

Prime Minister Gaston Browne Calls for Transformative Action on Mental Health at Landmark OAS Side Event

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Prime Minister Gaston Browne delivering the feature address at the formal opening ceremony for the 55th Regular Session of the OAS at the AUA Conference Centre on Wednesday night to an attentive audience.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne Calls for Transformative Action on Mental Health at Landmark OAS Side Event



Honourable Gaston Browne Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

In a bold and deeply personal address at the side event **“Uniting the Americas for Mental Health: From Commitment to Action”**, Prime Minister the Honourable Gaston Browne of Antigua and Barbuda issued a compelling call to leaders across the Western Hemisphere to treat mental health as a top development and public health priority.

The event, co-hosted by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), was held during the 55th Regular Session of the **Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly** at the AUA Convention Centre.

“We stand at a moment when a grave crisis—long hidden in plain sight—demands our collective resolve,” Prime Minister Browne said, as he urged governments, health institutions, and communities to “transform commitment into measurable action.”

Citing staggering statistics, Prime Minister Browne noted that over 16 million adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean live with mental health disorders, and more than 10 young people die by suicide every day in the region. He emphasized that seven out of ten people who need mental health care in the hemisphere receive no support—no counseling, no medication, and no community services.

“When we neglect mental health, we do not save money; we invest in failure,” he warned, referencing a 2024 study showing that untreated mental illness costs the U.S. economy \$282 billion annually, and similar costs are undermining economies throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Prime Minister announced the adoption of a landmark resolution piloted by Antigua and Barbuda, entitled **“Addressing the Critical Mental Health Crisis in the Americas.”** The resolution calls for:

- Mobilizing resources for awareness campaigns
- Funding scholarships in psychology and psychiatry
- Integrating mental health screenings into primary healthcare systems

“We must embed mental healthcare into primary care, make screening routine, and train health workers to detect early signs of distress,” Prime Minister Browne declared.

He called for regional governments to increase mental health budgets beyond the current 2–3% allocation, stating that this level of funding is “a decision to allow suffering and loss to continue and to grow.”

In one of the most poignant moments of the speech, Prime Minister Browne shared his own family’s experience with mental illness, reflecting on the challenges faced by his late mother.

“Society whispered judgments, but in our home, love prevailed,” he said. “In her memory—and for the hundreds of thousands like her—we must dismantle every wall of shame and build bridges of understanding.”

He stressed the importance of supporting caregivers, building emotionally supportive schools and workplaces, and empowering communities and faith-based organizations to break the stigma surrounding mental illness.

In addition, Prime Minister Browne called on OAS Member States to align their efforts with the Fourth High-Level Meeting on Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, scheduled to take place in September at the United Nations General Assembly in New York. He urged that commitments made in Antigua and Barbuda inform and strengthen the upcoming global Political Declaration on mental health.



He also proposed the creation of:

- A regional research and development program on mental health

- A data observatory using AI and technology to track progress

- Public-private partnerships to support wellness programs and scholarships

“Let’s develop a culture of love for our shared humanity... empathy and support for those with mental health challenges to end the stigma, condemnation, isolation, and rejection,” he said in closing.

The Prime Minister’s remarks underscored a bold new direction for mental health across the Americas—one grounded in compassion, policy reform, and sustained investment.

“Together, let us work towards a future where mental health is given the investment it deserves to achieve the well-being of each person and the prosperity of all our societies.”(ENDS)

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Prime Minister Browne addresses critical issues in wide-ranging address to OAS General Assembly

In a landmark address that set the tone for the 55th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), Prime Minister Gaston Browne of Antigua and Barbuda called on the nations of the Americas to reject isolationism and embrace unity, empathy, and bold multilateralism in tackling the hemisphere's most pressing crises.

Addressing high-level delegates and dignitaries from across the hemisphere at the AUA Convention Centre in Antigua, Prime Minister Browne emphasized that the Assembly is not a ceremonial gathering, but a necessary and urgent forum for collective action in the face of overlapping global and regional threats.

"This Assembly is not a mere formality—it is an imperative," he stated. "At a moment when multiple crises confront each of us and all of us, we cannot afford isolationism or narrow nationalism."

With rising tensions in the global order, Prime Minister Browne stressed the importance of international cooperation, not rivalry. He urged large economies to work in partnership with Latin America and the Caribbean to drive inclusive trade, technology transfer, and infrastructure development—rejecting zero-sum approaches that treat the hemisphere as a battle-



Prime Minister Gaston Browne of Antigua and Barbuda

ground for influence.

Prime Minister Browne also issued a dire warning about the existential threat of climate change, especially to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Antigua and Barbuda. He painted a vivid picture of the potential devastation that unchecked warming could inflict on the

Caribbean's culture, economy, and very geography.

"We are fighting climate change unrelentingly. We are fighting for our homeland, for our civilization, for our very soul."

He called for deep cuts in emissions, massive investments in renewable energy

and resilient infrastructure, and urgent climate finance from the world's biggest polluters.

Following through on a theme developed earlier in the day during a side event to the Assembly, Prime Minister Browne underscored the historic importance of the **OAS resolution on "Addressing the Critical Mental Health Crisis in the Americas"**, which Antigua and Barbuda proudly led. He revealed shocking statistics: 16 million adolescents suffer from mental disorders, and over 10 youth suicides occur daily in the region.

On the issue of organized crime, migration and guns, the Prime Minister condemned the spread of **transnational organized crime**, illegal firearms trafficking, and the escalating humanitarian crisis in **Haiti**, where gang violence has displaced more than 1 million people in the capital, Port-au-Prince. He called for tougher import/export controls and collective enforcement to halt the flow of weapons and reduce the burden on law enforcement and vulnerable communities.

He also urged the OAS to strengthen regional coordination on migration, ensuring host countries can uphold human dignity and provide durable solutions, while addressing the root causes of displacement.

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Foreign Minister Greene fulfills promise to students



Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P. Chet Greene, had a busy day on Wednesday, the first day of the 55th Regular Session of the Organisation of American States where he chaired the morning session and later held bilateral discussions with delegations from a number of countries.

As Antigua and Barbuda's Foreign Affairs Minister, Greene will host several events over the three days of the General Assembly. He also held bilateral meetings with several states, including a delegation from the

government of India.

However, despite Minister Greene's busy schedule, he was still able to live up to a promise he made that at least one student from each of the schools visited by teams from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during its OAS Awareness tour, will attend the conference as his special guests.

On Wednesday night, during the formal opening ceremony for the meeting, the students were acknowledged and applauded.

The minister said the move was aimed at broadening the experience of the students and to introduce them to the world of diplomacy with the hope that some would find it interesting enough to want to pursue it as a career choice.

The students came from the Antigua Girls High School, the All Saints Secondary, the Clare Hall Secondary, the Antigua Grammar School, the Liberta Primary, the Five Islands Primary

and the Adele School.

The students expressed their delight with the opportunity to attend the historic OAS General Assembly and thanked Minister Greene for making this possible.

The students were also greeted by many of the delegates attending the conference and they posed for photographers with Minister Greene as well as Senator Michael Freeland.

Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph chairs OAS ‘side event’ on the issue of mental health



Health Minister, Sir Molywn Joseph, chaired the special session of the Organization of American States (OAS) discussion on mental health at the 55th Regular Session of the OAS on Wednesday, the opening day, of the conference being held at the AUA Convention Centre.

“On behalf of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, I am pleased to welcome you to this event which is jointly sponsored with the Pan American Health Organization, as an official event in this the 55th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, and I acknowledge our distinguished speakers and attendees,” Sir Molwyn stated in his opening remarks.

He remarked that it is now widely recognized that “there can be no health without mental health.” However, mental health is not only a health issue, but a fundamental pillar of social and economic wellbeing and development at the national and regional levels.

“The Government of Antigua and

Barbuda and PAHO are co-hosting this session, “Uniting the Americas

for Mental Health: From Commitment to Action,” to inspire leadership on this very important topic across sectors in order to identify unifying perspectives on advancing mental health as an integral issue both in the Region and globally,” he stated.

Sir Molwyn observed that presentations were to be made Heads of State, Ministers of Government, Leaders of Multilateral Regional Organizations, health authorities and ambassadors speaking on the urgency of tackling mental health conditions in the Americas and highlighting the way forward.



WISH fully supports Antigua and Barbuda's OAS initiative on mental health

The Wadadli Initiative for Self-care and Healing (WISH) fully endorses the Antigua and Barbuda initiative, the historic side event “Uniting the Americas for Mental Health: From Commitment to Action,” held on the margins of the 55th Regular Session of the OAS General Assembly at the AUA Convention Centre in Antigua.

Co-convened by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the event brought together heads of state, ministers, civil society leaders, and health experts to address the growing mental health crisis across Latin America and the Caribbean. Prime Minister Gaston Browne delivered a powerful keynote address, emphasizing the urgent need to embed mental health into national development agendas, health systems, and education frameworks. WISH Founder Chaneil Imhoff, in attendance at the event, had the honour of meeting the Prime Minister following his remarks and reaffirmed her commitment to the cause. “Mental health is no longer just a conversation — it’s an action plan. WISH



is committed to helping place Antigua and Barbuda at the forefront of regional mental health reform. The time to act is now,” said Imhoff.

Speakers at the event shared staggering statistics that underscore the crisis: depression and anxiety cost the global economy an estimated \$1 trillion annually, while untreated mental health

conditions are projected to cost \$16 trillion by 2030. In Latin America and the Caribbean alone, more than 16 million adolescents live with a mental disorder, and over ten adolescents die by suicide every day. Seven in ten people in need of care across the Americas receive no support at all. These figures reflect the deep human and economic toll of inaction and

highlight the necessity of regional coordination.

WISH welcomes the adoption of the OAS resolution “Addressing the Critical Mental Health Crisis in the Americas” and is actively working to support its implementation. The organization’s focus includes advocating for mental health policy integration across government sectors, introducing school-based programs to promote emotional literacy and early intervention, building community capacity to identify and respond to mental distress, and ensuring caregivers have the tools and training they need to support loved ones.

Antigua and Barbuda can and must lead by example. The commitments made during the OAS-PAHO event must be followed by practical, well-funded implementation strategies that touch the lives of students, workers, parents, and communities. As WISH Founder Chaneil Imhoff noted, “We cannot afford to let this momentum pass us by. The cost of delay is measured in shattered lives and lost potential. We must act with urgency, empathy, and strategy.”

Trinidad Eye Hospital Team Pays Courtesy Visit to Permanent Secretary Colin O'Keeffe

The Trinidad Eye Hospital (TEH) team paid a courtesy call on Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Colin O'Keeffe, to provide an update on the number of cataract surgeries conducted during their ongoing visit to Antigua and Barbuda.

This marks the TEH's first engagement with O'Keeffe since his recent transfer to the Ministry of Health, Wellness, Environment, and Civil Service Affairs. During the meeting, representatives of the TEH expressed appreciation for the continued collaboration with the Ministry and reiterated their commitment to improving eye health across the nation.

Permanent Secretary O'Keeffe welcomed the update and expressed his enthusiasm for strengthening the partnership between the Ministry and the Trinidad Eye Hospital. He noted that improving access to cataract surgeries is a vital part of the Ministry's broader mission to enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

The Ministry looks forward to the continued work and shared vision that will help bring better sight—and brighter futures—to the people of Antigua and Barbuda.



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The Ministry of Education clears the air regarding proposed merger of two secondary schools

The Ministry of Education is clarifying the air regarding a recent media item and misinformation posted on social media concerning its proposal to merge Glanvilles Secondary School (GSS) and Pares Secondary School (PSS), effective from the 2025/2026 academic year.

This strategic recommendation responds to persistent enrolment decline, underutilized resources, and changing demographic trends. This proposal is a long-standing one dating back to 2019. The proposed merger is not about cost-saving, it intends to create a sustainable, vibrant learning environment that focuses on educational quality, efficiency, and equity that allow our students to thrive academically and socially.

It is the intention of the Ministry of Education to make a proposal to the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda for their decision on this proposed merger. Any discussions had with stakeholders in education was done to inform individuals of the impending proposal.

Currently, both schools serve a total population of 341 students, a figure significantly below their combined capacity, yet will still be considered a small school. The Glanvilles Secondary School has a population of 163 (total capacity 250) and the Pares Secondary School has a population of 178 (total capacity 550).



Education Minister Daryll Mathew

September, 2025, as a part of the recently established Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS). The ABCAS is an amalgamation of Antigua State College, Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology, Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute and the Harrison Center/ABICE.

Should the recommendation be accepted by the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda,



Glanvilles Secondary School (GSS)



Pares Secondary School (PSS),

The schools, which are only 2.5 miles apart, share similar curricula and serve overlapping communities (feeder schools are the same).

Noting the urgent and immediate need to develop the nation's capacity for food security, a recommen-

dation will be made for the Glanvilles Secondary School to be converted to a National School of Agriculture, which was previously earmarked for the Bethesda Primary School. This school of agriculture is expected to be opened in

further consultations will be held with parents, teachers and other stakeholders and the necessary upgrades and refurbishment of the existing plant will take place.

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Antigua and Barbuda Observes Census Day on Wednesday, June 25, 2025



The National Bureau of Statistics, through the Census Office, reminds residents that Wednesday, June 25, 2025, has been officially designated as Census Day. Census Day marks the official reference point for the data being collected. It is the day on which every person residing or present in Antigua and Barbuda will be counted, regardless of when they are interviewed.

The National Population and Housing Census involves all residents of Antigua and Barbuda and is a vital national exercise that provides accurate and up-to-date information about the population and living conditions across the twin-island nation.

Data collected will be used to inform policies, guide development planning, and improve services in areas such as health, education, infrastructure, and employment.

The theme for this year's census is: "Mapping the Present, Shaping the Future."

Enumerators will soon undergo extensive training to prepare them thoroughly for visiting households nationwide. All residents are encouraged to provide honest and complete answers to ensure thorough and accurate data collection.

According to Deputy Census Officer Tracelyn Joseph, "A complete and accurate census allows us to better understand the needs of our communities. The information you provide will help shape the future of Antigua and Barbuda."

The Census Office assures the public that all information collected will be kept strictly confidential and used only for statistical purposes.

Rohan Anthony, Deputy Census Officer, urges "every household to cooperate with enumerators, ask to see their official ID, and take the time to participate in this critical national effort."

Residents can expect to start being visited by field officers by mid-July 2025.

The Census Office adds that the public can be assured that once the Census fieldwork begins, residents will be adequately notified about the field activities and what to expect when an enumerator visits.



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PRESS RELEASE

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA FESTIVAL COMMISSION ANNOUNCES INET PARTY MONARCH COMPETITION IS WELL ON ITS WAY.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – WED. JUNE 25TH, 2025 – ST. JOHN’S, ANTIGUA...

THE ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA FESTIVALS COMMISSION (ABFC) OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCES THE CLOSURE OF REGISTRATION FOR THE INET PARTY MONARCH COMPETITION AS OF FRIDAY, JUNE 13TH, 2025. THIS YEAR, THE ABFC IS PLEASED TO REVEAL AN EXCITING TURNOUT: 74 ARTISTS WILL COMPETE IN THE GROOVY CATEGORY, WHILE 70 ARTISTS WILL FACE OFF IN THE JUMPY CATEGORY ON JULY 1ST AND 2ND RESPECTIVELY.

AHEAD OF THE QUARTERFINALS, THE ABFC HOSTED ITS WEEKLY FRIDAY VIBES EVENT ON FRIDAY, 20 JUNE, WHERE REGISTERED ARTISTS TOOK PART IN THE OFFICIAL DRAW TO DETERMINE THEIR PERFORMANCE POSITIONS FOR THE UPCOMING QUARTERFINALS. THE QUARTERFINALS WILL TAKE PLACE AT JACK IDLE, STARTING AT 7:30 PM, WITH GENERAL ADMISSION PRICED AT \$20.00.

THE MINISTRY LED FRIDAY VIBES, PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR PERFORMANCES WHERE MANY CONTENDERS UNVEILED THEIR 2025 SOCA TRACKS. IT ALSO CREATES A MINGLE-AND-NETWORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL CREATIVES. NOTABLY, THE DRAW FOR THE PERFORMANCE ORDER TOOK PLACE WELL AHEAD OF SCHEDULE, INDICATING THE READINESS FOR THE PARTY MONARCH COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEARS.

IN THE QUARTERFINALS, THE ABFC WILL SELECT THE TOP 15 ARTISTS FROM BOTH THE GROOVY AND JUMPY CATEGORIES TO ADVANCE TO THE SEMIFINALS, WHICH IS SET FOR FRIDAY, JULY 18TH AT CARNIVAL CITY FEATURING YOUNG BREDDA AT 8:00PM AND WILL TAKE THE FORM OF A COOLER FETE.

FROM THERE, THE TOP 9 GROOVY ARTISTS AND THE TOP 8 JUMPY ARTISTS WILL ADVANCE ON TO THE GRAND FINALS, WHERE THEY WILL COMPETE FOR PRESTIGE, THE CROWN, AND MAJOR CASH PRIZES. THE GROOVY MONARCH WILL RECEIVE \$50,000, WHILE THE JUMPY MONARCH WILL BATTLE TO DETHRONE THE REIGNING CHAMPION, YOUNG VICE, AND CLAIM \$50,000. THE FINALS WILL TAKE PLACE ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 3RD AT 8:00 PM, ALSO AT CARNIVAL CITY.

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Securing Our Future: A Call For Antigua and Barbuda to Act Together on Social Security Reform



By E. P. Chet Greene

The warning signs flashing across global Social Security systems should alarm us all. Just last month, the U.S. Social Security Administration reported its trust funds will be depleted by 2035, forcing an automatic 17% benefit cut unless Congress intervenes. Closer to home, Barbados' National Insurance Scheme required painful reforms after its reserves plummeted to just 1.5 years of coverage. These aren't abstract concerns. They are urgent lessons for us here in Antigua & Barbuda.

Against this troubling backdrop, our government's plan to sure-up the Social Security Scheme through strategic investment isn't just prudent, it is an existential necessity. The issue of Social Security reforms is serious and requires an all



of country responsible discussion. Instead of engaging in serious policy discussion, the opposition UPP has resorted to its traditional reckless fearmongering that has paralyzed reform elsewhere. The time for political games is over.

The numbers tell a sobering story and the global realities about Social Security schemes demand our sober attention.

In the United States Social Security's trust fund reserves will be exhausted in 11 years, threatening \$1.4 trillion in annual benefits, unless government intervenes.

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In the United States Social Security's trust fund reserves will be exhausted in 11 years, threatening \$1.4 trillion in annual benefits, unless government intervenes.

While the debate rages across the globe, closer home we should pay attention to the International Monetary Fund's projections that Caribbean pension systems could face 15-25% shortfalls by 2040. These stories are sufficient for us to apply the adage, 'a word to the wise is sufficient' as we act with alacrity to fix and sure-up our own national

scheme.

The government's intervention seeks to move the viability of the Social Security administration beyond pure contribution dependency. It follows best practices and mirrors Singapore's Central Provident Fund model that maintains 100% solvency through disciplined investing.

The UPP's objections ignore both our regional reality and global evidence. Their adumbrations begs the obvious question- what is their alternative? In a matter so serious, silence or opposing for opposing sake is not an option. Theirs mirrors the irresponsible opposition seen

in countries like Argentina, where political resistance to reform led to a pension system consuming 12% of GDP or Jamaica where delayed action forced painful 2014 reforms during crisis conditions.

We are now left to either embrace Leadership or descend into a Crisis. The government's plan offers:

- Generational fairness, protecting both current pensioners and young workers;
- Economic stability, which will maintain benefit flows that support local businesses and protect beneficiaries of the scheme;
- Global credibility, in recognition of globally recommended best practices for small island states.

The UPP would have us repeat the mistakes of failed systems worldwide but Antigua and Barbuda deserves better. As the U.S. crisis proves, the cost of inaction is catastrophic benefit cuts. Our government's measured evidence based approach provides the only responsible path forward.

The question isn't whether we can afford to act but rather whether we can afford not to. For the sake of every worker, retiree and business in our nation, we must choose reform over ruin. Saving OUR Social Security system transcends narrow political considerations and must be embraced as a national strategic imperative.



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Regional News



UWI medical students score big in final exams



There was high success rate among 2025 graduating medical student at the University of the West Indies (The UWI), Mona.

One hundred and thirty-four medical students sat the examinations at Mona, of which 125 (93.3 per cent) were successful and only nine or 6.7 per cent unsuccessful and will be required to do a resit of

the examinations.

The majority, 96 (71.6 per cent) of the medical students who sat the examinations at Mona are from Jamaica, the remainder were from the Caribbean region with a few international students.

The results were announced Thursday at the Faculty of Medical Sciences, Mona Pledge Cer-

emony for the MB.BS Class of 2025 at the Mona Campus.

Students sat the MB.BS Final Examinations held in May/June 2025. These were also regional examinations held at the Cave Hill, Mona, and St Augustine campuses, as well as the Clinical School of Medicine & Research in The Bahamas.

On Thursday there were wild applause for Caymanian student Brian-na Bodden, who took all three prizes awarded.

The prizes were the Professor Luois Grant Prize in Microbiology (for Best Performance in Microbiology); Professor S.E.H. Brooks Memorial Prize

(for Best Performance in Pathology); and the Pathology/Microbiology Medal (for Best Overall academic performance in Pathology and Microbiology Clerkship at the Mona Campus).

The newly minted doctors were given the opportunity to recite the Hippocratic Oath, which, according to a Google post, is the pledge taken by physicians, outlining ethical principles for medical practice.

“The UWI continues to train medical doctors for the region and for the wider world as was notable in the examinations,” the Faculty of Medical Sciences said. (*Loop Caribbean*)

Sint Maarten: Man arrested for smuggling drugs in deodorant bottle

Police in Sint Maarten conducted successful operations over the weekend and Monday morning, resulting in three arrests across two separate incidents and the confiscation of two illegal firearms.

In the first incident on Monday morning at approximately 10:00 am, officers arrested a male suspect identified by the initials L.Y.L. at the Miss Lalie Center in Cay Bay. The man was attempting to smuggle drugs concealed inside a deodorant bottle into the facility. He was immediately taken into custody and transported to the Philipsburg Police Station for questioning. The investigation into this case re-



mains active.

The second arrest occurred around 10:30 am the same morning after a citizen reported seeing his stolen Hyundai H-1 pickup truck being driven toward Philipsburg. Police responded quickly and intercepted the vehicle on W.J.A. Nisbeth Road, where they found two occupants inside. Both suspects, identified by the initials J.A.P.-E. and C.P.C., were arrested and taken to the police station where they are being held for questioning.

In addition, KPSM officers conducting routine controls across the island seized two illegal firearms. (*Loop Caribbean*)

BVI: Crashed vessel yields \$144 million worth of cocaine



within BVI waters.

Officers discovered a crashed vessel off the coast of Virgin Gorda on June 18 and recovered large quantities of cocaine scattered in the surrounding area. The seven arrests were made in connection with drug trafficking and immigration offences.

The recovery operation proved challenging, with officers executing a dangerous mission involving a 200-foot descent down a steep cliff to retrieve drug packages lodged between rocks and reef near a local bay. Several officers sustained injuries during the operation and received treatment on Virgin Gorda and Tortola.

Due to the steep, inaccessible terrain and deteriorated condition of the drug packages, authorities decided to destroy the bulk of the narcotics on-site.

The controlled destruction was carried out through

burning and witnessed by independent observers unaffiliated with law enforcement. The entire process was documented with video footage and photographs, and sufficient evidence, including retained drug samples, has been preserved to support ongoing prosecution.

Commissioner of Police Jacqueline Vanterpool praised the operation's success and the collaboration between agencies. "This operation is a powerful demonstration of what can be achieved through collaboration, courage, and commitment," said Commissioner Vanterpool. "Our officers faced significant risks, but their determination to protect these islands from the scourge of drug trafficking never wavered. I thank every agency involved for their unwavering support and shared dedication to safeguarding our borders and communities." (*Loop Caribbean*)

A coordinated multi-agency operation in the British Virgin Islands has resulted in the seizure of approximately 1,440 kilograms of cocaine with an estimated street value of \$144 million and the arrest of seven individuals.

The intelligence-led oper-

ation, conducted between June 17 and 18, involved the Department of Immigration, His Majesty's Customs, the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force (RVIPF), and external law enforcement partners following investigations by the Joint Task Force into suspected drug trafficking



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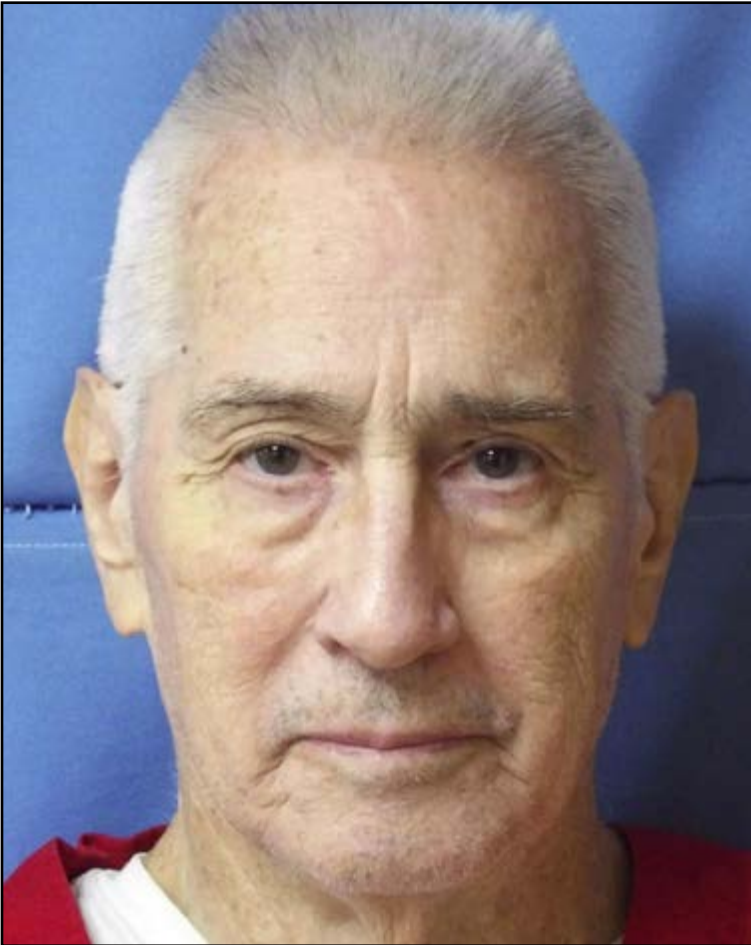
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Mississippi set to execute state's longest-serving death row inmate



Mississippi's longest-serving death row inmate is set to be executed Wednesday, nearly five decades after he kidnapped and killed a bank loan officer's wife in a violent ransom scheme.

Richard Gerald Jordan, a 79-year-old Vietnam veteran who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, is scheduled to receive a lethal injection at the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman. He is one of several people on Mississippi's death row suing the state over its three-drug execution protocol, which they claim is inhumane.

Jordan would be the third person executed in the state in the last 10 years; the most recent execution was in December 2022.

His execution comes a day after a man was executed in Florida in what is shaping up to be a year with the most executions since 2015.

Jordan was sentenced to death in 1976 for killing and kidnapping Edwina Marter, a mother of two young children, earlier that year. As of the beginning of the year, Jordan is one of 22 people across the country sentenced for crimes in the 1970s who are still on death row, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

Eric Marter, who was 11 when his mother was killed, said neither he, his brother, nor his father will attend the execution, but other family members will be there. (NBC News)



Burial of Zambia's ex-president in South Africa halted at last minute by court



A South African court has halted plans to bury former Zambian President Edgar Lungu at a private ceremony just as it was about to start.

The news was only announced to mourners in South Africa after a funeral mass had already finished.

This is the latest twist in a row between the government and Lungu's family over his burial, after the family opted for a private ceremony in South Africa, rather than a full state funeral at home.

The Zambian government had filed an urgent case in the Pretoria High Court seeking to stop the burial planned by his family.

The court said that the funeral would not go ahead following an "agreement between the parties" however it appears that any funeral won't happen until August at the earliest.

The dispute follows a long-standing feud between Lungu and his successor, President Hakainde Hichilema, with Lungu's family saying he had in-

dicated that Hichilema should not attend his funeral.

Following Lungu's death in South Africa aged 68, the family wanted to be in charge of the funeral arrangements, including the repatriation of his body, but the Zambian authorities sought to take control.

The government and his family later agreed he would have a state funeral before relations broke down over the precise arrangements, prompting the family to opt for a burial in South Africa.

President Hichilema has since argued that Lungu, as a former president, "belongs to the nation of Zambia" and should be buried in the country.

The Pretoria court gave Zambian attorney general Mulilo D Kabesha until 4 July to submit his "amended notice of motion" in support of Lungu's repatriation to Zambia. His family has until 11 July to file their opposing papers. "This matter will be heard as a special motion on the 4th of August 2025," the

court said. The costs of the urgent application will be determined then.

The Zambian government argues that personal wishes should not override the greater public interest, citing the case of founding President Kenneth Kaunda.

In 2021, Kaunda's family said he wanted to be laid to rest next to his wife and not at the site designated by the government.

However, the government went ahead and buried Kaunda at Embassy Memorial Park in Lusaka.

The current row over Lungu's burial underscores the tense relationship between him and his successor, which played out in life and continues even in death.

When Lungu was president, Hichilema was locked up for over 100 days on treason charges after Hichilema's motorcade allegedly refused to give way for him. (BBC News)

US intelligence suggests strikes only set back Iran's nuclear programme by months



A United States intelligence report suggests that Iran's nuclear program has been set back only a few months after US strikes and was not "completely and fully obliterated" as President Donald Trump has said, according to two people familiar with the early assessment.

The report issued by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) on Monday contradicts statements from Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the status of Iran's nuclear facilities.

According to the people, the report found that while the Sunday strikes at the Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan nuclear sites did significant damage, the facilities were not totally destroyed. The people were not authorised to address the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The US has held out hope of restart-

ing negotiations with Iran to convince it to give up its nuclear program entirely, but some experts fear that the US strikes - and the potential of Iran retaining some of its capabilities - could push Tehran toward developing a functioning weapon.

The assessment also suggests that at least some of Iran's highly enriched uranium, necessary for creating a nuclear weapon, was moved out of multiple sites before the US strikes and survived. It reportedly found that Iran's centrifuges, which are required to further enrich uranium to weapons-grade levels, are largely intact, according to the people.

At the deeply buried Fordo uranium enrichment plant, where US B-2 stealth bombers dropped several 30,000-pound bunker-buster bombs, the entrance collapsed and infrastructure was damaged, but the underground infrastructure was not destroyed, the

assessment found.

The people said that intelligence officials had warned of such an outcome in previous assessments ahead of the strike on Fordo.

The White House has strongly pushed back on the DIA assessment, calling it "flat-out wrong."

"The leaking of this alleged assessment is a clear attempt to demean President Trump, and discredit the brave fighter pilots who conducted a perfectly executed mission to obliterate Iran's nuclear program," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement. "Everyone knows what happens when you drop fourteen 30,000 pound bombs perfectly on their targets: total obliteration."

The Central Intelligence Agency and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) declined to comment on the DIA assessment.

ODNI coordinates the work of the nation's 18 intelligence agencies, including the DIA, which is the intelligence arm of the Defense Department, responsible for producing intelligence on foreign militaries and the capabilities of adversaries. The Israeli government also has not released any official assessments of the US strikes.

Trump special envoy Steve Witkoff, who said he has read damage assessment reports from US intelligence and other nations, reiterated Tuesday night that the strikes had deprived Iran of the ability to develop a weapon and called it outrageous that the US assessment was shared with reporters.

"It's treasonous so it ought to be investigated," Witkoff said on Fox News Channel.

Trump has said in comments and posts on social media in recent days, including Tuesday, that the strike left the sites in Iran "totally destroyed" and that Iran will never rebuild its nuclear facilities.

Netanyahu said in a televised statement on Tuesday that, "For dozens of years I promised you that Iran would not have nuclear weapons and indeed ... we brought to ruin Iran's nuclear program." He said the U.S. joining Israel was "historic" and thanked Trump.

The intelligence assessment was first reported by CNN on Tuesday.

Outside experts had suspected Iran had likely already hidden the core components of its nuclear program as it stared down the possibility that American bunker-buster bombs could be used on its nuclear sites.

Iran has maintained that its nuclear program is peaceful, but it has enriched significant quantities of uranium beyond the levels required for any civilian use.

The US and others assessed prior to the US strikes that Iran's theocratic leadership had not yet ordered the country to pursue an operational nuclear weapon, but the head of the Interna-

tional Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly warned that Iran has enough enriched uranium to make several nuclear bombs should it choose to do so.

US Vice President JD Vance said in a Monday interview on Fox News Channel that even if Iran is still in control of its stockpile of 408.6 kilograms (900.8 pounds) of enriched uranium, which is just short of weapons-grade, the US has cut off Iran's ability to convert it to a nuclear weapon.

"If they have 60% enriched uranium,

but they don't have the ability to enrich it to 90%, and, further, they don't have the ability to convert that to a nuclear weapon, that is mission success. That is the obliteration of their nuclear program, which is why the president, I think, rightly is using that term," Vance said.

Approximately 42 kilograms of 60% enriched uranium is theoretically enough to produce one atomic bomb if enriched further to 90%, according to the UN nuclear watchdog. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)



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Wadadli Elite stage recruitment camp for young basketballers



Wadadli Elite's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Byron Andrew. (File photo)

Young basketball players will get an opportunity to showcase their talents with the objective of securing recruitment to a professional team at an international recruitment camp, which is being hosted by the Wadadli Elite organization at the JSC Sports Complex from July 3 to 6.

The four-day camp will feature players in two age groups, 9 to 14 and 15 to 21. Chief Executive Officer of Wadadli Elite Byron Andrew said the participants will benefit from skills training while working with top coaches, and there will be recruitment opportunities to attain basketball scholarships and professional contracts to play overseas.

"For Wadadli Elite's camps we want to do the best practice in everything we do, especially in terms of coaching and skills development, so players who are attending the camp should expect that," Andrew stated.

"We will be teaching them skill development, and opportunities will be there for recruiting players on scholarships to play basketball in high schools and colleges in the United States of America, and we can also explore the



NCAA Coach Jemelle Speedy Fraser

possibilities of securing an international contract for them."

NCAA Coach Jemelle Speedy Fraser will be the chief facilitator at this year's camp. Coach Fraser recently ended his third season as an assistant men's basketball coach at Blinn College in Texas, USA.

Prior to arriving at Blinn, the Bronx, New York, native served as an assistant coach at LeMoyne College in Syracuse, New York. Fraser assisted in recruiting and player development, along with game and practice planning.

Fraser has coached and played in several countries internationally. He served as a head coach at the NBA Basketball School in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2020.

He helped develop grassroots and high school boys' basketball players and ensured high-quality programming and training. Additionally, he evaluated players' skill levels at the end of each term.

Andrew, the business owner and operator of Eye Mobile Vision Care (EMVC), said that Fraser, who was

born in Antigua, has worked with athletes such as former NBA players Kemba Walker and current point guard of the Detroit Pistons Cade Cunningham.

"We are going to bring back a long-standing coach, Jemelle Speedy Fraser, who has been working with us now for a few years. Fraser is a former NBA player, and he is very professional. We love how he communicates with the players, and so he will be here with us again in Antigua to conduct this year's camp for us," Andrew said.

The International Recruitment Camp will take place with two sessions on each day. The players in the 9 to 14 age group will attend sessions from 9 am to 1 pm, while those in the 15 to 21 category will be held from 1 pm to 5 pm. Food and drinks will be provided for the participants.

The registration fee is US\$150. Registration forms are available online at all of the Wadadli Elite platforms or from any member of the organization; can be collected at the offices of Eye Mobile Vision Care or contact Byron Andrew at 724-3976.

The Wadadli Elite Basketball Academy is the brainchild of Andrew, who started the organization in 2015.

Although he is the chief administrator of the organization, Andrew also performs the role of assistant to head coach Irwin "Wanga" Armstrong, who is an experienced former coach of both the national junior and senior teams, the Antigua Pitbulls and Wadadli Bulldogs.

Since its inception, Wadadli Elite Basketball has been instrumental in getting over 20 of its members to acquire athletic scholarships to high schools and colleges in the United States and to play professionally in Europe.

Fundamentals avenge defeat to Stoneville in ASCFL

After being dethroned by new Soccerama champions Stoneville, Fundamentals got sweet revenge when both sides clashed in the 2025 All Saints Community Football League (ASCFL) on Tuesday evening.

Last year's Soccerama champions, Fundamental, who lost their title after being beaten by Stoneville in the final, hit back to claim a 4-0 victory over their opponents in a Zone B league encounter at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints.

Shafeeq Joseph scored in the 14th minute to give Fundamentals a one-nil lead at halftime. Fundamentals scored three more goals in

the second half to record their second win in as many games.

Malone Joseph scored in the 50th minute, Shackwon Simon had a 53rd-minute conversion, and Kieran Richards wrapped up the win with a goal in the 62nd minute.

The result allows Fundamentals to move into second place in Zone B by advancing to six points from two matches. Stoneville remains rooted in the cellar of Zone B without any points after tumbling to their third loss in as many games.

Last year's runners-up, Police, maintained their lead at the top of Zone B

after battling to a 3-3 draw with Freeman's Village on Tuesday.

Freeman's Village were unable to press home their advantage and secure victory after relinquishing a commanding three-nil lead at halftime.

Roy Gregory scored twice with goals in the 18th and 29th minutes after teammate Vaughn Jackson opened the scoring with a fourth-minute conversion for Freeman's Village.

Police came storming back by scoring three goals in the second half to salvage the draw. Keon Greene struck twice with goals in the 57th and 73rd minutes,

and Glenroy Prince scored the equalizer with a conversion in the last minute (90th) of regulation time.

The result carries Police to seven points from three matches at the top of Zone B, and Freeman's Village slipped from second to third place with five points after salvaging their second draw in three encounters.

The All Saints Community Football League will continue with a double-header on Thursday (today).

Yorkshire will take on Ovals at 6:15 pm, and defending champions Old Stagers will tackle Attackers at 7:30 pm.



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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

Panam Sports select ambassadors to promote 2025 Junior Games in Asuncion



Adeajah Hodge

With just 45 days to go before the start of the greatest continental multi-sport festival for young people, the ASU2025 Junior Pan American Games, Team Panam Sports 2025 was officially presented.

After successful campaigns for Lima 2019, Santiago 2023 and Paris 2024, a new group of selected athletes from our region were chosen to promote the youth sports festival, which will take place in Asuncion, Paraguay, from August 9 to 23.

They are outstanding athletes from Brazil, Jamaica, British Virgin Islands, United States, Chile, Colombia and Paraguay, who, at their young age, have shined on the world stage in each of their sports and are expected to be the standout figures of ASU 2025.

Panam Sports has been looking for important athletes from our continent, who not only shine within a sports venue, but also outside of it and of course, who represent their countries and the Olympic values at



Alana Reid

all times.

With the slogan “The Power of the New Generation”, Team Panam Sports will be part of a communication and marketing campaign that will have as its main objective to spread and promote the importance of the ASU2025 Games in the region.

“We have achieved an extraordinary group of ambassadors for Team Panam Sports 2025. World medalists, Pan American medalists and some of them even placed at the top of the senior rankings in their respective sports.

“The most important thing is that they are exceptional athletes, true examples not only in their countries, but also in the entire continent, who we are sure will represent in the best way all the athletes who will be part of the ASU Junior Pan American Games 2025,” said the president of Panam Sports, Neven Ilic.

Among the chosen athletes, the current world number 2 in the 100m

freestyle swimming, Brazilian Guilherme Caribe, three-time Pan American champion in Santiago 2023, and the two fastest women in the world in the Under 20 category, Jamaican Alana Reid and British Virgin Islands’ sprinter, Adeajah Hodge, stand out.

Also part of this constellation are the current world junior record holder in track cycling, Stefany Cuadrado of Colombia; the 2-time world champion in water skiing, Chile’s Matías González; the bronze medalist in rowing in Santiago 2023, Paraguay’s Nicole Martínez; and one of the most promising figures in skateboarding for Team USA, Lazer Crawford.

The ASU 2025 Junior Pan American Games will feature the participation of more than 4,000 athletes from 41 countries of the continent.

The Pan American Sports Organization (Panam Sports) is the leader of sport and the Olympic movement in the Americas. It propels the development of sport and support the region’s 41 member National Olympic Committees to inspire more participation in international competitions as well as participation of the youth to prepare the generation to come in its region.

Panam Sports works closely with athletes, National Olympic Committees (NOC), Organizing Committees of all regional games, Pan American Sport Confederations, International Federations (IF) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to secure the success and celebration of its main event, the Pan American Games.

Sports News



Windies Academy level 50-over series with Sri Lanka Emerging Players

Two Antiguan, leg-spinner Micah McKenzie and young batting sensation Jewel Andrew, played instrumental roles to propel the West Indies Academy to level their three-match 50-over series with Sri Lanka Emerging Players on Tuesday.

After Sri Lanka Emerging Players took a one-nil lead with a five-wicket victory in the first match at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Saturday, the West Indies Academy drew level by snatching a 19-run win over the visitors in the second encounter at the same venue.

The West Indies Academy made 290 for nine off their 50 overs after losing the toss and being sent in to bat. Barbadian Rivaldo Clarke hit a run-a-ball 74, including five fours and two sixes.

Nevisian wicketkeeper/batsman Carlon Bowen-Tuckett cracked 50 off 57 balls, Andrew, who opened the innings, struck 45, and captain Teddy Bishop made 34 off 40 balls.

Joshua Bishop scored 24 off 19 balls, there was a contribution of 23 extras, and opener Ackeem Auguste made 19.

Right-arm pacer Garuka Sanketh captured four for 63, leg-spinner Melan Hasanka claimed two for 52, and fast bowler Dhananjaya Lakshan picked up two for 53.



Micah McKenzie



Jewel Andrew

Chasing 291 to win, Sri Lanka Emerging Players were restricted to 271 all out in 48.2 overs.

Antiguan McKenzie captured three for 70, Joshua Bishop claimed two for 44, and left-arm pacer Nathan Edward of St. Maarten picked up two for 48.

Middle-order batsman Sahan Kosala top-scored for the Sri Lankans with 75 off 87 balls, including nine boundaries, and Dhananjaya Lakshan hit 30 off 25 balls.

Opener Shevon Daniel struck 28 off 19 balls; there was a contribution of 28 extras, including 20 wides; Ravindu Fernando and Traveen Mathew each made 25, and Anjala Bandara chipped in with 22.

Both teams will clash in the third and final 50-over match to decide the series at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Thursday (today), starting at 9:30 am.

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Sports News

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decision of not out, with ball-tracking technology suggesting the ball would have struck leg stump.

Joseph should have been celebrating a second breakthrough two deliveries later when Cameron Green flashed at a wide delivery and picked out gully, but King grassed a regulation chance that thudded into his chest.

The blunder didn't prove too costly, however, with Green falling victim to Joseph a few overs later for 3. The tall West Australian departed in almost identical fashion to his twin dismissals during the recent World Test Championship final, pressing forward with hard hands and edging towards the slips cordon.

Despite Joseph's brilliance, dropped catches continued to plague the West Indies fielders, with Chase bottling a simple chance at first slip to gift veteran opener Usman Khawaja an extra life on 6.

Australia was suddenly reeling at 22 for three when the recalled Josh Inglis top-edged an ill-judged pull stroke against Seales, with wicketkeeper Shai Hope settling underneath the Dukes ball.

Runs proved hard to come by on the unpredictable surface – the Australians didn't hit a boundary until the 16th over, while Khawaja needed 45 deliveries to achieve the feat, nailing a hook shot into the stands.

However, the scoring tempo accelerated after lunch courtesy of a trademark counterpunch from Head, who raced towards fifty in just 57 deliveries.

Khawaja, dropped once again on 45, combined with Head for an 89-run partnership for the fourth wicket to briefly swing momentum back in Australia's favour before Joseph returned to break the stand following the drinks break.

Attempting a pull shot, Khawaja feathered a bottom edge through to wicketkeeper Shai Hope and trudged off for 47 before Joseph knocked

over all-rounder Beau Webster with an absolute peach that nipped away on a good length and crashed into off stump.

Drama erupted late in the afternoon session when Head, unbeaten on 52 at the time, seemingly snicked behind to the wicketkeeper, only for third umpire Adrian Holdstock to adjudicate that Hope hadn't taken a clean catch, denying Joseph a fifth wicket.

On what proved the final delivery before tea, Chase held onto a smart chance at slip to send Australian wicketkeeper Alex Carey packing for 8, with the reckless dismissal prompting a brief collapse of three wickets for five runs from 11 balls.

Head, Australia's last recognised batter, threw the kitchen sink at a wide delivery from Justin Greaves and edged behind for 59, with Starc departing shortly after for a fifth-ball duck.

Cummins struck four boundaries in an entertaining cameo before Seales

cleaned up the tail, finishing with five for 60 from 15.5 overs. The West Indies quick couldn't resist giving his rival skipper a send-off following his dismissal, pointing towards the sheds.

The West Indies' innings got off to a dreadful start as Starc dismissed both openers within eight deliveries of each other — Kraigg Brathwaite edged towards Webster at second slip before John Campbell lazily swatted at an outswinger, tickling behind to Carey with the gloves.

King and Keacy Carty steadied the ship for a 36-run partnership for the third wicket before Cummins produced an unplayable riser that kissed Carty's bat, gone for 20.

And Hazlewood ensured the Australians were in the preferred position at stumps by knocking over Jomel Warican for a second-ball duck, bowled through the gate. Chase (1 not out) and King (23 not out) will resume the West Indies innings on Thursday's second day.



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Aussies stage late fightback against Windies



West Indies fast bowler Jayden Seales, left, celebrates with his teammate after capturing a wicket against Australia on the opening day of the first cricket Test at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Wednesday, June 25, 2025. (Getty Images)



Fast bowler Mitchell Starc, left, celebrates with teammate after capturing a wicket against Australia on the opening day of the first cricket Test at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Wednesday, June 25, 2025.

West Indies fast bowler Shamar Joseph continued where he left off at the Gabba last year before Australia's pace cartel launched a late fightback on day one for the Frank Worrell Trophy Test-series opener in Barbados on Wednesday.

The tourists were dismissed for 180 in challenging conditions after Australian skipper Pat Cummins won the toss and chose to bat first at Kensington Oval, with Joseph taking four for 46 in a scintillating performance.

However, the Guyanese pacer was bitterly unlucky not to finish with more wickets, denied by a dubious umpiring call and multiple dropped catches, with debutant Brandon King putting down three chances.

Australian vice-captain Travis Head top-scored with a swashbuckling 59, while seamer Jayden Seales secured a five-wicket haul, his third in Tests, by cleaning up the tail in the evening session.

In response, the West Indies stumbled to 57 for four, still trailing by 123 runs at stumps, after Australia's quicks wreaked havoc late in the evening session.

Mitchell Starc removed both of the West Indies' openers in a damaging opening burst before Cummins and Josh Hazlewood made further inroads on the volatile deck.

Earlier, Sam Konstas' highly-anticipated return to the Test arena lasted just 14 deliveries, with Joseph producing a well-directed in-ducker that thudded into the teenage opener's pads.

West Indies captain Roston Chase successfully overturned the on-field

con't on pg 29