

Cabinet decides to respond to the US court case involving the Alfa Nero yacht

Story on Page 2



Cabinet session with PM Gaston Browne (centre) and soon-to-be Senator Michael Freeland on his right and Joel Rayne on his left

Story on Page 4

Local News

Cabinet decides to respond to the US court case involving the Alfa Nero yacht

The Cabinet has decided to enter a response in the court case filed in the United States by the Russian woman who has been claiming ownership of the yacht, Alfa Nero.

This comes as the Cabinet held a discussion on the outrageous and invasive request filed in Federal Court in New York requesting information on the Bank Account on several persons, banks and entities in Antigua and Barbuda and in the United States regarding the Alfa Nero Sale.

“The law firm that has agreed to enter pleadings on behalf of the defendants in the case describe the request as “a misuse of the Courts in the United States” and the system of Justice. The cost of defending this frivolous request for all kinds of records despite the fictitious and unjustifiable claim of the whereabouts of Ten Million United States Dollars. The Judgement in defense will be required to spend tens of thousands of dollars,” government sources reported.

However, the Attorney General explained that if the suit is not defended a default judgement will be entered against the defendants and the cost would be even greater.

The lawsuit has been described as a fishing expedition and the courts in the United States is likely to quash the subpoena that has been filled by the Russian Citizen who now claims ownership.



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The government has approved new payment system for Cuban medical personnel



The government has decided to restructure the payment system involving members of the Cuban Medical Brigade, whose presence provide a substantial support for the local healthcare system.

The decision comes in response to the threat by the Trump Administration to declare the Cuban Medical brigade as equivalent to “Human Trafficking”.

The Antigua and Barbuda government reiterates that it’s payment method and the contractual arrangement which the Government of Cuba and Antigua and Barbuda have entered into do not support this view.

Nevertheless, the Cabinet has made a decision to pay the Cuban Medical Brigade of Doctors and Nurses 100% of the contractual amount and to have each doctor or nurse receive the entire payment from the Antigua and Barbuda Government; statu-

tory deductions will also be, made from each pay package as is done for every worker in Antigua and Barbuda.

According to government sources this approach has been communicated to the US Government Officials and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda awaits the US Governments’ response.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Health informed that five new pieces of legislation will have their first reading at the next sitting of Parliament. They are the Mental Health Bill, the Abandonment of the Elderly Bill, the Licensing of Nurses Home Bill and the Sugary Drinks Bill.

In related developments, the Medical Benefit Scheme has agreed to set aside US\$1 Million to purchase vaccines in the event of an outbreak or pandemic. Both the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO) have suffered a decrease in contributions since the United States has signaled its intent to withdraw from regional and international organizations and to end its funding that it once provided.



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Michael Freeland to return to the Senate



One day after Michael Freeland was elected in a primary to be the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party's candidate/caretaker for the St. George constituency, the Prime Minister has decided to


appoint him to the Senate.

Freeland will be appointed to fill the vacancy created when Rawdon Turner was elected to the House of Representatives in

January. It is the second time that Freeland will be asked to serve in the Senate. He previously served from 2014 to 2018.

On Tuesday, Freeland emerged winner of the St. George ABLP primary where he secured 350 votes, nineteen more than his nearest rival, Joel Rayne with 331 votes. Bakisha Francis received 142 votes and Salim Browne 42.

Meanwhile, Joel Rayne is extending congratulations and support for Freeland noting that the people have made their choice and that he respects their decision. This as he gave thanks to his supporters, campaign team and family for standing alongside him during the primary process.



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OAS formally adopts date, venue and theme for 55th General Assembly in St. John's

It is now set; the venue, date and theme for the 55th General Assembly of the Organisation of American States (OAS) that will take place in Antigua and Barbuda in June have been approved.

At a regular meeting of the OAS Permanent Council held in Washington, DC, Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador, Sir Ron Sanders proposed a resolution naming the venue, date and theme for the meeting.

"With your permission, allow me now to formally introduce for consideration the draft resolution Number CP/Doc. 6068/25/ rev. 1, entitled: "Place, Date, and Theme of The Fifty-Fifth Regular Session of The General Assembly".

"This resolution announces that: The Fifty-Fifth Regular Session of the General



Ambassador Sir Ronald Sanders and OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro at signing of Agreement for Antigua and Barbuda to host OAS General Assembly

Assembly will be held in St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda, from June 25 to 27, 2025; The Resolution also declares that the theme of the Assembly will be "Building

Resilient, Inclusive Economies in the Americas," Sir Ron noted.

He told the Permanent Council members that it is believed this theme reso-

nates with urgent regional concerns, emphasizing the need for resilience and inclusivity as these countries address the challenges confronting each member state – big and small - and all of them collectively.

"By using the term "building" in the theme, we affirm our commitment to sustained, ongoing action. And the inclusive scope of the theme ensures that all Member States can highlight their specific priorities within a broader collective framework, underscoring our shared dedication to improving the lives of all citizens in the Americas," Sir Ron stated.

The resolution was adopted by the Permanent Council by acclamation.



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Local News

Police express gratitude to public in Chantel Crump



The Police Administration is expressing gratitude to the public for the overwhelming support and assistance received in the ongoing investigation into the homicide of Chantel Crump.

The cohesiveness of each community, along with the prompt responses from law enforcement, has significantly contributed to the

progress made in the case.

The administration also wishes to refute claims circulating on certain social media platforms suggesting that a specific individual is solely responsible for this success. In reality, it has been the involvement of residents across Antigua and Barbuda who have come together to support both Chantel's family and the police. It is disingenuous for any single person to take credit for this collective effort, especially in such a sensitive matter.

The police kindly ask the public to respect the grieving process of Chantel's family and assure everyone that they are committed to working with them to ensure justice is served and closure is achieved. Residents are reminded that the investigation is still ongoing, and

they should refrain from making public remarks that could hinder its progress. Anyone with additional information is asked to get in contact with the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913 or call the Crimestoppers anonymous hotline at 800-8477.

Meanwhile, the police are reporting that almost one million dollars' worth of cannabis was seized at V.C. Bird International Airport on Tuesday.

A joint drug operation between the police and customs officials resulted in the seizure of 119 vacuum-sealed packages of cannabis at the airport cargo shed. The controlled substance is valued at \$708,000 and weighs 118 pounds. The shipment was taken to the police station for further investigations.



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Caribbean leaders seek clarity as US mulls sweeping travel bans

Days after a US State Department spokesperson dismissed published reports of a list of countries that are to face varying levels of travel restrictions, there is still a sense of unease, at least among the countries of the Eastern Caribbean which were included in the list.

According to a Reuters News Agency report, the leaders from these countries are taking nothing to chance; they are actively seeking further clarifications from US officials on the matter.

For more clarity on the matter, Point Express publishes below the full text of the report;

BY Reuters March 18, 2025
 Leaders from across the Caribbean are seeking clarity after a draft of a U.S. government list of over 40 countries which could face sweeping travel restrictions was made public, a move which could mark the latest in President Donald Trump's crackdown on migration.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce disavowed the list on Monday, but stipulated "there is a review through the president's executive order for us to look at the nature of what's going on to keep America safer and dealing with the issue of visas and who's allowed into the country."

President Trump's adminis-

tration has vowed mass deportations of migrants in the U.S. illegally. Half of the

U.S. clarify the potential travel bans and "details of any 'deficiencies' perceived

fueled by guns shipped from Florida - would be subject to partial suspensions,



countries on the list in circulation are African, while seven more are located around the Caribbean.

The small island nations of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia were also listed in the draft for partial travel suspensions if their respective governments do not address unspecified "deficiencies" within 60 days.

Leaders from those nations have responded saying they have received no communication from the United States on the potential ban, nor on concerns raised about their governance.

In a Saturday letter seen by Reuters, Antigua and Barbuda's embassy in Washington expressed its "deep concern" and requested the

by agencies of the United States so that they may be promptly discussed and remedied."

"A review is not a ban," its ambassador to the United States, Ronald Sanders, told Reuters. "A review can lead to satisfaction as much as anything else."

Dominica's prime minister said he was making the necessary enquiries, while Saint Kitts and Nevis said it "has maintained consistent and open dialogue" with the U.S. and would provide updates should it receive any official communication.

According to the list, Haiti - which is facing a devastating gang conflict that has forced over 1 million from their homes and which the U.N. has warned is being

including for students and tourists.

The U.S. government last month decided to speed up the expiration of deportation protections and work permits for 521,000 Haitians covered by a temporary program by some six months.

Meanwhile, Cuba and Venezuela would face a complete visa suspension. Both leftist-run countries have tense relations with the Trump administration and are facing deep economic crises that have caused many to seek migration to the United States.

The Cuban, Venezuelan and Haitian governments did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

Local News

ABTA honours industry VIPs for years of dedication and support



The Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority (ABTA) has honoured a distinguished group of industry VIPs for their longstanding commitment to promoting Antigua and Barbuda by presenting them with the Minister's Award for Excellence in Tourism.

The awards ceremony was held in New York City with Tourism Minister, Charles 'Max' Fernandez, ABTA's CEO, Colin C. James, and Director of Tourism for the USA, Dean Fenton in attendance.

The ceremony recognized travel professionals, media partners, and community leaders who have made significant contributions to the destination's growth and success. The official delegation included Antigua and Barbuda's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Walton Webson, and Senator Alincia Williams-Grant.

The Tourism Minister Fernandez stated, "Our success is driven by the passion, dedication, and hard work of these professionals who consistently go above and beyond in advocating

for Antigua and Barbuda."

He added, "We take great pride in celebrating their accomplishments and eagerly anticipate strengthening these vital partnerships." Minister Fernandez highlighted the late Sir Rob Barrett, founder of Elite Island Resorts, acknowledging his significant contributions to developing Antigua and Barbuda's tourism industry, and also recognized Elite's team members, Larry Basham, Sherrie Ault, and John Cather, for their tremendous commitment to the industry's growth.

CEO Colin C. James remarked, "From the Travel Advisors and Public Relations Specialists, everyone honoured, has played a crucial role in showcasing the magic of Antigua and Barbuda to the world. Their efforts have greatly influenced our tourism industry, ensuring our islands remain among the Caribbean's premier destinations." ABTA USA Director of Tourism, Dean Fenton, commended the recipients, saying, "I am extremely proud to recognize our exceptional business partners, whose unwavering support and dedication have played a

significant role in elevating Antigua and Barbuda's tourism industry."

The distinguished honourees in attendance included Brenda O'Neale, Travel Advisor and Chair of the Antigua & Barbuda Travel Agent Advisory Board; Lila Nicholas, Travel Advisor and Chair of the Professional Travel Agents of North America (PATANA) National Advisory Board; Brenda Cole, Travel Advisor and President of PATANA; Corrine Mutarelli, Travel Advisor and Past President of the Alliance of Westchester Travel Agencies (AWTA); and Ralph Vasami, President of Kiwanis Yonkers and former President of the New York American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA).

Adrian Surgeon, Graphics and Design Specialist; Antiguan chefs Edward Murphy and Melvin Myers; Artistic Designer Dave Ray; Marilyn Pires, Travel Account Manager and Executive Assistant to ABTA USA Director Dean Fenton; Noel Mignott, founder of the Portfolio Marketing Group, the public relations firm responsible for maintaining the visibility of Antigua and Barbuda in the United States; and Alison Ross, a former partner at PMG, were among the honourees. Also included on the VIP awards list were Genevieve Edwards of Sharp Travel International, Henry Watkins, owner of the Watkins Media Group, and industry supporter Roberta Diaz.

Caption: L-R Dean Fenton, Director of Tourism, Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority; Brenda O'Neale, Travel Advisor and Chair of the Antigua & Barbuda Travel Agent Advisory Board; Honourable Charles 'Max' Fernandez, Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transportation & Investment

Foreign Minister Greene wants stronger ties between India and Latin America and the Caribbean



Foreign Minister E.P Chet Greene addressing delegates at the 10th India- LAC Conclave taking place in New Delhi

Foreign Minister, E.P Chet Greene has made the case for there to be a more formalized structure to promote closer ties between India and Latin Americana and the Caribbean.

Minister Greene who is in India, the world's most populous nation, made the point while addressing a Special Ministerial Session on Strengthening India-LAC Partnerships in a Changing Global Environment.

“We need to increase high-level visits and en-

gagements between India, Latin America and Caribbean countries if we are to foster better understanding and partnerships. An example of this concept would be the establishment of bilateral committees focused on specific sectors like agriculture, technology and pharmaceuticals,” the Foreign Affairs Minister suggested.

In his remarks to the session, India's Minister for Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal said, “Sectoral diversification is crucial so

that we can move beyond the traditional areas of trade. High-end manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, digital engagement, digital public infrastructure and artificial intelligence, all of these are necessary for building a future-ready business environment. Therefore, strengthening institutional frameworks will be essential along with the removal of non-tariff barriers and entering into robust trade agreements.”

He further stressed that Renewable Energy could be a key area of

collaboration as almost 40% of the world's lithium reserves are found in LAC countries. India would like to partner with LAC nations to process them jointly. “Our businesses can collaborate on lithium processing, battery manufacturing and electric mobility to contribute to solving climate change challenges,” he added.

Minister Greene traveled to India to participate in the 10th India-LAC Conclave hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry.

Financing available for youth-led projects under UNESCO programme



The Ministry of Health is encouraging young people involved in business enterprises to apply for funding provided by Nestlé and managed through UNESCO.

The initiative is being directed through the UNESCO Youth Programme which has announced the launch of the UNESCO x Nestlé “Youth Impact: Because You Matter” Global Youth Grant Scheme. Supported by Nestlé, the initiative will fund 100 youth-led projects worldwide.

Applications are now open for youth-led projects that lessen the impacts of climate disruption and ensure environmental sustainability. This includes youth projects to develop:

1. Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies,
2. Sustainable food systems,
3. Regenerative agricultural practices and

4. Packaging sustainability innovations.

Eligible project leaders are aged 18 to 30 years from diverse backgrounds and regions. 100 grants of \$8,500 each will be awarded, and grantees will receive training, mentoring and networking opportunities throughout the implementation of their projects.

You will find the application form here: <https://unesco.nestleyouthentrepreneurship.com/>

Note that applicants will need to register to Nestlé’s Youth Entrepreneurship Platform to apply. Applicants will need to apply until 8 April, 23.59 Central European Time.

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Commentary

When the World Stood Still



market and other every day chores. Schools were closed and lectures moved online. This presented several challenges as not all students had access to the Internet, or worse, had access to devices.

Then came a time when a 'vaccine' was developed, mainly by three pharmaceutical companies: Astra Zeneca, Moderna, and Pfizer. (Other pharmaceutical companies later joined in the race to develop a vaccine). The alarming thing is that governments across the world engaged these three companies to place huge orders, ostensibly for their population, and in the process indemnifying the pharmaceutical companies of any legal threat.

In Antigua and Barbuda, people were brought before the Court to pay huge fines for not wearing masks, or for objecting to the 'vaccine' mandate. The interesting thing is that people who are otherwise very astute, accepted the vaccine without question. Of course, vaccines take 6-7 years before they come to market. They have to be subjected to a series of trials and testing before they come to market. The COVID-19 'vaccine' was therefore brought to market and 'tested' on humans, with our government's full knowledge and cooperation.

We hope that there will never come a time again in the future, when citizens' rights would be curtailed, and the uncertainties which followed visited upon us again.

by Derrick Nicholas

This month marks the 5th anniversary of a grim experience which brought the world to a standstill. That event which threatened to bring the entire world to its knees was the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), a respiratory disease.

Even though the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic on 11th March, 2020, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda did not close its borders until 26th March, 2020. The world first became aware of an outbreak of the disease in Wuhan, China on 31st December, 2019 as several cases of pneumonia with no known cause. The disease later became known as COVID-19.

To understand the confusion and even the skepticism which surrounded the spread of this disease and the response of governments across the globe, it is important to study the timeline. On 7th January, 2020 the WHO announced that they have identified a new virus named SARS-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19. WHO also said that it (virus) belongs to the coronavirus family. Then, on 11th January, 2020 China announced the first death linked to COVID-19.

The days, weeks and months which followed were filled with the curtailment of rights and uncertainty. Curfews were imposed which severely restricted the public's ability to move. At the same time, uncertainty grew as we were not sure how long these conditionalities would remain in place, and how we would manage. Persons were mandated to wear a mask which covered both the nostrils and mouth when in public.

As the days became weeks, and the weeks became months depression and other conditions started to present in people who were trying their best to cope with the new 'normal'. We became suspicious of anyone who would dare cough in public. We soon managed to adjust to the limited time we had to do banking, going to the super-

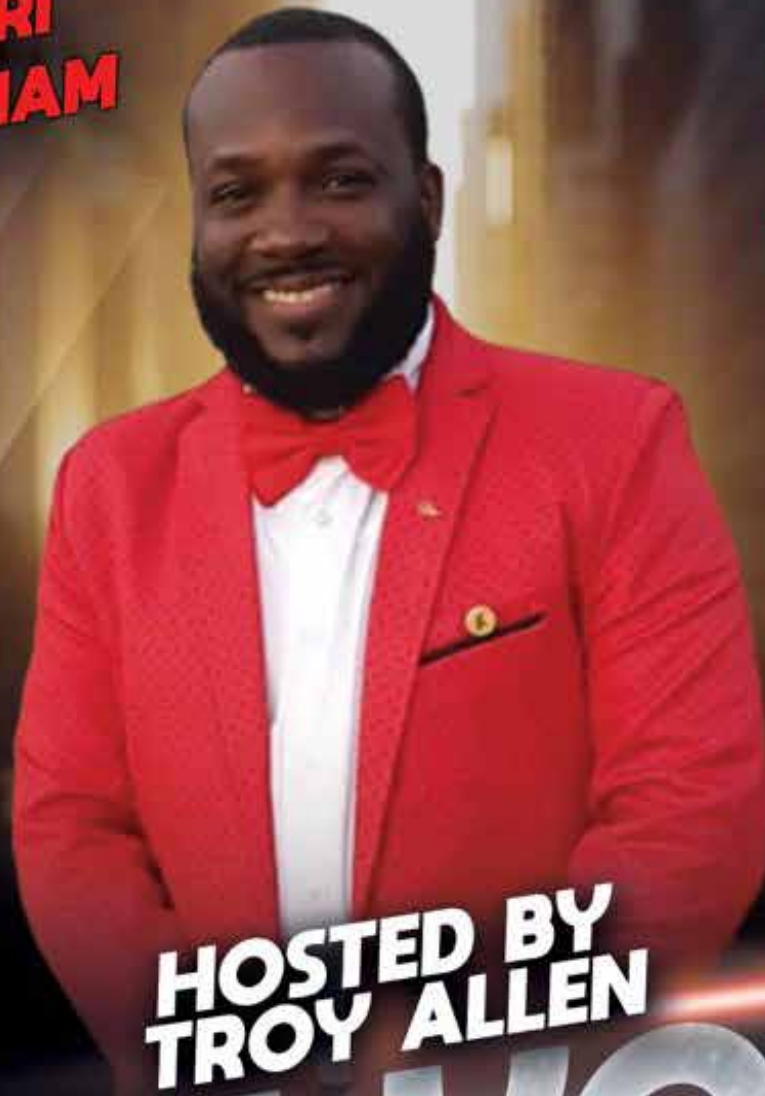
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Regional News



Kamla: Young 'hurriedly' called election

Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar has called Prime Minister Stuart Young's calling of an April election date a 'hurried,' attempt to avoid United National Congress (UNC) legal action against him.

Shortly after the Office of the Prime Minister yesterday published the April 28th General Election date set by Young yesterday, Persad-Bissessar stated that the announcement was an attempt to avoid facing the courts on what she termed his "illegal" an 'unconstitutional' appointment to the post.

Last week, Persad-Bissessar warned that Young would face the 'Brilliant UNC Lawyers,' in the country's courts should he replace outgoing Prime



Minister Dr Keith Rowley following his resignation.

The Opposition leader also did not attend Young's swearing-in ceremony on Monday, telling the Express that it was unconstitutional. 'I will not attend anything to give legitimacy to something that I think is unconstitutional. I do not

intend to go to that ceremony,' she had said.

Asked for her reaction to the election date, Persad-Bissessar doubled down on her stance, adding that Young would have had to face an internal election prior to the General Elections.

"Young and the PNM fully well know that his appointment is illegal and unconstitutional. His appointment would have been shown to be unconstitutional in the courts and he would then be forced to face a PNM internal election before the GE. Penny (Penelope Beckles) would have decimated him in any internal election and the PNM financiers backed coup would have been put down," she said the party was ready to protect the country.

"The UNC is ready, and we will do what PNM MPs failed to do, which is to protect our country from being gifted to a selfish select group of Young's financiers," said Persad-Bissessar said. (*Trinidad Express*)

Medicinal cannabis legislation should be in place by year's end, says PM

Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit has announced that his government plans to put legislation in place for the legal production of cannabis for medicinal purposes before the end of the year.

He made the announcement during a press conference on Monday.

"In so far as putting the legislation in place and so forth, I believe before the end of this year we will have the legislation in place and the mechanism for certification and licensing and providing of permits to persons who are interested in legal production of can-

nabis for medicinal purposes."

He continued, "The issue of cannabis, the Minister of Finance would have articulated certain policy positions of the government in its efforts to further the country's ability to be part of this growing industry."

The prime minister plans to engage stakeholders in discussion as far as cannabis is concerned.

According to him, there is also a national committee to spearhead those efforts.

He said there are several issues that

this national committee and the consultation must take into consideration, especially in regards to the transacting with cannabis by-products.

"Because as you know banks are not prepared to engage in this because it is still illegal in many countries around the world," Skerit stated. "And so this is something that we have to navigate around and to see whether the banking system can come to an appreciation that the by-products are crucial for health and wellness." (*Dominica News Online*)

Guyanese gov't defends slogan printed on new passport

The Government of Guyana says it will make “no apology” as it defended the decision to include the slogan “One Guyana” on the newly launched 10-year passports, saying it is not a political slogan.

“The ‘One Guyana’ slogan is not a political slogan. It is a unifying concept. It is a principle that denotes our national objective — one people, one nation, one common destiny. It is a rallying cry to bring the diverse cultures and races of our country together,” Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Anil Nandlall, said in a statement.

Nandlall was responding to a letter sent to the media by opposition legislator, Amanza Walton Desir, who said that the inclusion of the slogan is an attempt to replace national identity with political allegiance.

In the letter, Desir said that the move is part of a broader agenda by the ruling People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) to blur the lines between party and state, describing the decision as “a dangerous overreach” and an effort to embed political propaganda into a national document that belongs to all Guyanese, regardless of political affiliation.

“A passport is not a party manifesto, it is a sovereign document of our nation. It belongs to ‘we the people’ and is issued in our name by the state. It therefore ought to be neutral and free from partisan contamination.

”By embedding political propaganda onto a passport that belongs

to all Guyanese — regardless of their political affiliation, Irfaan Ali



has once again shown his complete disregard for democratic norms and institutional integrity,” the opposition legislator wrote.

“It must be understood, Guyanese brothers and sisters that this is a part of a broader, more sinister agenda. The PPP government has long sought to dismantle our democratic institutions, erode checks and balances, and manipulate our national identity to serve its own interests.”

Desir said that the use of state resources for political branding “is a classic sign of democratic backslide and authoritarianism and blurs the line of distinction between party and state”.

“It is quite interesting that the PPP which was relentlessly loud in its accusation of the PNC (People’s National Congress) for allegedly

practicing party paramountcy is now openly, unashamedly doing just that,” she wrote.

But in his statement, Nandlall defended the government’s decision, noting that the slogan, which also appears on the GUY\$2,000 (One Guyana dollar=US\$0.004 cents) bill, reflects the national ethos of unity and togetherness, which transcends political affiliations.

He said that President Ali had been using the slogan in numerous speeches as part of his broader effort to create a cohesive force for national unity.

Nandlall said that the slogan has been incorporated into various government initiatives, and its inclusion in national documents like the passport is consistent with the government’s ongoing efforts to promote national unity.

“This government has every right to formulate a logo or slogan that captures its ethos. The ethos of this government is national unity, and we want to project that in every one of our policies and programmes. We make no apology for that.”

Responding directly to Desir’s criticism, Nandlall said he has “never seen this slogan emanate from Freedom House (the headquarters of the ruling party)”.

“It is not a concept promoted by the PPP as a political slogan, but as a policy that reflects the values of the government,” he said, adding that “it is ironic that the person accusing us of using a political slogan seems to forget the history of their own party”. (*Jamaica Observer*)

Regional News

Opposition files lawsuit against law to make Portmore a parish

Another legal fight is looming between the Government and the parliamentary Opposition, this time over the legislation passed in February to make Portmore the country's 15th parish.

The Government used its majority in the legislature to pass the legislation despite concerns by the Electoral Commission of Jamaica (ECJ) that it could be in breach of the Constitution.

Opposition Leader Mark Golding disclosed that his People's National Party (PNP) filed a lawsuit in the Constitutional Court on Monday seeking to have the law struck down.

"We regard the pursuit of this legislation as a dangerous affront to our democracy which must be vigorously resisted by all lawful means at our disposal," Golding said during his contribution to the 2025-2026 Budget Debate in Parliament on Tuesday.

The ECJ warned, in a letter to Parliament and the Ministry of Local Government, that the proposed Portmore parish boundary "may negatively" affect a provi-



sion of the Constitution.

"The boundary of a constituency shall not cross the boundary of a parish as delimited by the Counties and Parishes Act or by any law amending or replacing that law," the ECJ said, quoting the constitution-

al provision.

The National Identification and Registration Act was initially declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court in 2017, ending a lawsuit filed by Opposition Member of Parliament Julian Robinson.

The PNP unsuccessfully challenged a constitutional amendment enacted by the Government that raised the age of retirement for the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Auditor General. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

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Two men found guilty in smuggling conspiracy where 53 immigrants died in hot tractor-trailer



Two smugglers charged after 53 immigrants died in the back of a sweltering tractor-trailer with no air conditioning were found guilty Tuesday after a two-week trial.

The 2022 tragedy in San Antonio was the nation's deadliest smuggling attempt across the US-Mexico border.

Jurors in federal court in San Antonio took only about an hour to convict Felipe Orduna-Torres and Armando Gonzales-Ortega, finding that they were part of a human smuggling conspiracy that resulted in death and injury. They face up to life in prison and have

a June 27 sentencing date.

The immigrants had come from Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico and had paid between \$12,000 and \$15,000 each to be smuggled into the United States, according to an indictment in the case. They had made it as far as the Texas border city of Laredo when they were placed into a tractor-trailer with broken air conditioning for a three-hour drive to San Antonio.

As the temperature inside the trailer rose, those inside screamed and banged the walls of the trailer for help or

tried to claw their way out, investigators said. Most eventually passed out. When the trailer was opened in San Antonio, 48 people were already dead. Another 16 were taken to hospitals, where five more died. The dead included six children and a pregnant woman.

"These defendants knew the air conditioning did not work. Nevertheless they disregarded the danger," Acting US Attorney Margaret Leachman for the Western District of Texas said in a news conference after the verdict Tuesday. Orduna-Torres was the leader of the smuggling group inside the US, and

Gonzales-Ortega was his "right-hand man" she said.

Five men previously pleaded guilty to felony charges in the smuggling case, including the truck driver Homero Zamorano Jr., who was found hiding near the trailer in some bushes. He faces a maximum sentence of life in prison. Also pleading guilty are Christian Martinez, Luis Alberto Rivera-Leal, Riley Covarrubias-Ponce and Juan Francisco D'Luna Bilbao. All five will be sentenced later this year. Another person charged in the US remains a fugitive, Leachman said. Several others have been charged in Mexico and Guatemala.

The incident is the deadliest among tragedies that have claimed thousands of lives in recent decades as people attempt to cross the US border from Mexico. Ten immigrants died in 2017 after they were trapped inside a truck parked at a Walmart in San Antonio. In 2003, the bodies of 19 immigrants were found in a sweltering truck southeast of San Antonio. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)



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DRINK RESPONSIBLY



US judge blocks Trump administration from banning transgender people from military service

A United States judge blocked enforcement of President Donald Trump's executive order banning transgender people from military service on Tuesday, the latest in a string of legal setbacks for his sweeping agenda.

Federal Judge Ana Reyes in Washington, DC, ruled that Trump's order to exclude transgender troops from military service likely violates their constitutional rights.

She was the second judge of the day to rule against the administration, and both rulings came within hours of an extraordinary conflict as Trump called for impeaching a third judge who temporarily blocked deportation flights, drawing a rare rebuke from Chief Justice John Roberts.

Reyes delayed her order until Friday morning to give the administration time to appeal.

"The court knows that this opinion will lead to heated public debate and appeals. In a healthy democracy, both are positive outcomes," Reyes wrote. "We should all agree, however, that every person who has answered the call to serve deserves our gratitude and respect."

The White House didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

Army Reserves 2nd Lt. Nicolas Talbott, one of 14 transgender active-duty servicemembers named as plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said he was holding his breath as he waited to find out if he would be separated from the military next week.

"This is such a sigh of relief," he said. "This is all I've ever wanted to do. This is my dream job, and I finally have it. And I was so terrified that I was about to lose it."

The judge issued a preliminary injunction requested by attorneys for six



transgender people who are active-duty service members and two others seeking to join the military.

On January 27, Trump signed an executive order that claims the sexual identity of transgender service members "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life" and is harmful to military readiness.

In response to the order, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued a policy that presumptively disqualifies people with gender dysphoria from military service. Gender dysphoria is the distress that a person feels because their assigned gender and gender identity don't match. The medical condition has been linked to depression and suicidal thoughts.

Plaintiffs' attorneys contend Trump's order violates transgender people's rights to equal protection under the Fifth Amendment.

Government lawyers argue that military officials have broad discretion to decide how to assign and deploy servicemembers without judicial interfer-

ence.

The judge said she did not take lightly her decision to issue an injunction blocking Trump's order, noting that "Judicial overreach is no less pernicious than executive overreach."

But, she said, it was also the responsibility of each branch of government to provide checks and balances for the others, and the court "therefore must act to uphold the equal protection rights that the military defends every day."

Thousands of transgender people serve in the military, but they represent less than 1% of the total number of active-duty service members.

In 2016, a Defense Department policy permitted transgender people to serve openly in the military. During Trump's first term in the White House, the Republican issued a directive to ban transgender service members. The Supreme Court allowed the ban to take effect. President Joe Biden, a Democrat, scrapped it when he took office. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

12 killed in Honduras plane crash

A small commercial plane crash off the coast of Honduras left 12 people dead, including a well-known Garifuna musician, authorities said.

The Lanhsa Airlines flight crashed into the sea shortly after takeoff Monday night from the island of Roatan en route to the mainland city of La Ceiba.

It carried 17 passengers and crew, five of whom were rescued and hospitalized.

Police reported that the plane failed to reach full al-

titude and sank quickly after impact. Local fishermen rescued the survivors.

The Honduran Civil Aeronautics Agency said the crash is under investigation.

Among the victims was Aurelio Martínez Suazo, a former member of Congress and member of the Garifuna ethnic group, which is of mixed African and Indigenous heritage. Martínez Suazo also held U.S. citizenship. His representative, Helene Odile Guivarch, a French citizen, was among the survivors.

Martínez Suazo was originally from Honduras' Gracias a Dios region along the country's Caribbean coast.

"We're devastated," his nephew Ángel Aparicio Fernández Martínez, also a musician who played with his uncle, said Tuesday. "He was the family's pillar."

Martínez Suazo was a member of Los Gatos Bravos before forming his own group Lita Ariran. His first album "Garifuna Soul" took him to Europe, the United States and other parts of the world.

"He was the greatest model from Honduras of Garifuna music on a worldwide stage," his nephew said.

Humberto Castillo, president of the Association of Afro-descendants of the Sula Valley, called Martínez Suazo "the ambassador of Garifuna culture," noting that he spoke Garifuna and Miskito and composed music in both languages.

The victims' bodies were taken from Roatan to the morgue in San Pedro Sula.

(Loop Caribbean)



DAILY PROGRAMMING




EARLY VIBRATIONS 6AM-10AM MON. - FRI.
WITH GREMSTA

THE RUSH HOUR SHOW 5PM-7PM MON. - FRI.
WITH ROGER LAKE 6AM-9AM SATURDAYS

TOUCHLINE 7PM-9PM MON. - THURS.
WITH EPILUS

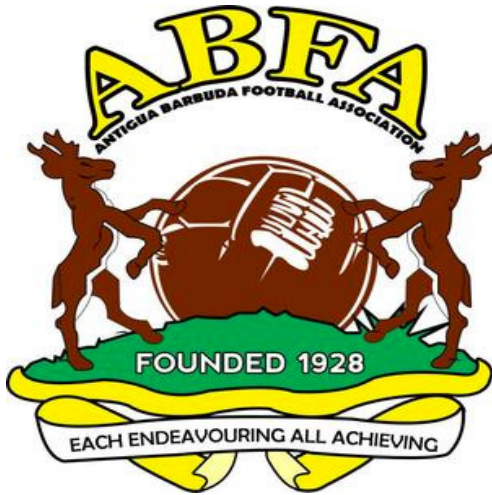
BAD COMPANY 2PM-6PM THURS. 12PM-4PM SATURDAYS
LIVE FROM THE V.I. & 1PM-5PM ON SUNDAYS

REGGAE INSPIRATION 9PM-12AM MON. THURS. SUNDAY
WITH SELECTOR KEEGAN

JAH WADADLI 7PM-9PM FRIDAYS
WITH DJ JAH WADADLI

Sports News

Jennings United stay second in First Division League



Jennings United kicked off the second round group phase of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's First Division League in commanding fashion on Tuesday.

Jean-Pierre Williams scored twice as Jennings United consolidated their second-place position with a 5-1 drubbing of Police at the ABFA Technical Center.

Williams had conversions in the

13th and 90th minutes. The other goals for Jennings United were scored by Kemon Samuel in the 40th minute, Shaquille Watkins in the 52nd minute, and Rasheed Lambert in the 82nd minute.

Adrian Baron scored a consolation goal in the 20th minute for Police, who will remain second from the bottom of the 14-team standings with seven points after crashing to their 11th defeat in 14 matches.

Their 10th win in 14 matches carries Jennings United to 33 points, one adrift of unbeaten leaders Ottos Rangers.

The Freemans Village Scorpions jumped from fifth to third place after securing a 5-0 drubbing of Lion Hill in their opening second-round match at the Freemans Village playing field.

Roy Gregory and Darius Hector both converted twice in the second half after Robert Abraham scored the opening goal in the 36th minute to give the Scorpions a one-nil lead at halftime.

Gregory had conversions in the 49th

and 73rd minutes, while Hector scored in the 70th and 74th minutes.

The result allows the Freemans Village Scorpions to move from fifth to third place by advancing to 29 points after recording their ninth win in 14 matches.

Lion Hill will remain in 11th place with 11 points after suffering their eighth defeat in 14 matches.

SAP FC jumped from sixth to fourth place after snatching a 1-0 win against FC Master Ballerz in their opening second-round encounter at the ABFA Technical Center.

Emerson Henry snatched victory for SAP by scoring the only goal of the match in the 36th minute.

The result allows SAP FC to overtake Swetes and Empire into fourth place by advancing to 28 points after recording their eighth win in 14 matches.

FC Master Ballerz will remain in ninth place on goal difference with 14 points after slipping to their eighth defeat in 14 matches.

Ojays extend unbeaten run in ABBA's Division 2 league



The Cutie's Ovals Ojays maintained their unbeaten run in the Second Division of the 2025 Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) domestic season on Tuesday evening.

The Ovals Ojays notched up their ninth win in as many games with an 85-64 victory against the Ramco Phar-

macy Fearless Crew in the second game of a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Tajahron Davis shot a game-high 35 points with six steals; Tequan Brodie sank 18 points; Raheem Sawyer converted 15 points; and Shaheim Omarde scored 10 points and grabbed 14 rebounds for the Ovals Ojays.

Takeem Martin converted 24 points and grabbed 18 rebounds, Joel Christian sank 19 points and claimed nine rebounds, and Romel Diggs scored 11 points and snatched 12 rebounds for the Fearless Crew, who lost for the sixth time in 10 games.

The Navigators claimed their seventh win in 10 matches with a 61-46 victory against Michael Joseph Phoenix in the first game of Tuesday's double-header.

Ricky Willock sank 18 points; DeLorng Jules converted 14 points; Baldwin Anthony had nine points and 16 rebounds; and Ariel Quallis produced seven points, 10 assists, seven rebounds, and five steals for the Navigators.

Daysher Samuel produced 19 points, nine rebounds, and five steals, and Shalom Bloodman had 13 points and six rebounds for Michael Joseph Phoenix, who lost for the seventh time in 10 games.

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

Total Imports EMC's Potters Steelers will take on Lava Smoke Shop Warriors at 6:45 pm, and Spanish Heat will face Da Project at 8:30 pm.

Island Academy on course to retain school volleyball titles

Reigning champions Island Academy-1 is just one win away from completing a successful defense of their Male Division title in the Ministry of Sports JOMA Caribbean Inter-School Volleyball League.

Island Academy-1 advanced to the final after securing a 2-0 victory against Island Academy-2 in the semi-finals at the indoor volleyball stadium at the YMCA Sports Complex on Tuesday.

The Island Academy first team prevailed 25-18, 25-16 against the Island Academy second team in the second

male division semi-final.

The defending champions will face Antigua Grammar School in the championship decider.

The Antigua Grammar School booked their spot in the final by pulling off a 2-0 victory against the Harrison Center of Antigua and Barbuda School of Continuing Education (HCABSCE) in the first semi-final.

The male volleyballers of Antigua Grammar School prevailed 25-17, 25-15 against HCABSCE.

Reigning champions Island Academy are also on

course for a successful defense of their Female Division title. Island Academy advanced to the final after beating the Antigua Girls High School first team (AGHS-1) 25-23, 25-21 in the semi-finals.

The Christ the King High School also booked their place in the Female Division final after pulling off a 25-22, 25-22 victory against the Antigua Girls High School second team (AGHS-2) in the other semi-final.

The finals of both divisions will be played at the YMCA Sports Complex on Friday.

Island Academy will face Christ the King High School in the female division final, and Island Academy-1 will clash with Antigua Grammar School in the male division final.

The losing semi-finalists in both divisions will also meet in the playoff for third place at the same venue on Thursday (today).

AGHS-1 will clash with AGHS-2 in the female third-place decider, while Island Academy-2 will take on HCABSCE in the battle for the bronze medals in the male division.



**TUES - FRIDAY
11AM - 2PM**



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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

IOC names outgoing boss Bach as honorary president for life

PYLOS, Greece (Reuters) - Outgoing International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach was named honorary president for life on Wednesday, with the German due to step down in June after 12 years in charge.

The proposal was passed by acclamation with a teary-eyed Bach, whose successor will be elected on Thursday, earning a standing ovation from the IOC members at their session in southern Greece.

Bach, a German lawyer and former Olympic fencing champion, took over in 2013 and immediately introduced wide-ranging reforms both in relation to the Olympic Games and the IOC itself, including reducing the size and cost of the Games to make them more attractive to future host cities.

His tenure as president was at times rocky, with the Olympics hit by the 2014 Sochi Games' Russian state-backed doping scandal, which led to Russian athletes participating as neutrals in several editions of the Games.

He also had to deal with political tensions on the Korean Peninsula prior to the 2018 winter Games in South Korea's Pyeongchang, and was also forced to postpone the Tokyo 2020 Olympics by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Beijing 2022 winter Games were also held without fans due to the pandemic. The Paris 2024 Games had the participation of Russian athletes once more as



International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach speaks during the 144th session which will elect the new IOC President, in Costa Navarino, western Greece, Wednesday, March 19, 2025. (AP)

neutrals following the country's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Bach, 71, will step down from his post on June 23 and will also vacate his IOC membership post.

There are seven candidates to succeed Bach, with IOC vice-president Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr., Zimbabwe's sports minister Kirsty Coventry and World Athletics President Sebastian Coe of Britain seen as the frontrunners.

International cycling chief David Lappartient, International Gymnastics Federation head Morinari Watanabe, Prince Feisal Al Hussein of Jordan and Olympic newcomer and multimillionaire Johan Eliasch, who heads the International Ski and Snowboard Federation, complete the lineup.

Behind closed doors at a re-

sort in Greece, with the cameras turned off, International Olympic Committee (IOC) members will choose a new president on Thursday at the organization's 144th session.

The winner among the seven candidates will lead the largest sporting organization in the world beginning in June when president Thomas Bach, who has held the top job since 2013, steps aside.

One of the biggest items on the new president's to-do list appeared to be checked off earlier this week, when the IOC announced a new US media rights deal with NBC.

The deal, worth US\$3 billion, will last through at least 2036, when Salt Lake City will host the Winter Olympics. The US rights deal is a major source of revenue for the IOC.

Sports

TRURSDAY 20TH MARCH 2025



The President of the Caribbean Association of National Olympic Committees (CANOC), Keith Joseph, has made a passionate appeal for greater support and development of cricket across the region, emphasizing the sport's historical and cultural significance in forging Caribbean unity and identity.

Speaking on the role of cricket in the region's past and future, Joseph highlighted how the sport, despite not being invented in the Caribbean, has profoundly influenced the formation of Caribbean societies and national identities.

"Cricket has played a major role throughout our region's history in the forging of our respective countries in multi-various ways," he noted.

Joseph underscored cricket's power to unite the Caribbean people under the banner of the West Indies team, fostering regional solidarity despite differences and disputes over selection policies.

Historically, cricket provided Caribbean people with a shared commitment to excellence, offering generations of athletes the opportunity to prove their talent and command global respect.

Through the exploits of legendary cricketers such as Learie Constantine and many others, cricket not only gained popularity but

also became a platform for political consciousness, particularly in the United International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Los Angeles Bid Committee in secur-



Keith Joseph

Kingdom, where Caribbean cricketers influenced movements for independence across former English colonies.

Joseph referenced the work of renowned author CLR James, who documented how cricket shaped the aspirations and struggles of Caribbean people.

Beyond its social and historical impact, Joseph emphasized the economic transformation of cricket, stating that the sport now provides lucrative career opportunities for Caribbean players.

"Today, cricket is a major source of economic enterprise, fueling careers and lifestyles that we in the region perhaps never dreamed of being possible," he said.

CANOC, recognizing cricket's potential, played a pivotal role in supporting the

ing cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Olympic Games. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to create new pathways for Caribbean athletes to excel on the global stage.

Joseph revealed that CANOC is actively working to expand cricket's presence among its member National Olympic Committees (NOCs), encouraging membership with the ICC and integration into Commonwealth Games Associations (CGA). This initiative also aligns with CANOC's successful bid to include cricket in the Pan American Games in 2027.

Despite the progress, Joseph acknowledged that seven CANOC members still do not have cricket integrated into their structures. However, he expressed optimism as many have already begun the process, which

is expected to drive further growth and participation in the sport.

"Regardless of the size of our respective countries, cricketing talent abounds," he stated, emphasizing that CANOC can play a pivotal role in harnessing and showcasing this talent.

Joseph urged Caribbean nations to embrace cricket as a vital team sport, leveraging its potential to shape the sporting ecosystem across the Americas. He believes that Olympic participation should now be a part of young Caribbean athletes' aspirations, alongside professional contracts and franchise league opportunities.

"Together, we can assist in building cricket's popularity and ensuring successive generations have the opportunity to participate in the Olympics, just as they have pursued lucrative professional careers in the sport," Joseph asserted.

As the sport continues to evolve, CANOC remains committed to ensuring cricket's sustained growth in the Caribbean, reinforcing its impact on individual, community, national, and global development.

"Let us be in this work together. Excellence is only one step in the process of going 'Beyond Possible,'" Joseph concluded, calling for collective regional support to elevate cricket's standing on the world stage.