

Antigua and Barbuda rejects US claims of 'human-trafficking' re: Cuban medical brigades

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Director of Culture and Arranger of the Hells Gate Steel Orchestra, Khan Cordice and family

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Antigua and Barbuda rejects US claims of 'human-trafficking' re: Cuban medical brigades



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Antigua and Barbuda is not involved in any way in human trafficking as the new United States Administration has described the use of Cuban doctors and nurses in health systems across the Caribbean and Latin America.

Speaking on the **Browne and Browne** show on Saturday, Prime Minister Gaston Browne explained that Antigua and Barbuda, as a matter of policy, has always stayed away from getting involved in US policies regarding other countries but in areas where these policies affect the country, he will speak out.

“On the issue of their position on the Cuban doctors and nurses, that’s an area where we have to do some realignment to make sure we don’t end up in their cross-hairs. However, the US must understand that these Cuban medical per-

sonnel represent the core of our health care services within the Caribbean. We are not involved in any illegal activities, any human trafficking and we totally reject that notion that we are involved in any human trafficking,” PM Browne declared.

According to the prime

minister the Cuban doctors, nurses and technicians are being paid and he suggested a willingness to review the payment mechanism as something ‘we can look at’. However, he expressed the view that the attitude of the US government in the matter is at ‘face value’, an over-reach.

“This extra-territorial positioning, articulation and threat; I don’t think that this is the route that we ought to go. I believe that CARICOM countries and US officials can have a discussion on how we can structure payments going forward. I don’t see the need for them to threaten us. We are sovereign countries and even though we are small and powerless they ought to respect our sovereignty. We are not trying to do anything to hurt our neighbour to the north; in fact,

that is the most important relationship for practically all of CARICOM countries and we are inextricably linked in that we have the largest Caribbean diaspora in the United States,” he observed.

PM Browne reiterated that Antigua and Barbuda has no interest in any acrimony with the US, while at the same time, he suggests that the US should treat the Caribbean states with ‘some degree’ of respect rather than threatening the region over such a critical issue as the survival of their health-care systems.

“If they were to take punitive action because of the presence of Cuban medical personnel in our healthcare systems, it would practically dismantle these systems across the region,” he emphasized.



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PM Browne adopts 'wait and see' posture regarding ECCB Governor's residence

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has adopted a 'wait and see' posture regarding the controversy regarding the publicity surrounding the huge cost over-runs in the construction of an official residence for the Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

The matter was brought to light last week when a letter written by St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves addressed to PM Browne, was released to the public. In his letter, the SVG PM expressed grave concerns over the cost over-runs calling the proposed building 'a palace'.

He indicated that the building was originally estimated to cost \$7 million, but the costs have since



mushroomed to more than \$22 million. Dr. Gonsalves wants to see severe consequences for this development.

But PM Browne is taking a softer approach to resolve the issue as he pointed that what he sees as 'deficiencies' in the governance structure that allowed this matter to reach the stage that

it has.

"At the level of the Monetary Council, we were caught flatfooted in terms of the monies spent, but I don't know that we can escape responsibility. Some may argue that we ought to have known. At the level of the directorship, I don't know that they knew the extent of the money that was spent,"

he observed.

Additionally, the prime minister noted that there is no evidence that the Governor, himself, had sought to be excessive, noting that he has not seen any case of corruption that would create an issue of undermining the Governor's integrity. PM Browne is calling for the establishment of an independent committee to look into the matter and that everyone should reserve judgement until the committee has submitted its report. He however acknowledged that the amounts spent on the building 'had raised concerns' among monetary council members, but he feels it may be premature for him to be making any definitive statement at this time.

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Significant work on new cruise terminal to start next Monday



General Manager of the Antigua Cruise Port, Gasper George

The people who live or operate businesses on lower Newgate Street and its environs are being asked to brace themselves for noise and other pollution as a critical part of the construction of the new cruise terminal at the 5th Berth is set to start next Monday.

General Manager of the Antigua Cruise Port, Gasper George has announced that special equipment has arrived at the St. John's Harbour to commence the sinking of piles for the project and that this operation will generate noise and other irritants for persons in the immediate areas.

“Our 30-foot tower rig has arrived in Antigua and over the coming week it will be assembled on site. That equipment will be used for the first time here in Antigua and starting on Monday 17 March, the construction team will commence the piling. There are 270 piles that will be sunk during this operation at an average of 10 meters deep for each pile. Therefore, one can expect some noise as this operation gets underway. We will try to expedite this process to complete no more than between 60 to 90 days maximum,” he revealed.

George also announced that ACP will hold several stakeholder engagements with various groups who will

be affected by the noise as well as they who will benefit from the project when it is completed.

Among those to be targeted for a series of town-hall meetings are residents of the Villa/Point communities. “Our communications and marketing manager and the construction team will be working alongside the requisite government agencies to hold the town-halls to include not just the residents of the neighbouring communities but all of Antigua and Barbuda,” he stated.

The purpose of the town-hall meetings is two-fold; firstly, the ‘bring the project to the people’ to explain in detail what is involved to the gain stakeholder ‘buy-ins’ as well as secondly, to share the renderings with the public and to invite their input and especially, to indicate for they may

benefit.

The cruise terminal is set for completion in the third quarter of this year; the first phase of the tourism development in the area is set for completion by the middle of next year. The project will include a pool, an entertainment area, shops and an area for the sale of local arts and craft.

George said with the acquisition of the San Juan, Puerto Rico, cruise port, by Global Ports, the intention is to use that facility to drive more cruise ships from North America into the Eastern Caribbean to include Antigua and Barbuda.

For Antigua and Barbuda, George revealed that the plan is to capitalize on the country's strengths in home-porting to attract European cruise lines to utilize the country for this type of operation.



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Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Barbuda Affairs Announces 2025 Diplomatic Encounter Forum

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Barbuda Affairs is pleased to announce the upcoming 2025 Diplomatic Encounter Forum, themed “Alignment of Diplomatic Outreach with National Priorities”. Scheduled for 26–28 March 2025, this landmark event will bring together Cabinet Members, Heads of Missions, Ambassadors, Diplomatic and Consular Representatives, Honorary Consuls, Ministry officials and staff, and distinguished speakers to enhance Antigua and Barbuda’s diplomatic engagement and advance the nation’s strategic objectives on the global stage.

Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Bar-

buda Affairs, underscored the Forum’s importance, stating:

“The 2025 Diplomatic Encounter Forum will be a pivotal platform for harmonising our diplomatic outreach with the nation’s strategic priorities. By fostering collaboration among our Ministry staff, diplomatic corps and engaging key stakeholders, we aim to position Antigua and Barbuda as a proactive and influential voice in regional and global affairs.”

The Honourable E.P. Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Barbuda Affairs, highlighted the Forum’s role in shaping the country’s foreign policy agenda:

“As a Small Island De-

veloping State, Antigua and Barbuda stands at the crossroads of vulnerability and resilience in an era of geopolitical uncertainty—where forging new alliances and reaffirming existing partnerships is paramount. The 2025 Diplomatic Encounter Forum will recalibrate our foreign service to reflect critical national priorities, from economic growth and climate resilience to tourism and investment.”

The Forum opens on 26 March 2025 with a Welcome Reception, followed by an Opening Ceremony at the Royalton Hotel. The Honourable Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, will deliver the keynote

address. Panel discussions throughout the event will cover topics such as Antigua and Barbuda’s capacity to host international conferences, the intersection of tourism and the blue economy, the Citizenship by Investment Programme, Artificial Intelligence and Sustainable Development, and shifting geopolitical relations. The Forum concludes with a featured address by the Honourable E.P. Chet Greene, outlining actionable steps to advance Antigua and Barbuda’s diplomatic agenda.

For media inquiries or additional information, please contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Barbuda Affairs.



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Ambassador Webson calls for urgent action on the ABAS in crucial year for SIDS

Antigua and Barbuda is showing strong leadership in navigating the current and emerging challenges for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and is urging for collective action in accelerating the pace of implementation of the ABAS.

The ABAS, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, was the ground-breaking framework document that emerged from the country's hosting of the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States last year. It was adopted by the United Nations last August and since that time considerable work has been done in executing its goals.

But Antigua and Barbuda's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Walton Webson wants the pace quickened, a sentiment that resonated with his colleagues who gathered on Friday for an Ambassadorial Retreat, convened by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA).

Ambassador Webson delivered a detailed presentation that re-



mindful of the key goals of the ABAS and the crucial importance of maintaining course in the midst of the current global environment that

is exposing the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS. Ambassador Webson's presentation sparked a robust exchange of ideas that underscore the ur-

gency in addressing the grave issues facing SIDS while charting the way forward over the next few months.

The Antigua and Barbuda diplomat updated his ambassadorial colleagues and DESA officials about the progress being made on a number of initiatives that underpin the strategic goals of the ABAS. He stressed the crucial importance of adhering to the monitoring and evaluation mechanism that has been integrated into the ABAS in keeping track on the progress of implementation across all priority areas.

He was pleased to report that there was marked progress in the establishment of the Centre of Excellence, the Data Hub and the Debt Sustainability Support Services Initiative as cornerstone pillars that were built from the work of SIDS4.

The DESA initiative was hailed as a truly productive dialogue in seeking to inform and inspire the necessary action on the various priorities of the ABAS as the demand to build a more resilient and sustainable future for SIDS is becoming

Everton Jeffers to be named Commissioner of Police



Acting Commissioner of Police, Everton Jeffers

Acting Commissioner of Police, Everton Jeffers, will be confirmed into the post shortly.

This follows the departure of Commissioner of Police, Atlee Rodney, who is now on leave, but who will soon take up an appointment as Deputy Director of the Regional Security Service based in Barbados.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne made the announcement on the *Browne and Browne* radio programme on Saturday.

“I can say here that

COP Rodney is on leave and his deputy, Everton Jeffers, will eventually be confirmed in the post so there will be a new Commissioner of Police. Additionally, we are going to use the opportunity to elevate a few of the younger officers in the force to ensure continuity. When you look at the top leadership, Jeffers, DC Albert Wade and others, you have to start the planning for the next five years for solidly trained and experienced officers to take over the mantle for the police force,” he indicated.

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Minister of Tourism, Charles Fernandez, Pays Tribute to the Late Mr. Alexandre De Brito



Minister of Tourism, Charles Fernandez

It is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Mr. Alexandre De Brito E Cunha, the immediate past Chairman of the Antigua & Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association (ABHTA). Mr. De Brito dedicated his professional life to advancing the hospitality industry in Antigua and Barbuda, leaving an indelible mark on the sector and the many lives he touched.

Reflecting on this loss, the Hon. H. Charles Fernandez, Minister of Tourism, shared:

“Today, I received the heartbreaking news of the passing of Mr. Alex De Brito. From my interactions with him, I came to know a truly remarkable individual whose passion for the hospitality sector transformed the lives of many. His unwavering dedication to Antigua & Barbuda’s tourism industry—particularly during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic—has left an indelible mark on our nation.”

“Mr. De Brito was not only a leader in his field but also a mentor and friend to many. His kindness, resilience, and commitment to excellence inspired all who had the privilege of knowing him. He firmly believed in the power of hospitality to bring people together, and he embodied this belief through his daily actions.”

“As we honor his legacy, let us continue his spirit of compassion and service, ensuring that his

contributions to the industry endure. On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism, I extend our heartfelt condolences to his family during this difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.”

On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism, we extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues during this difficult time.

Rest in peace, Mr. De Brito. Your impact will continue to inspire us.



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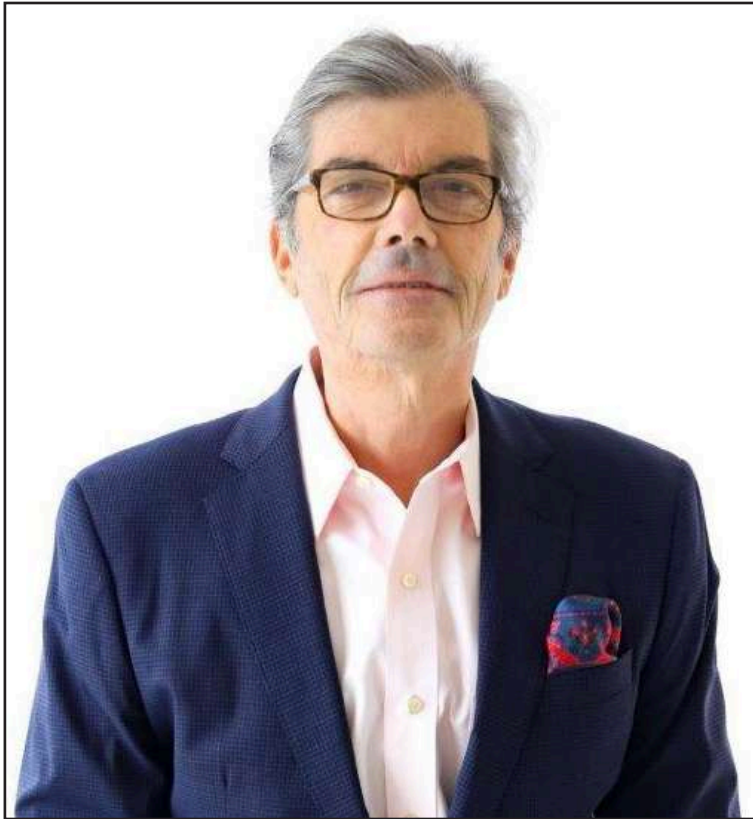
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ABHTA mourns the passing of former Chairman, Alex De Brito



Mr. Alexandre De Brito E Cunha (Alex De Brito)

The Antigua & Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association (ABHTA) is deeply saddened by the passing of Mr. Alexandre De Brito E Cunha (Alex De Brito), the immediate past Chairman of the ABHTA. Mr. De Brito, who handed over the leadership of the Association to Craig Marshall in April 2023, remained a dedicated Board member until his passing.

For decades, Mr. De Brito was an integral figure within the ABHTA, dedicating much of his life to the mission of the Association, which aims to serve as the central voice for the hospitality industry in Antigua and Barbuda. His unwavering commitment to the advancement of the industry and to the development of its people was evident

in his tireless work, especially through challenging periods like the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr. De Brito was instrumental in guiding the Association through this crisis, providing invaluable leadership and ensuring that the needs of the industry were met. His dedication to the ABHTA was nothing short of relentless.

Craig Marshall, Chairman of the ABHTA, shared his heartfelt condolences: *"Mr. De Brito was not only an incredible leader but also a mentor and friend. He was instrumental in my transition into the role of Chairman, and I will forever be grateful for the wisdom and guidance he provided. His presence in the Association, his devotion to our mission, and his love for the industry will*

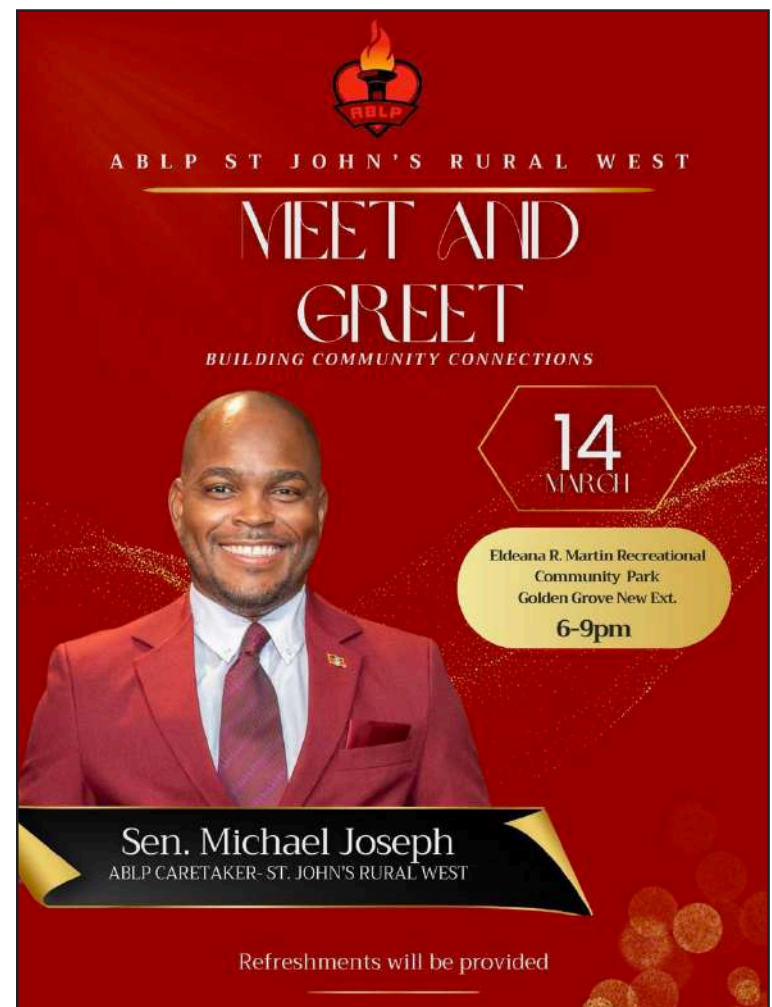
be missed. My thoughts are with his wife Yovanni, his immediate family, and the entire team at Galley Bay Resort during this difficult time."

Patrice Simon, Executive Director of the ABHTA, also expressed her sorrow: *"I am deeply saddened by the loss of Mr. De Brito. He afforded me the opportunity to join the ABHTA as Executive Director, and it was under his strong and steady guidance that I was able to work in this position with confidence. I will miss our many strategy sessions, his leadership, his time, and his mentorship. His presence, wisdom, and encouragement will be greatly missed."*

Rest in eternal peace Mr. De Brito"

The Board of Directors and Secretariat of ABHTA extends its deepest condolences to Mr. De Brito's wife, Yovanni, his extended family, and the entire team at Galley Bay Resort & Spa. Mr. De Brito's legacy of leadership and service will forever be remembered by all who had the privilege of working alongside him.

It's the second time in less than a week that the ABHTA is mourning the loss of one of its key members. Last Thursday, it announced the passing of the country's top hotelier, Sir Robert (Rob) Barrett.



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A triumphant salute to Khan Cordice!



The Ministry of Education, Sports, and the Creative Industries, in collaboration with the Caribbean Union Bank Hells Gate Steel Orchestra, extended a warm and festive welcome to the Director of Culture and Arranger of the Hells Gate Steel Orchestra, Khan Cordice on Sunday, at the V.C. Bird International Airport.

Cordice was the drill-master of Exodus Steel Orchestra, the 2025 Panorama Champions of Trinidad and Tobago. This is a first for an Antigua and Barbuda national and it is a significant achievement for a non-Trinidadian in the 'land of the steel pan'.

The celebratory atmosphere was witnessed by Senator Shenella Govia, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Sports, and the

Creative Industries, who delivered heartfelt remarks on behalf of the Honourable Daryll Matthew and the ministry. She expressed immense pride in his recent accomplishments, stating, "We are immensely proud of your achievements and eagerly anticipate the remarkable contributions you will continue to make in promoting our culture and the creative arts."

The welcoming ceremony was a vibrant display of cultural pride, with enthusiastic support from members of the Hells Gate Steel Orchestra, family, friends, and well-wishers who gathered to show their appreciation and admiration. Adding to the celebration were spirited performances by dancers from the Department of Culture, who dazzled the crowd with their artistry

and grace. The Pointe and Villa Iron Band infused the event with traditional sounds, while the Hells Gate Steel Orchestra delivered a powerful musical performance, creating a true carnival-like atmosphere.

The Ministry of Education, Sports, and the Creative Industries remain committed to supporting the arts and providing platforms for cultural ambassadors to shine both locally and internationally.

Local Hero Joshuanette Francis Shines on International Women's Day: A Beacon of Strength in the Disability Community



“Diagnosed with arthritis at 24, she set out to hike... and change an unequal society”

In celebration of International Women's Day, the inspiring story of local advocate Joshuanette Francis, featured in a recent BBC article, showcases the incredible strength and influence of women in the disability community. Diagnosed with osteoarthritis at just 24 years old, Francis embarked on a journey to hike every nature trail in Antigua and visit all 365 of the island's beaches, defying her prognosis of potentially losing her ability to walk by age 40.

Despite personal setbacks, including losing her job, mortgage, and dream of building her own home, Joshuanette's resilience never waned. Her struggles became the catalyst for change as she transitioned into full-time advocacy, founding the pioneering non-profit Good Humans 268 Inc. in 2023. The organization is

dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with disabilities and creating a more equitable society.

Good Humans 268 Inc. has already made significant strides in Antigua and Barbuda, implementing a nationwide recycling program across 81 schools, diverting over a million bottles and cans from landfills, and employing individuals with disabilities.

This feature is not only a testament to the resilience of Francis but also a showcase of how Antiguan and Barbudans can become beacons of hope and acquire international recognition for their advocacy and humanitarian efforts. Her story is a powerful reminder that women continue to drive social justice and champion the rights of marginalized communities.

“Fighting is exhausting, but change will only happen when more people talk about disability and demand change,” Francis shared. Her unwavering positivity and determination inspire many, including those employed through Good Humans' programs and those impacted by her advocacy.

Good Humans 268 continues to push for the establishment of an Equal Rights Tribunal as mandated by the Disabilities and Equal Opportunities Act of

2017.

To read the full story and gain deeper insight into Joshuanette Francis's remarkable journey, visit the BBC article at <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm23me8x5yeo>.

On this International Women's Day, let us celebrate the trailblazers like Joshuanette Francis, whose cour-

age, strength, and vision pave the way for a more inclusive society. For more information or to support the initiatives of Good Humans 268, visit goodhumans268.org.

Together, we can uplift and empower the voices of women and individuals with disabilities, creating a society where everyone is valued and included.



Barbuda Local Government ELECTION 2025 NOMINATION DAY GUIDELINES

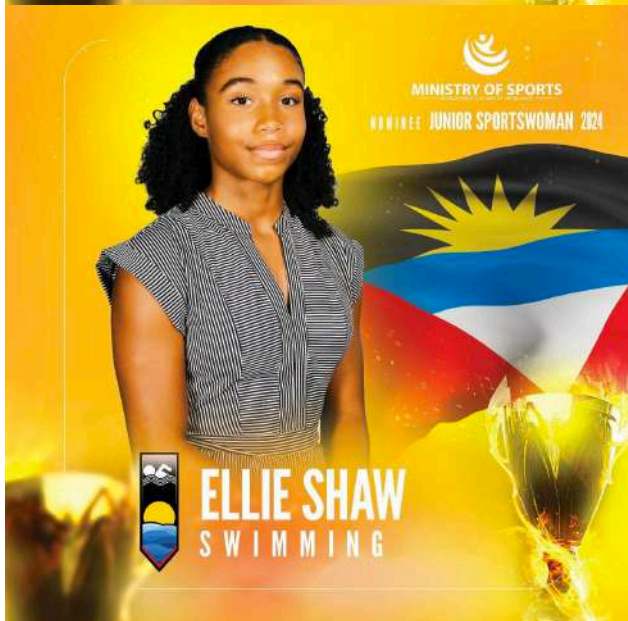
- Nomination Day will take place at the Barbuda Registration Unit at Low School on Friday 14th March 2025 between the hours of 10 am - 1 pm.
- Forms of nomination papers may be obtained at the Barbuda Registration Unit.
- Each candidate must be proposed and seconded by at least two duly registered voters.
- The Returning Officer will at the request of any elector, prepare a nomination paper for signature.
- Nomination Papers may be delivered by the candidate or his proposer or seconder to the Returning Officer during the times and location mentioned.



Antigua Barbuda Junior Sportswoman Nominees



Daena Bird has demonstrated exceptional growth in fencing, claiming the title of the Junior Female Fencing Champion in 2024. Her year was highlighted by her participation in a specialized training workshop with Coach Nestor Rosario, further honing her skills. Daena's journey in the sport, which began in the Antigua Barbuda National Cadets Core, continues to inspire her peers. A dedicated athlete, she remains committed to pushing her limits and promoting fencing in Antigua, encouraging young athletes to pursue the sport with the same resilience she exhibits. With her determination and sportsmanship, Daena is poised for greater success in the future.

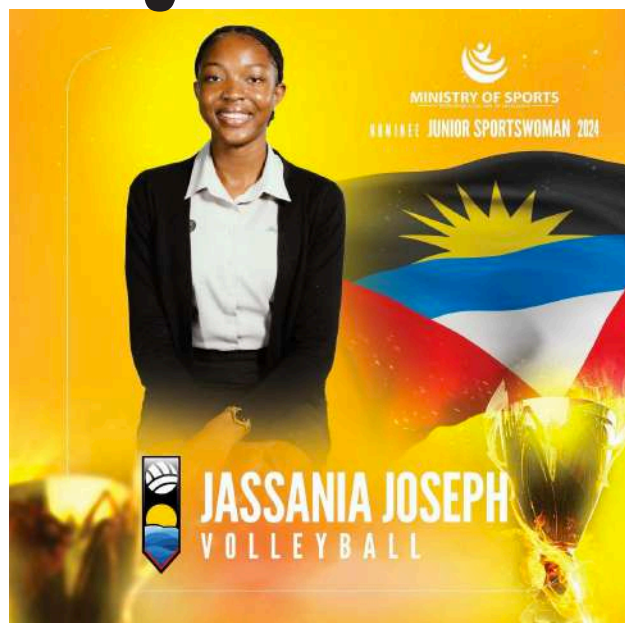


Ellie Shaw continues to excel in breaststroke, establishing herself as a top swimmer in her age group. In 2024, she claimed gold and silver at the OECS Swimming Championships, breaking new national and OECS records, including in the 200 Individual Medley. She also achieved impressive finishes at the Puerto Rico PanAm Aquatics Age Group Championships. Ellie's remarkable performances led to her selection by Universality as the highest female FINA points holder from Antigua & Barbuda for the 2024 Olympics in Paris. Her dedication, achievements, and growth in the sport make her a standout nominee.

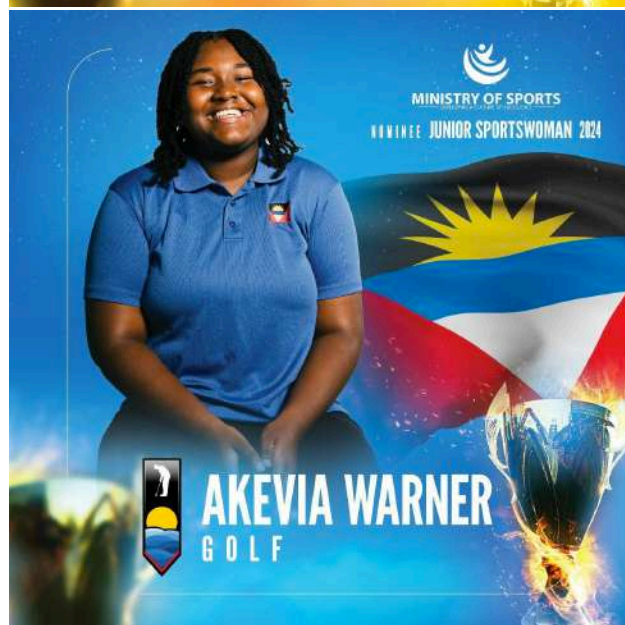


Emily Gaillard had an exceptional 2024 displaying talent and dedication, excelling in both local and international sailing competitions. She secured 2nd place overall in the Laser Radial category at the Bodret Marine Annual Laser and Optimist Nationals Championship, competing against 21 sailors. At the Antigua Classics Yacht Regatta, she won 1st place in the Single-Handed Regatta and placed 2nd at the Y2K Sailing Week Melges24 event. Her international success included a personal best 18th place finish at the Youth World Laser Radial Sailing Championship in Lake Garda, Italy. Emily's dedication, sportsmanship, and passion make her a true ambassador for sailing.

Antigua Barbuda Junior Sportswoman Nominees



Jassania Joseph demonstrated exceptional resilience and skill throughout 2024, solidifying her status as one of Antigua and Barbuda's brightest volleyball talents. Competing in the ABAVA Local Volleyball League, she was the top scorer for her team, Royal Cruisers, and played a pivotal role in Da Squad's victory at the ABAVA Presidents Cup. On the regional stage, she represented Antigua and Barbuda at the ECVA U21 Beach Volleyball Championships in St. Kitts, where an injury hindered her pursuit of gold. Despite this setback, Jassania recovered to compete at the EVA Senior Women's Indoor Championship, showcasing her determination and versatility.



Akevia Warner has been a solid ball striker from a young age, and her hard work was evident in 2024 at the Eastern Caribbean Golf Championship. Competing against 87 golfers from 8 countries, Akevia secured the Lady's Low Gross category, becoming the only female to shoot in the 70s on both days. Her victory brought immense pride to the Antigua and Barbuda Golf Association and served as an inspiring example for junior golfers. Akevia's consistency and skill continue to demonstrate the power of dedication, motivating the next generation of golfers to pursue excellence in the sport.



Tyra Fenton had a phenomenal 2024, proving herself to be one of Antigua and Barbuda's most promising young athletes. At just 13, she dominated national and regional competitions, earning triple gold at the Sir Reginald Samuel Invitational and breaking the U15 national 400m record with a stunning 54.39 at the Cool & Smooth Interschool Championships. Tyra also claimed double bronze at the Carifta Games in Grenada and currently ranks among the top U18 athletes globally, including #1 in the OECS for the 200m and 400m. Her remarkable achievements, dedication, and poise have set a high standard for junior athletes in 2024.

Antigua Barbuda Junior Sportswoman Nominees



Jenah Andrew demonstrated exceptional tenacity and skill on the basketball court in 2024. Andrews led St. Anthony's Secondary School's Female Basketball Team, she guided them to victory in the Cool & Smooth Interschool Basketball Senior Girls League Championship and played a key role in securing second place in the playoffs. Throughout the season, Jenah averaged 15 points, 9 rebounds, 7 assists, and 5 steals per game, showcasing her all-around abilities. Her remarkable performances contributed to her team's highest-ever finish in the Senior Girls category and earned her the title of Female Player of the Year in the competition.



Kimberly Anthony had an exceptional year in 2024, showcasing her talent and leadership in cricket. As vice-captain of the Leeward Islands Under-19 Women's cricket team, she played a pivotal role in the Cricket West Indies Regional Under-19 Women's T20 Championships, including a standout 37 runs off 21 balls. Kimberly also excelled in the Clare Hall Secondary School boys' cricket league, demonstrating her resilience and skill in a male-dominated environment. In 2024, she earned a Cricket West Indies development contract, solidifying her status as a rising star in Caribbean cricket and inspiring young athletes across the region.

Keitonya Skepple a young football prodigy has had an exceptional 2024. At the 2024 Concacaf U-15 Girls Championship in Trinidad, she scored four goals in a 5-0 victory over Grenada, showcasing her talent and leadership. Her contributions helped propel her team to success, earning her widespread recognition. In addition, Keitonya wrapped up her freshman season at Houlton High School with several accolades, including spots on the Penobscot Valley Conference 2nd and All-Aroostook teams. She also trains rigorously with the Maine Sports Training Academy, constantly refining her skills. Keitonya is poised to make even greater strides in her football career.

Stuti Kashyap has had an extraordinary 2024, solidifying her position as a top young talent in table tennis. She won the U15 Girls title at the Caribbean Youth Championships in the Dominican Republic and reached the semifinals in mixed and girls' doubles. Her success continued with podium finishes at major tournaments like the WTT Youth Contenders in San Francisco, Hungary, and Italy. Stuti's resilience and technical prowess rose to 79th in the global U15 rankings, reflecting her dedication and exceptional competitive spirit. Her achievements are a testament to her hard work and potential in the sport.

Commonwealth Day 2025: “Together We Thrive” – A Celebration of Unity and Progress



Carlon Knight

On March 10, 2025, the world will join in celebrating Commonwealth Day, an occasion dedicated to honouring the unity, shared values, and collective action that bind the 56 member states of the Commonwealth. This year’s theme, “Together We Thrive,” reflects the spirit of collaboration and mutual growth that define the Commonwealth. By working in harmony, its diverse nations can overcome challenges, foster prosperity, and create a better, more equitable future for all. For countries like Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth Day is a moment to reflect on the tangible benefits of this global family and renew the commitment to collective progress.

Since its founding in 1949, the Commonwealth has made significant strides in promoting democracy, good governance, and global cooperation. One of its greatest successes has been its role in guiding nations

through peaceful transitions to democracy, advocating for human rights, and strengthening the rule of law. By working together, member states have cultivated a culture that values democratic institutions, free speech, and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

The Commonwealth has also played a transformative role in global health and education. Through initiatives such as the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme, millions have gained access to world-class education. Furthermore, the Commonwealth has spearheaded numerous health campaigns, addressing pressing issues like HIV/AIDS prevention and mental health, while also fostering greater awareness and action on global health challenges.

Equally vital has been the Commonwealth’s commitment to gender equality and empowering women. Numerous programs have worked to promote women’s leadership and ensure their participation in decision-making, creating fairer, more inclusive societies around the world.

Perhaps most notably, the Commonwealth has been a staunch advocate for small states, especially small island nations like Antigua and Barbuda. With 33 of the 56 Commonwealth members classified as small states—and 25 of those being island nations—the Commonwealth has championed critical causes for these vulnerable countries, including climate change, the blue economy, and trade.

For Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth represents a vital link to a global community committed to peace, democracy, and sustainable development. Though Antigua and Barbuda’s connection to the Com-

monwealth is rooted in its colonial past, the significance of this bond today lies in the shared values that continue to shape the nation’s future.

Membership in the Commonwealth provides Antigua and Barbuda with a powerful platform to amplify its voice on the world stage. The nation’s collaboration with other small island developing states (SIDS) addresses challenges such as climate change, trade, and youth development, creating a strong sense of solidarity and shared responsibility.

One of the key benefits Antigua and Barbuda has received from the Commonwealth is the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, which has enabled many of the nation’s brightest minds to study at leading universities across the globe. These educational opportunities equip future leaders with the skills to effect positive change within their communities. Through the Commonwealth Youth Parliament and the Commonwealth Games, the country’s youth have also been able to develop critical leadership and advocacy skills as well as demonstrate their athletic talent on the world stage.

In addition to human development, the Commonwealth has been an invaluable partner in advancing sustainable development. For a small island state like Antigua and Barbuda, addressing environmental sustainability is a matter of great importance. The Commonwealth’s commitment to global cooperation on climate change has allowed Antigua and Barbuda to access vital climate adaptation funds and technical resources to help build resilience to natural disasters and rising

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sea levels. Through the Commonwealth's advocacy for small island states, Antigua and Barbuda's voice is amplified in discussions about the urgent need for climate action on the global stage.

While Antigua and Barbuda has benefitted greatly from its membership in the Commonwealth, it has also made significant contributions to this global network. As a nation situated in the Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda has shared its unique perspectives on issues like climate change, sustainable tourism, and trade. In doing so, the country has influenced the Commonwealth's policies on these matters, advocating for the needs and challenges of small island developing states (SIDS).

Antigua and Barbuda has also been a dedicated advocate for climate

change, ensuring that the voices of small island nations, who are disproportionately impacted by global warming, are heard. The nation's leadership in this area is exemplified by its role as one of the Co-Champions of the Blue Charter Action Group on the Sustainable Blue Economy within the Commonwealth. Through this platform, Antigua and Barbuda champions the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, vital for the economic well-being of island nations.

Moreover, Antigua and Barbuda has enriched the Commonwealth's cultural fabric by contributing its vibrant music, art, and sporting achievements. The nation has played a key role in promoting unity and cross-cultural understanding through its engagement in sporting competitions and hosting international

events. These efforts have helped strengthen the Commonwealth's diverse and inclusive identity.

The Commonwealth continues to be a beacon of hope and cooperation, where nations, regardless of size, can work together to tackle global challenges. As we commemorate Commonwealth Day 2025, the theme "Together We Thrive" serves as a reminder of the immense power of unity, collaboration, and collective action. For Antigua and Barbuda, this theme is a powerful reflection of the shared aspirations and achievements that unite its people with those of the broader Commonwealth community. Together, Antigua and Barbuda and its fellow Commonwealth nations strive toward a more prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive world.



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Commentary

From Challenges to Triumph: The Transformative Leadership of my Headmistress Ms. Gertrude Spencer”



By Garfield Joseph, MBA

In the heart of Clare Hall, Antigua, stands a beacon of hope and transformation—Clare Hall Secondary School. Established in 1971, this institution has proudly served the community for over five decades. Anchored by the motto *“Striving for Excellence,”* the school embodies a commitment to nurturing minds and fostering growth.

The arrival of Ms. Gertrude Spencer marked a turning point in Clare Hall’s journey. It felt like divine intervention when she took on the mantle of leadership during a time the school urgently needed a guiding light. This article is a tribute to an extraordinary Headmistress, whose influence extended far beyond the classroom walls to uplift students and inspire change—myself included.

Giving Hope and Nurturing Confidence

Ms. Spencer had an exceptional gift for instilling self-belief in every student she encountered. In a world where many young people face adversities, her steady presence served as an unwavering source of support. She consistently saw the potential in each of us, regardless of our cir-

cumstances, and empowered us to believe in ourselves.

I must confess, I was more inclined toward cricket than academics during my early school years. Yet, under Ms. Spencer’s guidance, my focus shifted. She championed the value of curiosity and encouraged us to read widely, going beyond the confines of our subjects. Her lessons opened our minds and equipped us with skills that transcended the classroom.

Ms. Spencer’s compassion extended further still. Her genuine care and consistent encouragement helped countless students like me feel valued, capable, and understood. As someone who quietly struggled with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), her insights and adaptability made a world of difference. She guided me with patience and understanding, creating an environment where I—and many others—could thrive.

Transforming Clare Hall Secondary School

When Ms. Spencer stepped into her role as Headmistress, Clare Hall faced significant challenges. Limited resources, discipline issues, and a poor reputation posed hurdles for the school. Yet, Ms. Spencer approached these obstacles with unshakable determination.

She implemented transformative changes that revitalized the school. From introducing innovative academic programs and extracurricular activities to spearheading infrastructure improvements, her leadership brought fresh life to Clare Hall. Discipline was maintained through mutual respect and understanding, fostering a safe, structured, and

supportive environment.

These transformative efforts gradually bore fruit, reshaping Clare Hall Secondary School’s identity. Under Ms. Spencer’s visionary leadership, the school began to shed its underdog image, emerging as a symbol of resilience and excellence.

Celebrating Achievements

As I look around today, I see the remarkable successes of so many individuals who have excelled in diverse fields such as aviation, teaching, farming, construction, the automobile industry, heavy-duty equipment operation, banking, law, and medicine, making their contribution to society. Many of us might not have realized our potential without Ms. Spencer’s guidance. Her dedication to nurturing talent and encouraging excellence paved the way for our achievements, which continue to inspire gratitude and admiration. These successes, at home and abroad some including the great states of the USA, and Canada, stand as living proof of Ms. Spencer’s transformative influence on countless lives.

Under Ms. Spencer’s leadership, Clare Hall Secondary School reached milestones that once seemed unattainable. One defining achievement was winning Antigua’s *“Top of the Form”* quiz competition, a testament to the academic rigor she cultivated. The joy and pride we felt for the first time, as students of Clare Hall Secondary, cannot be expressed in words.

In addition, Ms. Spencer championed sports as an integral part of education. Clare Hall’s cricket

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team became a formidable force in inter-school tournaments, while its track and field athletes consistently shone on the field. These victories nurtured teamwork, perseverance, and school pride—values Ms. Spencer held dear.

A Legacy of Transformation

Ms. Spencer had a rare ability to uncover the hidden potential in students, even those who faced personal or academic challenges. She “polished the brass,” as they say, helping us shine in ways we never thought possible.

Without her tireless efforts, many of us, including myself, might not have achieved the success we enjoy today. Ms. Spencer’s contributions

were a beacon of hope, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and limited resources. She taught us that determination, care, and a belief in oneself could overcome even the toughest barriers.

Her legacy lives on in the countless lives she touched, in the students who have gone on to achieve remarkable things, and in the community she helped uplift. While her well-deserved retirement marks the end of her direct role in education, her influence continues to inspire future generations.

Conclusion

As I reflect on my time at Clare Hall Secondary School, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for Ms.

Gertrude Spencer’s profound influence. Her belief in our potential, her compassionate leadership, and her relentless dedication to excellence have left an indelible mark on our lives. Decades later, I still carry the lessons she imparted—a testament to her transformative impact.

This tribute is a humble attempt to honor a remarkable Headmistress who truly transformed lives and uplifted communities. Ms. Spencer, your legacy continues to inspire and guide future generations. May the extraordinary work you have done be counted unto you as righteousness. For, as the good book says, *“Whatever you have done unto the least of these, you have done it unto me.”*



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‘Raging at injustice’ – Mavado slams Jamaica’s justice system after son’s conviction overturned



Dancehall artiste Mavado has expressed relief and outrage following Friday’s Court of Appeal decision to overturn the murder conviction of his son, Dantay Brooks, and his co-accused, Andre Hinds.

“There is a fire raging within me at the injustice,” he said in a post on his official Instagram page on Saturday. Brooks and Hinds, who were convicted in January 2021 for the 2018 murder of Lorenzo Thomas in Cassava Piece, St Andrew, were freed after the appellate judges found a “substantial miscarriage of justice” in how the trial was conducted. The court cited issues with identification evidence, credibility of the prosecution’s sole eyewitness, and procedural errors by the trial judge. In the social media post, Mavado, whose given name is David Brooks, hailed the decision while condemning the authorities involved in the prosecution of the matter. “It’s taken me some time to process all that has taken place, but I am ready to speak. To God be the glory; He comes first in everything

we do. I am naturally elated, relieved, and full of joy that my son Dantay has been freed from the State-imposed hell he has endured for seven years of his young life.” Dantay was 18 years old at the time of his life sentence in March 2021.

The entertainer has expressed anger at the legal system, questioning how the case even proceeded to trial. “But at the same time, there is a fire raging within me at the injustice - or as the appeal judges put it - **SUBSTANTIAL MIS-CARRIAGE OF JUSTICE** - that has taken place. A trial without jury decided on by a lone judge who chose not to take into account the amount of times the **SINGLE** witness changed his statements, admitted to lying to police and fabricated his account of events,” the 44-year-old said. In their ruling, Justices Marva McDonald-Bishop, David Fraser, and Kissock Laing found that the trial judge Leighton Pusey failed to adequately assess the reliability of the sole eyewitness. The court highlighted inconsistencies in the witness’

statements, his initial failure to identify the accused, and the poor lighting conditions during the alleged crime.

The judges also ruled that the voice identification evidence used against Brooks and Hinds did not meet legal standards and should never have been admitted.

Mavado indicated that he and his legal team will be pursuing legal action against those responsible for what he believes was an orchestrated effort to convict his son unfairly.

“We will be pursuing full legal action against ALL parties involved in this cruel act of injustice and will not stop fighting until real justice is served upon those who perpetrated this awful, unlawful and unwarranted action against my son and his co-accused Andre Hinds,” he said.

He also accused authorities of attempting to “drag [his] name through the mud” to sensationalise the case.

“They also tried to drag my name through the mud to help them carry out their wrongdoings and garner headlines for themselves. Well, this story and those headlines are far from over.” The deejay praised his son’s legal team, led by Hugh Wildman, and Oswest Senior Smith, who led the case for Hinds.

“I would like to thank Hugh Wildman, who never had a doubt this miscarriage of justice would be overturned from the first minute he started reading the court transcript. His leadership and bravery against a system designed to destroy the lives of

innocent youth is a service to his country. Big up Oswest Senior Smith for his sharp legal mind and assiduous work in freeing my son and Andre.”

When Brooks and Hinds walked free from the Tower Street Adult Correctional Centre, they were greeted with tears of joy and embraces from family and friends. Brooks’ attorney, Hugh Wildman, said his client was overjoyed and grateful. “He is so happy, he is so excited, and he is thanking us profusely,” Wildman stated. Hinds’ other attorney, Kemar Robinson, also noted his client’s elation, adding that he immediately went to see his grandmother on her birthday after being freed.

Prosecutors had led evidence that Brooks and Hinds were among five men who entered a house house, shot Thomas, and then pushed his father into another room. They were accused of attempting to sever Thomas’ head before aborting that plan because the machete was too dull. They then allegedly poured gasoline on the house and the body before setting both on fire.

Prosecutors relied on the eyewitness testimony of Thomas’ father, who indicated that he knew his son’s killers from the community and had not only seen the face of both men but had also recognised them by their voices.

However, both men had maintained their innocence, stating that they were never at the scene and had raised a defence of alibi. (Jamaica Gleaner)

DR: Italian passenger arrested with cocaine at airport

A total of 24 packages of suspected cocaine were recently found during joint inspection operations at Las Américas International Airport (JFPG).

As part of enhanced counter-narcotics operations, authorities acted on intelligence reports to question an Italian national who was preparing to board a flight to Madrid, Spain.

Security personnel detected suspicious images during the scanning of the passenger's luggage, prompting a more thorough examination.

Following established protocols, authorities accompanied by a prosecutor opened the suitcase and discovered 24 packages of the presumed cocaine wrapped in adhesive tape and marked with various logos.

“The 65-year-old foreigner is being transferred to the Permanent Attention Court of Santo Domingo Province to face charges for violation of Law 50-88 on drugs and controlled substances,” officials stated.

The Public Ministry and DNCD



have launched an investigation to determine if other individuals were involved in the thwarted attempt to transport the suspected drug shipment to Madrid.

Authorities also confiscated Dominican pesos and US dollars, a mobile phone, personal documents, and other

evidence from the suspect.

The 24 packages have been sent to the National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF) for laboratory analysis and confirmation of the substance. (Loop Caribbean)

4 countries to go head-to-head in plus-size Caribbean beauty pageant

The British Virgin Islands will host the inaugural Miss Elegantly Plus Caribbean Queen Pageant next week, bringing together contestants from four nations across the region to celebrate diversity in beauty standards.

Scheduled for March 14 at the Eileene L. Parsons Auditorium in Tortola, the competition will feature delegates from the host British Virgin Islands alongside representatives from the U.S. Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and Antigua and Barbuda.

Organizers have branded the event under the theme “Boldness Revived,” positioning it as a milestone for inclu-



sive representation within Caribbean pageantry.

Public participation is being encouraged through the People's Choice Award, with voting currently underway via the contestant flyers posted on the Miss Elegantly Plus Pageant social media page and through the pageant's dedicated Instagram account @misselegantlyplus.

The voting period will remain open until March 13, concluding just one day before the main competition.

(Loop Caribbean)

North Korea unveils nuclear-powered submarine



North Korea unveiled for the first time a nuclear-powered submarine under construction, a weapons system that can pose a major security threat to South Korea and the United States.

State media on Saturday released photos showing what it called “a nuclear-powered strategic guided missile submarine,” as it reported leader Kim Jong Un’s visits to major shipyards where warships are built.

The Korean Central News Agency, or KCNA, didn’t provide details on the submarine but said Kim was briefed on its construction.

The naval vessel appears to be a 6,000-ton-class or 7,000-ton-class one which can carry about 10 missiles, said Moon Keun-sik, a South Korean submarine expert who teaches at Seoul’s Hanyang Univer-

sity. He said the use of the term “the strategic guided missiles” meant it would carry nuclear-capable weapons.

“It would be absolutely threatening to us and the US,” Moon said.

A nuclear-powered submarine was among a long wishlist of sophisticated weaponry that Kim vowed to introduce during a major political conference in 2021 to cope with what he called escalating US-led military threats.

Other weapons were solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles, hypersonic weapons, spy satellites and multi-warhead missiles. North Korea has since performed a run of testing activities to acquire them.

North Korea obtaining a greater ability to fire missiles from underwater is a worrying development

because it’s difficult for its rivals to detect such launches in advance.

Questions about how North Korea, a heavily sanctioned and impoverished country, could get resources and technology to build nuclear-powered submarines have surfaced.

Moon, the submarine expert, said North Korea may have received Russian technological assistance to build a nuclear reactor to be used in the submarine in return for supplying conventional weapons and troops to support Russia’s war efforts against Ukraine.

He also said North Korea could launch the submarine in one or two years to test its capability before its actual deployment.

North Korea has an estimated 70-90 diesel-powered submarines in one of the world’s largest fleets. How-

ever, they are mostly aging ones capable of launching only torpedoes and mines, not missiles.

In 2023, North Korea said it had launched what it called its first “tactical nuclear attack submarine,” but foreign experts doubted the North’s announcement and speculated it was likely a diesel-powered submarine disclosed in 2019. Moon said there has been no confirmation that it has been deployed.

North Korea has conducted a slew of underwater-launched ballistic missile tests since 2016, but all launches were made from the same 2,000-ton-class submarine which has a single launch tube. Many experts call it a test platform, rather than an operational submarine in active service

In recent days, North Korea has been dialing up its fiery rhetoric against the US and South Korea ahead of their upcoming annual military drills set to start Monday.

During his visits to the shipyards, Kim said North Korea aims to modernize water-surface and underwater warships simultaneously. He stressed the need to make “the incomparably overwhelming warships fulfill their mission” to contain “the inveterate gunboat diplomacy of the hostile forces,” KCNA reported Saturday. (Jamaica Gleaner)

Flight cancellations at Germany's Hamburg Airport affect more than 40,000 passengers after strike

Flight cancellations at Hamburg Airport after a surprise strike by workers affected more than 40,000 passengers on Sunday, a day before a planned wider protest across Germany amid new contract negotiations.

Only 10 of more than 280 scheduled flights went as planned early Sunday, the airport said. Many service desks sat empty as would-be passengers lined up to seek information about the cancellations.

The surprise walkout, which reportedly took place with only about a half-hour advance notice, came before a broader series of preannounced strikes across 13 airports in Germany on Monday, organized by the



ver.di union.

The union, whose members work in areas including passenger services and cargo and goods screening, called for Sunday's strike by security control staff to put pressure on company

representatives amid collective bargaining talks.

"The behavior of the trade union ver.di is dishonorable: The strike without notice hits Hamburg Airport at the start of the vacation season," airport spokes-

woman Katja Bromm said in a statement. She said that on Monday, arrivals would be possible, and that "considerable disruptions and cancellations" were expected.

Bromm said that Sunday's walkouts were "excessive and unfair to tens of thousands of travelers who have nothing to do with the disputes."

For months, ver.di has been negotiating a new agreement that aims to improve occupational health and safety, provide more vacation days, an increase in the annual bonus to 50% and the freedom to choose a doctor for employees' regular, mandatory medical exams, among other things. (NBC News)

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Syria's president calls for 'peace, calm' amid brutal clashes

Fighting has erupted at Syria's Baniyas gas power plant, just hours after the country's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa urged for peace amid escalating communal violence that has killed hundreds of civilians in the coastal areas.

Syria's state-run news agency SANA reported on Sunday that fighting broke out with security forces at the plant after an attack by "remnants of the former regime".

Earlier on Sunday, al-Sharaa stated the need to "preserve national unity and domestic peace; we can live together" as newly appointed forces clash with fighters from removed President Bashar al-Assad's Alawite sect.

The fighting began after pro-Assad fighters coordinated attacks on security forces on Thursday. The attacks spiralled into revenge killings as thousands of armed supporters of Syria's new leadership went to the coastal areas to support the security forces.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based war monitor, at least 745 Alawite civilians have been killed in Latakia and Tartous since Thursday, as well as about 125 members of the government's



security forces.

In addition, 148 pro-Assad fighters were killed, the Observatory added, taking the overall death toll to 1,018.

Al Jazeera has been unable to independently verify those figures.

UN rights chief Volker Turk has called for an immediate halt to the violence in Syria.

"There must be prompt, transparent and impartial investigations into all the killings and other violations, and those responsible must be held to account, in line with international law norms and standards. Groups terrorising civilians must also be held accountable," Turk said.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Sunday condemned the "massacres" of minorities in Syria and demanded that the interim administration hold those responsible to account.

"Syria's interim authorities must hold the perpetrators of these massacres against Syria's minority communities accountable," Rubio said in a statement.

"Rest assured about Syria, this country has the characteristics for survival," al-Sharaa said in a video at a mosque in Mazzah, Damascus. "What is currently happening in Syria is within the expected challenges."

Al-Sharaa has said anyone targeting civilians would be held accountable.

Later on Sunday, SANA reported, quoting a source in the Ministry of Defence, that "intense clashes in the vicinity of the village of Betannita in the countryside of Tartous" were taking place.

"Many war criminals affiliated with the al-Assad regime and groups of armed remnants fled to the village," the report added.

Colonel Hassan Abdul Ghani, spokesperson for the ministry, said that "the second phase of the military operation aimed at pursuing the remnants and officers of the defunct regime has begun in the countryside of Latakia and Tartous, after restoring security and stability in the main coastal cities". (Al Jazeera English)

World Health Organization warns of possible tuberculosis surge because of USAID cuts

Health authorities are calling attention to a looming consequence of the Trump administration's gutting of the U.S. Agency for International Development: the risk of a global surge in tuberculosis cases and deaths.

The World Health Organization warned this week that the sweeping funding cuts could endanger millions of lives, since many countries depend on foreign aid for TB prevention, testing and treatment.

"Without immediate action, hard-won progress in the fight against TB is at risk," Dr. Tereza Kasheva, director of the WHO's Global Programme on TB and Lung Health, said in a statement Wednesday.

Globally, tuberculosis is responsible for the most deaths of any infectious disease. Around 1.25 million people died from the bacterial infection in 2023, the latest data available, and new cases hit an all-time high that year, with around 8.2 million people diagnosed, according to the WHO.

Until recently, USAID provided about a quarter of the international donor funding for tuberculosis services in other countries — up to \$250 million annually, according to the WHO. The agency operated tuberculosis programs

in 24 countries.

The WHO said that because of the U.S. funding cuts, drug supply chains in other countries are "break-

ing down," laboratory services are "severely disrupted" and surveillance systems are "collapsing," making it difficult to identify, monitor and treat tuberculosis cases. Some research trials have been halted, as well.



That has incapacitated some national tuberculosis programs, with the WHO warning of devastating impacts in 18 countries with the highest burden of disease, many of which are in Africa.

In Uganda, the rollback of USAID funding has made it hard to pay community health workers, leading to understaffing, said Dr. Luke Davis, a clinical

epidemiologist at the Yale School of Public Health. Such workers play a critical role in notifying people who test positive for

tuberculosis, getting them treatment and screening their close contacts for infection. "Patients may get a diagnosis of TB after they've left the clinic because they're waiting for the results, and they may be at home with TB and not know they have TB. There's literally not the resources to go out and reach those people," he said. "People are dying because they have disease that hasn't been diagnosed, hasn't been treated, hasn't been prevented."

Since Jan. 24, the discontinuation of USAID funding may have led to an estimated 3,400 addi-

tional tuberculosis deaths and 6,000 additional infections, according to a project modeling the impact of the cuts. The

model is coordinated by the Stop TB Partnership, a United Nations organization that aims to eliminate tuberculosis as a public health problem.

Any increase in the disease's spread could affect the U.S., since it would allow more people who live or travel abroad to bring the disease in. Already, tuberculosis cases in the U.S. have risen: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recorded more than 9,600 cases in 2023, a nearly 16% increase from the year prior and a 9% increase over pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

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A persistent outbreak in Kansas has led to 68 active cases since January 2024.

“What happens when we travel overseas? I’ve known servicemen and -women who come back with multidrug-resistant TB after a tour of duty. I’ve known of bankers, people from Silicon Valley who work overseas, come back with the disease,” said Dr. Kenneth Castro, a professor of global health at Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health.

“The problem with all these infectious diseases is that they know no borders, and neither should our efforts stop at the border,” he said.

A resurgence of tuberculosis in the U.S. from 1985 to 1992 was attributed, in part, to a decline in tuberculosis control programs and rising global cases.

The White House did not provide a comment in time for publication.

People with active TB usually develop a bad cough and chest pain. They may cough up blood and mucus and have difficulty breathing. Left untreated, the bacterial infection can damage the lungs and spread to other parts of their body such as the brain, kidneys and spine. It can be fatal for up to two-thirds of people with active cases who

aren’t properly treated, according to the WHO.

But treatment is no quick matter: Tuberculosis patients must usually take antibiotics for six months, and stopping in the middle can lead a person to become resistant to the antibiotics, then spread that drug-resistant TB strain to others.

Until the recent cuts, USAID had been instrumental in conducting surveillance to identify new tuberculosis cases, improving supply chains to get medicine to sick patients, and investing in clinical trials for new therapies and diagnostic tests. In communities that lacked radiologists to read X-rays, USAID also funded portable X-ray systems that use artificial intelligence to make diagnoses.

Additionally, the agency helped countries procure drugs at lower costs, in part by funding the Global Drug Facility, a group that negotiates drug prices with suppliers.

Many of those efforts came to a halt when the Trump administration stripped the agency down to bare bones. After firing or furloughing contractors in January, the administration laid off 1,600 staffers, then placed thousands more on administrative leave last month. The State Department slashed nearly 5,800 of USAID’s foreign aid awards —

more than 90% of the total — according to a lawsuit filed by nonprofits and businesses that receive USAID funding. The awards totaled \$54 billion, according to The Associated Press.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a waiver in January allowing USAID’s lifesaving humanitarian programs — including tuberculosis prevention and treatment — to continue, despite a 90-day freeze on foreign aid. But in a memo to staffers last month, a USAID official said that nearly all of the funding needed to keep those programs going had been terminated.

The official warned of “preventable death, destabilization, and threats to national security on a massive scale,” then was placed on administrative leave after sending the memo.

The downsizing of USAID has been part of the broader effort to reduce federal spending led by Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency. Musk said on X last month that he was “feeding USAID into the wood chipper,” and that he and Trump agreed the agency should be shut down.

So far, federal judges have denied requests from USAID staffers and contractors to continue their work

while lawsuits challenging their terminations play out. The Supreme Court on Wednesday, however, said the Trump administration had to pay USAID contractors \$2 billion for work already completed.

The WHO has a goal to reduce tuberculosis cases by 80% and deaths by 90% by 2030. That was already aspirational but is even further out of sight now, said Dr. Priya Shete, an associate professor of medicine and epidemiology at the University of California, San Francisco.

USAID played a significant role in getting diagnostic tools and treatments over the “last mile” to patients, Shete said. That included finding ways to transport drugs when road conditions were poor and funding mobile clinics that offered X-rays and bacterial testing.

“The loss of resources to get across the finish line is what’s really disturbing to some people, and will end up costing millions of lives potentially,” she said.

Experts worry the disruption to clinical trials will also hinder the development of treatments for drug-resistant infections and of new ways to detect cases in children, who are often hard to diagnose.

“The innovations do come back and benefit the U.S. as well,” Davis said. (NBC News)

Sports News

Guydadli FC among winners in Second Division League



Guydadli FC, Blackburn Palace, and West Ham FC all won in the latest round of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League on Friday.

Guydadli FC consolidated their position in sixth place, recording their 10th win in 15 matches by snatching a 4-0 victory against the Young Warriors at the Buckley's playing field.

Imani Joyce scored twice with conversions in the 37th and 56th minutes after

Michael Peters opened the scoring with a 21st-minute conversion. Ethan Camacho wrapped up the match with a strike in the 62nd minute.

The Young Warriors finished the match with 10 men after Daryl Burton received a red card and was expelled in the 34th minute.

Guydadli will advance to 30 points from 15 encounters, while the Young Warriors will remain in 14th place in the 17-team standings with 10 points after losing for the 12th time in 16 matches.

Jahmari George scored four times as Blackburn Palace secured their eighth win in 14 matches with a 9-1 drubbing of Real Blizzard at the ABFA Technical Center.

George had conversions

in the 37th, 45th, 47th, and 50th minutes. The other goals were scored by Jameal Lawrence in the second minute, Jayvin Ambrose in the seventh, Shanoy Spencer in the 61st, Johnte Dyer in the 76th, and Mario Lewis in the 81st minute.

The result allows Blackburn Palace to remain in seventh place by advancing to 24 points from 14 matches.

Real Blizzard will stay in 11th place with 18 points after suffering their eighth defeat in 16 matches.

West Ham came from behind to clinch their fifth win in 15 matches by snatching a 3-2 victory against Bethesda at the Bethesda playing field.

Goals by Vernon Jeffers

Jr. in the eighth minute and Devin Martin in the 25th minute gave Bethesda a two-nil lead. Jahmarley Barzey reduced the deficit on the stroke of halftime with a 45th-minute conversion.

Anderson Herbert then scored twice in a ten-minute span to snatch victory for West Ham. Anderson struck the equalizer in the 48th minute and snatched the winner with a strike in the 58th minute.

The result allows West Ham to stay one place and a point behind Bethesda in the standings. West Ham will remain in 13th place by advancing to 16 points from 15 matches.

Bethesda will remain in 12th place with 17 points after crashing to their eighth defeat in 15 matches.



Windwards beat Leewards in regional four-day championship

The Windward Islands Volcanoes completed an innings and 60-run victory over the Leeward Islands Hurricanes on day three of their round four West Indies Championship clash at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium in Gros Islet on Friday.

The Leewards started day three on 165 for seven off 44 overs in their first innings, trailing by 315. They were able to face just over seven more overs before being dismissed for 195, trailing by 285.

Mikyle Louis, who entered the day on 82 not out, eventually fell for a top score with 84 off 152 balls, including 13 fours.

Pacer Gilon Tyson bagged five for 45, while Ryan John finished with four for 42. Following on, the Leewards were bowled out in their second innings for 225 in 61.2 overs.

Justin Greaves led the way with 67 off 113 balls, including three fours, while Cameron Pennyfeather (39), Mikyle Louis (39), and captain Rakheem Cornwall (31) made useful contributions with the bat.

Shadrack Descarte took three for 58, while Ryan John picked up two for 21. Leg-spinner Darel Cyrus and off-spinner Kenneth Dember also took two wickets, each.

Summarized scores: Windward Islands Volcanoes 480 all out in 116.3



Gilon Tyson

overs (Shadrack Descarte 119, Ryan John 109, Kenneth Dember 75 not out; Oshane Thomas 4-66, Justin Greaves 3-102).

Leeward Islands Hurricanes 195 all out in 51.1 overs (Mikyle Louis 84, Jahmar Hamilton 40; Gilon Tyson 5-45, Ryan John 4-42) and 225 all out in 61.2 overs (Justin Greaves 67, Mikyle Louis 39, Cameron Pennyfeather 39, Rakheem Cornwall 31; Shadrack Descarte 3-58, Ryan John 2-21, Kenneth Dember 2-33, Darel Cyrus 2-43).

Bryan Charles produced a masterful spell of off-spin bowling to guide Trinidad and Tobago Red Force to a 125-run victory over West Indies Academy at Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua on Saturday.

Charles' stunning six for 47 dismantled the Academy's batting lineup as they crumbled to 152 all out,

well short of their 278-run target.

Scores: Trinidad and Tobago Red Force 304 and 241; West Indies Academy 268 and 152.

Barbados Pride claimed a commanding 10-wicket victory over Combined Campuses and Colleges (CCC) on Friday's third day of their fourth-round encounter at the Kensington Oval in Barbados.

After amassing a 166-run first-innings lead, thanks to a strong 428-run reply to CCC's 262, Pride's bowlers, led by Jomel Warrican (5-59), Roston Chase (2-69), and Kemar Roach (2-14), made light work of the opposition, bundling them out for 193 in their second innings.

That left Pride with a target of just 28 runs, which captain Kraigg Brathwaite (15 not out) and Zachary McCaskie (13 not out) chased down with ease to

secure their third win of the campaign.

Chase, who also had a century, ended with match figures of seven for 139, while Warrican had match figures of eight for 135. Scores: CCC 262 and 193; Barbados Pride 428 and 28-0.

Left-arm spin twins Gudakesh Motie and Veerasammy Permaul starred to lead the Guyana Harpy Eagles to a 214-run win over the Jamaica Scorpions at Sabina Park on Saturday.

The Harpy Eagles will next host the Windward Islands Volcanoes in round five, while the Scorpions will travel to Antigua to face the West Indies Academy.

Summarized scores: Guyana Harpy Eagles 339 all out in 109.2 overs (Kevlon Anderson 116, Matthew Nandu 61, Kemol Savory 48; Odean Smith 5-68, Marquino Mindley 2-36, Tamarie Redwood 2-109) and 193-3 in 69.3 overs (Tagenarine Chanderpaul 74, Kevlon Anderson 50 not out, Tevin Imlach 31).

Jamaica Scorpions 44 all out in 25.5 overs (Ronaldo Alimohamed 6-17, Nial Smith 4-21) and 274 all out in 85 overs (Kirk McKenzie 147, Brandon King 53; Gudakesh Motie 4-69, Veerasammy Permaul 3-50, Ronaldo Alimohamed 3-52).

Aguilleira expresses happiness after T&T win women's Super50 Cup

Trinidad & Tobago Red Force Divas head coach Merissa Aguilera is “really happy and excited” after her team claimed the 2025 CG United Women’s Super50 Cup title on Friday.

The Red Force Divas won their first CG United Women’s Super50 Cup title since 2017 when they defeated Barbados in the final at Warner Park.

“Firstly, let me thank God. If he didn’t give us this opportunity, we would not have been here today. I really want to say thanks to the players and the management staff for the support that they have given me,” Aguilera said in a post-match interview.

“I honestly believe that the girls have been working really hard. I’m happy to see the performances, the way they built up throughout the tournament and how they executed today. So, I’m really happy and excited,” added the former West Indies captain.

The two teams met previously in round four where Trinidad & Tobago handed the Bajans their first loss of the season, bowling them out for 76 before reaching 77 for five in 22 overs.

On that occasion, all 10 Barbados wickets fell to spinners and the Trinis employed that tactic once again on Friday, albeit on a new surface.

It worked well for a second time in a matter of days as spin combined for seven of the 10 wickets to fall as the Bajans capitulated for just 71 in 29 overs.

“Obviously, what is working for you, you need to stick with it and I think the spinners have been dominating. I think we have the best spinning attack in the competition and we continued to do so throughout our games so what sense is there in



Players of the Trinidad and Tobago team in celebration after winning the 2025 CG United Women’s Super50 Cup title at Warner Park in St. Kitts on Friday, March 7.

changing something that has been working?

“We had the discussions and went ahead with it and it became successful again,” she added.

Aguilleira also gave credit to her captain Karishma Ramharack’s leadership throughout the tournament.

“Karishma has been exceptional. From the first time that we had some sort of interaction based on her as the captain and myself as the coach, I saw that she has a lot of potential. She has been doing pretty well and I think she is a really good prospect for West Indies cricket,” she said.

Meanwhile, the Windward Islands trounced the Leeward Islands by 71 runs in the fifth-place playoff at St. Paul’s Sports Complex.

The Windwards women made 130 off 34.2 overs. Opener Jannillea Glasgow struck 50, and Nerisa Crafton scored 21. Davronique Maynard bagged four for 20, Chey-Ann Moses claimed two for 10, and Rozel Liburd captured two for 37.

In reply, the Leewards women

were bundled out for 59 in 21.1 overs. Shawnisha Hector got 24. Afy Fletcher grabbed five for 12, and Zaida James took three for 10.

Guyana claim the bronze medal after crushing the 2024 champions Jamaica by 82 runs in the playoff for third place at the Conaree Sports Club.

Guyana women made 182 for eight off their allotted 50 overs. Realeanna Grimmond hammered 71, Cherry-Ann Fraser got 47, and captain Shemaine Campbelle made 26. Neisha-Ann Waisome picked up three for 25, Roshana Outar claimed three for 27, and Jodian Morgan took two for 29.

In reply, Jamaica women were all out for 100 in 31.2 overs. Captain and opener Rashada Williams made 27, and Neisha-Ann Waisome scored 21. Nyia Latchman bagged four for 15, Plaffiana Millington captured two for 25, and Trisha Hardat took two for 30.



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Sports News

Several new records set at 9th National Swimming Championships



Members of the Vipers Swimming Club display their winnings.



Coaches and members of the War Swimming Club display their winnings. (Photos courtesy of the ABSF)

A total of four national records and seven age group records were established at the 9th National Swimming Championships, organized by the Antigua and Barbuda Swimming Federation (ABSF).

Held from February 28 to March 2, the short course meters (SCM) competition showcased outstanding performances from local swimmers.

Madison MacMillian and Ellie Shaw led the record-breaking performances, capturing four national records between them.

MacMillian claimed three (3) national records in the girls' 15-17 age group. She set new records in the 50-meter backstroke with a time of 30.97 seconds, the 200-meter backstroke clocking 2:25.48, and the 400-meter individual medley, finishing in 5:15.73. Notably, all three records also serve as new age group records.

Ellie Shaw secured a national and age group record in the girls' 15-17 category for the 200-meter breaststroke, completing the race in 2:45.16.

Other notable age group record-breakers included Bianca Mitchell's new age group record in the 200-meter freestyle in the girls' 18 and over category; Anya DeGannes' new age group record in the 13-14 category for the 400-meter individual medley; and Alessandro Bazzoni's new age group record in the boys' 11-12 category for the 200-meter freestyle.

In addition to these remarkable record-breaking performances, many of the swimmers demonstrated significant personal improvements, recording new personal best times.

The championships saw participation from forty-five (45) swimmers, which included two (2) swimmers from the British Virgin Is-

lands (BVI) and one swimmer from the USA.

Trophies were awarded to the top-performing athletes for their high-point achievements throughout the competition. Awardees for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places in their age groups.

8 and under Boys

1st Eili Lewis

9 -10 Girls

1st Isabel Nicholas

2nd Lake Zreibi

9-10 Boys

1st Jalen Weste

2nd Major Emmanuel

3rd Zane Williams

11-12 Girls

1st Keziah Joseph

2nd Kaylee Warner

3rd Willow Zreibi

11-12 Boys

1st Alessandro Bazzoni

2nd Christopher Walter

3rd Tristan Nicholas

13-14 Girls

1st Anya DeGannes

2nd Paradise Carlisle

3rd Tori S Hosam

13-14 Boys

1st Reuben Edwards

2nd Zahid Derrick

3rd Jamie Tranter

15-17 Girls

1st Madison MacMillan

2nd Ellie Shaw

3rd Aunjelique Liddie,

15-17 Boys

1st Sindhi Jai

2nd Espriit Shaw,

18 and over Girls

1st Tahesia Drew

18 and over Boys

1st Zardad Jan

2nd Yacine Williams

The ABSF commends all athletes for their dedication and resilience, which continue to push the boundaries of swimming excellence in Antigua and Barbuda.

As the final meet to make qualification for the upcoming CARIFTA Aquatics Championships 11-12 age group swimmers, Willow Zriebe and Alyssa Watkins, made the required two qualifying standards, the former at the ABSF Nationals and the other at the Barbados Nationals, which were held over the same weekend.

Steelers remain perfect in ABBA's Division 1 League



Total Imports EMCS Potters Steelers maintained their unbeaten run in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) First Division League on Saturday evening.

The Steelers won for the eighth time in as many games to remain the only unbeaten team in the league with a 98-50 drubbing of Kennedy's Club Ottos Full Throttle at the JSC Sports Complex.

Keroi Lee produced a game-high 29 points with 21 rebounds and six assists; Cohen Desouza had 19 points, 15 rebounds, and five assists; Kareem Edwards sank 16 points and grabbed 10 rebounds; and Devorn Benjamin scored 15 points and claimed five rebounds for the Steelers.

Akeem Davis converted 17 points and grabbed 13 rebounds, and Morlon Davis had nine points, nine rebounds, and five assists for the Ottos Full Throttle, which lost for the ninth time in as many games.

Reigning league and playoff champions, the EZ Fit Flyers claimed their eighth win in nine matches, winning by default over the Northside Stingerz, who failed to show up on time for their encounter on Saturday.

It means the Northside Stingerz have now lost a match for the eighth time in 10 games.

Meanwhile, Spanish Heat and the Lava Smoke Shop Warriors recorded wins in their latest games in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's First Division League.

Spanish Heat claimed their fifth win in eight matches with a 65-58 victory against Kennedy's Club Ottos Full Throttle.

Steven Matthew shot a game-high 23 points; Gabriel Perez produced 10 points and five rebounds; Damian Floyd sank eight points and grabbed 15 rebounds; and Antonio Cruz had eight points and six rebounds for the Spanish Heat.

Warren Bogle produced 22 points,

nine rebounds, and five steals; Morlon Davis sank 14 points and grabbed 12 rebounds; and Akeem Davis had 10 points, nine rebounds, and seven steals for the Ottos Full Throttle.

The Warriors notched up their third win in eight matches with a comfortable 102-90 victory over the Northside Stingerz.

The Warriors were led by Kebo Orford with 29 points, nine rebounds, and six assists; and Lincoln Weekes with 29 points, eight rebounds, and five assists.

In support, Zuri Nesbitt contributed 11 assists, 10 points, and eight rebounds; Kyle Alexander and Faisal Obeidat each scored nine points; and Michael Barton grabbed 20 rebounds and converted eight points for the Warriors.

Ammiel Williams shot a game-high 30 points and snatched 11 rebounds; Alexander Fuller sank 20 points and claimed nine rebounds; Sadiq Phillip converted 18 points and grabbed 14 rebounds; Jaheem James produced 11 points and eight steals; and Te-Ran Zachariah had nine points, nine rebounds, five assists, and five steals for the Northside Stingerz.

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Anisa Lewis (18 & over), who also attended the Barbados Nationals, scored three LCM age group records: 200-meter breaststroke 3:29.65, 200-meter backstroke 2:58.75, and 100-meter backstroke 1:23.70.

Meanwhile, Antigua and Barbuda's overseas-based athletes have been making waves and setting

new records this year. In January, Alandra Dublin set two national and age group records in the girls' 15-17 category at the 2025 MR WEST Chris Dewey IMX Memorial Meet (short course yards) in the USA.

She established records in the 200-meter backstroke with a time of 2:36.13 and in the 200-meter individual medley, clocking in at 2:22.63.

Also in January, Tivon Benjamin, representing the boys' 15-17 age group at the NJIT vs. Rider Dual Meet (SCY) in the USA, set a national and age group record in the 200-meter butterfly, finishing in 1:55.97.

Benjamin continued his impressive form in February at the 2025 MAAC Men's & Women's Championships (SCY) in the USA, where he established three

national and age group records.

He clocked 48.55 in the 100-meter butterfly, 1:55.18 in the 200-meter butterfly, and 52.27 in the 100-meter backstroke.

The ABSF commends Alandra Dublin and Tivon Benjamin for their continued excellence and contributions to Antigua and Barbuda's swimming legacy.

Old Road drop Premier League points in surprise loss to Tigers

Old Road dropped crucial points in their quest to secure third place when they crashed to their second successive loss in Group 2 in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division on Saturday.

After losing 2-1 to leaders and defending champions Special Security Services and Bitar Pizza All Saints United in their previous outing, Old Road crashed to a 1-0 defeat against the Potters Tigers in the last match of a triple header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Keon Greene struck the winner for the Potters Tigers by converting a penalty kick in the 31st minute. It was the sixth win in 17 matches for the Potters Tigers, who will remain in eighth place on goal difference behind Island Original John Hughes by advancing to 21 points.

It was the sixth loss in 18 matches for Old Road, who have one game left against Parham and will remain in third place on goal difference ahead of Garden Stars. Both teams have 34 points, but Garden Stars have three matches remaining.

Terminix Pigotts Bullets and Aston Villa Lions will remain in fifth and sixth places, respectively, after both teams recorded wins in the other two matches in Group 1 on Saturday.



Players of the Potters Tigers team

Sujae McBean struck a hat trick to fire the Bullets to their 10th win in 18 matches with a 4-1 victory against John Hughes in Saturday's opening game.

McBean opened the scoring by firing home a penalty kick in the 11th minute, but his teammate Donte Pereira converted an own goal in the second minute of added time in the first half to draw John Hughes level at 1-1 at the interval.

However, McBean restored the Bullets lead by scoring his second goal in the 51st minute and completed his hat trick when he fired home his third in the 66th minute. Akeem Isaac wrapped up the win with Bullets' fourth goal in the 76th minute.

The Pigotts Bullets will stay in fifth place by advancing to 31 points, while John Hughes will remain in seventh place on goal difference with 21 points after suffering their eighth loss in 17 matches.

Rakeem Joseph also scored a hat trick as the Villa Lions notched up their ninth win in 17 matches with a 5-1 drubbing of former champions Cool and Smooth Greenbay Hoppers in Saturday's second game.

Kwame Kirby converted a penalty kick in the 15th minute, and Joseph scored his first in the 20th minute to give the Villa Lions a 2-0 lead at halftime.

But shortly before the interval, the Greenbay Hop-

pers were reduced to 10 men after Jose Antonio Gonzalez received a red card and was expelled in the 41st minute.

Yoandir Puga Estevez scored a consolation goal in the 54th minute for the Greenbay Hoppers, and Joseph struck twice with conversions in the 75th and 80th minutes to achieve his hat trick.

Midfielder Sean Tomlinson scored the last goal in the 90th minute to wrap up the victory for the Villa Lions.

The Villa Lions will stay in sixth place by advancing to 30 points, while the Greenbay Hoppers will remain in 12th place on goal difference with 11 points after crashing to their 12th defeat in 17 encounters.

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