

Port triples revenues in ten years

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The Annual CSEC prize giving Ceremony held on Thursday at the St. John's Pentecostal House of Restoration

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Port triples revenues in ten years



Port Manager Darwin Telemaque

The Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority has reported that revenues for 2024 amounted to approximately \$62 million...an impressive performance when it is considered that ten years prior, 2014, revenues amounted to just \$21 million.

This is the report presented to the Cabinet on Wednesday by Port Manager Darwin Telemaque, who was invited to provide an update on the operational performance and economic outlook of the port. Along with tripling of the revenues in ten years, the port has also made significant progress in the handling and efficiencies of its overall operations.

“The Port Manager also highlighted a sustained increase in cargo throughput, with the exception of a temporary decline during the COVID-19 period in 2021. For the year 2025 to date, the port has already recorded more than 8,700 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units)—a 4% increase over the same period in 2024.

“He further reported that over the past weekend alone, the port processed a record 375 containers—including 109 transshipped containers—in just two days (Saturday and Sunday). This operational milestone is credited to the

significant investments by the Gaston Browne administration in the modernization and expansion of both the commercial port and the cruise port infrastructure,” according to a Cabinet spokesman.

Telemaque also noted the growing role of Antigua and Barbuda as a regional transshipment hub, with increased volumes positioning the country as a rising player in global port logistics.

In response, the Cabinet agreed to engage with relevant unions on matters aimed at further enhancing the port’s efficiency and long-term viability. To this end, several decisions were made:

□ Within 14 days, an **Inland Revenue Department office** will be established at the port to facilitate direct payment processing.

□ The port will begin **phasing in ship and shore operations** under the direct control of the Port Authority.

□ **Training programmes for members of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force** in all aspects of port operations will commence, especially to support expanded transshipment activity.

□ The port will implement a **Strategic Operational Model**, transitioning to a **24/7 operation** with **three 8-hour shifts**, enhanced vessel accommodation, and broader improvements in efficiency and revenue generation.

The Port Manager has been asked to report back to Cabinet within 30 days on the progress of implementing these decisions.

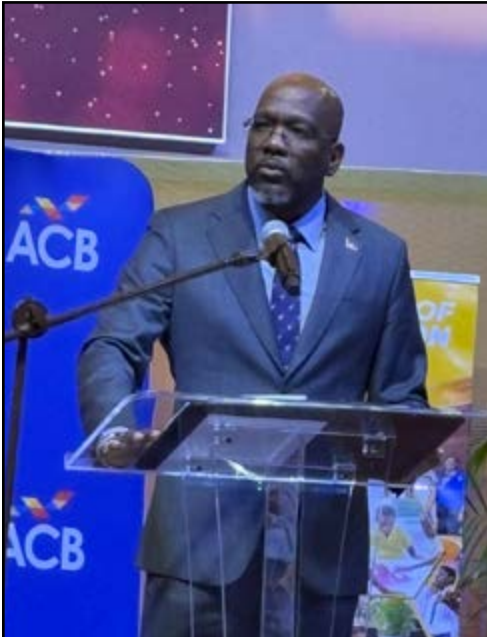


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The Education Minister tells CSEC awardees not to fear Artificial Intelligence



Education Minister Daryll Matthew



Sir Clare Roberts presents the Student of the Year Award to Uchenna Ohaegbulam



Student of the Year Uchenna Ohaegbulam receives Prime Minister's Award from Education Minister Daryll Matthew

Education Minister Daryll Matthew has congratulated this year's CSEC awardees for completing their secondary school examinations in an exceptional manner despite being the cohort that started their education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"You are the survivors of a global

upheaval. You are the cohort – the young men and women who started their secondary education journey amidst a world locked down in fear, uncertainty and isolation. While other generations had the luxury of normalcy, yours began in front of a computer screen, navigating school through the fog

of a pandemic," he started in an address at the annual CSEC prize giving ceremony held on Thursday at the St. John's Pentecostal House of Restoration.

Having successfully navigated the challenges of COVID-19, Minister Matthew drew the awardees attention to the subject of Artificial Intelligence. "We are standing in the eye of a technological storm," he noted, "Artificial Intelligence, once the stuff of science fiction, is now shaping how we work, how



we learn, how we live.

“AI is now writing books, diagnosing diseases, composing symphonies, and passing exams. Jobs that once felt secure – like travel agents, bank tellers, legal assistants and data entry clerks – are vanishing or being transformed beyond recognition,” he highlighted.

According to the education minister some of the careers that young people may have dreamed of when they entered secondary school, may not even exist five years from now. That, he added, could be frightening.

Despite these developments, Minister Matthew is urging young people not to be fearful and lose hope. “But hear me when I say this – do not fear the change. Because it is not here to replace

you. Because while machines can compute, they cannot create with compassion. While AI can write code, it cannot feel purpose. And while technology can simulate emotion, it cannot love, serve, or lead with integrity,” he declared. The annual CSEC prize-giving ceremony is sponsored by ACB Caribbean and its representative, Efiah Charlemagne-Norbert noted that the bank believes in investing in young people recognising that their success is the bank’s success.

“Today is a celebration of your hard work, your resilience, and your commitment to excellence. You have faced challenges, adapted to change and grown in ways you may not even realise yet. Whether you are heading off to university, entering the work-

force, or exploring new paths, know this – your journey is just beginning and your potential is limitless,” she remarked.

During the Ceremony, Sir Clare Roberts, the Governor General’s Deputy, presented the Student of the Year Award to Uchenna Ohaegbulam of the St. Joseph’s Academy. Minister Matthew also presented Ohaegbulam with the Prime Minister’s Award for Excellence.

The Student of the year wrote 23 CSEC subjects...graduating with 21 Grade Ones and two Grade Two’s.

Two Baptist Academy students tied for second place; both Kadisha Valerie and Jhorden Mannix passed 20 subjects each with 17 Grade Ones.



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Government is to capitalize on the growing use of stem cell therapy



Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin

The Antigua and Barbuda government is seeking to capitalize on the growing popularity of stem cell therapy to treat a wide variety of medical conditions.

This comes as it was brought to the attention of the Cabinet that large numbers of persons travel the world for wellness purposes and in search of stem cell therapy and this that development could form the backbone of health and country.

A Cabinet spokesman said that as part of its strategic efforts to develop the Wellness Tourism sector, the Cabinet took a policy decision to initiate the process for the manufacturing of stem cells within the country. The Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin, has been tasked with reviewing and proposing legislation to create an enabling legal framework for this emerging biotechnology sector.

The Cabinet emphasized that any stem cell manufacturing conducted in Antigua and Barbuda will be done strictly using ethical and

humane methods, specifically utilizing umbilical cord blood stem cells (UCBSCs). The Cabinet also acknowledged the increasing number of individuals who travel to Antigua and Barbuda seeking stem cell treatment and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting this sector—strictly within the parameters of national law.

The spokesman said the stem cell treatment that draws persons to the country are a source of revenue for the government as these services attract ABST which goes to the In-

land Revenue Department.

It has been noted that stem cell manufacturing refers to the process of producing, expanding, and preparing stem cells in controlled laboratory or industrial settings for use in research, diagnostics, or therapeutic applications. It involves several steps to ensure that the stem cells are safe, potent, pure, and scalable for clinical or commercial use.

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Festival Commission tells Cabinet ‘all planning milestones’ have been met

The Cabinet is generally pleased with the advanced state of planning for the 2025 instalment of the national festival, Antigua Carnival 2025.

This after the Cabinet on Wednesday welcomed the Chairman, Ambassador Elizabeth ‘Lisa’ Mahkoul and Deputy Chairman, Senator Michael Freeland and a member of the Festivals Commission for an update on the preparations for Antigua’s Carnival 2025, which will be held from **July 25 to August 5** under the theme “Itz A Vibe.”

Reports from the Cabinet said the Commission reported that all planning milestones have been met. It said that in collaboration with the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, it developed a strategic marketing campaign which has significantly boosted interest in the festival.

“As a result, tourism officials have indicated that hotel bookings have reached over 90% occupancy, and air-



Chairman, Ambassador Elizabeth ‘Lisa’ Mahkoul

lines are reporting near-full capacity for the duration of the festivities,” according to the report.

The Festivals Commission further announced new partnerships with private fete promoters, contributing to a dynamic lineup of events. Notable highlights include the 40th Anniversary Concert of the legendary *Burning*

Flames and a *Face Off* Concert featuring Asa Banton of Dominica and Antigua’s own Tian Winter.

In further positive developments, the Cabinet was informed that registration for carnival competitions is at a record high, and the various soca and calypso tents are now fully operational. The Commission also noted ongoing efforts to settle outstanding prize payments to artistes and outlined the hosting of workshops focused on vocal training and adjudication standards.

Cabinet was also briefed on the introduction of new parade routes, which will utilize streets on the outskirts of St. John’s to better accommodate the flow of events. The Cabinet instructed the Festivals Commission and the Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA) to ensure these routes are properly outfitted with carnival décor and adequate street lighting.



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Canadian designer George Sully visits, inspires local fashion designers



Ontario-based Fashion designer and entrepreneur George Sully, while vacationing in Antigua last week, met with three local designers to explore creativity and cross-border collaboration.

Sully met with Miranda Askie of Miranda Askie Designs, Shem Henry of Henrè Designs and Althea Teague of Althea's Wonderfully Made Productions at Villa Coby, a luxury villa in the Jolly Harbour area. In the intimate poolside setting, the designers showcased their couture pieces, fabric samples and accessories with live models.

Sully described the Antigua and Barbuda fashion scene as a vivid tapestry of creativity, culture, and expression.

"The islands' designers that I have had the pleasure to meet, effortlessly blend contemporary style with traditional influences, creating a unique narrative where every piece tells a story," Sully said.

"From bold colours to intricate patterns, the designs reflect not just the beauty of the landscape but the heart and soul of the people. Antigua and Barbuda is a place where fashion is more than a trend, it is a celebration

of identity and heritage that truly comes alive in every stitch."

The activity was organized by the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority's (ABTA) Canada Office, as part of ongoing efforts to expose Antiguan and Barbudan talent internationally.

ABTA Director of Tourism in Canada Tameka Wharton, said the collaboration between George Sully and the talented local designers serves to highlight Antigua and Barbuda's vibrant creative scene.

"By fostering these connections, we're not only

showcasing our home-grown talent but also opening doors for international partnerships that elevate our fashion industry on a global stage. These exchanges will continue within other prominent industries and sectors as a unique opportunity to promote our destination to experiential travellers," Wharton said.

While visiting Antigua and Barbuda with his wife and two sons, Sully ventured to Stingray City and Laviscount Island, a sanctuary for the protected Aldabra tortoises and other wildlife. Sully described the trip as "epic."

"Antigua welcomed me with open arms. It wasn't just the breathtaking landscapes that left an impression, but the genuine warmth of the people and their stories, reminding me that travel is more than just a destination," Sully noted.

The Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority is looking forward to future collaborations with Sully and the unique contributions and value he brings through his existing relationships and professional network.



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Carnival Corner



Antigua Calypso Tent 2025 Ignites the Season with New Venue, Big Vibes, and Powerful Performances



The spirit of Calypso is alive and thriving as the Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission (ABFC) officially launched the 2025 Calypso Tent season last weekend in grand style at a vibrant new venue, **Jack Idle**. Running every weekend through **July 4th and 5th for Calypso Quarterfinals**, the Tent showcases the richness of our Calypso music through stirring perfor-

mances, lively bands, unmatched VIBE and energy that's fueling the countdown to Antigua Carnival 2025.

Each Friday night features Wadadli Vibes, while Saturdays spotlight the high-energy sounds of the Sweet Benna Band, both delivering next-level musical accompaniment for the calypsonians. The Tent continues to grow in VIBES and momentum, and this weekend will be

extra special with two featured guest performers from Nevis: Garlic the Entertainer and Calypso Sabu, appearing on both nights.

Garlic the Entertainer, hailed as the #1 entertainer in the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, has graced international stages including the St. Kitts Music Festival, a performance for President George H. W. Bush, and the 2023 Black Tie Gala at the White House. With a career that includes sharing stages with global icons such as Janet Jackson, Whitney Houston, Machel Mon-

tano, Calypso Rose, and Antigua's own Onyan, he brings electrifying energy and undeniable star power. Joining him is fellow Nevisian Calypso Sabu (Ted Brandy), a seasoned and passionate lyricist and performer since 1979, known for his thoughtful commentary and regional appearances. A co-founder of the Nevis-Antigua Calypso Association (N.A.C.A.), Sabu embodies the heart of calypso through his words and presence.

This year marks a strategic partnership between ABFC and Jack Idle, transforming the Calypso



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Carnival Corner



Tent into a more immersive and accessible cultural hub. From the bar in the back to intimate seating up front, Jack Idle offers space, comfort, and atmosphere a perfect blend of lime and lyrics. The venue's elevated stage, expansive seating, and sports bar vibe have already drawn larger and more diverse crowds.

"Our music is one of the sources that fuels Carnival, and this year, the

calypsonians have truly delivered. I want to congratulate all the artiste, arrangers and producers for the exceptional quality of music," said **Peter Abraham Sr.**, Chair of the Calypso Monarch Subcommittee.

The opening weekend was filled with unforgettable highlights, the return of legendary Queen Ivena as a backup singer, a warm welcome for returning junior artistes, and impres-

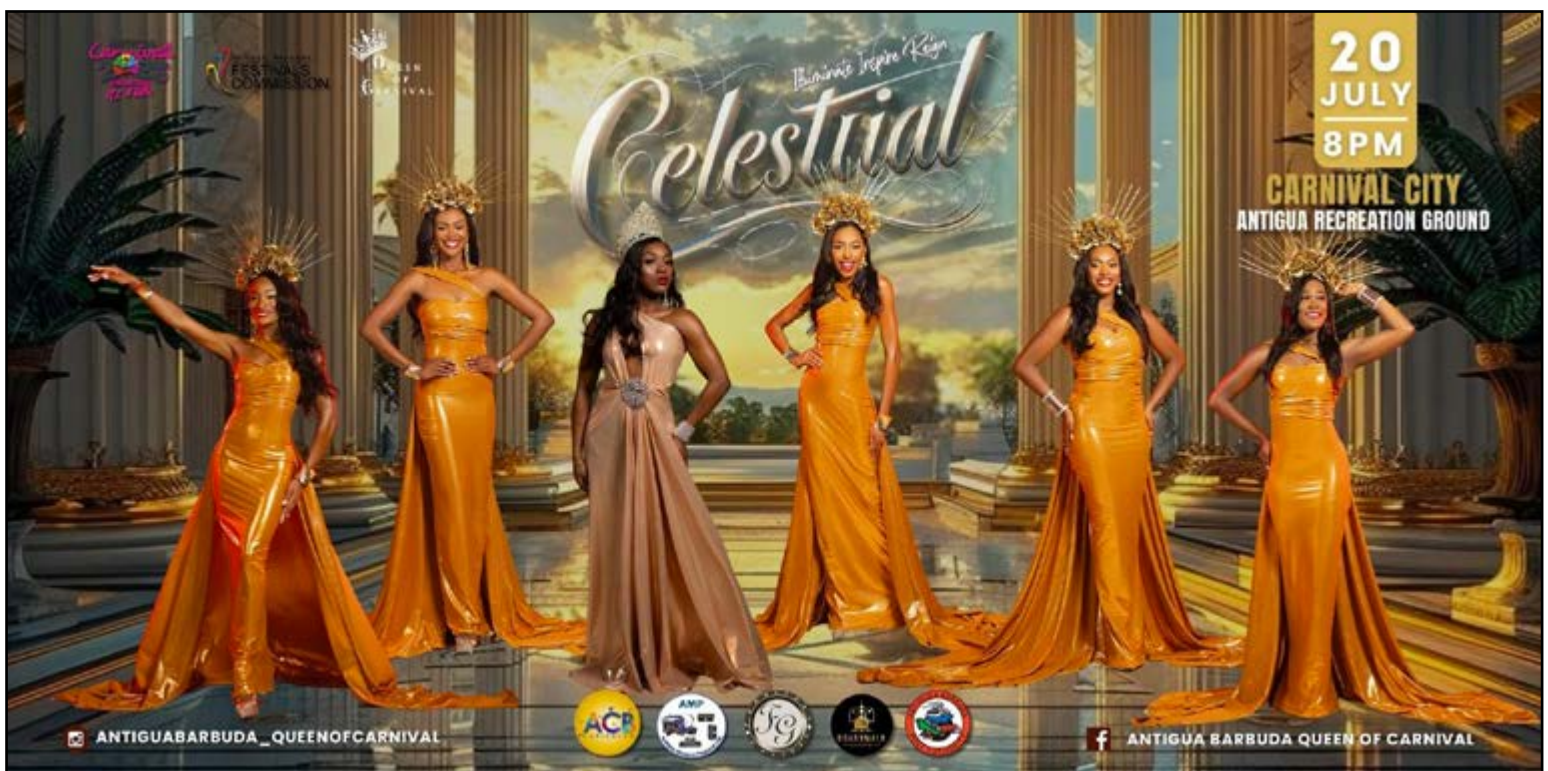
sive showings from first timers and veterans alike. The tent blended social and political commentary, witty humor, and rich storytelling, all hallmarks of classic Calypso.

"We are thrilled with the reception to the new venue," said **Ms. Elizabeth Makhoul**, Chairperson of the Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission. *"Jack Idle has given the Calypso Tent a fresh identity, and the feedback speaks for itself. We are already seeing new faces, new VIBES, new energy, and a renewed love for the artform. This is exactly what we hoped for."*

Hon. Daryll S. Matthew, Minister of Education, Sports and the Creative Industries, added: *"Calypso is not just music; it's commentary, it's*

tradition, it's our story, and it's a VIBE on its own. The Tent is a vital space where our creatives connect with the people, and this year, it's not just about the songs, it's about the movement, with a strong presence of our young artiste crossing over into Calypso. I encourage everyone to come out and support our artists. There's no Carnival without Kasio."

The Calypso Tent continues **every Friday and Saturday night through July 4th and 5th for Calypso Quarterfinals**, and all are invited to be part of the Calypso Tent. Come VIBE, lime, laugh, dance, and support our artiste as they bring the spirit of Calypso in Carnival to life. Local music is more than a VIBES, it's our voice.





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The Continuing Distress of the Haitian People



By Sir Ronald Sanders

The situation in Haiti is worsening, and the ordinary people of Haiti—already among the most impoverished in the Western Hemisphere—are its most tragic victims. They continue to exist, barely, in conditions of extreme poverty, rampant violence, and diminishing hope for a better life.

Over the last three years, the rise of armed gangs—now controlling more than 80% of Port-au-Prince and extending their influence beyond—has made life in Haiti increasingly intolerable. As the machinery of governance and law enforcement in the country has eroded, these gangs have filled the void with terror and impunity. Presently, at least 1.3 million people are displaced within Haiti's borders. The scale of the security and humanitarian crisis is catastrophic and worsening.

A recent report by Haiti's leading independent human rights watchdog, the National Human Rights Defence Network (RNDDH), outlines this dire situation with stark clarity. Titled "Poor Governance, Insecurity, Corruption, and Impunity: In One Year, the CPT

Has Worsened the Already Concerning Situation in the Country", the April 2025 report paints a bleak picture. Since the installation of the unelected Presidential Transition Council (CPT) in April 2024, RNDDH has recorded thirteen massacres and dozens of armed attacks. From April 2024 to March 2025 alone, 4,405 people were murdered—805 of them in just the first three months of 2025. More than 3,700 women were subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, including nearly 1,900 cases of rape or sexual assault.

The RNDDH report is particularly critical of Haiti's governance. It notes that only one of the thirteen documented massacres led to any form of prosecution. Complaints from victims remain unaddressed. Haiti's prisons are overcrowded by more than 82%, and its court system is in disarray, with some judges operating from a makeshift house after fleeing areas overtaken by gangs. The report is unequivocal in its conclusion: the CPT has deepened, rather than alleviated, the country's descent into violence, corruption, and institutional breakdown.

While the Haitian people are caught in this maelstrom, the international community remains fragmented and largely ineffective. The United Nations Security Council has repeatedly renewed the mandate of the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission to support Haiti's stabilization efforts. However, with approximately 1,000 personnel on the ground and inadequate funding, the operation is hamstrung. The U.S. and Brazil have advocated for transforming this effort into a full-fledged UN peacekeeping mission. But China and Russia have blocked such a move, revealing the systemic paralysis at the heart of the Security Council.

As a result, the MSS is running on fumes—willing, perhaps, but not resourced or structured to be truly effective. Its Kenyan leadership is confronting a scale of violence and sophistication among Haiti's gangs that vastly outmatches the mission's capacity.

In a highly controversial development, the CPT has reportedly hired a private security company led by U.S. citizen Erik Prince—founder of the infamous Blackwater group—to carry out targeted operations against the gangs. Reports suggest that Prince's operatives have been using kamikaze drones since March 2025 to assassinate gang leaders. While some sources claim that a significant number of high-ranking gang members have been killed, there is no independent verification of these claims.

More alarmingly, the gangs have begun to hide themselves within local communities to evade drone strikes, exposing innocent civilians to the risk of being killed. Experts warn that it is only a matter of time before these heavily armed and well-resourced groups—already possessing superior firepower to the Haitian National Police—acquire and deploy drones of their own. The trend of non-state actors using commercially available drones in other conflict zones underscores the risk of a massive and destructive escalation in Haiti's already dire security crisis.

In the face of this spiralling crisis, the new Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Albert Ramdin, has proposed a fresh approach. In his inaugural address on May 30, Ramdin called for a new strategy to address the interlinked security, humanitarian, and political crises in Haiti. He hopes that stakeholders can significantly improve the security situ-

ation and organize a constitutional referendum before February 2026, when the mandate of the CPT expires.

The Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington-based think tank, asked me to comment on the feasibility of this vision. My answer was clear:

“What is certain is that, without a significant use of force to dislodge the gangs’ stranglehold in Haiti, security will not improve, nor will a constitutional referendum occur by February 2026. However, such a force is most unlikely. The UN Security Council would not authorise it, and the OAS Charter does not permit it. So, Secretary-General Ramdin is right to pursue a new strategy.

Any realistic strategy must face this central reality: the gangs have a strong and determinative presence, with substantial firepower and almost no incentive to disarm unilaterally. A greater realism is required. This demands cooperation among the UN and OAS

Secretaries-General, key UN Security Council members, and the Haitian Transitional Council to establish a short-term stabilization plan in conjunction with a long-term economic transformation agenda. The short-term plan must provide targeted support to strengthen Haitian institutions, particularly the Haitian National Police, and bolster any feasible international security mission.

Essentially, the strategy must also involve engagement with gang leadership, not to give them a share in power, but to provide them with incentives to cooperate in establishing the rule of law. History shows that dialogue, however difficult, has helped to resolve internal conflicts; without it, the status quo will persist.”

Some may recoil at the notion of engaging criminal gangs in dialogue. However, at least two Caribbean leaders have publicly acknowledged the necessity of such an approach, and others have done so privately. The

hard truth is that, with the UN Security Council unwilling to act decisively, and the U.S. increasingly financing Haiti’s security in an ad hoc manner, a dangerous vacuum has emerged in international support for resolving the crisis.

Haiti’s internal governance failures cannot be addressed solely by force. What was once unimaginable must now be seriously considered. That includes unconventional diplomacy, direct engagement, and regional leadership to fill the vacuum of international will.

(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda’s Ambassador to the US and the OAS. He led the OAS Mission to Haiti in 2016, which helped to resolve the Constitutional crisis, leading to an interim government and the holding of elections for a new administration. The views expressed are entirely his own. Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com)



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Feature



From Crisis to Catalyst: The Sargassum Rebellion Rising from the Sea

By Dr. Curtis Charles

Imagine waking up on a Caribbean morning to the salty kiss of sea breeze—only to be smothered by the thick, pungent stench of rotting sargassum blanketing the shore. Once a symbol of sun-kissed freedom, our coastlines have, for years, been under siege. Boats grounded. Fishers halted. Tourism choked. For many, sargassum is a menace—an uninvited guest over-staying its welcome.

But what if this very menace is the messenger of our next big breakthrough?

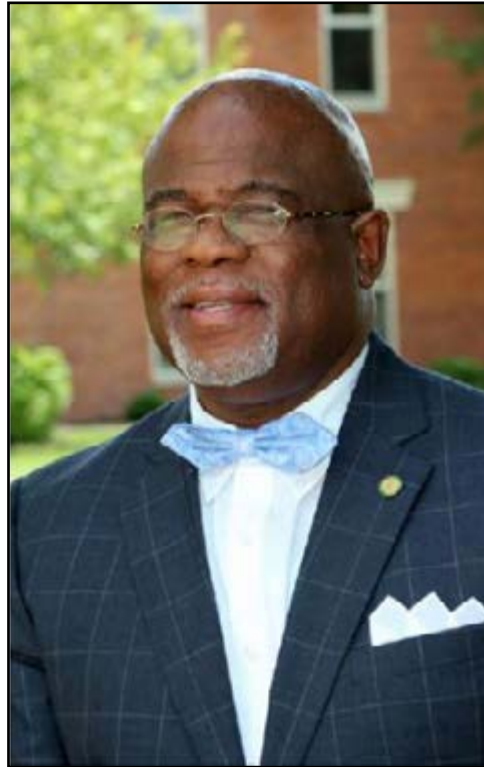
This year's electrifying panel, *"From Sargassum to Sustainability: Tech-Driven Solutions for Ocean Health"*, flips the script. Instead of lamenting the seaweed invasion, Caribbean scientists and innovators are reimagining sargassum as a resource—a golden tide of opportunity in disguise. And the stories coming from this panel? They don't whisper—they roar.

Moderated by the brilliant Dr. Ilenius Ildephonse, the session ignites with the visionary insights of Dr. Mario Costa Sousa from the University of Calgary. His team's **Rapid Sargassum Modeling (RSM) Project** is not science fiction—it's science *Caribbean-style*, fused with grit and grace. Using AI, immersive visualization, and real-time satellite data, the RSM is like a digital guardian of our oceans, detecting sargassum blooms before they wreak havoc. It models their spread, gauges environmental damage, and helps defend coral reefs—the beating heart of marine life—from suffocation.

This isn't tech for tech's sake. It's tech with soul. Tech with purpose.

But hold on, the magic doesn't stop there.

Enter Dr. Legena Henry—fearless inventor, university lecturer, and Ca-



Director of Academic Studies at the University of the West Indies FIC, Dr. Curtis Charles

ibbean daughter of the soil. With a wild mix of genius and gumption, her company, **Rum & Sargassum Inc.**, is doing the unthinkable: turning sargassum into fuel. Yes, you read that right.

Not just any fuel—**renewable natural gas (RNG)** brewed from sargassum, Blackbelly sheep manure, and wastewater from local rum distilleries. At a live demo in Barbados, this elixir powered a generator, juiced up an electric vehicle, and proved it could help stabilize entire island energy grids.

Let that sink in.

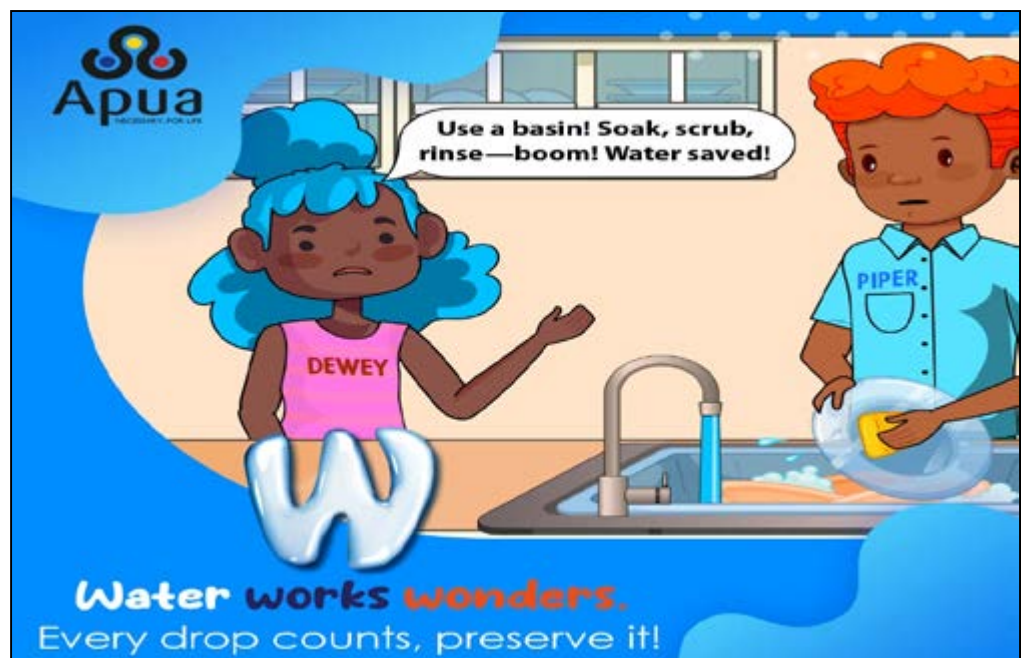
The same seaweed once strangling our shores is now lighting our homes, charging our cars, and offering a pathway to energy sovereignty.

Together, these trailblazers are not just patching up problems. They're birthing a new Caribbean renaissance—where marine waste fuels clean energy, where artificial intelligence safeguards fragile ecosystems, and where island innovation speaks louder than imported solutions.

This panel reminds us: we are not victims of climate change. We are architects of our survival.

So the next time you smell sargassum in the air, don't turn away. Lean in. That's the scent of possibility. That's the Caribbean rising.

And the world had better be ready.



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Regional News

Dominica Government orders investigation after roof collapse at Grammar School

The Government of Dominica has issued a statement regarding the collapse of the concrete roof at the Dominica Grammar School, which is currently under construction in the capital. The incident occurred on Monday when the roof of the school's auditorium gave way. Fortunately, no injuries were reported.

"The Government of Dominica views the collapse of the concrete roof at the Dominica Grammar School construction site on Monday, June 16, as a matter of grave concern and is addressing the incident with the highest level of urgency and seriousness," Acting Prime Minister Denise Charles-Pemberton said on Wednesday.

"We are extremely thankful that the incident resulted in no injuries," she added.

Charles-Pemberton informed that the Cabinet has approved an independent investigation to determine the cause of the structural failure. She said an engineering firm will be engaged to



carry out a comprehensive assessment of the site and submit a detailed report to the government.

As an additional measure, a decision was also taken to inspect all other structures currently under construction at the site to assess their structural integrity and ensure full compliance with safety standards, Charles-Pemberton said.

Meantime, she adds that, "All construction activities at the site have been suspended with immediate effect pending the outcome of the

investigation."

A joint team from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Works will oversee the process and ensure that corrective actions are implemented.

In January, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit, who toured the construction of the new DGS said the building is expected to be completed by the end of June this year.

"Though we are under pressure to have the students in at the earliest opportunity, but at the same time we have to be

careful that we do not speed-compromise the structural integrity and the architectural quality of the Dominica Grammar School," he said then.

"The well-being of the students, teachers, and staff of the Dominica Grammar School remains the government's paramount concern, and no compromises will be made in safeguarding their safety and protection," Charles-Pemberton concluded, promising to provide the public with further updates in due course. (*Loop Caribbean*)

St Kitts and Nevis wins award for new ePassport design



St Kitts and Nevis has been awarded the 'Best New Passport' award for 2025 under the 'Regional ID Document of the Year' category at the High Security Printing Latin America conference, making it the first OECS country to win the HSP award.

The Ministry of National Security, Citizenship and Immigration announced that the award was presented last week in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during the annual international conference that focuses on emerging technologies related to government-issued currency, identification, and travel documents.

St Kitts and Nevis launched its new ePassport in November 2024. The ePassport features a polycarbonate data page, which significantly

enhances durability and security by making it resistant to tampering and wear. The ePassport's design intricately blends island-centric elements such as indigenous flora and geographic motifs with cutting-edge security features, ensuring it remains one of the most secure travel documents in the Caribbean.

The ePassport was developed and produced by the Canadian Bank Note Company, Limited (CBN) and is compliant with the global interoperability standards set forth by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The Ottawa-based firm also delivered an advanced passport issuance system, online web services for the public, a border management system, and self-clearance kiosks at the

Robert L. Bradshaw International Airport.

The St Kitts and Nevis Information Service says that "the award comes at a time when St. Kitts and Nevis is

strengthening its border security architecture and compliance regime in line with international standards and best practices." (*Loop Caribbean*)



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Regional News



PM Gonsalves says OECS might have to consider exiting CSME



St Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves has assumed the chairmanship of the sub-regional Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), highlighting a number of complaints about the larger Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

regional bloc.

Like St Lucia Opposition Leader, Allen Chastanet, had done during the meeting of the OECS Assembly on Tuesday, Gonsalves said that to address some of these issues, the OECS may have to decouple from some

elements of CARICOM.

Chastanet had asked the OECS Assembly, comprising government and opposition legislators from the nine-member grouping, to consider what would happen if the sub-regional group exited CARICOM and negotiated bilateral agreements with the other members.

However, Gonsalves did not go so far, saying, “the OECS countries may well, most reluctantly by force of circumstances, have to put on the table the continued relevance of our participation in the CSME (CARICOM Single Market and Economy), while, of course, remaining in CARICOM until the inequities refer to hearing are satisfied”.

The CSME is an arrangement among CARICOM member states aimed at creating a single, larger economic space by removing trade barriers and facilitating the free movement of goods, services, people, capital, and technology.

Gonsalves, currently, the longest-serving head of government in the 15-member CARICOM, noted that the OECS has a deeper level of integration than CARICOM.

He said the OECS, as the most-integrated form of the several circles of integration in the Caribbean, allows for overlapping membership of several regional entities, including CARICOM, the Association of Caribbean

States (ACS), the Community of States of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC) and the Bolivarian Alliance for Our America (ALBA).

“Each of these circles of integration provides optimal outcomes for their members only if they pursue the mandates effectively through their own arrangements, and also leverage, efficaciously, their points of contact and relevance with the other regional integration mechanisms.”

The Vincentian leader said that with the OECS having the tightest level of integration, its members “have to make sure that we do in ours and all the others of which we are members the best in accordance with the mandates in those organizations and for them to have points of relevance and contact with one another, so that all can be cohesive, going towards certain desired ends”.

Gonsalves, however said that in this process, “multiple contradictions and challenges arise, and in this regard, it is to be seriously regretted that CARICOM has yet to find it possible to provide a specific carve out for the OECS within its treaty arrangements for a special attention beyond the general regime in CARICOM’s Treaty, chapter seven of it, covering special treatment for disadvantaged countries, regions and economic sectors”.

Regional News

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He said both the OECS and CARICOM have been designed as integration entities “to be organic as distinct from mechanistic.

“This means, in effect, that the strengths and weaknesses, limitations and possibilities of each member state are dissolved into an integrated whole, which is greater than the sum of the individual parts, from which each becomes a beneficiary and receives value greater than it otherwise would have realized, had it not been a member”.

He said the value garnered has to be substantially material, enhancing the life, living and production of the people of each member state, adding that there is great value in small states such as those in CARICOM and OECS coming together.

Gonsalves said most people take so much of those benefits for granted “that they do not quite appreciate the value until something goes awry.

“Still, if the member countries within the specific regional integration entity are unequally yoked in terms of decision making and outcomes, and if not corrected, the integration entity may wither, or it may itself become a yoke too burdensome for some members to bear.”

Gonsalves said that in the OECS “this particular conundrum does not exist or hardly so,” but in the case of CARICOM, there are “relevant queries” which ought to be raised “honestly yet again.

“First, it is evident that the trading arrangements of CARICOM have benefited the member states with a larger territorial and economic base, particularly in respect of manufacturing commodities and the comparatively cheaper energy resource in Trinidad and Tobago has additionally made that country’s manufacturing sector the uneven beneficiary from CARICOM’s trade in commodities,” Gonsalves said.

He said that before the OECS signed on to the CSME, the OECS had conducted a study which confirmed that “the CARICOM

arrangements disadvantaged the OECS manufacturing sector.

“It is nevertheless true that without special protection offered through article 164 of the CARICOM treaty to the production of flour in the OECS, our Eastern Caribbean Flour Mills in St Vincent and the Grenadines’ very existence would be in grave jeopardy.”

He, however, noted that this protection for Vincentian flour, for example, under Article 164 of the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, “is time-bound periodically and always in jeopardy.

“On the last occasion on which this matter came up for renewal, the opposition of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados almost scuttled this protection,” Gonsalves said.

“Fortunately, my government was able to secure continued protection under the rules through the combined support of the OECS countries, Guyana, Haiti, Belize and Suriname. Next time, will the anchor hold?

“Undoubtedly, the producers in Trinidad and Tobago want to take over the entire flour market in the Eastern Caribbean. We in St Vincent



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Regional News

Human development and partnerships top agenda when Jamaica assumes chairmanship of CARICOM



When Jamaica assumes Chairmanship of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), human development, capacity-building and partnerships will be central to all dialogues and actions.

The incoming Chairman of CARICOM is Prime Minister, Dr Andrew Holness, who takes over from Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley.

Holness will host the upcoming 49th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, scheduled to take place at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in St James, from July 6 to 8, under the theme 'People, Partnerships, Prosperity:

Promoting a Secure and Sustainable Future'.

The Conference will bring together CARICOM member States, associate member States, representatives from regional bodies and specially invited guests.

Speaking at a Jamaica Information Service (JIS) Think Tank on June 17 in Kingston, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Kamina Johnson Smith, said that significant thought planning and effort went into developing the theme.

She said that 'people' was placed first to reflect the importance of human development and capacity-building, which must remain at the heart of all regional initia-

tives.

Addressing the element of 'partnerships', Minister Johnson Smith stressed that nothing can be done in isolation.

"Not only as a region but globally, we have to ensure that we have appropriate partnerships in place to build resilience and to achieve our goals," she said.

The theme's focus on 'prosperity' she said, reflects the aspirational developmental goals shared by all CARICOM member States.

The Minister also reflected on the phrase, 'promoting a secure and sustainable future', recognising that peace, stability and security

are critical pre-conditions for prosperity and require collective commitment from all.

On the matter of 'sustainability', she explained that it reflects the need to focus on climate change and on building resilience, both nationally and regionally.

"The sustainable element also includes an economic aspect. Sustainability is also about inclusive and sustained economic growth... This is key to building a region that is not only environmentally sustainable but also capable of achieving more together," she added. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

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US resumes visas for foreign students but demands access to social media accounts



The US State Department said Wednesday it is restarting the suspended process for foreigners applying for student visas but all applicants will now be required to unlock their social media accounts for government review.

The department said consular officers will be on the lookout for posts and messages that could be deemed hostile to the United States, its government, culture, institutions or founding principles.

In a notice made public Wednesday, the department said it had rescinded its May suspension of student visa processing but said new applicants who refuse to set their social media accounts to “public” and allow them to be reviewed may be rejected. It said a refusal to do so could be a sign they are trying to evade the requirement or hide their online activity.

The Trump administration last month temporarily halted the scheduling of new visa interviews for foreign students hoping to study in the US while preparing to expand the screening of their activity on social media, officials said.

Students around the world have been waiting anxiously for US consulates to reopen appointments for visa interviews, as the window left to book

their travel and make housing arrangements narrows ahead of the start of the school year.

On Wednesday afternoon, a 27-year-old PhD student in Toronto was able to secure an appointment for a visa interview next week. The student, a Chinese national, hopes to travel to the US for a research intern position that would start in late July. “I’m really relieved,” said the student, who spoke on condition of being identified only by his surname, Chen, because he was concerned about being targeted. “I’ve been refreshing the website couple of times every day.”

Students from China, India, Mexico and the Philippines have posted on social media sites that they have been monitoring visa booking websites and closely watching press briefings of the State Department to get any indication of when appointment bookings might resume.

“Under new guidance, consular officers will conduct a comprehensive and thorough vetting of all student and exchange visitor applicants,” the department said in a statement.

“To facilitate this vetting” applicants “will be asked to adjust the privacy settings on all their social media profiles to ‘public,’” it said. “The enhanced social media vetting will ensure we are

properly screening every single person attempting to visit our country.”

In internal guidance sent to consular officers, the department said they should be looking for “any indications of hostility toward the citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles of the United States.”

Jameel Jaffer, executive director at the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, said the new policy evokes the ideological vetting of the Cold War when prominent artists and intellectuals were excluded from the US.

“This policy makes a censor of every consular officer, and it will inevitably chill legitimate political speech both inside and outside the United States,” Jaffer said.

International students in the US have been facing increased scrutiny on several fronts. In the spring, the Trump administration revoked permission to study in the US for thousands of students, including some involved only in traffic offences, before abruptly reversing course. The government also expanded the grounds on which foreign students can have their legal status terminated.

As part of a pressure campaign targeting Harvard University, the Trump administration has moved to block foreign students from attending the Ivy League school, which counts on international students for tuition dollars and a quarter of its enrolment. Trump has said Harvard should cap its foreign enrolment at 15 per cent.

The Trump administration also has called for 36 countries to commit to improving vetting of travellers or face a ban on their citizens visiting the United States. A weekend diplomatic cable sent by the State Department says the countries have 60 days to address US concerns or risk being added to a travel ban that now includes 12 nations. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

Erick strengthens into a Category 3 major hurricane approaching Mexico's coast



Hurricane Erick powered up into a dangerous Category 3 major hurricane Wednesday evening as it bore down on the southern Mexico coast, threatening to unleash destructive winds, flash floods and a dangerous storm surge on the region in coming hours, forecasters said.

Swiftly strengthening from a Category 1 hurricane hours earlier, Erick had maximum sustained winds of 120 mph (195 kph) by nightfall as it churned offshore about 55 miles (90 kilometres) south-southwest of Puerto Angel, the Miami-based US National Hurricane Center said.

Erick was also about 160 miles (260 kilometres) southeast of Punta Maldonado and moving northwest at nine mph (15 kph) toward an expected landfall sometime Thursday morning, according to the center's latest advisory. A major hurricane is defined as Category 3 or higher and wind speeds of

at least 111 mph (180 kph). Forecasters said further strengthening is expected and devastating wind damage is possible near where the eye crashes ashore.

The projected path would take its centre near the resort of Acapulco, which was devastated in October 2023 by Hurricane Otis, a Category 5 hurricane that rapidly intensified and caught many unprepared. At least 52 people died in Otis and 32 were missing, after the storm severely damaged almost all of the resort's hotels.

In Acapulco on Wednesday, there was a strong presence of National Guard and police in the streets, but most visible were trucks from the national power company. Crews worked to clear drainage canals and brush. Some beaches were already closed, but tourists continued to sunbathe on others hours earlier as the storm gained strength well offshore.

On a beach in Acapulco, a line of people waited for the help of a backhoe to pull their boats out of the water.

Adrián Acevedo Durantes, 52, hauls tourists around Acapulco's picturesque coastline in boats. Two of his boats sank in Hurricane Otis and a third was badly damaged.

"We're taking precautions because with Otis we never expected one of that magnitude to come and now with climate change the water is warmer and the hurricanes are more powerful," Acevedo said.

This time the port administration ordered that no one ride out the storm aboard their boats. During Otis many lost their lives by staying on boats in the harbour, which had traditionally been how they ensured their safety during previous storms. Acevedo said he knew some of those lost at sea.

He acknowledged that it was sunny and the water

calm Wednesday afternoon, making it hard to imagine a major storm was on the way, but said "with Otis it was calm all day, sunny, then at midnight there were two hours of strong winds and we saw what had happened the next day."

Francisco Casarubio, a 46-year-old choreographer, carried a carton of eggs as he did some last-minute shopping ahead of the storm. He planned to pick up rice, beans and some canned food as well.

His home flooded and lost power in Otis and said he was taking Erick more seriously, but hadn't had time to shop until Wednesday.

Forecasters said Erick was expected to lash Mexico's Pacific coast with heavy rain, strong winds and a fierce storm surge. Rains of up to 16 inches (40 centimetres) could fall across the Mexican states of Oaxaca and Guerrero, with lesser totals in Chiapas, Michoacan, Colima and Jalisco states, the center's advisory said. The rainfall threatened flooding and mudslides, especially in areas with steep terrain.

A hurricane warning was in effect from Acapulco to Puerto Ángel. A hurricane warning means hurricane conditions are expected in the area, and preparations to protect life and property should be rushed to completion, according to the hurricane center advisory. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

South Africa declares national disaster as flooding death toll rises to 92



South Africa was under a declared state of national disaster on Thursday as the death toll from floods caused by severe rains in the Eastern Cape region rose to 92.

The Eastern Cape government honoured the victims of last week's floods with a provincial Day of Mourning and a memorial service at King Sabatha Dalindyebo Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College in Mthatha, one of the few schools whose infrastructure remained

intact.

Speaking at the public memorial service, Zolile Williams, a member of the executive council, said the people of the coastal province have not been the same since the disaster hit, and many are now faced with the challenging task of rebuilding.

"Since June 9, this province has been hit hard by unprecedented, catastrophic and unimaginable disasters, where in the whole of the province, about 92 people have perished," said Williams.

"Since that day, the Eastern Cape has not been the same. It is the first time we have experienced so many dead bodies, some of whom have not yet been found."

An extreme weather front brought heavy rain, strong winds and snow to parts of the province caused flooding in one of South Africa's poorest provinces last week, leaving dozens dead and roads, houses, schools and other infrastructure damaged.

At least two school children who were washed away in a bus are among the unverified number of missing persons according to local media reports, while thousands have since been displaced.

Authorities have appealed for residents to report missing people so rescuers could better understand how many people they were still looking for.

Religious leaders from different Christian religions were among the hundreds of mourners who attended the memorial ceremony, lighting candles as a symbolic expression of remembering the 92 people who died in the floods. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)



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St. Kitts to host 2025 CWI Under-19 Tournament



2024 double regional Under-19 champions Barbados

The 2025 Cricket West Indies (CWI) Rising Stars Men's Under-19 Championship will take place in St. Kitts and Nevis at the end of this month.

The competition, which has been hosted annually in St. Vincent since 2018, will be returning to St. Kitts and Nevis from June 30 to July 25 this year.

Matches will be played across five venues. They are the Len Harris Cricket Academy, Conaree Sports Club, St. Mary's Park in Cayon, St. Paul's Cricket Ground in St. Kitts, and the Elquemedo Willett Park in Nevis.

The regional under-19 tournament, which was last hosted in St. Kitts and Nevis

in 2017, will also see a change in format with only a 50-over competition.

In recent years, the regional under-19 tournament comprised a 50-over championship in conjunction with a three-day or two-day competition.

The regional under-19 tournament commenced with a three-day tournament in 1976, and the 50-over contest was inaugurated in 1998 in Trinidad and Tobago as a replacement for the washed-out three-day competition.

Barbados will be the defending champions after capturing the double, winning both the two-day and 50-over contests at last year's tournament in St.

Vincent.

Two teams from the United States will be joining the six regional territorial teams in the competition. It is not the first time an overseas team is taking part in the tournament.

Canada's under-19 team participated in the 50-over championship in the 2018 regional under-19 tournament in St. Vincent.

The eight teams in this year's competition will contest seven round-robin matches. The top two teams at the end of the round-robin stage will advance to the final, which will take place on Thursday, July 24.

The other teams will also have a final round of match-

es to determine third place, fifth place, and seventh place on July 24.

The competition will bowl off with the opening round of matches on Thursday, July 3.

Champions Barbados will launch the defence of their title against Guyana at the Elquemedo Willett Park in Nevis.

The Leeward Islands will begin their campaign against the Windward Islands at Conaree.

In the other two opening round matches, Jamaica will tackle USA 1 at St. Mary's Park in Cayon, and Trinidad and Tobago will clash with USA 2 at St. Paul's Cricket Ground.

Old Stagers lose opener in title defence of ASCFL



The Old Stagers football team, Champions of the 2024 ASCFL. (File Photo)

Old Stagers have made a losing start in defence of their title in the All Saints Community Football League (ASCFL).

Darg Ah Bark launched their campaign with a 3-1 victory against Old Stagers in their opening encounter in the league at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints on Wednesday evening.

Shamoy Carr gave Dark Ah Bark a one-nil lead with an 18th-minute conversion. But Lee Andre Nicholas scored an equalizer for Old Stagers in the 30th minute as both teams reached halftime level at 1-1.

Darg Ah Bark regained their lead via

an own goal by Joel Jacob in the 43rd minute and wrapped up the win with a 60th-minute conversion by Renol Delva.

Last year's Soccerama champions, Fundamentals, also made a winning start to their league campaign on Wednesday.

Troy Jules scored twice as Fundamentals launched their league campaign with a 2-1 victory against Ovals.

Jules opened the scoring with a sixth-minute conversion to give Fundamentals a one-nil lead.

Ovals equalized via an own goal, which was scored by Kwami Byers in the 13th minute as both teams reached

halftime deadlocked at 1-1.

Jules snatched the winner for Fundamentals when he scored his second goal of the match by converting a penalty kick in the 38th minute.

Ovals finished the match with 10 men after Rakeem Isaac received a second caution (yellow card) in the 36th minute and was expelled.

The All Saints Community Football League will resume with another double-header on Sunday.

Fundamentals will take on Police at 6:15 pm, and Soccerama champions Stoneville will clash with Ovals at 7:30 pm.

Windies women to open 2026 T20 World Cup campaign against New Zealand



Players of the West Indies women's team

The West Indies Women will launch their 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup campaign with a challenging showdown against reigning champions New Zealand after both were drawn in Group Two of the tournament set to bowl off on June 12.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) officially unveiled the full tournament schedule, which confirmed 24 days of high-octane international cricket across England and Wales, with iconic venues like The Oval, Lord's, Headingley, Old Trafford, and Hampshire Bowl hosting matches.

The Windies will share Group Two with host nation England, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, and two teams

from the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier, which takes place next year. Group One features Australia, South Africa, India, Pakistan, and two additional qualifiers.

This 2026 edition marks a significant milestone for the sport, as the tournament continues to build momentum behind the growing popularity and influence of women's cricket.

It also represents a major opportunity for the West Indies to reclaim their place among the sport's elite after mixed results in recent global events.

The tournament will open with England crossing swords with Sri Lanka under the lights at Edgbaston, while fans can also look for-

ward to fiery clashes such as India against Pakistan and Australia against South Africa in the group stages.

Tournament Director Beth Barrett-Wild described the event as "a transformative opportunity" for women's cricket.

"The ICC Women's T20 World Cup provides us with an unparalleled opportunity to transform a month of sporting excellence into a movement that will rewrite the narrative about women's cricket. It's our opportunity to give women's cricket and women's sport the stage it deserves," she said.

The semi-finals and final will be played in London, at The Oval and Lord's, adding prestige to the tournament's knockout stages. Fans are

already flocking to secure tickets, with priority passes for the final selling out within 24 hours of release.

The West Indies Women, who won the title in 2016, will be keen to recapture past glory and make a deep run in the newly expanded 12-team format.

Australia boast a record six titles (2010, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020, and 2023), while England (2019) and New Zealand join the West Indies with one title each.

Group 1: Australia, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Qualifier, and Qualifier.

Group 2: West Indies, England, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Qualifier, and Qualifier.

Alleyne, Joseph sanctioned for dissent in second ODI against South Africa



Aaliyah Alleyne

The West Indies women's all-rounder Aaliyah Alleyne and opening batter Qiana Joseph were fined for breaching Level One of the ICC Code of Conduct during the second Women's One-Day International (ODI) against South Africa at the 3Ws Oval in Barbados over the weekend.

The duo were both found guilty

of violating Article 2.8 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which pertains to "showing dissent at an umpire's decision during an international match."

Alleyne, who was fined 10 per cent of her match fee and handed one demerit point, displayed her frustration by gesturing with open

arms and hesitating to leave the field after being adjudged out by the on-field umpires.

Joseph, on the other hand, committed the same offence in what was described as a more forceful manner. She was fined 50 per cent of her match fee and received two demerit points on her disciplinary record.

Both players admitted to their respective offences and accepted the sanctions imposed by match referee Akhtar Ahmad of the Emirates ICC International Panel, avoiding the need for a formal hearing.

The charges were brought by on-field umpires Jacqueline Williams and Nimali Perera, third umpire Candace la Borde, and fourth umpire Maria Abbott.

Level One breaches carry penalties ranging from an official reprimand to a maximum fine of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, along with the imposition of one or two demerit points.

According to ICC regulations, if a player accumulates four or more demerit points within a 24-month period, they are converted into suspension points, leading to a ban.

Two suspension points translate to a ban from one Test match or two ODIs or T20Is, depending on the format scheduled next for the player.

Demerit points remain on a player's record for 24 months before being expunged.

Maginley claims second title on ATP Challenger Tour



Antiguan Jody Maginley, right, and teammate Andre Ilagan of the United States of America with their trophies after capturing the title at the M25 ITF Championship on the hardcourt in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on Sunday, June 15, 2025. (Photo courtesy Jody Maginley)

Antigua and Barbuda's only professional tennis player, Jody Maginley, has captured his second doubles title on the ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) Challenger Tour.

Maginley and teammate Andre Ilagan of the United States of America captured

the title at the M25 ITF Championship on the hardcourt in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, held from June 9 to 15.

The Antiguan and his American teammate clinched the title with a 7-5, 6-7, 11-9 victory over the Brazilian duo of Lucas An-

drade Da Silva and Lucca Pignaton in the keenly contested final.

On their way to the final, the combination of Maginley and Ilagan ousted the team comprising Peter Bertram of the Dominican Republic and Mwendwa Mbithi of the USA 6-0, 6-2

in the semi-final.

In the quarter-finals, the Maginley and Ilagan duo defeated the Dominican Republic duo of Alejandro Gandini and Emmanuel Munoz 6-3, 6-4.

Maginley and Ilagan also combined their efforts to prevail 6-7, 6-4, 10-4 against the American pair of Dakotah Bobo and Ronald Hohmann in a keenly contested first-round encounter.

This year has already turned out to be the most successful year on the ATP Challenger Tour for Maginley.

Maginley won his first ATP Challenger Tour event when he and teammate Alfredo Perez of Cuba captured the doubles title at the Morelos Open in Mexico in April.

Maginley and teammate Clement Chidekh of France also captured the runner-up spot at the Ivory Coast Open 1 in West Africa on Sunday, April 20.

Maginley's participation in the ATP Challenger Tour has been supported with the assistance of Heritage Sports, the Changeover, Tennis Antigua, Wilson Tennis, Antigua Power Company, and Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority.