



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

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Multiple communities to benefit from aggressive road repair programme

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Soca diva Claudette Peters, one of the big winners at the National Music Awards with presenter, Steve 'Ibis' Freeland

Local News



Multiple communities to benefit from aggressive road repair programme

Four officials from the Public Works Department were invited to the Cabinet on Wednesday to address the continuing work on repairing highways and community roads throughout the country. The officials included the Permanent Secretary, the Minister of State within the Ministry, the Director and Deputy Director. The Cabinet agreed that teams of workers, undertaking repairs at night, will continue. Several concrete roads that were started in Pares Village, Weirs, and Lightfoot will be completed. All Saints Road will be re-

paved completely.

The Cabinet Notes said a sum of US\$5 million is already assigned by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to enable road repairs; consequently, that CDB amount will be utilized to purchase new equipment that will expand the capabilities of the Ministry of Works to add to the road repairs list.

According to the Notes, the Cabinet identified the road to Hermitage Bay, the Bathlodge Road, the Buckley's Line, Bellevue, Herbert's Highway, and several others in St.

John's and rural Antigua for repairs. More than \$50 million will be assigned to Barbuda for road building.

The Cabinet is also exploring ways to raise money to carry out the road repair works. Consequently, the Cabinet also agreed that a small increase in vehicle registration fees, on heavy-duty trucks and on earth-moving equipment that utilize the roadways shortening their lifespan, will soon be enacted following the next parliamentary sitting this month.

The amounts to be

raised by this levy will be utilized to leverage a loan from several banks that will be utilized to fix many roads throughout the country.

"It will become a dedicated sum, not unlike the Board of Education Levy that is currently used to provide resources to fund education; or, the statutory obligations paid to MBS by all employed persons to support healthcare in the country. The complaints of potholed and poor road surfaces will be eliminated in Antigua and Barbuda, the Cabinet decided," according to the Notes.

Cabinet continues to push for the swift re-opening of the Cancer Center

The Cabinet is sparing no effort in its desire to have the Cancer Center return to full operations within the shortest time possible.

The absence of the facility for almost a year has led to many cancer patients having to seek specialized treatment overseas, with Colombia in South America one of the popular destinations.

On Wednesday, the Cabinet held a discussion about the Cancer Center and its readiness to receive patients for radiation and chemo-therapy. The Cabinet agreed that the machines which remain in the build-

ing are no longer useful but can be removed only under the supervision of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—a United Nations body that possesses the expertise to decommission the (radioactive) machines that are within the building.

"The Cabinet authorized the Attorney General to move to acquire the machines if the owners do not claim them within a certain timeframe, and to present the Court with a valuation that can stand up to scrutiny. In the meantime, repair work is continuing on the roof and the

interior of the building," according to the Cabinet Notes following the meeting.

It noted that an engineering flaw which failed to take into account cascading columns of water when runoff pours down from the excavated hillside, is also being addressed.

"An exact date for the refitting of the Center with new machines, staff and trained personnel could not be fixed at this time, although the Cabinet was informed that within 60 to 90 days, the repair work will be completed," the Notes revealed.

Foreign Minister Greene says 'it's now or never' for CARICOM



Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P. Chet Greene, has issued a stern warning to other Caribbean nations about the real imperative for the region to come together in a meaningful way amidst the

growing uncertainty in the international political arena. Minister Greene was at the time meeting with members of the CARICOM CSME Unit's team that is currently

visiting the country for a series of consultations. "At this particular juncture, regional unity and the strengthening of the integration movement are needed more than ever as we (the region) are a threatened civilization given the uncertainty with recent geopolitical initiatives. If we can't fix the challenges we face now; I don't know when we will be able to," he exclaimed.

The Foreign Minister recalled that the people of the (English-speaking) Caribbean had failed at attempts at a Federation in the late 1950's to early 1960's, and the region cannot afford to fail at CARICOM now.

"Let us not pretend that this is some esoteric conversation or merely a 'walk in the park'. There are real challenges and we have to bring every country on board so that at the end of the process no one is referring to the integration movement as their's but

will seek ownership of the process and would henceforth refer to it as 'ours' instead," he stated.

According to Minister Greene there is an absence of support for the integration movement in much of the region primarily because the 'man of the street' doesn't feel that his life is in any way positively affected by it.

For example, he noted that the West Indies Cricket team, despite its recent failings, still enjoys much support from the regional body politic. "Despite its recent performances, the West Indies Cricket team is embraced by Caribbean people. This contrasts with the integration movement which many don't take seriously," he observed.

He urged the technicians, both regional and local, to 'listen to the voices' of the people and to come up with workable solutions for what currently ails the integration movement.

CSME team attends meeting of National Trade Council

The National Trade Council (NTC) of Antigua and Barbuda convened an extraordinary meeting on Wednesday with a visiting team from the CARICOM Secretariat's CSME Unit. In welcoming the five-member team to St. John's, NTC Chairman, Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim, noted that the visit formed part of a series of regional consultations on the implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). "Their insights and expertise will undoubtedly help us to strengthen our national frameworks, address constraints and derive practical solutions for the effective implementation of the CSME," he explained. Ambassador Pilgrim noted that the NTC is committed to fostering a dynamic and competitive trade environment that enhances economic growth, promotes sustainable development and strengthens the country's global trade position. Through the formation of progressive trade policies, the council seeks to create an enabling environment for businesses, support industrial development and ensure economic resilience. "These objectives align closely with the CSME which aims to deepen regional integration by facilitating free movement of goods, services, people and capital. In turn, the CSME



CSME Team leader, Leo Preville and NTC chairman Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim



CSME team members meet with the National Trade Council directly contributes to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), particularly SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), by driving job creation, business expansion and regional economic cooperation," he stated.

ponent of our regional integral project, but it lies at the heart of those efforts. When we speak of the CSME, we generally try to restrict it to how economic actors like the private sector can take advantage of opportunities to produce, to trade and which leads to the creation of jobs, taxes and growth. The current state of our production and trade arrangement are governed by certain trade policies. There are two key elements in our trade policies; these are the rules of origin for goods to move freely within the region and the Common External Tariff (CET)," he explained. A note from the CARICOM Secretariat outlined the objective of this intervention as 'to discuss and provide an opportunity for an assessment of procedures and arrangements' in place to support the implementation of the CSME. The engagement will also gain insight into the constraints limiting implementation and derive workable country specific solutions. "At the end of the engagement, an agreed plan of action will be developed to advance the implementation of the CSME focusing on legislative and administrative frameworks of the CSME regimes including public education and advocacy," according to the Secretariat.

"The CSME is one com-

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CSME team members meet with the National Trade Council

The mission to Antigua and Barbuda ends on Friday. The team from the Secretariat will meet with key stakeholders including Customs and Exercise Department, Ministry of Legal Affairs, Free Movement Committee, National Trade Council, secondary and tertiary institutions and will also conduct radio and television interviews.

There other team members are;

- Ms. Gladys Young, Assistant General Counsel to provide legal guidance and present on specific elements of the CSME Work Programme;
- Mr. Salas Hamilton, Specialist Communications to cover aspects of Public Education and Outreach and provide guidance to the Member State on national action to be taken in these areas;
- Ms. Wanya Illes, Deputy Programme Manager, Free Movement and

Labour to present on Free Movement and Labour issues and specific elements of the CSM Work Programme: and



CSME Team leader, Leo Preville

- Mr. Bernard Black, Senior Project Officer, Customs and Trade Policy to present on Trade in Good Arrangements in the CSME.



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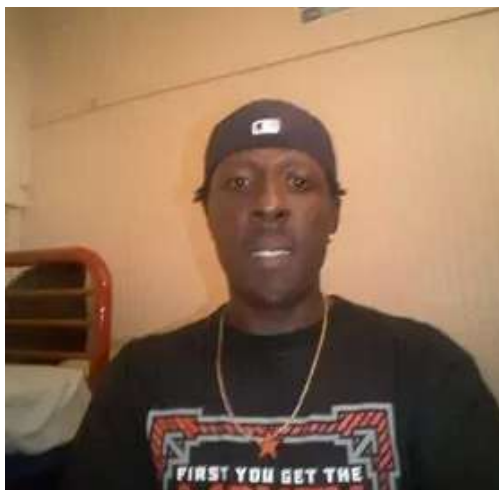
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Judge dismisses murder case in personal trainer's death

The murder trial against Berle Wallace Jr concluded Wednesday when the judge accepted a no-case submission from defence attorney Wendel Alexander.

Wallace had faced murder charges in connection with the death of Christopher Smithers, a 36-year-old personal trainer who died from stab wounds in March 2022 outside Pita Pocket Restaurant on Popeshead Street.

According to court evidence, the incident be-



Berle Wallace Jr

gan while both men were viewing Smithers' phone, escalating when Smithers allegedly threw the first

punch.

The altercation ended fatally when Wallace reportedly obtained a knife and allegedly stabbed Smithers.

The prosecution's case appeared to falter due to insufficient evidence to support the murder charge.

The judge's decision to uphold the defence's no-case submission effectively ended the proceedings, clearing Wallace of the charges.



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Renewable Energy targets set by OECS Energy Ministers



Antigua and Barbuda's Energy Minister, Melford Nicholas was among attendees at the third Council of Energy Ministers Energy



Energy Ministers from across the OECS countries have concluded a two-day meeting in St. Kitts where they have de-

cided on a set of energy targets for the sub-region over the next five to ten years. Antigua and Barbuda's

Energy Minister, Melford Nicholas was among attendees at the third Council of Energy Ministers Energy who were looking at the region's energy crisis and how best to chart a way forward in driving the region's economies through sustainable energy development.

The meeting delved into areas of high imported fossil fuel costs currently affecting regional competitiveness, job creation and local industry development, and sustainable energy transition aimed at redirecting billions from fuel imports to productive investments.

The Energy Ministers endorsed the OECS Sustainable Energy Roadmap 2025-2035 and review practical targets, including achieving 30% renewable energy penetration across the OECS by 2030, with a minimum of 20% in each member state and 50% by 2035.

Attending the meeting along with Minister Nicholas was Senior Energy Officer Ita Jah Simmons.

The Meeting was themed Sustainable Energy: Creating Opportunities for Reinventing the Economy of the OECS.

Carl Ronnie Roberts takes the spotlight

Carl Ronnie Roberts, who is celebrating his 20-year dedication to the nation’s tourism

Since January 2004, Carl has been a distinguished member of the National Taxi Association

he fell ill. Starting at Royalton Antigua, Carl quickly recognized the importance of humour

success to the mentorship of veteran drivers at Royalton and the foundational values instilled by his father, Keith Shakespeare Longfellow Roberts. These influences have shaped his perspective on the true value of life and the significance of hard work.

“I cherish my journey in the hospitality industry and often wish I had embarked on it sooner,” Carl remarked. “To all current and aspiring drivers, remember that we are ambassadors of Antigua and Barbuda. Our commitment is crucial to the thriving of our industry.”

The “Unveiling Hospitality Professionals” series is an initiative by the ABHTA to spotlight the dedicated individuals who form the backbone of Antigua and Barbuda’s tourism industry. By sharing these inspiring stories, the association aims to motivate future generations to pursue excellence in hospitality.



sector, takes the spotlight this month in the Antigua & Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association (ABHTA) “Unveiling Hospitality Professionals” series.

tion, primarily serving guests at the Carlisle Bay Resort. His journey into the taxi profession began under unforeseen circumstances when he stepped in to continue his father’s legacy after

and a deep knowledge of Antigua and Barbuda’s rich history in providing exceptional service.

Reflecting on his career, Carl attributes his

The Mitch League Expands Support for At-Risk Youth Through Strategic Partnership

The Mitch League is proud to partner with the government's Family and Social Services Division to provide meaningful interventions for at-risk youth. This initiative, which includes key agencies within the Ministry of Social and Urban Transformation—such as the Disability Center, Ecclesiastical Commission, ABICE, and PDV—aims to address the holistic needs of young men.

“Through this partnership, participants will receive access to critical resources, including counseling, mentorship, and social support programs. By fostering personal growth and resilience, we are not only helping young men overcome challenges but also empowering



Mitch Jeremiah

them to build brighter futures,” Mitch Jeremiah, founder of the League stated.

The Mitch League remains committed to creating safe, supportive environments where

youth can develop their potential and make positive contributions to their communities. The organization is encouraging stakeholders, community members, and local leaders to join it in

this mission.

The Mitch League was created by Mitch Jeremiah who has dedicated his life to helping children attain a better life overall

PAGE 10 Letter to the Editor



It's Not Personal, It's Strictly Business

Dear Editor,

For those of us who have seen the classic movie, *The Godfather*, you may remember a scene, when Michael Corleone masterminds a plan to kill a rival mob kingpin and the equally corrupt police chief. While his brother Sonny jests with him about taking the issue to a new level, by making it personal, Michael responds by saying "It's not personal, Sonny. It's strictly business!"

When we look at the development of the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Antigua and Barbuda, between 2017 and 2025, we can agree that the industry has seen growth. Royal Antigua is now The Royalton, the former Rex Halcyon Cove has also been renovated and rebranded, Air BnB's and boutique properties have popped up, and with the "facelift" taking place in the Jolly Harbour area, it is undeniably set to become the Tourist capital of Antigua and Barbuda.

The Caribbean market, in particular, is ecstatic about the entry of LIAT 2020 Ltd., to the skies and the introduction of Sunrise Airways, and InterCaribbean Airways. In one way or another, these airlines have filled a void in a manner for which many have longed.

Additionally, the St. John's Harbour and cruise ship berths have become the envy of many Caribbean states, allowing for greater exportation and importation, but more importantly, allowing for larger cruise ships to dock, sometimes up to five vessels, six even, when using the Falmouth Harbour. Kudos to all the industry partners and the current Government of Antigua and Barbuda for seeing the vision that continues to enable the growth.

Lest I forget, Barbuda is "on its way to becoming a marquis luxury destination in the Caribbean," as said by the Honorable Prime Minister.

But, amidst it all, there are some who, unfortunately, have seen the darker side of the industry, where the preference is to put them on the top shelf and just pretend that they do not exist. In the meantime, they struggle to be heard and seen and are left longing for effective advocacy. They no longer benefit from the growth, yet they also deserve what is owed to them for their contribution toward this economic powerhouse.

Some of these "top-shelfers" worked in the Hospitality industry for a particular resort between May 2004 and October 2017, contributing to the said economy, and giving their all, many times without even a word of thanks, but that is the reality of this industry; it is as thankless, as it can be rewarding.

In July 2024, there was a notice for the demolition of the Tranquility Bay Antigua property. A mixed-use resort owned by the ABI Group of Companies (as far as these workers knew). In its heyday, this property was a premiere, upscale all-suite property.

For many seasons, the resort operated at full occupancy. Tranquility Bay Antigua contributed significantly to the economy of Antigua and Barbuda and the growth of the ABI Group of Companies during its thirteen years of operation. But what happened to Tranquility Bay Antigua?

Sadly, the ABI Group stumbled, fell, and couldn't get up. As often as they played "tag, you're it!" with the Chairman and Directors of the Board, they also played Russian Roulette with their investments until their luck ultimately ran out, and so too did everything and everyone else. So, by 2017 all that was left of the Board of Directors of Tranquility Bay Antigua, was a chairman and two directors sitting in their offices, doing what? Indeed, they were not trying to keep the doors of Tranquility Bay Antigua open and certainly not caring for

the staff who continued to work and welcome guests to the property, with their limited resources.

In October 2017, days before the reopening for the Winter season, the staff received a text message advising them that the property would remain closed, until further notice. For weeks the staff waited in anticipation for a message regarding their expected return date. That message never came, and neither was an official letter issued by the Chairman of the Board. The livelihoods of the staff were dismissed, abruptly and without consideration.

In 2020, three years later, around the time that the world had started to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic and all its variants, there was a stirring, something was afoot... questions were being asked, information was being sought, verifications, advice, who owned what, from where and how many??? Something was happening with Tranquility Bay Antigua.

Now in as much as we need to practice discernment, sometimes "they" are fully clothed in wool, with words of compassion, promises of payments coming soon, giving hope, but with gratification to some, not all. The goal, it seemed, was to complete the project, "by any means necessary."

The outcome of this project allowed for the reimbursement of the outstanding balances to the foreign time-share members. It also allowed for a demolition team to remove the structures. Most importantly, this project catered to the investors who received what was due to them, and likewise, all others who contributed towards the removal of that 65-room en-suite property. Unfortunately, the staff who at the time of its forced closure, who had worked diligently to keep the doors open until the very last, have to date, not been paid

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(a)“quart!”

So as Government Ministers and Senators stand in Parliament, speaking to the booming Industry and advocating for other hospitality and industry workers, the staff of the former Tranquility Bay Antigua await their turn. In as much as efforts are being made by some, there have been no positive results. There are constant closed doors or unanswered calls. The people with the answers and the requisite information use their law to protect themselves, but who protects the workers?

Tranquility Bay Antigua’s demise was not due to the mismanagement of funds at the resort but allegedly from the Board’s misuse of the asset for other investments. It was not about what it offered to the industry, but how it allegedly aided in acquiring finances for other ABI ventures. The questions must be asked, what were the regulations of the then-sitting government to protect this new timeshare industry, and what can the current government take from this to ensure that it is not repeated, and that severance is paid to those who are deserving of it? Will the new owners come forward to offer a solution for these workers? It is no secret that business decisions in tourism are complex and fraught with challenges, but through it all, the basic rights and dignities of workers should never be sidelined.

As we call upon the policymakers, the unions, and the government representatives to assist us in the push for the payment of our outstanding severance, perhaps now may be the best time to ensure that similar situations do not continue to recur, particularly within the Hospitality and Tourism industries.

Stakeholders must take accountability for the lack of protection for workers. It is time to examine the existing laws as it relates to workers in the Hospitality, Travel and Tourism industries. It is time to advocate for and implement changes, to enhance the justice

system and make it more efficient. In so doing, other workers who face similar “predicaments” would benefit from such an intervention, e.g. the workers of LIAT (1974) Ltd.

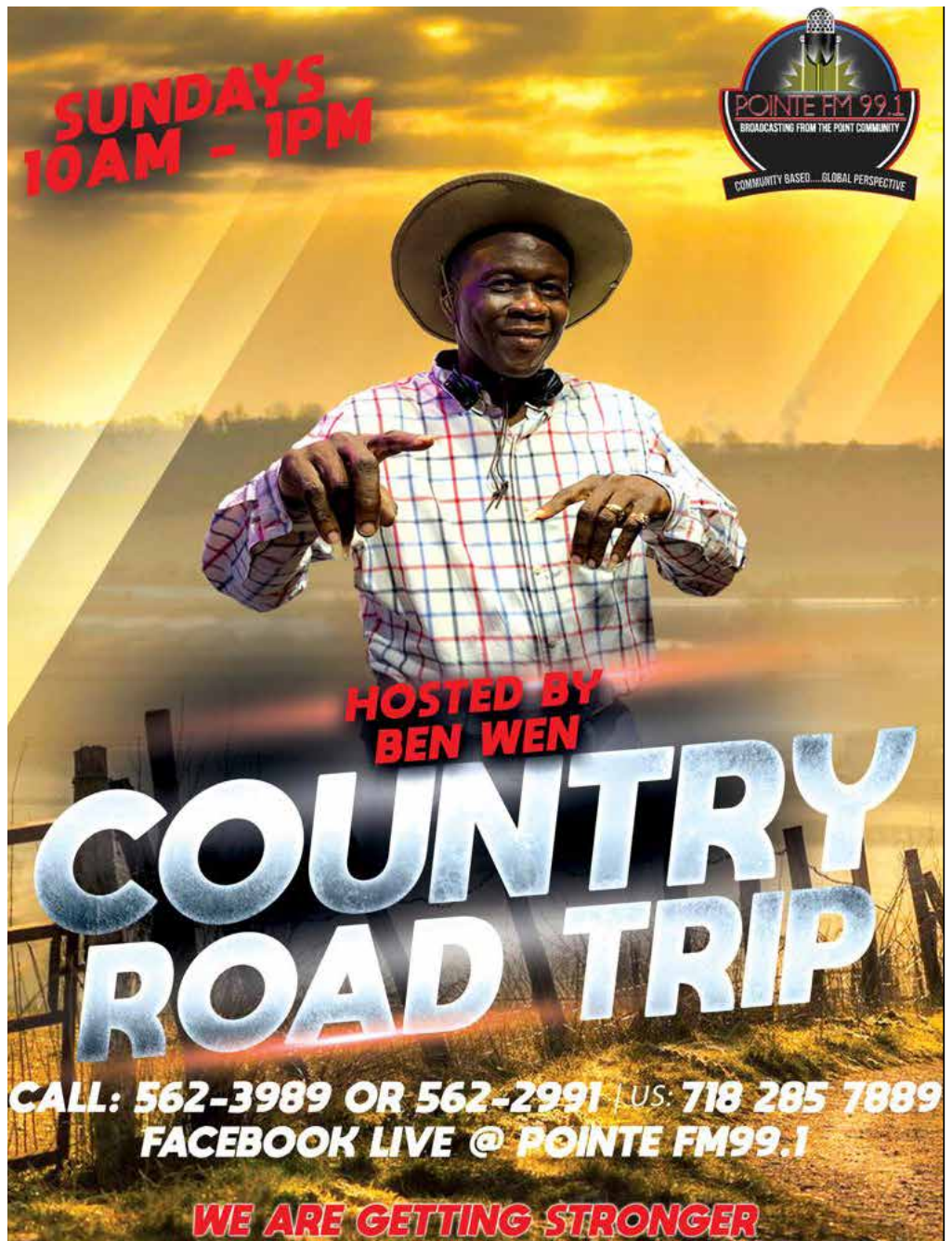
At the time of the sudden closure of Tranquility Bay Antigua, the staff who relied on salaries to live, were unable to meet their payments or had to delay payments. It was just a complete disruption of life, without warning, and a quick refocus to find a job, any job.

Some of the staff members never recovered from the job loss. Other members passed away, sadly, and got

their reward in heaven. Some were lucky enough to move on swiftly, but all have been left with a sour taste in their mouths for the gap in advocacy efforts for workers who needed attention urgently, and for the deceitful means by which information was garnered and lastly, for the lack of communication, from the former owners.

So, Mr. Editor, let me close by saying that while for them **“It’s strictly business!”** for us, **“It was personal, Sonny.”**

By Anonymous



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Once again, the Empire strikes back

I am not going to refer to a new sequence of the famous Star Wars franchise. It is about the sick obsession of nine US Administrations, in trying to make an entire nation surrender with the most genocidal economic war in the recent history of humanity.

With all the imperial arrogance that characterizes the new US Administration, on January 31st the Secretary of State of that country proclaimed the return to a tough policy against Cuba as a “great victory.” His words are worthy of a script for a bad tragicomedy or an implausible Kafkaesque novel. Has the criminal policy of blockade that the US has applied against Cuba for more than 63 years not been tough enough, causing all kinds of suffering to the humble and supportive Cuban people?

The current President Donald Trump decided to surround himself with a “select” group of close advisors, among whom stands out Secretary of State Marcos Rubio, who have made aggression against Cuba a way of life, have profited for decades

from the anti-Cuban business and today share the intoxication of the new president. From the very first day of his mandate, they eliminated all the steps that, although late, were going in a positive direction, taken by his predecessor Joe Biden. They were steps that, like the exclusion of Cuba from the spurious list of terrorist countries, were applauded and supported by the vast majority of governments and peoples of our region and the world in general. Without any legal or truly credible justification, other than the blind hatred of the current US ruling team towards the Cuban people and their Revolution, the decision to reverse these positive measures demonstrates the total disregard of the current Administration towards the truth and the demands of the majority of the international community. It shows the real objective that has motivated the policy towards Cuba of the current governments in the United States for all these years: to economically suffocate Cuba, cause harm to our people, and expect us to renounce the sovereign prerogatives whose con-

quest has cost so many years, efforts and lives.

Who is Marco Rubio fooling with his false pretexts to try to justify this new attack against Cuba and its people? How can he articulate such hypocritical phrases when pointing out that preventing Cubans living in the US from helping their relatives in Cuba with their remittances, blocking the island’s ability to obtain the necessary fuel for the generation of electric energy by subjecting Cubans to countless hours of blackouts, denying access to the raw materials necessary for the production of medicines, among other draconian measures of economic asphyxiation, “are measures that seek the benefit and protection of the common citizen.”

As stated in statements by the Cuban government, “the economic blockade, its reinforcement and the new aggressive measures will continue to weigh, with a very damaging effect, on our economy, the standard of living, the development potential and the legitimate dreams of justice and well-being of the Cuban people, as has

been the case in recent years. It constitutes the empire’s reaction of impotence in the face of its inability to bend our will and in the face of the respect, sympathy and support that the Cuban Revolution arouses among the peoples of the world.”

Cuba and its people will never give up their dream of continuing to fight for greater and sustainable economic and social development, characterized by justice and full observance of all the rights of its people, a system where the values of solidarity and brotherhood prevail towards the rest of the peoples who today also fight for a better future for their children. To achieve this, we will continue to defend, at whatever cost, our independence, sovereignty and the right to build our future without foreign interference. The self-proclaimed emperors of the world today will not be able to subdue or defeat a people that has never surrendered and will never surrender.

Cuban Ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda

H.E Sergio Martinez

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11AM - 2PM**



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Photo Essay

Highlights of the National Music Awards ceremony



Photo Essay

Highlights of the National Music Awards ceremony



Belize launches major energy project to boost power independence



Belize has unveiled a \$58.4 million energy project to strengthen its power infrastructure and reduce dependence on imported electricity.

The initiative, announced in partnership with the World Bank and the Government of Canada, aims to modernize the country's energy grid and increase renewable energy usage.

The project comes as Belize grapples with significant energy challenges, including reliance on Mexican imports for 50 per cent of its electricity needs. These imports, subject to volatile market prices, have created unpredictable costs for consumers.

The country's power system has also proven vulnerable to extreme weather, as demonstrated when Hurricane Lisa left the capital without power and water in 2022.

Four 10-megawatt battery storage systems will be installed across San Pedro, Dangriga, Orange Walk, and Belize District. These installations are designed to improve power management and reduce outages while supporting the integration of renewable energy sources like solar and wind.

"This project represents a crucial milestone for Belize's energy independence and sustainability,"

said Lilia Burunciuc, World Bank Director for the Caribbean. "By investing in advanced storage solutions and renewable energy integration, we are ensuring a more reliable and affordable power supply for communities while paving the way for a greener future."

The initiative aims to address pressing challenges in Belize's energy sector, where low-income households currently spend up to 30 per cent of their pre-tax income on electricity. No new generation capacity has been added in over a decade despite a 48 per cent increase in peak demand.

Olivier Jacques, Ambassador of Canada to Guatemala and High Commissioner to Belize, emphasized the regional significance: "Energy security is a challenge for many nations, especially for Caribbean countries. This is why the Government of Canada is proud to support Belize in its journey towards a more resilient and sustainable future."

The project will be funded through a \$50 million World Bank loan and \$8.4 million in Canadian financing, including a \$0.2 million grant from the Canada Clean Energy and Forests Climate Facility. (*Loop Caribbean*)

Eighty-three-year-old American suspected to have drowned in Soufriere



Officers attached to the Soufrière Police Station, are presently investigat-

ing a suspected drowning, which occurred on Tuesday, February 4, 2025,

at Anse Chastanet Beach, Soufrière.

At about 1:35 pm, the Soufrière Police were summoned to the Soufrière Hospital after the body of an adult male was conveyed to the facility via ambulance. It was reported that the male encountered difficulties while snorkelling at Anse Chastanet Beach.

Despite attempts to assist him, he was later pronounced dead by a medical professional.

He has been formally identified as an 83-year-old, resident of North Carolina, United States of America.

Investigations are ongoing in the matter. (*Loop Caribbean*)

CoP arrest should have been handled better

The arrest, release, and subsequent suspension of Commissioner of Police Erla Harewood-Christopher should have been better handled by the executive of the police service (TTPS).

This was stated by Secretary of the TTPS Social and Welfare Association (TTPSSWA) W-ASP Nathalie John in a press briefing which was held Wednesday at the Association's office in Riverside Plaza in Port of Spain. At the time, John, who was supported by Association president ASP Gideon Dickson and vice president ASP Ishmael Pitt, read from a statement in which she made clear the TTPSSWA's position.

"We believe the Commissioner of Police (CoP) is the highest rank in the TTPS and the office holder is expected to be one with



high morals and ethics. The TTPSSWA believes at no time, the office of the CoP should be brought into disrepute and that all necessary protocols should be afforded to the office holder. With respect to the handling of the investigation, notwithstanding the aforesaid, no one is above the law...the Association holds the view that the manner in which the in-

vestigation unfolded in the public domain could have been better managed," John said.

She also said the timing of the investigation had been noted by the organisation.

"Trinidad and Tobago is presently in a state of emergency which is being spearheaded by the office of the CoP, hence the association's executive

questions the timing of this matter being executed in the heights of this public crisis. Towards what end? This is the question we must ask. The Association is mindful that we live in a global village and episodes like this can have an acute negative impact on our country, on our organisation's image, regionally and internationally, and threatens to erode the legitimacy of the organisation," John said.

The event of the past few days, she stated, had led to the erosion of internal trust and confidence within the TTPS.

"This is of grave concern to us, and it must be restored immediately, through decisive leadership, effective communication, and transparency," John said. (*Trinidad Express*)

St Ann man freed of charge he molested a 3-y-o girl

A St Ann man has been acquitted of a charge that he molested a young child five years ago.

A judge found the 21-year-old man not guilty of indecent assault at the end of his trial in the St Ann's Bay Parish Court yesterday, the Court Administration Division (CAD) and his attorney have confirmed.

Trials involving sexual offences are closed to the public. The Gleaner will not publish the man's name to protect the identity of the seven-year-old child.

The alleged incident occurred in 2020 at an early childhood institution in St Ann which the child attended, prosecutors alleged. She was three years old at the time of the incident.

"The accused was discharged. No evidence was offered. The matter was tried and the defendant was found not guilty," said a spokesperson for CAD in response to questions submitted by The Gleaner.

Donnovan Collins, the attorney for the 21 year-old man, said his client is "extremely happy" with the verdict because "his life has been on hold since he was accused of this crime".

"He can now begin the journey of getting his young life together so that he can achieve his goals," said Collins, noting that his client has vehemently

denied the accusations from day one.

The attorney was also critical of how the initial complaint was handled by police investigators.

According to him, there were several other clear leads that could have been followed by the police.

"It appeared that once the statement was recorded

from the complainant the police proceeded to arrest my client," he said. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

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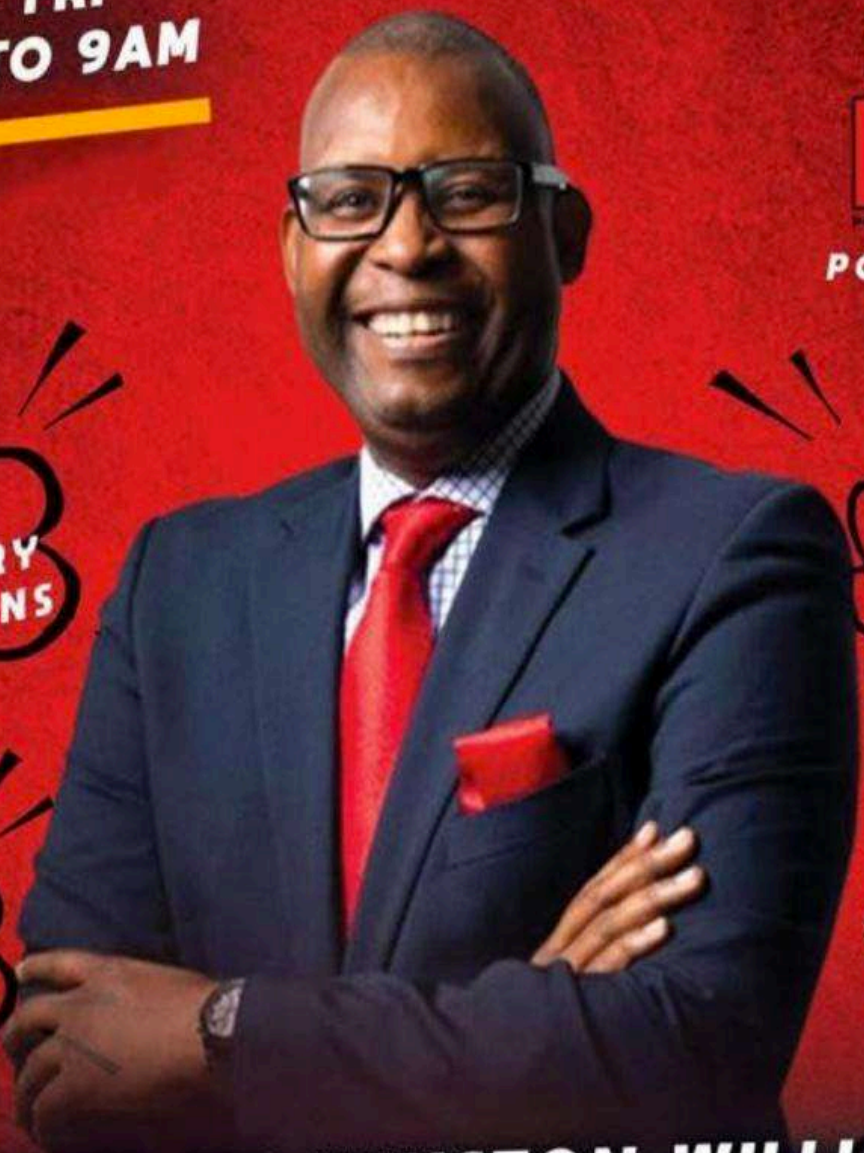


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HOSTED BY WINSTON WILLIAMS

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International

AROUND THE WORLD



Argentina says it will withdraw from the World Health Organization, echoing Trump

Argentina's president has ordered the country's withdrawal from the World Health Organization due to "profound differences" with the UN agency, a presidential spokesperson said Wednesday.

President Javier Milei's decision echoes that of his ally, US President Donald Trump, who began the process of pulling the United States out of WHO with an executive order on his first day back in office on January 21.

The loss of another member country will further fracture cooperation in global health, though Argentina was expected to provide only about \$8 million to WHO for the agency's estimated \$6.9 billion 2024-2025 budget.

Argentina's decision is based on "profound differences in health management, especially during the (COVID-19) pandemic," spokesperson Manuel Adorni told a news conference in Buenos Aires. He said WHO guidelines at the time led to the largest shutdown "in the history of mankind."

Argentina will not allow an international organization to intervene in its sovereignty "and much less in our health," he added.



WHO has no authority to compel countries to take specific health actions, and the organization's guidelines and recommendations, including in health crises like COVID-19, are often disregarded.

WHO said it was looking into Argentina's announcement.

Adorni did not say when Milei's decision would be implemented. He also asserted that WHO lacks independence because of the political influence of some countries, without naming any.

WHO is the only organization mandated to coordinate global responses to acute health crises, particularly outbreaks of new diseases and per-

sistent threats including Ebola, AIDS and mpox.

Milei was a sharp critic of the lockdown imposed by former President Alberto Fernandez during the pandemic, asserting that it hurt the economy and that the government used it as a mechanism of "repression."

"LONG LIVE FREEDOM," Milei said Wednesday in a post on X criticising the UN agency.

Argentina does not receive WHO funding for health management, and the president's decision doesn't affect the quality of health services, Adorni said.

"On the contrary, it gives greater flexibility to implement policies adopted

to the context of interests that Argentina requires," he added.

Last year, Milei's government refused to sign an agreement to manage pandemics within the WHO framework, on the grounds that doing so could affect national sovereignty.

The announcement on the WHO comes ahead of Milei's trip to the US later this month that will coincide with the Conservative Political Action Conference summit of right-wing leaders in Washington. The spokesperson has not confirmed that Milei will attend or that he might meet Trump. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

Protesters across the U.S. decry Trump administration policies

A movement to protest the early actions of President Donald Trump's administration took off Wednesday, as thousands of demonstrators gathered outside a federal courthouse in Philadelphia and at state capitols in Michigan, Texas, Wisconsin and Indiana.

Protesters waved signs decrying Trump; billionaire Elon Musk, the leader of Trump's new Department of Government Efficiency; and Project 2025, a hard-right playbook for American government and society.

"Democracy is not a spectator sport! Do something," said a sign held aloft by one demonstrator in Philadelphia.

The protests were a result of a movement that has organized online under the hashtags #buildtheresistance and #50501, which stands for 50 protests, 50 states, one day. Websites and accounts across social media issued calls for action, with messages such as "reject fascism" and "defend our democracy."

Outside the state Capitol in Lansing, Michigan, a crowd of about 500 people gathered in freezing temperatures. They denounced everything from Trump's plans for Gaza to the roll-back of rights for transgender neighbors and recent efforts to deport people who are in the U.S. illegally.

Catie Miglietti, from the

Ann Arbor area, said Musk's access to the Treasury Department data was especially concerning to her. She painted a sign depicting Musk puppeteering Trump from his outstretched arm — evoking Musk's straight-arm gesture during a January speech that some have interpreted as a Nazi salute.

"If we don't stop it and get Congress to do something, it's an attack on democracy," she said.

Kelsey Brienne, a key organizer of the Michigan rally, learned about the protest movement Sunday night and has been coordinating speakers and safety protocols.

"I want to look back at this time and say that I did something and I didn't just sit back," Brienne said on the eve of the protests.

Trump has signed a series of executive orders in the first couple of weeks of his new term on everything from trade and immigration to climate change. As Democrats begin to raise their voice in opposition to Trump's agenda, protests have also begun.

On Sunday, thousands of people marched against Trump's plan for large-scale deportations in Southern California, including in downtown Los Angeles, where protests shut down a major freeway for hours. (NBC News)

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:
INTERNAL AUDITOR VACANCY

Deadline for application is Friday 7th February, 2025

** Only suitable applicants will be acknowledged **
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International

AROUND THE WORLD



US Postal Service flip-flops on Hong Kong-China packages, lifting a ban imposed a day earlier

The U.S. Postal Service is reversing course a day after

would no longer accept parcels from the China and

without paying tax.

The Postal Service reversed course Wednesday but gave no reason. It said it would work with Customs and Border Protection to implement a collection process for the new China tariffs to avoid delivery disruptions.

The post office pointed to the short prepared statement on the reversal when asked for more details about the reversal Wednesday by The Associated Press.

The ban had the potential to create massive disruptions for online shopping platforms like Shein and Temu,

popular with younger shoppers in the U.S. for cheap clothing and other products, usually shipped directly from China.

Cheap, direct postal service helps these companies keep costs low, as did the “de minimis” exemption that previously allowed shipments to go tax-free if their value is under \$800.

The suspension by USPS would have likely have created delays in shipments and potentially higher prices for the companies that rely on rock-bottom pricing for huge sales. (*Associated Press*)



placing a ban on all inbound packages from China and Hong Kong.

The post office had announced Tuesday that it

Hong Kong after the U.S. imposed an additional 10% tariff on Chinese goods and ended a customs exception that allowed small value parcels to enter the U.S.

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Sweden searches for answers after country's deadliest shooting

Ismail Moradi, 16, would normally be carrying his textbooks into school.

But on Wednesday he was clutching a bunch of red flowers to lay in tribute to those murdered in Sweden's worst ever mass shooting.

"I was shocked and didn't know if I wanted to come to school today after what happened so nearby," he explains to us.

Ismail's own elementary school is next to the adult learning centre that was targeted yesterday.

Although police still have not given a motive for the attack, Ismail - who is Kurdish - says he fears there was a clear racial element to the shooting.

"In this school, it's only newcomers to Sweden. There's not so many Swedish people. So, I think it was targeted for one special group of people."

Swedish police are still investigating the gunman's personal history and have not said the attack, which killed 11 people, was targeted.

Hellen Werme, a 35-year-old trainee nurse, survived the shooting. She and her classmates locked themselves inside their classroom as the shooter prowled the corridors.

"We could hear him firing," she told us. "I just felt that at any moment I would be shot and I could never come home to my children."

We met her outside the college. All day, there's been a steady procession of locals lighting candles and gazing across to the school site which remains sealed off.

Vacant faces in the icy wind reflect the sense of shock that has gripped many Swedes in the past 24 hours.

A hush descended on the scene when Sweden's King arrived to leave his own flowers. The solemnity echoing the national mood as flags fly at half-mast.

The collective grief is complicated by the lack of any explanation for the assault. The police, now in the midst of huge investigation have not given away anything to that end.

Trying to build a profile of a "clean skin" - someone not previously known to the police or security service - makes any probe all the more difficult.

But the scale of the loss of life means the public and politicians want answers from the police now.

More than 100 specialist officers

are involved, on a local, regional and national level.

Unconfirmed reports in the Swedish media say the gunman was a 35-year-old local man who legally owned a gun.

Reham Attala, 21, is a law student also thinks it was no coincidence this college - popular with immigrants - was chosen, rather than others which were reported to be near the suspect's home.

"I'm so sad and scared," she tells us at the site of the shooting. "This shouldn't have happened."

Reham explains that her dad is Syrian and her mum is Palestinian but for her Sweden is home. She's has lived in Orebro for the past 11 years.

She is alarmed that the gunmen attacked a school where Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) courses are known to be taught.

"Those people lost yesterday were studying Swedish and this make me think about my future and am I even going to live here, should I have children here? All these questions."

People should be free to learn and live in peace on campus without fear of this happening, she sighs. (*BBC News*)

Sports News



Spanish Heat and EZ Fit Flyers win first games in ABBA's Division 2 league



Spanish Heat 2 and EZ Fit Flyers 2 successfully launched their campaigns in the Second Division of the 2025 Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) domestic season on Tuesday evening.

Spanish Heat 2 won their opening game by pulling off a 96-82 victory against the Navigators in the first game of a double-header at the JSC

Sports Complex.

The Spanish Heat was led by Wester Batiste with 22 points and Kevin Pimentel, who had 21 points and nine assists.

Giving support were Jesus Emmanuel with 16 points, eight assists, six rebounds, and five steals; Erwin Rodriguez, who had 15 points, 14 rebounds, and five steals; and Maicol Reyes with 13 points and 12 rebounds.

The leading performers for the Navigators were Ariel Quallis with 23 points, seven rebounds, and six assists, and Raheem Sawyer with 20 points and 10 rebounds.

In support, De-Lornge Jules converted 12 points, Baldwin Anthony sank 11 points and grabbed 16 rebounds, and Ryan Shepherd scored 10 points and claimed eight rebounds.

The EZ Fit Flyers 2 soared past Da Project 2 with a comfortable 74-45 victory in the second game of Tuesday night's double-header.

Harry Rashaun converted 13 points and claimed 15 rebounds, Hansel Piper also scored 13 points, and Amare Browne contributed 12 points for the EZ Fit Flyers.

Nathan Matthew produced 13 points, and Gabriel De-Suza had 11 points and five rebounds for Da Project 2.

The ABBA First Division League will resume with another double-header at the JSC Sports Complex on Thursday (today).

Total Imports Potters Steelers will face Ottos Full Throttle at 6:45 pm, and the Northside Stingerz will take on the Lava Smoke Shop Warriors at 8:30 pm.

Villa and Cedar Grove win by big margins in school basketball league

Villa and Cedar Grove Primary recorded two of the biggest margins on victories in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League on Tuesday.

Both teams recorded wins in two of the five matches in the Miniboys Primary Division of the league at the JSC Sports Complex.

Levi Richards shot a game-high 16 points to propel the Villa Primary to a 22-0 drubbing of the J.T. Ambrose Primary in a lopsided affair.

Khai Charles sank nine points to lead Cedar Grove



Players of the Villa Primary and the J.T. Ambrose Primary compete in the Miniboys Primary Division in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday, February 4, 2025. (Photo courtesy of the school basketball league)

Primary to a 23-1 victory over Post Millennial Academy in another one-sided

contest.

There was success as well for Potters, Greenbay,

and T.N. Kirnon Primary. Derick Perez converted 12 points to enable Potters Primary to prevail 15-5 against Buckley's Primary.

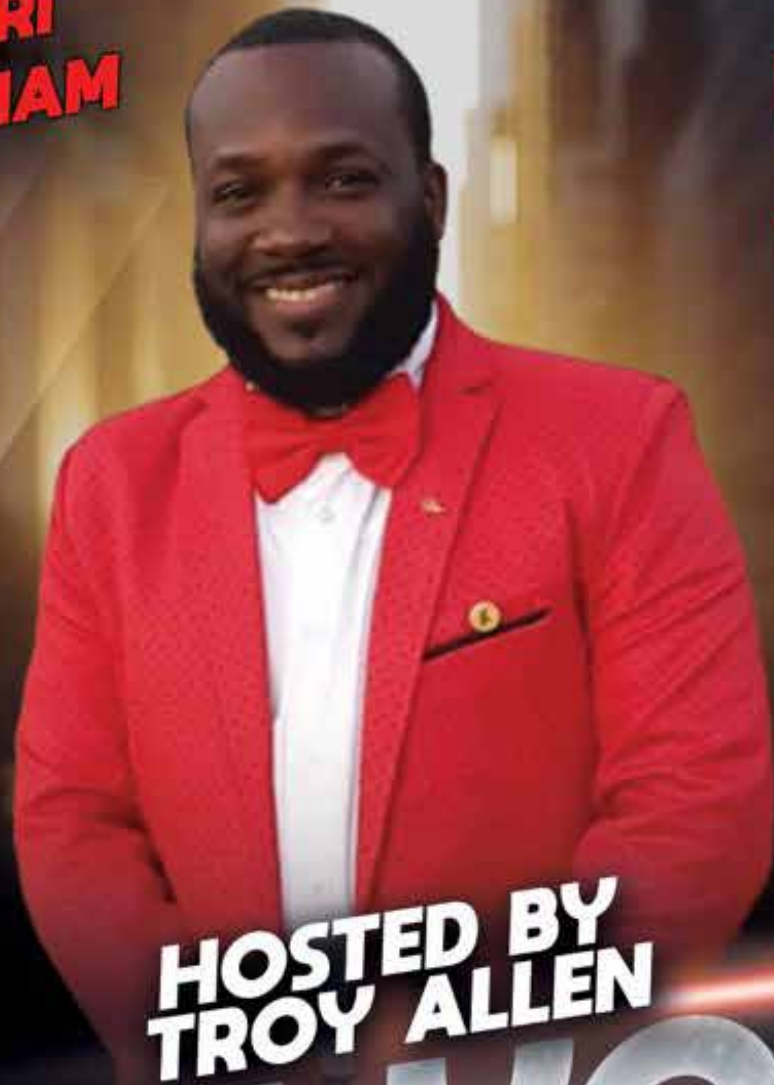
Rylin Rodriguez scored seven points to lead Greenbay Primary to a 13-6 victory against Mary E. Pigott Primary.

T.N. Kirnon Primary snatched an 8-6 victory against S.R. Olivia David Primary of Bolans in the day's most keenly contested affair.

Arie Adams and Jeron Jones each scored four points for T.N. Kirnon Primary.



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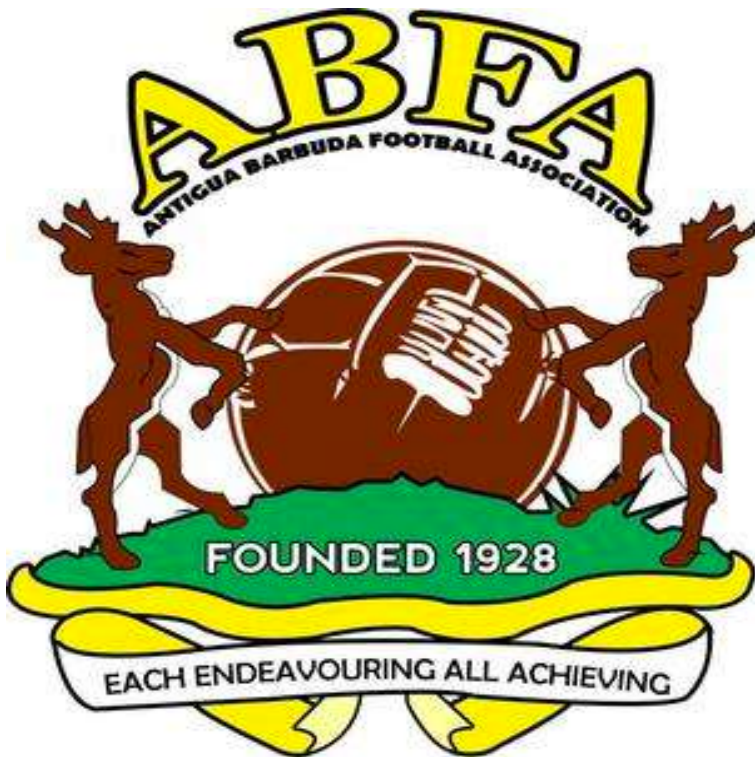
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Sports News

Empire advance to second place in First Division League



Empire FC moved into second place in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League on Tuesday.

Empire achieved the feat by recording their eighth win in 12 matches with a 3-1 victory against Swetes FC at the Freeman's Village playing field.

Swetes contributed to their own demise as they were reduced to 10 men after Yakira Hughes received a red card and was sent off in the 14th minute.

Empire capitalized on their one-man advantage to take the lead in the 22nd minute via Carlos Solomon's conversion. But Swetes got an equalizer when Kimoi Alexander

scored in the 34th minute as both teams reached half-time deadlocked at 1-1.

However, Empire snatched victory with two goals in the second half, which were scored by Nickado Lindsay in the 76th minute and Rashidie Lewis in the first minute of added time.

Empire also finished the match with 10 men after Sydney Samuel received a red card and was dismissed in the 79th minute.

The result allows Empire FC to advance from joint-third to second place with 26 points, one adrift of leaders Ottos Rangers, who have a game in hand. Swetes FC will drop to sixth place with 21 points after suffering their second

defeat in 11 matches.

Leaders Ottos Rangers were unable to add to their tally after their top-of-the-table clash with SAP FC was abandoned in the second half due to crowd trouble at the Bolans playing field.

Both teams were deadlocked at 0-0 when the match ended prematurely after the referee called off the game in the 68th minute due to the behaviour of some spectators. According to the ABFA, the match will be rescheduled at a neutral venue.

The Ottos Rangers, who have eight wins in 11 matches, remain at the top of the First Division with 27 points, while SAP drops from second to fourth place on goal difference with 24 points from 12 games.

Jennings United moved above SAP FC into third place on goal difference after snatching a 1-0 victory against Bolans FC at the Jennings playing field.

After their unbeaten run was ended with a surprising 3-1 defeat to Urlings FC in their previous outing, Jennings United rebounded to claim their seventh win in 11 matches by beating Bolans.

Daryl Massicot scored the only goal of the match by converting a penalty kick in the 42nd minute.

The result allows Jen-

nings United to jump from joint fifth place with Swetes FC to third place with 24 points, the same as SAP FC.

Bolans FC will remain in seventh place on 16 points after suffering their fourth loss in 13 matches.

The latest results mean that the Freeman's Village Scorpions have dropped from third to fifth place with 23 points from 12 matches.

Meanwhile, the Cedar Grove Blue Jays have moved into joint first place with Sea View Farm FC at the top of the Second Division League.

The Blue Jays achieved the feat by recording their 11th win in 13 matches with a 2-0 victory against National Parks English Harbour at the Cedar Grove playing field.

Following a goalless first half, Maleke Francis broke the deadlock with a 46th-minute conversion, and Reuben Reubel scored in the 75th minute to wrap up the victory.

The result allows the Cedar Grove Blue Jays to advance to 34 points, the same as Sea View Farm FC, which has played 14 matches.

National Parks English Harbour will remain in fourth place with 29 points after suffering their second loss in 13 matches.

CWI announces 2025 schedule for senior men's and women's teams



Captain of the West Indies men's Test team Kraigg Brathwaite. (CWI Media)

Cricket West Indies (CWI) unveils an action-packed schedule for the senior Men's and Women's teams from May to December 2025, featuring a mix of home and away fixtures.

Fans can now start planning for an exciting year of cricket, with the men beginning their campaign with limited-overs tours in the United Kingdom.

The men's team will continue its preparations for the 2027 International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket World Cup, starting with a three-match One-Day International (ODI) series against Ireland from May 21-25 in Malahide, Dublin.

Four days later, they will face England in a bid for back-to-back ODI series wins, with

three ODIs scheduled from May 29 to June 3. This will be followed by three T20 Internationals (T20Is) against England from June 6-10, before concluding the UK tour with three T20Is against Ireland in Belfast from June 12-15.

The West Indies men team will then shift focus to Test cricket, with the start of the ICC World Test Championship cycle under new head coach Daren Sammy.

They will battle for the prestigious Frank Worrell Trophy against Australia in a three-match Test series, beginning in Barbados (June 25-29), before moving to Grenada (July 3-7) and concluding in Jamaica (July 12-16).

A five-match T20I series against Australia



Captain Hayley Matthew, second right, and members of the West Indies women's team.

follows, with the first two games at Sabina Park (July 20 and 22) and the remaining three at Warner Park, St. Kitts (July 25, 26, and 28).

To close out the home summer, the West Indies will play against Pakistan in three T20Is in Lauderhill, Florida followed by three ODIs at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Trinidad from July 31 to August 12.

The West Indies men's team will then embark on an overseas tour to India, Bangladesh, and New Zealand, spanning from September 21 to December 23.

India will feature two Test matches, Bangladesh three ODIs and three T20Is while a full tour will be hosted by New Zealand consisting of five T20Is, three ODIs and

three test matches.

The West Indies women's team begins their 2025 campaign with the ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers from April 4-19 in Pakistan, where six teams will compete for two spots in the marquee event in India, scheduled to take place in August and September.

Following the qualifiers, the West Indies women will tour England for a full white-ball series, featuring three T20Is and three ODIs from May 21 to June 8.

Later in the year, the West Indies women will host South Africa for a historic white-ball series at the 3Ws Oval in Barbados, marking the first time the venue will stage such an international series.

Young Benna Boys finalize preparations for the 2025 CONCACAF Qualifiers

The young Antigua and Barbuda Benna Boys have been undergoing intense training, including practice matches, over the past two months in preparation for the upcoming CONCACAF Under-17 Qualifiers later this month.

Antigua and Barbuda will compete in Group E, which is scheduled to be held at the Estadio Cementos Progreso in Guatemala City, Guatemala, from February 7 to 16.

The other teams contesting the Group E qualifiers are Haiti and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The young Antigua and Barbuda Benna Boys are set to travel on Sunday, February 9, ahead of their first game against hosts Guatemala on Tuesday, February 11, at 8 pm.

The 21-member squad that has been training under the watchful eye of head coach Auckland “Pin Up” Jarvis and assistant coach Gayson “Bubbler” Gregory was slated to play their final pre-tournament friendly against Garden Stars on Wednesday (yesterday) at the ABFA Technical Center.

The Antigua and Barbuda national under-17 squad includes goalkeepers Gavin



Head coach Auckland ‘Pin Up’ Jarvis, left, and assistant coach Gayson ‘Bubbler’ Gregory spearhead the coaching staff of the young Antigua and Barbuda Benna Boys, who have been undergoing intense training over the past two months in preparation for this month’s CONCACAF Under-17 Qualifiers in Guatemala. (ABFA Media)

Gonsalves, Erick Moreta, and Micah Archibald.

The defenders are Jaeden Browne, Seth Layne, Brandon Satchell, Joshua Roach, Cody Richardson, Marlon Peters, and Najontae Wijnaldum.

Also included are midfielders Zidaan Williams, Jermarion Edwards, Vaughn Jackson, Marco Michael, Samuel Brazier, Jaquon Watts, Brenden Skilling, and Silence Manyaka.

Completing the squad are forwards Greg Williams

and Adonai Lee-Francis.

In addition to coaches Jarvis and Gregory, the rest of the coaching and management staff includes goalkeeper coach Janeil Simon, trainer Could Graham, physiotherapist McLean Lawrence, equipment manager Lakeisha Samuel, and team manager Salim Browne.

The 2025 CONCACAF Under-17 Men’s Qualifiers will kick off on February 7 with a new single-round format to determine which

eight national teams will represent the region at the 2025 FIFA Under-17 Men’s World Cup.

The 2025 CONCACAF Under-17 Men’s Qualifiers will be the sixteenth edition of the tournament as an Under-17 competition and the twentieth, including its initial years as an Under-16 tournament.

Thirty-five (35) national teams, divided into eight groups, will be participating in the 2025 CONCACAF Under-17 Men’s Qualifiers.