6 pm, and All Saints United will take on Parham at 8 pm.

In Sunday's triple-header, Jennings Grenades will oppose the Greenbay Hoppers at 4 pm, Old Road will challenge Five Islands at 6 pm, and Garden Stars will clash with the Attacking Saints at 8 pm.

John Hughes and the Potters Tigers receive byes during the opening round of matches.

After a quota of 13 round-robin matches in the first phase, Jennings Gre-

nades are currently leading the Premier Division League with 35 points, one ahead of All Saints United in second place.

They are followed by Old Road with 28 points and Pigotts Bullets and Garden Stars with 25 points each, and the Villa Lions with 21 points.

Next are the Potters Tigers with 17 points, John Hughes and the Attacking Saints with 15 points apiece, Green City with 11 points, and Five Islands and the Willikies Warriors with 10 points each.

Parham is currently second from the bottom of the standings with nine points, while the Greenbay Hoppers occupy the cellar with three points.