

# Inter-School Garden Festival





## More than Five Hundred students attend Inter-School Garden Festival



More than five hundred students from pre-schools, primary and secondary schools in Antigua and Barbuda participated in the second annual Inter-School Garden Competition and Exhibition jointly organized by the ministries of agriculture and education.

The event was held at the Botanical Gardens in St. John's and it was a hive of activities on Tuesday as the

young people displayed their skills in all aspects of agriculture, from planting and harvesting of crops, to the rearing of animals for meat and of poultry for eggs.

Tuesday's exhibition marked the grand finale of the 2025 Inter-school Gardening Competition as students, educators, parents, well-wishers and officials gathered for the awards ceremony hosted by the Ministry of Edu-

cation in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture.

This year's theme being "sustainability and youth empowerment, the event celebrated weeks of hard work





and creativity” perked students from schools across the island. After months of toiling they met at the Botanical Gardens in St. John’s, to enjoy a variety of experiences and exhibits centered on the agriculture and the agro-industry industry.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne led the official government party that included the Minister of Education, Daryll Matthew, Minister of Agriculture, Anthony Smith Jr., Director of Education, Clare Browne, and Director of Agriculture, Gregory Bailey among others. Education Officer

Agricultural Science Department Nicolette Francis performed the role of host of the event.

PM Browne commended both the students and their teachers for preparing them for participation in the competition. He was particularly pleased with the turnout to the event. “I wish to commend all our teachers for encouraging our students for getting involved in agriculture and literally exposing them to agriculture at an early age. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars importing food annually, and if we can even substitute 25 per-

cent of the amounts that we import, then that in itself could be close to \$100 million. If that amount of money can be spread among farmers here, then that would empower our people while at the same time would provide residents with more nutritious products and meats and make our country more food secured,” he remarked.

Head judge of the competition, Carol-Faye Bynoe-George congratulated the students from twenty-six (26) schools, for their creativity, discipline, and commitment to agriculture. She also remarked on the increase in competing schools, noting a 138% increase in participation from schools across the island and extended an invitation





# Local News



for more schools to come on board for next year's competition. "I want to send a warning to the Secondary Schools, they need to be watchful and mindful of the pre and primary schools because during the adjudication we observed the enthusiasm, hard work and determination exhibited from those levels of the academia, and 'a word to the wise is sufficient'," advised Bynoe-George.

Mill Academy emerged as the stand-out academic institution of the day, earning the Prime Minister's Award as the Overall Winner with a near-perfect score of 43.8/50. The school also claimed First Place in the Primary School category and took home the Pinnacle Feeds Award for Best Record Keeping, scoring a perfect 10/10.

Other notable winners included:

***Simon Bolivar Preschool, awarded First Place in the Preschool category (41.6/50)***

***Sir Novelle Richards Academy claimed First Place in the Secondary School category (41.8/50)***

***R. Olivia David Primary School (formerly Bolans Primary and first time participating) awarded second place and also received the Best Garden Layout award (8.6/10)***

Second place and Third place awards across all school levels recognized the consistent quality of garden projects, including:

***Sir Luther Wynter Preschool, Second Place in Preschool category (36.5/50)***

***Jennings Secondary School, Second Place in Secondary Schools (38.6/50)***

***Villa Preschool, Third Place in Preschools (35.6/50)***

***Glanville's Secondary School, Third Place in Secondary Schools (37.4/50)***

***Jennings Primary School (first time entering), Third Place among Primary Schools (36.6/50)***

Prizes and tokens of appreciation were presented by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Education, and the Director of Education.

The Inter-School Gardening Competition continues to be a powerful educational tool, teaching students about food sovereignty, food security, environmental care, and sustainable living-skills that will serve them and their communities well into the future.





PRESENTS

Caribbean



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## PM Browne Urges Greater Domestic Investment in Hospitality Sector to Sustain Economic Growth



Prime Minister Gaston Browne is encouraging members of Antigua and Barbuda's middle and upper classes to play a more active role in national development by investing in the country's growing hospitality sector.

"We want to have larger ownership, domestic ownership, especially within the hospitality sector. So what our government is now doing is that we are making available some very beautiful waterfront and in some instances beach properties."

The Prime Minister made these remarks during a recent stakeholder engagement hosted by the Antigua and Barbuda Chamber of Commerce. He acknowledged the success of his administration in attracting hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign investment and navigating the country through the challenges of COVID-19. However, he emphasized the need for greater local participation in economic wealth generation.

"We have attracted more investments per capita than perhaps any other country within the Caribbean. To the extent we have several luxury properties that are being constructed or about to be constructed," PM Browne said, "So we're attracting the investments and from that standpoint we're doing

well. But we want to ensure that we build a broader ownership class within the country - and this is where I'll be making a special appeal to all of you."

"You are the middle class and the wealthy. I see some multi-millionaires here, so I certainly want to call upon you to do more for your country," Browne stated, referencing the late US President John F. Kennedy's famous call to action: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

Browne acknowledged that many people—especially Black Antiguan and Barbudans—are often risk-averse and reluctant to invest, despite having the means to do so.

"We sit back, we sit in our big bank accounts, we do nothing. And then when others invest, we quarrel and then we argue that the government does not do enough for us and the government doesn't give the same type of concessions," he observed.

Browne dismissed the idea that foreign investors are given preferential treatment, noting that concessions are based on the scale of the investment—not ethnicity or nationality—and are governed by laws passed by previous administrations. "If it's one thing that I want our people to disabuse their minds of, is this notion that we discriminate against locals when it comes to investments. That is not so. The extent of concessions that anyone gets is based on the size of the investment, not based on your ethnicity."

To encourage greater domestic participation, the Prime Minister announced that the government will make prime waterfront and beachside lands available for locals to develop Airbnb-style short-term rentals. These lands are located at Pensioners Beach, Morris Bay, and Shell Beach, where development is set to begin in the coming days on more than 40 acres of land.

He said interested individuals can register at the National Housing office and will benefit from a range of incen-

tives, including duty-free concessions on construction materials and furnishings.

"We will try and keep the price of land down so that it does not become prohibitive," he noted. However, he clarified that the land will not be sold at the rural rate of \$5 or \$6 per square foot but rather at prices reflective of their prime locations.

"I see Antiguan and Barbudans building out large properties, multi-million dollar properties in communities in which people don't want to stay. So if you get an opportunity now to get a nice piece of land, I want to recommend to you that you avail yourselves of the opportunity."

He also urged people not to miss out on these opportunities, warning that inaction would amount to "discriminating against themselves."

The Prime Minister concluded by highlighting recent and upcoming developments, including the renewable energy plant in Barbuda, which now powers the island for up to 15 hours a day. He said the goal is to make Barbuda a fully green island community. Additionally, plans are underway to expand the airport runway in Barbuda to accommodate American Airlines jets, which will enhance airlift and tourism.

He emphasized that while the post-COVID years have shown strong economic performance and future prospects look promising, citizens must be active participants in the country's development if they wish to truly benefit from it.

Antigua and Barbuda's economy, according to Browne, has seen significant growth—expanding by more than 6 percent annually since the pandemic and reaching an estimated GDP of \$6 billion, up from \$3.8 billion in 2014. This \$2.2 billion increase makes Antigua and Barbuda one of the most resilient economies in the Eastern Caribbean.



## The 2025 ACB Caribbean National CSEC Awardees identified



*Uchenna Ohaegbulam*



*Jhorden Mannix.*



*Kadisha Valerie*

The names of the awardees and recipients of national recognition for the 2025 ACB Caribbean National CSEC Awards Ceremony have been released by the Ministry of Education. A total of one hundred and thirty-four (134) students will be recognized at the highly anticipated event, scheduled to take place on Thursday, June 19.

This annual ceremony, sponsored by ACB Caribbean, celebrates the academic excellence, dedication, and resilience of Antigua and Barbuda's top-performing students in the CSEC Examinations.

Students will be awarded in the following categories:

- **Platinum Awards** – 9 students
- **Gold Awards** – 15 students
- **Silver Awards** – 11

*students*

□ **Bronze Awards** – 4 students

□ **Certificates of National Recognition** – 96 students

The Ministry of Education is also pleased to congratulate and announce the top three achievers at the 2024 June sitting of CSEC examinations. In addition to **Uchenna Ohaegbulam**, the 2024 Top CSEC Student, who attained 22 subjects with 20 Grade Ones, the Ministry of Education also recognizes the stellar performances of two exemplary students from the **Baptist Academy of Antigua**, **Jhorden Mannix** and **Kadesha Valerie**, who tied for second place. Both students successfully passed **20 subjects**, earning **seventeen Grade Ones** — a truly outstanding accomplishment.

The ACB Caribbean National CSEC Awards Ceremony continues to be a cornerstone event on the national education calendar, rewarding hard work, academic brilliance, and the pursuit of excellence.

The Ministry of Education extends congratulations to all awardees and expresses gratitude to ACB Caribbean for its continued partnership and support in recognizing and promoting academic success across the nation.



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## Guadeloupe-led green ferry project moves ahead, Antigua and Barbuda named as part of its route



A landmark project to establish a fossil fuel-free ferry network in the Eastern Caribbean is gaining momentum, as the initiation phase of the Guadeloupe-led KARULINK project has been successfully completed in Antigua and Barbuda, St Kitts, and Dominica.

A team from Guadeloupe visited Antigua and Barbuda to assess the feasibility of a green-energy-powered ferry service under the EU-funded INTERREG Caribbean KARULINK project. Led by Guadeloupe's private transport company STEPS, the initiative aims to connect Antigua, Dominica,



and St Kitts to Guadeloupe with an eco-friendly ferry network by 2027.

Facilitated by the Antigua and Barbuda Chamber of Commerce, the team met with key stakeholders, including the Port Authority

and the Ministry of Tourism, to discuss logistics. They have identified suitable harbours for the pilot phase in 2026. Chamber Director Martin Cave supports the project, highlighting its potential to boost regional

trade and align with international maritime regulations.

Antigua was the first stop, but the team also visited Dominica and St Kitts. If the project proves viable and profitable, national governments will decide how to sustain the service long-term.

The broader vision of the KARULINK project is to develop a comprehensive strategy for opening new maritime routes using environmentally friendly solutions. The ferry network will leverage smaller ports around Guadeloupe to facilitate seamless and sustainable inter-island travel.



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# Local News



## Dutch maritime economist discusses food security issues with local officials

A Dutch maritime economist held talks in St. John's on Tuesday with senior government officials on a range of issues related to regional trade, food security and agricultural development.

Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Trade, Ambassador Clarence E. Pilgrim was engaged in high-level talks with Eric Van Drunen, a prominent maritime economist from the Netherlands.

Both men discussed the future of the food trade and agriculture within the Caribbean region. This visit was the final leg of Van Drunen's study tour, which included stops in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica. His aim is to conduct research that will contribute to making agricultural practices and trade more sustainable and efficient across the region.

During the meeting, Ambassador



*Ambassador Clarence E. Pilgrim*

Pilgrim expressed the government's commitment to supporting regional trade initiatives. He emphasized that Antigua and Barbuda remains dedicated to maintaining regional trade interconnectivity at reasonable prices, ensuring that the economic benefits of such cooperation are felt by all partic-

ipating nations.

"Antigua and Barbuda is committed to working collaboratively with our regional partners to strengthen trade and agriculture within the Caribbean," said Ambassador Pilgrim. "We are eager to see the results of Van Drunen's study, which we believe will provide valuable insights for enhancing our agricultural sector and improving food trade in the region."

Van Drunen's study is part of a broader effort to identify strategies that can help address the challenges facing the agricultural sector while promoting greater regional cooperation. The results of this study are expected to provide actionable recommendations that will benefit the islands in terms of food security, trade efficiency, and economic development.

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# Another drug interception at the St. John's Harbour

Law enforcement authorities have discovered a quantity of controlled drugs during a joint drug interdiction operation at the Deep Water Harbor Cargo Shed.

On Monday, April 7, 2025, at approximately 2:30 pm, a coordinated effort between the Royal Police Force and Customs Enforcement led to the seizure of a barrel containing seventeen (17) vacuum-sealed packages of the controlled drug canna-



bis.

A female resident of York's

was subsequently taken into police custody for questioning in connection with the incident. The packages weighed five and a half (5½) pounds, and have a street value of \$44,000.

The Royal Police Force and Customs Enforcement remain committed to the protection of the nation's borders and the disruption of illegal drug trafficking operations.



## DAILY PROGRAMMING




**EARLY VIBRATIONS** 6AM-10AM MON. - FRI.  
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**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  
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**REGGAE INSPIRATION** 9PM-12AM MON. THURS. SUNDAY  
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# Local News



## Priest Isaac successfully completes diplomacy course



Tony Isaac, a priest within the Ethiopia African Black International Congress religious order, and more commonly known as Ambassador Priest Isaac, has recently completed a study programme where he gained a certificate in Global Diplomacy – Diplomacy in the Modern World from the University of London.

Priest Isaac, who is widely known in local circles for his thought provoking lectures on Astrology and related subjects, is also the driving force behind the Priest Isaac's Institute of Holistic Knowledge.

The course of studies is usually completed with three to four months, but according to Priest Isaac he was able to complete the course in a shorter time and emerged with a perfect score of 100 percent. The course was offered online but which complied with the rules laid down by the university.

He is his religious order's ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda and he has traveled widely to lecture at which point he considers himself as an ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda as he uses these occasions to promote the country and to speak of the megalith rock formation at Greencastle High, which is considered a natural phenom-

enon.

Ambassador Priest Isaac said the achievement of certification in diplomacy serves to enhance his capabili-





ties and his understanding of the role of diplomacy in an increasingly hostile international world.

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## GG SIR Rodney Williams joins in the dedication of the new Freemansville Methodist Church



Governor-General, Sir Rodney Williams, joined members of the Methodist community and invited guests for the Dedication and Consecration Service of the newly constructed Freemansville Methodist Church, last Sunday.

The service marked a historic moment for the Freemansville community and the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas. The event was well attended, with members of the congregation, clergy, and supporters gathering to witness the blessing of the fourth chapel erected on the site.

Before the service commenced, contractor Everton Cornelius officially handed



over the keys, symbolically opening the doors of the new church for worship. The act set the tone for a service filled with reverence, celebration, and thanksgiving.

The Preacher and Celebrant for the service was The Right Reverend Damien Hughes, Bishop of the Lee-

ward Islands District of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas. In his sermon, Bishop Hughes reflected on the steadfast faith and resilience of the Freemansville Methodist community throughout the years.

In keeping with the sig-

nificance of the event, Sir Rodney also contributed a special message to the commemorative magazine. In it, he praised the dedication of the Methodist community in Freemansville, acknowledging their more than 150-year legacy of worship, service, and community building. He highlighted the church's origins, tracing back to enslaved women of the nearby North Sound Estate and emphasized the chapel's enduring role as a beacon of hope, moral guidance, and Christian unity.

Sir Rodney extended best wishes to the congregation and church leadership, affirming that the new chapel would continue to inspire service and faith across generations.



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# Local News

## AS Bryden named Corporate Citizen of the Year 2024 by Halo Foundation

The Halo Foundation, the charitable organization associated with the Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams, has named AS Bryden as Corporate Citizen of the Year, 2024.

Chief Executive Officer, Frances-Ann Minors accepted the award on behalf of AS Bryden in a brief ceremony held at Government House. The award, presented by Sir Rodney and Lady Williams, recognized AS Bryden's swift response to a critical call for help, showcasing their commitment to community support and humanitarian efforts.

Sir Rodney and Lady Williams expressed their admiration for the remarkable humanitarian spirit exhibited by AS Bryden, highlighting the importance of such selfless actions in today's world. "We need more individuals like you, Ms. Minors, who are dedicated to making the world a better place," they remarked, emphasizing the positive impact of corporate responsibility.



This accolade not only celebrates AS Bryden's commitment to social obligation but also inspires others to engage in acts of kindness and generosity. With this recognition, AS Bryden's

stands as a shining example of corporate citizenship, proving that businesses can play a vital role in uplifting communities and fostering a genuine culture of compassion.



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## Gov't to roll out \$1.5 billion Quarterly Road Patching Programme

The Government is set to roll out a \$1.5 billion Quarterly Road Patching Programme starting in May to improve road conditions.

The initiative, led by the Ministry of Responsibility for Works in collaboration with the National Works Agency, will target critical corridors.

Minister with responsibility for Works, Robert Morgan, emphasised the Government's commitment to maintaining Jamaica's road network.

He said the programme will prioritise main thoroughfares and high-traf-



ficked corridors, community and parish roads in need of urgent repairs, and damage-prone areas affected by recent weather events.

"With quarterly disbursements, the initiative will provide ongoing maintenance throughout the year, addressing road degradation before it worsens," said Morgan.

Work is scheduled to commence in May, with a phased roll-out to ensure efficiency and maximise impact. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

## Johnson Pen, Spanish Town woman stabbed in her sleep, 21-y-o attacker charged

A 21-year-old Johnson Pen, Spanish Town, St Catherine woman has been charged for entering a woman's house and stabbing her while she slept.

Gabriel Cooper, otherwise called 'Gabby', is charged with wounding with intent. Reports from the Spanish Town police are that about 5:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 05, a woman was at home sleeping when she was awakened by a stab to her

neck and Cooper inside her room.

The woman reported that Cooper continued to stab her all over her body, causing bleeding.

She was assisted to hospital for treatment, where she was admitted in serious condition.

A report was made to the police, and Cooper was subsequently arrested and charged following a question-and-answer session.



Her court date is being final-ised. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

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## At least 18 dead, more than 120 injured in roof collapse at Dominican Republic nightclub



At least 18 people died and more than 120 were injured after a roof fell at a nightclub in the capital of the Dominican Republic early Tuesday, authorities said.

Crews were searching for potential survivors in the rubble at Jet Set in Santo Domingo, said Juan Manuel Méndez, director of the Center of Emergency Operations.

“We presume that many of them are still alive, and that is why the authorities here will not give up until not a single person remains under that rubble,” he said.

Nelsy Cruz, the governor of Montecristi, was among the victims. Meanwhile, the injured include merengue singer Rubby Pérez, who was performing when the roof collapsed, officials said.

His manager, Enrique Paulino, whose shirt was spattered with blood, told reporters at the scene that the concert began shortly before midnight, with the roof collapsing almost an hour later, killing the group’s saxophonist.

“It happened so quickly. I managed to throw myself into a corner,” he said, adding that he initially thought it was an earthquake.

President Luis Abinader wrote on X

that all rescue agencies are “working tirelessly” to help those affected. “We deeply regret the tragedy that occurred at the Jet Set nightclub. We have been following the incident min-

ute by minute since it occurred,” he wrote.

Abinader arrived at the scene and hugged those looking for friends and family, some with tears streaming down their faces. He did not speak to reporters.

An official with a megaphone stood outside the club imploring the large crowd that had gathered to search for friends and relatives to give ambulances space.

“You have to cooperate with authorities, please,” he said. “We are removing people.”

At one hospital where the injured were taken, an official stood outside reading aloud the names of survivors as a crowd gathered around her and yelled out the names of their loved ones.

It wasn’t immediately clear what caused the roof to collapse. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)



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# Regional News



## Dominican Republic boosts security on border with crisis-ridden Haiti



The Dominican Republic has announced a series of measures to bolster border security and tighten migration control in response to escalating instability in neighbouring Haiti.

President Luis Abinader said on Sunday that security would be increased, despite calls for his country to ease stringent policies as Haitians seek refuge from violence wracking their country.

“We will step up surveillance of the borders with 1,500 additional troops, on top of 9,500 already deployed,” the Dominican leader, re-elected last year on pledges to clamp down on immigration, said in a speech.

Abinader added that he has approved the construction of a new section of a wall that separates the two countries – which share the second-largest island in the Caribbean af-

ter Cuba.

The border between the two countries stretches for more than 300km (186 miles). About 54km (33 miles) of border wall has been completed.

Legal reforms are also on the agenda, according to Abinader, with the goal of using tougher penalties to deter those who facilitate the entry and stay of immigrants into the country.

The increased border measures come as the Dominican Republic eyes the deepening crisis in Haiti.

Chaos took reign in the country last year as violence flared dramatically, leaving an alliance of gangs in control of most of the capital city of Port-au-Prince.

Despite the efforts of a Kenyan peacekeeping force, numbering approximately 1,000, the transitional government in

Haiti has been unable, or unwilling, to curtail the violence, which has seen a resurgence over the last month or so.

The United Nations reports that more than 5,600 people were killed in 2024 and that over one million people have been displaced, many seeking refuge in the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic has responded with stringent deportation policies, aiming to repatriate up to 10,000 Haitians per week in recent months.

This has led to reports of human rights abuses, with advocates calling on countries across the Americas, especially the United States and the Dominican Republic, to halt deportations due to dire conditions awaiting people in Haiti.

Abinader, who won a second term in the May 2024 election that heavily featured issues relating to Haiti, has emphasised the need for tougher border and immigration controls while also calling for international assistance.

The president said his latest order would “speed up construction of the border wall” to add a further 13km (8 miles). (*Al Jazeera English*)

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# **BRANCH MEETING**

**Villa Primary School**

**APRIL 9, 2025 | 6:30 PM**





## Supreme Court allows Trump to deport Venezuelans under wartime law, but only after judges' review

The Supreme Court on Monday allowed the Trump administration to use an 18th century wartime law to deport Venezuelan migrants, but said they must get a court hearing before they are taken from the United States.

In a bitterly divided decision, the court said the administration must give Venezuelans who it claims are gang members “reasonable time” to go to court.

But the conservative majority said the legal challenges must take place in Texas, instead of a Washington courtroom.

In dissent, the three liberal justices said the administration has sought to avoid judicial review in this case and the court “now rewards the government for its behaviour.” Justice Amy Coney Barrett joined portions of the dissent.

The justices acted on the administration’s emergency appeal after the federal appeals court in Washington left in place an order temporarily prohibiting deportations of the migrants accused of being gang members under the rarely used Alien Enemies Act.

“For all the rhetoric of the dissents,” the court wrote in an unsigned opinion, the high court order confirms “that the detainees subject to removal orders under the AEA are entitled to notice and an opportunity to challenge their removal.”

The case has become a flashpoint amid escalating tension between the White House and the federal



courts.

Attorney General Pam Bondi called the court’s ruling “a landmark victory for the rule of law.”

An activist judge in Washington, DC does not have the jurisdiction to seize control of President Trump’s authority to conduct foreign policy and keep the American people safe,” Bondi wrote in a social media post.

The original order blocking the deportations to El Salvador was issued by US District Judge James E. Boasberg, the chief judge at the federal courthouse in Washington.

President Donald Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act for the first time since World War II to justify the deportation of hundreds of people under a presidential proclamation calling the Tren de Aragua gang an invading force.

Attorneys from the American Civ-

il Liberties Union filed the lawsuit on behalf of five Venezuelan non-citizens who were being held in Texas, hours after the proclamation was made public and as immigration authorities were shepherding hundreds of migrants to waiting airplanes.

Boasberg imposed a temporary halt on deportations and also ordered planeloads of Venezuelan immigrants to return to the US That did not happen. The judge held a hearing last week over whether the government defied his order to turn the planes around. The administration has invoked a “state secrets privilege” and refused to give Boasberg any additional information about the deportations.

Trump and his allies have called for impeaching Boasberg. In a rare statement, Chief Justice John Roberts said “impeachment is not an appropriate response to disagreement concerning a judicial decision.” (*Jamaica Gleaner*)



## Iran and US set for nuclear talks in Oman

Iran has said it would hold talks with the United States over its nuclear programme, confirming an earlier announcement by President Donald Trump.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote on social media late on Monday that “indirect” talks would take place on Saturday. Iranian state media later reported that Araghchi would meet the US envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, with Oman acting as a mediator.

Earlier, Trump had announced the start of “direct” talks, while maintaining threatening rhetoric suggesting the US could attack Iran. Tehran had earlier dismissed Washington’s calls for the talks.

“We’re having direct talks with Iran, and they’ve started. It’ll go on Saturday. We have a very big meeting, and we’ll see what can happen,” Trump told reporters at the White House on Monday, alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“And I think everybody agrees that doing a deal would be preferable,” he added, without providing further details.

Trump also warned that Iran would be in “great danger” if diplomatic efforts to curb its nuclear ambitions failed, adding that Tehran “can’t have nuclear weapons”.

Earlier this month, Trump told NBC News: “If they [Iran] don’t

make a deal, there will be bombing.”

He added that the bombing would be “the likes of which they have never seen before”.

Trump’s announcement of direct talks with Tehran would not be to Netanyahu’s “liking”, as the Israeli leader has long wanted to simply bomb Iran, said Marwan Bishara, Al Jazeera’s senior political analyst.

“Trump has wanted a deal for a long time,” Bishara said. However, “Netanyahu certainly thinks Iran’s defences have been weakened by last year’s Israeli air strikes on Iran. And he sees this as a great opportunity, with US support, for Israel to finish off Iran.”

“In reality, Trump doesn’t want to enter a war with Iran while he is in the midst of trade wars with the rest of the world,” Bishara added.

Trump said last month in a letter to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that he hoped there would be a negotiation between the countries.

Over the weekend, Araghchi had described the prospect of direct talks as “meaningless”.

Tehran, which maintains that it is not seeking a nuclear weapon, has rejected Washington’s push to enter direct negotiations but has previously said it is open to indirect diplomacy.

Iranian media reported on Tues-

day that Oman’s Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi will act as a mediator in the talks. Oman has long acted as a communication channel between the US and Iran.

It also played a crucial role in the signing of the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers which placed strict curbs on Tehran’s nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. Trump withdrew from that deal in 2018.

Nournews, affiliated with Iran’s top security body, described Trump’s claim that direct talks were planned as part of a “psychological operation aimed at influencing domestic and international public opinion”.

China, which hosted talks with Iran and Russia over the issue this week, was quick following Tehran’s confirmation to urge Washington to show “sincerity”.

“As the country that unilaterally withdrew from the comprehensive agreement on the Iran nuclear issue and caused the current situation, the US should demonstrate political sincerity [and] ... mutual respect,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian said.

Iran says its nuclear activities are solely for civilian purposes. Israel, the US’s top ally in the region, is widely believed to have an undeclared nuclear arsenal. (*Al Jazeera English*)



# International

AROUND THE WORLD



## Brazil to reinstate visa requirements for US, Canadian and Australian citizens



for the three countries, but the mood changed in the lower house after Trump imposed a 10% tariff on Brazilian goods last week. Allies of Speaker Hugo Motta have said the bill will not come to a final vote any time soon.

Last week, Brazil's Congress swiftly passed a reciprocity bill so the country's executive has leeway to impose retaliation tariffs on countries that impose barriers to Brazilian goods. The bill is yet to be sanctioned by Lula. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

Brazil will reintroduce visa requirements Thursday for United States, Canadian and Australian citizens, a move that ends the country's open entry for people of those nationalities after six years.

The United States Embassy in Brasilia said Monday that Americans will still be able to request visas electronically if they visit from April 10 onward.

Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, an ally of US President Donald Trump, scrapped the visa requirements in a 2019 decree as he sought to boost the country's tourism industry.

That went against the South American country's tradition of requiring visas

from travellers based on the principle of reciprocity and equal treatment.

Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva suspended the free entry of Americans, Canadians and Australians in March of 2023, shortly after he defeated Bolsonaro.

The leftist leader said then it was based on the principle of reciprocity as Brazilians still need visas for those countries.

Lula's decision was postponed from coming into force three times as the government negotiated to get reciprocity for Brazilians, but no change was made.

Brazil's Senate approved a bill earlier this year to keep the visa exemption




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# Sports News



## NBA News

Darius Garland scored 28 points, Evan Mobley had 21 points, 11 rebounds and 7 assists and the Cleveland Cavaliers clinched the top seed in the Eastern Conference with a 135-113 win over the Chicago Bulls on Tuesday night.

Garland made four 3-pointers in eight minutes during the second quarter, triggering a 41-21 run that allowed the Cavaliers to push their lead to 21 points en route to the victory.

Ty Jerome added 18 points off the bench and De'Andre Hunter scored 17 for Cleveland, which has the second-best record in franchise history at 63-16. The Cavaliers secured the No. 1 seed in the East for the fourth time and first since 2015-16.

"Yeah, I mean I think you celebrate these moments," Cleveland coach Kenny Atkinson said. "You know, we'll talk about going forward, what that looks like. But today, tonight, we celebrate."

"I think the guys are super happy in that locker room."



Cleveland did it without All-Star shooting guard Donovan Mitchell, who did not dress for precautionary reasons after spraining his left ankle Sunday against the Sacramento Kings. Atkinson said Mitchell will be good to go for the playoffs, but may sit out additional games.

The Cavaliers improved to 8-0 this

season when Mitchell does not play.

Patrick Williams scored a season-high 21 points, making 5-of-6 3-pointers, and Matas Buzelis added 19 points for Chicago. The Bulls have clinched a play-in tournament berth and are tied with Miami for ninth in the East.

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## PMS successfully defend Under-16 girls' football championship

The Princess Margaret School have retained the championship in the Under 16-Girls Football Inter-school football competition for another year.

In the Cool and Smooth/Jomo Caribbean sponsored

competition, PMS defeated their arch-rivals, the Antigua Girls High School by a score of 2-goals to one. PMS was able to hold off a late run by the AGHS girls in a keenly competitive match at the Technical Cen-

tre on Monday.

Alicia Humphreys gave PMS an early lead in the first half, but in the second half the AGHS came roaring back with a goal from the league's top striker, Nafisa Quashie with a goal in

the 45 minute to reduce the deficit.

PMS coach Devika Tittle congratulated her team for their performances throughout the competition.

## KKR slammed for delaying Russell

In a contest where more than 450 runs were scored in less than 40 overs, it's probably redundant to count the number of sixes. The excessive sixfest, especially over the last couple of seasons of IPL, may have dulled the charm of the big hit. Yet when Andre Russell launched Akash Deep over the ropes, a rather exhausted crowd at the Eden Gardens, most of whom had braced the afternoon heat in Kolkata without a shelter, marked their volumes higher than they had till then in the match.

With 56 needed off 26 balls, the game was certainly in balance, and even as Kolkata Knight Riders had lost two wickets in quick succession, with Russell and Rinku Singh to take charge in the last four overs of the chase, there was hope to track down the remaining runs.

But was the noise, one that no other follow-up or preceding hit over the rope had entertained, just for the fact that KKR were still in the hunt? Or was it for because there was hope that Andre Russell, the long-time death-over destroyer and gamechanger for



Andre Russell

KKR, was finally coming into his elements this season?

The answer will remain uncertain, at least for now. But on objective scales, it was the first six of the IPL season for Russell. In fact, with that one hit, off the second ball of his innings, he had registered his highest score of the season.

That hope that Russell, who was

scratchy and out of form, had returned to his elements, flickered only for a few more minutes from there-on. What he had dispatched over the boundary ropes was a full delivery in his swinging arc. In the first ball of the next over, he failed to connect a low full toss from Shardul Thakur, who has struck thrice with a similar delivery in the last two seasons of IPL, and was caught.