

PM Browne makes the case for continued visa free access to the European Union

Story on Page 2



High-level representation at the formal opening ceremony for the 55th Regular Session of the OAS General Assembly in Antigua and Barbuda, (front row left to right): Attorney General Sir Steadroy Benjamin, House Speaker Osbert Frederick, President of the Senate Sen. Alincia Grant, Lady Roberts and Governor General's Deputy Sir Clare Roberts

PM Browne makes the case for continued visa free access to the European Union



PM Gaston Browne (second from left) and PS Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Dr. Clarence Pilgrim meet with members of the EU delegation to the OAS meeting

Prime Minister Gaston Browne is hoping Antigua and Barbuda would be able to persuade the European Union, through negotiations, not to implement its decision to discontinue visa-free access to holders of the country's passports.

The prime minister made known his preference during a courtesy call by two members of the European Union's delegation attending this week's 55th Regular Session of the Organisation of American States (OAS) General Assembly being hosted by the Antigua and Barbuda government.

"We recognize that the European Union has agreed to certain protocol's now to discontinue visa-free access. We are hoping, though, that through our negotiations that we can come to some 'happy medium' in which we can maintain the visa-free access but at the same time providing the EU with all of the assurances that our programmes do not represent a risk to the European Union. As you are aware, the programmes are very important to the OECS countries. In fact, even more so to the other OECS countries than Antigua and Barbuda because in our case, it's about 10 percent of overall revenues, but for the other islands, it's up

to 50 to 60 percent," he observed. He underscored the importance of the CIP programmes to the OECS states noting that should they be forced out of operation, then the results would be 'devastating'.

"As you know, we have a consultative mechanism in which we are cooperating with the North Americans and the Europeans to strengthen our programmes," he stated.

PM Browne revealed that the government is going to parliament next month to make the recommended changes citing this as an example of full cooperation 'on the sense that these programmes are very important to us'.

The prime minister added that if the European Union feels that it must introduce new measures, then these would not go beyond ETA's.

"I mean, an ETA does give the EU some level of control in the sense that you know who is coming into your country and you can accept or deny. But as it stands now, we enjoy duty free access and we are appreciative of it, and we think that it is important to continue the visa-free access," PM Browne urged.



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US is reviewing its membership of organisations such as the OAS

The United States, a major contributor to the finances of the Organisation of American States (OAS), now convening the 55th Regular Session of its General Assembly in Antigua and Barbuda, has announced that it is currently reviewing its membership of several international organisations, including the OAS.

The announcement was made by the US Deputy Secretary of States, Christopher Landau, as he addressed the OAS Plenary session on Thursday.

“As you may be aware, President Trump issued an executive order in the first days of this administration directing the Secretary of State within six months to review all international organizations of which the United States is a member to determine whether such membership is in the interests of the United States and whether such organizations can be reformed. Upon the conclusion of that review, the Secretary must report his findings to the President and recommend whether the U.S. should withdraw from any such organization. That review remains ongoing, and the OAS is obviously one of the organizations we’re reviewing,” he revealed.

Deputy Secretary of State, Landau, speaking frankly, said he was not sure that he is able to predict how that review will turn out. “That’s certainly something I’m open to discussing at this meeting so no one can say they’re surprised,” he added.

The Senior US government official raised several concerns noting that members must ask themselves ‘how the organization remains relevant today, and whether its achieving its lofty and noble goals’.

He questioned the legitimacy of the recent elections in Venezuela and that country’s ongoing dispute with Guyana as well as the near total control that gangs have over parts of Haiti as areas of concern for both he and Sec-



2025 JUN 25, Secretary General Meets with Deputy Secretary of State of the United States, Christopher Landau

retary and State, Marco Rubio.

He did not indicate just how soon that

review will be concluded.


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Local News



Sir Ronald Sanders to Deliver 2024 Commonwealth Lecture Honouring the Legacy of Sir Shridath Ramphal



The Commonwealth Association has announced that Sir Ronald Sanders will deliver this year's Commonwealth Lecture on Monday, July 1, at Marlborough House, the seat of the Com-

monwealth Secretariat in London.

This year's lecture will reflect on the legacy and enduring lessons from the life and leadership of the late Sir Shridath "Sonny" Ramphal, who served as the Commonwealth's second and longest-serving Secretary-General from 1975 to 1990. Sir Shridath passed away on August 30, 2024, and the lecture will be preceded by a memorial service in his honour at The Queen's Chapel, St James's Palace, earlier in the day.

The lecture will take place in the presence of the current Commonwealth Secretary-General, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, and will be attended by distinguished guests from across the Commonwealth.

"The event is fully booked," the Commonwealth Association noted, "with overflow space lined up for those who aren't able to get into Marlborough House."

Sir Ronald Sanders, who is Sir Shridath Ramphal's son-in-law, brings deep personal insight and decades of professional engagement with the Commonwealth to the occasion. He served on the governing Board of the Commonwealth Secretariat, was a member and rapporteur of the 2010–2011 Eminent Persons Group (EPG) commissioned by Commonwealth Heads of Government to propose reforms for the association, and has twice served as High Commissioner of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Kingdom. He is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States and High Commissioner to Canada.

A widely published commentator on international and Commonwealth affairs, Sir Ronald is expected to draw on his close relationship with Sir Shridath and his experiences in diplomacy and Commonwealth reform to deliver a timely and reflective address.

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Ambassador Dwight Gardiner Calls for the 'political will' to tackle the ocean crisis



Antigua and Barbuda's Permanent Representative to the International Seabed Authority, Ambassador Dwight Gardiner

Antigua and Barbuda's Permanent Representative to the International Seabed Authority, Ambassador Dwight Gardiner, delivered cogent arguments before the United Nations on this week urging states to demonstrate *political will* and firm action in addressing the ocean crisis.

Ambassador Gardiner, who is also Director/Registrar General of the Antigua and Barbuda Department of Marine Services (ADOMS) is in New York to attend the 35th meeting of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The United Nations body sets out the fundamental rules by which countries make use of the world's oceans. Some of these rules govern fishing rights, shipping lanes and territorial boundaries.

Recognising Antigua and Barbuda's leadership role as a member of the community of Small Island Developing States, Ambassador Gardiner zeroed in on that section of the Secretary General's report that confirmed a harsh reality affecting these nations – the oceans are in crisis.



"Climate change, overfishing, marine pollution, and habitat destruction continue to place our marine ecosystems under increasing stress. For SIDS, these impacts are especially severe. We are among the least responsible for these global challenges, yet we bear their harshest consequences, often with the least access to the necessary tools, technology, and finance to respond," Ambassador Gardiner pleaded before the United Nations body.

Siezing on the momentum created by the Oceans Conference in France earlier this month, Ambassador Gardiner expressed grave concern about the process of implementation in addressing the widening gap between commitment and concrete action.

"For SIDS, implementing UNCLOS provisions on capacity-building, marine science, and technology transfer is not a lofty ambition but a matter of survival. We call on all States Parties to match their legal commitments with political will and resources, ensuring no state, especially no small island state, is left behind," he urged.

Ambassador Gardiner also reflected positively on the advisory opinion of the International Tribunal of the Law

of the Sea in the fight for climate justice, noting its call for urgent financial and technical support to enable SIDS to adapt, build resilience, and to safeguard our marine environment for generations to come.

He further advised that the 33 member UN grouping of countries known as the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) has named Antigua and Barbuda its candidate to serve as President of the 30th Session of the International Seabed Authority Assembly, to be held this July in Kingston, Jamaica. "We would be honoured to serve in this important role, having been consistent, active participants in the work of the Assembly," Ambassador Gardiner noted.

Ambassador Gardiner was joined at the meeting by Executive Director of the Centre for Excellence for Oceanography & the Blue Economy Dr Branson Belle and First Secretary at the Antigua and Barbuda Mission to the United Nations Asha Challenger. During his visit, he also engaged in discussions on a range of matters with Antigua and Barbuda's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Walton Webson.

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Local News

Permanent Secretary O'Keiffe meets Management of the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre



The tour of SLBMC by PS Colin O'Keiffe included interactions with members of the hospital's staff



Permanent Secretary, Colin O'Keiffe meets with members of the management team at the SLBMC

Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Health, Wellness, the Environment, and Civil Service Affairs, Colin O'Keiffe, paid an official visit to the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre on Thursday, where he met with members of the hospital's management team to discuss ongoing operations and explore avenues for continued service improvement.

PS O'Keiffe was welcomed by Medical Director, Dr. Shivon Belle-Jarvis, following which he held discussions with several members of the leadership team, including Dr. Acheabea Dyer, Acting Director of Administration; Jacqueline JnoBaptiste, Director of Nursing; Terrecere George-Davis, Human Resource Manager; Aldin Crump, Financial Controller; Marlon Jones, Director of Operations; and RN Debbie Jeffers-Joseph, Acting Quality Care Coordinator.

The visit included a comprehensive tour of the facility, where the Permanent Secretary observed daily operations, interacted with staff, and assessed both clinical and administrative functions. Key areas of discussion included workforce development, quality of patient care, and infrastructure enhancement needs.

O'Keiffe reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to supporting healthcare institutions in delivering high-quality, patient-centered care and emphasized

the importance of continued collaboration between the Ministry and healthcare providers.

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Double celebrations for American couple – 50th wedding anniversary and 50th visit to Sandals



Sandals Pearl Guest, Valerie and Ross Mickel

An American couple, Ross and Valerie Mickel, is celebrating a remarkable milestone, one the stuff of fairy tale romances; Ross and Valerie are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary and have chosen to spend it at a Sandals resort for the 50th visit to a resort within the brand.

This Baltimore couple recently celebrated their milestones by choosing to stay at the breathtaking Sandals Grande Antigua Resort and Spa.

Their journey with Sandals began in 1997, and though they briefly explored other all-inclusive options in

their earlier years, the allure of Sandals, and especially Antigua, always drew them back. “We tried some other all-inclusive brands and they weren’t as nice, so we came back home to Sandals and Antigua over the years,” Ross shared.

As valued resort pearl guests, a membership loyalty tier reserved for those who have spent a total of 250 or more nights at Sandals Resorts, Ross and Valerie were treated to a special celebration. The Sandals loyalty and travel team organized a private, beachfront garden reception to honor their golden anniversary, a

gesture that highlighted the deep connection the couple has forged with the brand.

Sandals Grande Antigua holds a special place in their hearts. “When we first came here to Antigua, the Mediterranean Village wasn’t built yet, so we came back the second time to experience the new addition, and we just love it here,” Valerie explained. “Sandals Grande Antigua is a wonderful property. From the big pool that’s right in front of the beach, to the amazing array of restaurants and the friendliest team.”

While they’ve explored nearly every Sandals resort, a total of 13 to be exact, with only Sandals Royal Curaçao, Sandals Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Sandals Royal Plantation, and Sandals Halcyon yet to be discovered, Antigua remains a cherished destination. This recent trip marked their fourth stay on the island, and they eagerly anticipate many more vacations in the Caribbean.

Resort General Manager David Latchimy said, “the Mickles are family. They have continued to support the brand and have introduced other guests to not only Sandals but Sandals Grande Antigua. Their story is an inspiration, a testament to the enduring power of love, loyalty, and the pursuit of paradise found only at Sandals.”



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Kiara Kwenga is the National Tourism Youth Congress Speech Competition winner, 2025



Students from secondary schools across Antigua and Barbuda came together this week for the National National Tourism Youth Congress Speech Competition. Organized by the Ministry of Tourism, the event was designed to select the nation's next Junior Minister of Tourism.

This annual competition is part of a larger Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) initiative that encourages young people across the region to speak up about the future of tourism. It gives them a platform to share their perspectives, propose solutions, and explore themes of sustainability, culture, and innovation. The winner of the national event goes on to represent Antigua and Barbuda at the CTO's Regional Youth Congress, joining peers from across the Caribbean.

Manager of the Tourism Education, Training and Awareness Unit, Tracey Browne, emphasized the importance of giving young people a voice in shaping the future of the industry.

"The future of tourism is not only about infrastructure or innovation. It is about people. As such, the voices of young people are central to the conversation," she said. She also highlighted how the competition builds leadership skills, encourages critical thinking, and nurtures a deeper appreciation for tourism's role in communities and economy.

She noted that two of the top performers - **Kiara Kwenga and Dominick Blair** - are members of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Cadet Corps. "This is a powerful testament to the impact of the Ministry of Tourism's education and awareness initiatives," she said. "Both the Youth Congress and the Tourism Cadet Corps are designed to inspire, empower, and prepare our young people to become leaders and innovators in the tourism industry."

After a display of talent, insight, and confidence, **Kiara Kwenga of Christ the King High School was named 2025 Junior Minister of Tourism.** She re-

ceived a laptop, a plaque, a two-night stay for two at Blue Waters Resort and Spa, and a certificate of participation. She will proudly represent Antigua and Barbuda at the CTO's Regional Youth Congress later this year.

Khesha Harilall of Sir Novelle Richards Academy earned first runner-up, taking home a tablet, a plaque, a day pass for two at Elite Island Resorts, and a certificate of participation. **Dominick Blair of St. Mary's Secondary School** earned second runner-up, receiving a tablet, a plaque, lunch for two at Maia Lounge and Restau-

rant, and a certificate of participation.

All participants were applauded for their impressive contributions and received certificates of participation. This year's representatives also included **Joel Jno Baptiste** of Antigua Grammar School, **Jedidiah Peters** of Divine Academy of Excellence, **Dachia Henry** of Clare Hall Secondary School, **Gabriella Eusebe** of All Saints Secondary School, **Leanna Browne** of Antigua State College, and **Zeña Benjamin** of St. Anthony's Secondary School.

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Local News

It's Day 3 at OAS 55th Regular Session of the General Assembly



It's **Day 3** (and final day) of the 55th Regular Session of the Organisation of American States (OAS) General Assembly that is being hosted by the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda.

Members of the various delegations and observer groups have been lavishing praise and compliments on the government and people, both publicly and privately, for executing what they described as a well-managed meeting with the hospitality of the people and the beauty of Antigua serving as backdrop to the successful meeting.

There have been a several bilateral meetings by visiting delegations with Prime Minister Gaston Browne with similar meetings being hosted sepa-

rately by Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Greene and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dr. Clarence Pilgrim.

Foreign Minister Greene has been serving as the chair of the Plenary sessions but as is customary at these types of meetings, there have been a packed agenda for 'side-meetings' and other forms of engagements at both the official and un-official levels.

Today's final session is slated to run into the evening with the presentation of papers from groups such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Pan American Health Organisation and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.





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Regional News



PAHO launches Birth Defects Repository in the Americas



The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has launched the Birth Defects Repository in the Americas, an interactive platform that consolidates real-time data on congenital anomalies reported by national epidemiological surveillance systems in Latin America and the Caribbean.

PAHO said this new tool aims to strengthen evidence-based decision-making and support the development of policies and strategies to improve maternal and child health.

“Each year, approximately 15 million children are born in the Region of the Americas, with 10 million of them

in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than half of all deaths among children under five occur during the first month of life, mainly due to prematurity, birth defects, sepsis, or asphyxia. Congenital anomalies are among the leading causes of neonatal mortality and childhood disability, affecting thousands of families.

“These conditions are associated with genetic and hereditary factors, chromosomal abnormalities, environmental exposures, nutritional deficiencies, toxic substances, or chronic and infectious diseases during pregnancy.”

James Fitzgerald, Director

of PAHO’s Department of Health Systems and Services, said:

“The Zika virus emergency in 2016 — which can be transmitted from mother to child — and recent evidence of vertical transmission of the Oropouche virus have underscored the urgent need for timely and comparable data to prevent and address these anomalies.”

To address this challenge, the repository offers interactive dashboards displaying trends, geographic distribution, and demographic patterns of birth defects, supporting the design of prevention strategies and health interventions.

Although the platform currently presents preliminary data from a few countries, its coverage will expand as more national authorities contribute their records, with technical support from PAHO.

PAHO said currently, 14 countries in the region have national birth defect surveil-

lance programs at various stages of development.

During the virtual launch seminar of the new tool, four countries — Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Cuba — shared their experiences, as well as key challenges in implementing these systems.

Jointly developed by PAHO’s Departments of Health Systems and Services and Evidence and Intelligence for Action in Health, PAHO said this initiative reaffirms the Organization’s commitment to more inclusive and effective health systems. By identifying disparities in surveillance, the repository also promotes health equity. PAHO said it invites countries across the Region to join this collaborative platform, strengthening epidemiological surveillance and advancing toward a future where every child has the opportunity for a healthy start in life. (*Loop Caribbean*)



Bahamas: 64 migrants apprehended near Abaco



Sixty-four migrants were apprehended Sunday in a joint interdiction operation near Hole in the Wall Lighthouse, Abaco, following a four-day surveillance operation by Bahamian and United States authorities.

The operation involved the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF), Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPf), Bahamas Department of Immigration, and United States partners working together to intercept the vessel.

Aerial surveillance first detected the vessel of interest in the South Abaco area, leading to the successful interception of a cabin cruiser-type motor vessel that had been under active surveillance for four days.

The apprehension was carried out with assistance from HMBS LIGNUM VITAE, commanded by Lieutenant Sanchez Davis, and the RBDF Drone Team.

Of the 64 migrants apprehended, 50 were males and 14 were females, according to the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.

The migrants were initially transported to Marsh Harbour for preliminary processing by the Bahamas Department of Immigration. They are now being transported by HMBS LIGNUM VITAE, along with the captured

vessel, to New Providence for further processing. (*Loop Caribbean*)

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Regional News



PNP optimistic it can win 10 of 15 seats in Kingston and St Andrew

The People's National Party (PNP) will sweep the five constituencies in the eastern end of Kingston and St Andrew, the party's Region Three chairman, Dennis Gordon, has predicted.

Three of those constituencies, St Andrew East Central; St Andrew South East; and East Kingston and Port Royal, are already represented by PNP members of parliament (MP).

The other two, St Andrew Eastern and St Andrew East Rural, are represented by the Jamaica Labour Party's Fayval Williams and Juliet Holness, respectively.

However, Gordon said he is confident the PNP's Patricia Duncan Sutherland will unseat Williams, who is also Finance Minister, and that Patrick Peterkin will defeat Holness, the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Gordon will be the PNP representative in St Andrew East Central, currently represented by outgoing MP and former PNP president, Dr Peter Phillips.

"I can account for East Central St Andrew," he said during a PNP rally in Papine, St Andrew, on Wednesday.



day.

"I am now accounting for East Rural St Andrew and I have checked the box for Eastern St Andrew," he said to wild applause from party supporters.

Gordon also predicted that Kingston Central will return to the column of the PNP, bringing to nine the number of constituencies he said the PNP will win in Kingston and St Andrew.

Retired Senior Superintendent of Police Steve McGregor is the PNP's representative in Kingston Central.

He is expected to face incumbent, the JLP's Donovan Williams, who pulled off a surprise victory in the 2020 general election in a constituency dominated by the PNP.

The other Corporate Area constituencies held by the PNP are St Andrew South, represented by the party's President Mark Golding; St Andrew South West, represented by PNP chairman Dr Angela Brown Burke; and St Andrew Western, represented by Anthony Hylton.

General elections are due in

September.

"We now have six and we have captured East Rural (St Andrew), Eastern (St Andrew) and Central Kingston so we are now at nine," Gordon said.

"But I have more good news for you because I am optimistic that I can get 10 because West Rural St Andrew is also on the list," he said.

West Rural St Andrew is represented by the JLP's Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn, who is also junior minister for National Security. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

Cop allegedly kills spouse then attempts suicide

A policeman reportedly shot and killed his spouse before turning the gun on himself in a suicide attempt in St Mary last night.

The incident occurred about 10:20 p.m. in the Essex community.

Reports are that the constable, who is assigned to the St Andrew North police division, used his Glock service pistol to fatally shoot 21-year-old teaching assistant D'Johnnay Peta-Gaye Graham.

He then allegedly inflicted a gunshot

wound to his own head.

The constable remains under police guard at a hospital.

The Richmond police are investigating. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

US issues warning to nationals living or wanting to travel to Haiti



The United States says while routine domestic commercial air travel has resumed between several airports in Haiti, US citizens should only seek to leave the French-speaking Caribbean Community (CARICOM) country “when they feel it is safe to do so.”

In a statement, the US embassy here said that Americans should also seek to leave the country by commercial or other privately available transportation and that they “should monitor local news and check regularly with travel agencies and commercial transportation providers’ offices and webpages to find departure options that suit their needs.”

“We are aware of US citizens traveling to Cap-Haïtien via helicopter from sites other than commercial airports; those flights involve potential risks citizens should assess before flying,” the Embassy said.

Criminal gangs in Haiti seeking to overthrow the government have been targeting the various airports here and the Embassy said that US government personnel are not authorized to travel on commercial flights into or out of Port-au-Prince because of Federal Aviation Administration restrictions and potential risks to air traffic.

“The US government does not endorse private nor commercial carriers,” the Embassy said, urging Americans not to travel to the troubled country.

“If you are a US citizen in Haiti, depart Haiti as soon as possible by commercial or other privately available transportation options. Avoid crowds and monitor local media for updates and avoid areas where violence, demonstrations, or disruptions are reported to be happening.”

The Embassy is also urging Americans in Haiti to keep a low profile and that they should be “prepared to shelter in

place for an extended time period,” and avoid being out after dark.

Earlier this week, the United Nations said that violence against children in war zones surged to “unprecedented levels” in 2024, with the report documenting 41,370 grave violations, the highest since global monitoring began nearly 30 years ago, in several countries including Haiti.

The UN also reported that powerful gangs that control much of Haiti are increasingly ruthless and better armed despite a weapons embargo.

“With the absence of an effective government response, gangs continue to have free rein to conduct attacks with impunity and expand their territorial control,” the report said. (*Loop Caribbean*)



An explosion and ensuing stampede kill 29 children in a Central African Republic school

An explosion and the stampede that followed killed at least 29 schoolchildren and injured more than 250 at a high school in Central African Republic’s capital city, authorities said Thursday.

The explosion occurred Wednesday at the Barthelemy Boganda High School in Bangui when power was being restored to an electrical transformer within the school premises after it malfunctioned, according to the country’s Ministry of National Education.

Most of the victims – including 16 girls – died at the scene after the explosion resulted in a stampede while others were confirmed dead at the hospital, the Ministry of Health said in a statement. At least 260 students were injured and being treated in various hospitals, the ministry said.

An estimated 5,000 students were at the school for higher-education exams at the time. Survivors recounted hearing a loud explosion from the transformer midway into the examination.

“The building shook and we were all terrified. It was everyone man for himself,” said Alvin Yaligao, one of the students.

Some of the victims died after jumping out of the building while others were killed in the stampede at the crowded entrance to the upper floors in an attempt to escape.

Many other students fainted amid the chaos and were rushed to the hospital, some of them transported on motorcycles.

Many people in the area

were angered, accusing the government of negligence for not handling the problems with the electrical transformer. Government officials and workers who arrived at the scene were pelted with different objects by angry residents.

“We deplore this incident which was caused by a lack of maintenance,” Gédéon Cyr Ngaïssé, president of the school’s parents’ association, told reporters. He called for an investigation into the tragedy. (Jamaica Gleaner)



LICQUOR LICENSE

To His Worship the Licensing Magsistrate

To The Magistrate District “A”

And

To The Commissioner Of Police

We, **ODESSA HOPKINS** of Upper Fort Road, Saint John’s Parish in the State of Antigua and Barbuda and **LENROY WILLIAMS** of Goldem Grove, Saint John’s Parish in the State of Antigua and Barbuda, **DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE** that it is our intention to apply at the next licensing session to be held at the Magistrate’s Court, High Street, Saint John’s, Antigua, District “A” on the 3rd day of July 2025 for a “Licquor License” in respect of our premises known as “**Blue Oranges Enterprise**” situated at Golden Grove, Satnt John’s, Antigua, Telephone No. (268) 764-2514.

Dated the 5th day of June 2025

Pope Leo XIV affirms celibacy for priests, demands 'firm' action on sex abuse



Pope Leo XIV affirmed Wednesday that priests must be celibate and insisted that bishops take “firm and decisive” action to deal with sex abusers, as he gave marching orders Wednesday to the world’s Catholic hierarchy.

Leo met in St Peter’s Basilica with about 400 bishops and cardinals from 38 countries attending this week’s special Holy Year celebrations for clergy. A day after he gave an uplifting message of encouragement to young seminarians, Leo offered a more comprehensive outline of what bishops must do to lead their flocks.

It’s an issue the former Cardinal Robert Prevost would have long pondered given his role as the prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Bishops. In that job from 2023 until his election in May, the Chicago-born Prevost vetted bishop nominations for Pope Francis, identifying the type of leader who would further Francis’ view of a church where all are welcome and dialogue is the decisive form of governance.

History’s first American pope reaffirmed Wednesday that the primary role of bishops is to forge unity in his diocese among clergy and to be close to his flock in word and deed. Bishops must live in poverty and simplicity, generously opening their homes to all and acting as a father figure and brother to his priests, Leo said.

“In his personal life, he must be detached from the pursuit of wealth and from forms of favoritism based on money or power,” he said.

Bishops must remain celibate “and present to all the authentic image of the church, holy and chaste in her members as in her head,” he said.

Referring to cases of abuse, he said bishops “must be firm and decisive in dealing with situations that can cause scandal and with every case of abuse, especially involving minors, and fully respect the legislation currently in force.”

It was the second time in a week that Leo has commented publicly on the

abuse scandal. On Friday night, in a written statement to a crusading Peruvian journalist who documented gross abuses in a Peruvian Catholic movement, Leo said there should be no tolerance in the Catholic Church for any type of abuse. He identified sexual and spiritual abuses, as well as abuses of authority and power in calling for “transparent processes” to create a culture of prevention across the church.

Francis, who in many ways placed Leo in position to succeed him, had also reaffirmed celibacy for Latin rite priests while acknowledging it was a discipline of the church, not doctrine, and therefore could change. But he refused appeals from Amazonian bishops to allow married priests to address the priest shortage in the region.

Prevost spent two decades as a missionary and bishop in Peru and would know well those arguments. But on Wednesday he reaffirmed the celibate priesthood as the “authentic image” of the church. (*Loop Caribbean*)

Ecuador's most wanted drug lord captured in 'underground bunker'

Police in Ecuador have recaptured the country's most wanted fugitive, drug lord Adolfo Macías Villamar.

Macías, also known by the alias "Fito", is the leader of Los Choneros, a powerful criminal gang which is blamed for Ecuador's transformation from a tourist haven to a country with one of the highest murder rates in the region. He is also suspected of having ordered the assassination of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio in 2023.

Police tracked him down to what they described as an underground bunker below a luxury home in the city of Manta.

A police spokesman said no shots were fired in the 10-hour joint operation by police and the military.

A large number of officers first monitored and surrounded the three-storey home in the Monterrey neighbourhood of Manta, on the Ecuadorian coast.

When they stormed the building, they found a sliding trap door, disguised to look like part of the stone floor, from which metal stairs led to Fito's underground hideout.

The "bunker" was fitted out with air conditioning,



a bed, a fan and a fridge.

The house itself boasted a gym with a punching bag and a games room where he could play pool and table football.

Fito reportedly put up no resistance and was transferred by air to the port city of Guayaquil, where several of Ecuador's largest prisons are located.

Footage of his arrival in Guayaquil shows him wearing shorts, a T-shirt and flip flops while being led by armed security officers to a parked SUV before being transferred to the La Roca maximum-security prison.

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa praised the security forces for capturing Fito and said that he would be extradited to the US, where he has been charged with cocaine smuggling.

Fito escaped from La Regional prison in Guayaquil in January 2024 with the help of at least two guards,

prompting global media attention.

It triggered a wave of deadly prison riots, in which guards were taken hostage and which prompted Noboa to declare a state of emergency.

But Fito was already notorious prior to his escape. During his time in prison - while serving a 34-year sentence for murder and drug trafficking - he rose to the top of the Los Choneros gang after its previous leader was killed.

From behind bars, he co-ordinated the gang's activities, which include drug trafficking and extortion.

He is also suspected of having ordered the murder of politician Fernando Villavicencio, who was gunned down at a campaign rally just days before the 2023 election.

Under Fito's leadership, Los Choneros forged links with Mexico's powerful Sinaloa cartel, an alliance

which experts say has led to the gruesome tactics commonly used by Mexican cartels - such as decapitations and mutilations - spreading to Ecuador.

Shortly before his prison escape, he also appeared in a narcocorrido - a slick music video in which his daughter glorifies her father's criminal exploits.

The video, which was partly recorded inside the prison, shows him caressing a fighting cockerel and freely chatting to fellow inmates.

The gang leader's escape in 2024 was a blow to Noboa's government. The Ecuadorian leader had assumed office in November 2023 after being elected on a promise to combat the growing power of the gangs.

On Wednesday, Noboa said that the drug lord's capture was proof his approach - which includes bringing in laws giving him sweeping powers to declare an "armed internal conflict", and which allows police to conduct searches without a warrant - was working.

"More [drug lords] will fall, we will regain [control of] the country," he posted on X. (BBC News)

Benta and Bullets set new records in ABSCA's T20 competition

Deran Benta and his team, Bryson's Shipping and Insurance Bullets, established two records in the Antigua and Barbuda Softball Cricket Association's (ABSCA) T20 Competition on Wednesday evening.

Both records were set as the Bullets crushed Mix Up Stars by 250 runs in a lopsided encounter at the Powells playing field.

Benta, who set a new record for the highest individual score, hammered 174 not out. He struck 22 sixes and four fours in his swashbuckling knock.

His century propels Bullets to a new record total as the team amassed 283 for seven off their 20 overs. Wilson Charles hit 33, and George Elvin scored 25. Almond Peters captured three for 28.

In reply, Mix Up Stars were bundled out for 31 in seven overs. Deran Benta snapped up six wickets for six runs to claim the player of the match award. Kimani George also picked up one wicket for five runs.

It was the first win in two matches



Deran Benta

for the Bullets, who lost by 18 runs to Goody's Taxi Service and Tours 300 in their opening encounter.

The Mix Up Stars suffered their first defeat in two games after being awarded victory by default against PMS, who failed to provide the match balls

for their opening encounter.

Meanwhile, the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League Sir Curtly Ambrose Limited Overs Championship will continue this weekend.

In two matches on Saturday, Consolidated Maritime Services and Dream 2 Reality Sea View Farm will face Free-town at Sea View Farm, and PIC Insurance Liberta Blackhawks will tackle Police at Ball Beef in Liberta.

Llewellyn Simon and Otis Burton will umpire at Sea View Farm, and Dirk Schouten and Dalis Adams will officiate at Liberta.

On Sunday, the Blackhawks will host Mahico at Liberta, and Sea View Farm will entertain Police at Sea View Farm. Otis Burton and Llewellyn Simon will officiate at Liberta, and Dalis Adams and Dirk Schouten will umpire at Sea View Farm.

Dwayne Bravo (in foreground) and players of the Trinbago Knight Rider CPL team.



DAILY PROGRAMMING




EARLY VIBRATIONS WITH GREMSTA THE RUSH HOUR SHOW WITH ROGER LAKE TOUCHLINE WITH EPILUS BAD COMPANY LIVE FROM THE V.I. REGGAE INSPIRATION WITH SELECTOR KEEGAN JAH WADADLI WITH DJ JAH WADADLI	6AM-10AM MON. - FRI. 5PM-7PM MON. - FRI. 6AM-9AM SATURDAYS 7PM-9PM MON. - THURS. 2PM-6PM THURS. 12PM-4PM SATURDAYS & 1PM-5PM ON SUNDAYS 9PM-12AM MON. THURS. SUNDAY 7PM-9PM FRIDAYS
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Sports News

Darg A Bark extend unbeaten run, El Hombre draw in ASCFL



The El Hombre football team

Darg A Bark extended their unbeaten run in the 2025 All Saints Community Football League (ASCFL) on Wednesday evening.

Darg A Bark snapped up their third win in as many games with a 3-1 victory against Overdose in the opening game of a double-header at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints.

Garen Williams converted an own goal in the second minute to give Dark A Bark the lead. Nashawn

Gunthropes snatched an equalizer for Overdose with a 10th-minute conversion.

But Dejuan Francis restored Darg A Bark's advantage when he scored in the 22nd minute to give his team a 2-1 lead at halftime. Eroy Gonsalves wrapped up victory for Dark A Bark with a conversion in the 72nd minute.

The result allows Darg A Bark to remain at the top of Zone A with nine points from three matches, while

Overdose will stay firmly rooted in the cellar of the six-team group without any points after crashing to their third loss in as many games.

Sea View Farm and El Hombre fought to a 1-1 draw in the second game of Wednesday's double-header.

Shamoi Andrew scored in the 20th minute to give Sea View Farm a one-nil lead at halftime. Nadre Thomas snatched the equalizer for El Hombre with a conversion in the

61st minute.

The result allows Sea View Farm to remain unbeaten in second place in Zone A with five points from three matches.

El Hombre remains in third place with four points after salvaging their first draw in three matches.

The All Saints Community Football League will continue with a double-header on Friday.

Ovals will take on Police at 6:15 pm, and Freeman's Village will tackle Fundamentals at 7:30 pm.

Teams to resume quest for supremacy in ABCA's Super40 Cup

Defending champions PIC Insurance Liberta Blackhawks will resume their quest for a fourth consecutive title when action continues in the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Super40 Cup on Saturday.

The Blackhawks, who have won their first two matches in Zone A of the 10-team competition, will play their first game away from home when they take on Wayne's Electrical Services Rising Sun Spartans at the Rising Sun playing field in St. John's.

Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles will seek their first win in three matches when they host the All Saints Pythons in another Zone A encounter in Bethesda.

The Jennings Tigers will be aiming to maintain their good start to the competition when they host Empire Nation in a Zone B match at Jennings.

CMW New Winthorpes Lions, who have won their first two matches in New Winthorpes, will remain at home to face the Bolans Blasters in a Zone B en-

counter.

Going into Saturday's matches, the Liberta Blackhawks and the Pigotts Crushers are leading Zone A with eight points apiece. However, the Crushers have played three matches, one more than the Blackhawks.

The Jennings Tigers and the New Winthorpes Lions are leading Zone B with eight points each. However, the Jennings Tigers have played three matches, one more than the Lions.

The ABCA Super40 Cup will continue with four more

matches on Sunday. In Zone A, Pigotts Crushers will oppose Rising Sun Spartans at Pigotts, and the Liberta Blackhawks will face the Bethesda Golden Eagles in Bethesda.

In Zone B, Tertiary Institutions & Schools will tackle the New Winthorpes Lions in New Winthorpes, and the Bolans Blasters will meet Empire Nation at the Factory Ground.

All matches in the 40-over competition will commence at 11 am on both days.



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Sports News



CPL teams up with Bravo and Collabr App to spotlight music talent



Bravo and Knight Riders

The Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League (CPL) has announced a groundbreaking partnership with the Collabr App, co-founded by West Indies cricket icon Dwayne Bravo, to uncover and showcase the Caribbean's rising musical stars.

As part of the 2025 tournament, emerging artists will have the chance to perform during halftime shows at CPL matches, offering them a platform to reach regional

and international audiences.

Collabr is a creative networking app designed by and for artists, giving musicians, filmmakers, writers, and other creatives a space to promote their work, grow their audience, and connect with collaborators across all disciplines.

Through this partnership, artists can upload their profiles and showreels to the app, where Bravo, his team, and the CPL will select

standout talents to perform live.

These performances will be part of the CPL's Live & Louder initiative, which showcases non-cricketing entertainment across the league.

The lineup will also include some of the region's most celebrated music acts who will join the Collabr artists to entertain the crowd at CPL games.

Some of the artists fans can look forward to seeing this year are AkaiiUSweet, Ricky T, Claudette Peters, and Lil Rick with more amazing music acts still to be announced.

Pete Russell, CEO of the Republic Bank CPL, said, "At CPL, we're always looking for new ways to highlight the best of the Caribbean, and this collaboration allows us to shine a light on musical talent that

need a platform to showcase their ability.

"We're excited to work with Dwayne, who had the vision to create this opportunity, and the Collabr team to discover fresh voices and deliver unforgettable performances for our fans."

Dwayne Bravo, West Indies legend and Collabr co-founder said, "As someone who's always been passionate about both cricket and music, this partnership with CPL is a dream come true.

Collabr was created to give talented artists a real chance to be seen and heard, and now they'll have the opportunity to perform on one of the biggest stages in Caribbean sport. I can't wait to see the incredible talent we uncover and bring that energy to the CPL crowd."



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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

ABCF to stage national championships this weekend



Antiguan cyclists assemble at the Block House at Shirley's Heights for the start of the King of the Hill cycling race on Sunday, June 15, 2025. (Photo courtesy of the ABCF)

The Antigua and Barbuda Cycling Federation (ABCF) will be staging its two-day 2025 national championships this weekend.

The event comprised the Inet Nationals Individual Time Trial on Saturday and the Top Ranking Nationals Individual Road Race the following day.

The Inet National Individual Time Trial, which is also being supported by Gatorade, Subway Restaurant, and Paradiso Water, will commence at the Police Recreation Grounds at 8 am on Saturday.

The cyclists will proceed eastward on the Sir Sydney Walling Highway. They will travel through Gunthorpes and continue eastward past the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

The cyclists will continue their eastward journey by travelling past Parham's Corner, Vermont, and the Mount Joy Service Station.

They will move onto the Pares Vil-

lage Main Road, the Glanvilles Main Road and the Willikies Main Road before turning around and travelling back along the same route to the finish line at the Police Recreation Grounds.

The Top Ranking Nationals Road Race, which is also being supported by Subway, Gatorade, and Paradiso Water, will start in front of the Top Ranking Store on Old Parham Road on Sunday at 8 am.

The cyclists will proceed eastward until they reach the intersection at Dee's Service Station, the Sir George Walter Highway, and the Pigotts Main Road.

They will make a left turn onto the Sir George Walter Highway and proceed through Coolidge until they reach the intersection with Jabberwock Road and Hospitality Drive.

They will make a left turn onto the Jabberwock Road, past the American University of Antigua and Jabberwock Beach. The cyclists will travel through

Hodges Bay and proceed along the Hodges Bay Main Road into Cedar Grove Village.

They will then make a left turn onto Friar's Hill Road, passing Longfords, Cedar Valley, and Marble Hill. They will proceed along Friar's Hill Road past the Woods Shopping Center and the St. John's Public Cemetery.

The cyclists will proceed to the intersection with Old Parham Road near the YMCA Sports Complex. They will make a left turn onto the Old Parham Road and proceed eastwards past the YASCO Sports Complex before finishing back in front of the Top Ranking Store.

Cyclists from all the major clubs affiliated with the ABCF are expected to once again compete for top honours in several categories, including elite male, women, cadets, sports, and masters class.

One lap of the route consists of 11 miles, and the elite riders will have to complete six laps, totaling 66 miles, to win their class.

The cyclists in the masters' class will be required to complete five laps, or 55 miles; the females will complete three laps, or 33 miles; the sports class will complete four laps, or 44 miles; and the cadets will only be required to complete one lap, or 11 miles.

Tahje Browne is the current champion of the ABCF's Inet National Individual Time Trial. Reigning champion Jyme Bridges, who has won the road race for the past three years, will be going for his fourth consecutive Top Ranking National Cycling Championship.