

PARLIAMENT MEETS TODAY...

Story on Page 2



Antigua and Barbuda at CARIFESTA aims to "mash dong de place" with all its acts.

Story on Page 4

Parliament meets today...

The House of Representatives will convene a meeting at the Parliament Chambers this morning with all eyes focused on the debate on the government's plan to invest funds owed to the Social Security Scheme into the Jolly Beach Hotel.

According to Prime Minister Gaston Browne the move has many benefits for Antigua and Barbuda. Primarily it will help to secure the future of the scheme which in the past had faced difficulties in meeting its monthly obligations.

A 2011-12 actuarial report had indicated that the scheme requires ten contributors to every one beneficiary to make it financially sound. This has never been achieved in the life of the organisation and with life-expectancy increasing, the demands on the scheme will only grow as the gap widens between contributors and beneficiaries.

The government believes that the proposed investments by the Scheme into Jolly Beach hotel, which is a viable concern that is currently turning a profit, is a sound move that will ensure the long-term viability of the scheme and thus reduce the threat that one day beneficiaries will again be lining up at dawn to collect their pensions.

Additionally, by investing in the lucrative tourism sector, the move guarantees employment,



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

economic growth and most importantly, ownership. It will place a key tourism asset into the

hands of Antiguan and Barbudans who are the owners of the Social Security Scheme.

The prime minister even added that another layer of security will be put in place; the guarantee by the government of the investments by the Scheme. It is therefore a 'win-win' for Social Security and the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

Other matters on the Order Paper is the amendments to the CIP Act to bring it in line with recommendations from both the US government and the European Union.



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Government assures the public: safeguards will be in place for the SS Jolly Beach investment

Safeguards, Transparency, and Compounding Growth

Prime Minister Gaston Browne reiterated that the ‘Jolly Beach–Social Security initiative’ was not a speculative gamble but a carefully structured investment. He outlined the multiple safeguards that had been built into the plan:

- Professional fund managers would oversee operations.
- An escrow account would ensure independent custody of receipts.
- Parliamentary reporting would guarantee transparency.

Speaking on the **Browne and Browne** show on Saturday, PM Browne stressed that these mechanisms were already documented in detail and would provide the public with assurance that the project was being executed with full accountability.

Importantly, he described how reinvestment of profits into further ventures could create a compounding effect, generating returns of 40% annually or more. The plan also emphasized diversification across real estate, liquid assets, and securities—far from the speculative ventures of “options or Bitcoin” suggested by critics.

A Transformed Jolly Beach

Turning to the property itself, PM Browne highlighted that Jolly Beach was no longer the “relic” left behind by past administrations. Already, EC\$15 million had been invested, with another EC\$20+ million set aside for improvements. The resort, once in decline, was being revived as a cornerstone of Antigua and Barbuda’s tourism and investment strategy.

The Forward: A Vision for National Transformation

The Prime Minister then read from the **Foreword** of the Jolly Beach project document, situating the initiative within a broader vision for Antigua



and Barbuda.

Back in 2014, his administration had embarked on a mission not merely of recovery, but of transformation—to build Antigua and Barbuda into a Caribbean economic powerhouse. This transformation required rejecting the colonial, extractive model of development and embracing what PM Browne termed ‘entrepreneurial socialism’ or ‘empowerment capitalism’.

“Under this paradigm, the state partners with the private sector to generate profits, which are then redistributed through taxes and dividends to drive social and economic development. The government must itself be entrepreneurial—seeking out strategic investments that keep wealth circulating within the country,” the prime minister argued

Building Ownership and Self-Reliance

The nation’s leader stressed that Antigua and Barbuda’s future required ‘creativity, ownership, and self-reliance’. This philosophy had already borne fruit:

- West Indies Oil Company (WIOC), once foreign-owned, was now majority-owned by the government and people. Over the last decade, WIOC had contributed over EC\$160 million in retained profits and dividends to national development.

- Through government policy, Canadian banks exiting the country were required to sell branches to domestic banks, which collectively posted EC\$110 million in profits last year. These funds now remained in Antigua and Barbuda rather than being repatriated abroad.

The next logical step, PM Browne explained, was to apply the same empowerment model to Jolly Beach. By transferring the resort to Social Security, renovating it, and expanding operations, the scheme would generate sustainable profits, strengthen pensions, and ensure that wealth stayed within the nation.

Rejecting Dependency and Embracing Local Capacity

The prime minister expressed astonishment at opposition calls to sell Jolly Beach to foreign investors. Such a move, he argued, would perpetuate “mental slavery” and send profits overseas.

Instead, he insisted that Antiguan and Barbudans possessed the intellectual capital, creativity, and resilience to manage such assets successfully. With significant national investments already made in education and training, there was no reason to assume that only foreign “godfathers” could ensure success.

Antigua and Barbuda...marking an impact at CARIFESTA XV (15)



Just days into the Caribbean cultural exposition, CARIFESTA 15, the Antigua and Barbuda delegation is already making an impact at the 10-day cultural exposition that is being held in Barbados under the theme “Caribbean Roots; Global Excellence”.

Reports from Bridgetown indicate that the iconic Burning Flames Band, now celebrating its 40th anniversary, was among a list of top performers participating in the ‘Super Concert’ on Friday night. Performing as one of the main headline acts and appearing on stage just before soca superstar, Machel Montano, the reports indicate that the band did not disappoint as they gave the Bajan and Caribbean audiences a performance about which they will be talking for years to

come.

“Our intention when we selected the delegation to represent Antigua and Barbuda at CARIFESTA is to ‘mash dong de place’ with all our acts, starting of course with Burning Flames,” said an ecstatic Khan Cordice, Director of Culture and Chef de Mission of the delegation.

According to Cordice the Antigua and Barbuda the delegation was purposefully selected to showcase the very best of its culture, highlighting the nation’s three pillars of representation: Legacy, Innovation, and Youth. He noted that from the iconic Burning Flames, celebrating 40 years of musical dominance, to the reigning Panorama champions CUB Hells Gate Steel Orchestra, and a dy-

namic mix of dancers, actors, writers, visual artists, culinary experts, and musicians, the team embodies the heartbeat of Antiguan and Barbudan creativity.

As an example of this, on Saturday night, when the focus was on the youth, the National Combined Dance Theatre performed and again, the reports are that they completely wooed the audience with their performance. The reigning Calypso Monarch, Ge’Eve also gave a remarkable performance during the presentation.

“We came to make a statement, and we are doing just that so far with our performances,” Cordice stated.

Antigua and Barbuda Panorama’s Champion Hell’s Gate Steel Orchestra was

scheduled to perform Sunday after when Calypsonian, Empress, was slated to perform with the steelband.

The S. Matthew, Minister of Education, Sports, and the Creative Industries, expressed his excitement and optimism for the delegation’s participation:

“This moment is a proud one for Antigua and Barbuda. Our nation has long contributed significantly to Caribbean culture, and CARIFESTA XV provides us the opportunity to present that legacy on a grand stage. I am confident that our delegation will make an indelible impact, showcasing not just our traditions but also our innovation and the energy of our youth. I extend my best wishes to every performer, artisan, and

Local News

PAGE 5



cultural ambassador representing us in Barbados.”

Antigua and Barbuda’s presence at CARIFESTA XV includes performances, exhibitions, and interactive workshops across multiple disciplines—dance, music,

theatre, culinary arts, literary arts, symposium, and craft. The delegation also carries a strong promotional focus, with its national booth at the Grand Market highlighting the country’s cultural tourism and upcoming festivals, including

Art Week 2025, Carnival 2026 and One Nation 2026 with the kind support of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority and coverage by ABS, the nation’s station.

As the festival unfolds from

August 22–31, Antigua and Barbuda’s delegation is poised not only to represent the twin-island nation with pride but also to contribute meaningfully to the collective Caribbean voice celebrating the richness of regional identity.



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Piango Festival 2025...deemed a successful venture



The Ministry of Agriculture is expressing satisfaction with the Piango festival, 2025, which took place at the Cades Bay Agricultural Station on Sunday afternoon. It was the first such festival after a two-year hiatus.

“I am happy to see the rebirth of the Piango Festival and I am generally

pleased with both the turn out and the level of participation in the festival this year,” say Minister of Agriculture Anthony Smith Jnr.

Thousands turned out to participate in the festival which showcased the best the country has to offer in agro-processing. Scores of stalls were set up

with vendors offering for sale from wine, to jams and sauces and a wide variety of sweets.

Minister Smith said he was pleased to welcome Prime Minister Gaston Browne to the festival which signals his support for agriculture as a matter of priority. Other Cabinet ministers



Local News



included Social and Urban Minister Rawdon Turner.

The government officials and the attendees were there to patronize the stalls as well as to enjoy the entertainment provided by the organisers.

Minister Smith said part of the decided to return to Cades Bay was to shine the spotlight on the government's efforts to revitalize the Antigua Black pineapple which is well on the way.

"Already we have propagated some 15 thousand pineapple slips with another 15 thousand slips soon to come. What we want to do is to raise the number of slips we distribute to two-hundred thousand which we hope to distribute

to local farmers," he revealed.

According to the minister the focus this year has been on agro-processing and he was quite impressed with the variety of end-products that were on display made from the two main fruits under consideration; the mango and the pineapple. "We have lots of innovative and creative ways that our people used the mangoes and the pineapples. Traditionally, we often think of planting and reaping of crops whenever we think about agriculture, but agriculture is quite a wide subject area and this includes the value-added items such as the several agro-processed items that are on sale here this afternoon," Smith told Point Express

from the Cades Bay festival.

For future iteration of the festival, the minister said he wants to see the focus expanded beyond mango and the pineapple and include other fruits that are available locally. Naturally, he believes that this will result in a demand for more booths for additional vendors thus ensuring that the festival continues to grow and to expand in years to come.

One of the attractions of the festival was the demonstration of a 10-pound drone which hopefully will soon become part of the tools of farmers as they adopt technology to apply pesticides and fertilisers to their crops.





Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party

Nugent Avenue
St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda
Tel: 268-770-8643



23 August 2025

THE ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA LABOUR PARTY MEDIA STATEMENT

We mourn the loss of our Comrade extraordinaire and elder, Ms. Ethlyn Winter, of Cassada Gardens. The good comrade transitioned earlier this morning, Saturday, 23 August 2025, at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Center, following a brief illness.

For seven decades, Comrade Winter demonstrated her undiminished love and fealty for the ABLP and the AT&LU by her membership, first as a Juvenile Supporter and, following adulthood, as a member of the Women's Action Group. The political defeat of the ABLP --especially following the 1968 debacle that led to the splitting of the institution of Labour and the 1971 electoral loss of the ABLP-- cemented Comrade Ethlyn Winter's place as a stalwart of this great institution. She worked tirelessly for the victory of the party.

Comrade Winter's unstinting support for the Honourable Lester Bird, in the Rural East constituency, marked her as special among the ABLP Women's Action Group that assured him of victory, in 1976 and again following the 2004 defeat of "the comeback kid." She never relented in her support for the ABLP and the AT&LU.

At one of the ABLP Friday night forums, a young comrade began to hiss when Comrade Ethlyn Winter began to speak about the past. The General Secretary immediately intervened to teach the young present about the high regard which the party holds for its elders. Comrade Winter completed her discourse with loud applause following. She spoke softly but with tremendous force.

The ABLP political leader, Honourable Gaston Browne, has already indicated that a special honour, in keeping with the Revised Constitution of the ABLP, will be conferred on this outstanding comrade by the body of the ABLP.

-end-



Applications for the UK Government's Chevening Scholarships now open

Applications for prestigious Chevening Scholarships to study in the UK are open from 5 August to 7 October 2025. The programme offers fully funded master's degrees at UK universities to individuals who are ready to lead positive change in their home countries and around the world.

For more than 40 years, Chevening has attracted hundreds of thousands of applications globally. Successful applicants are individuals who can clearly demonstrate outstanding leadership, influence, and networking skills through compelling, evidence-based examples.

Emma Hennessey, Head of The Scholarships Unit at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), said:

"Chevening's highly competitive selection process ensures that those chosen to become Chevening Scholars or Fellows represent the brightest and most driven individuals from around the world."

"Chevening Alumni use their world-class education, global networks, and confidence gained in the UK to create meaningful, lasting change when they return home, whether by tackling global challenges or making a tangible impact in their own communities."

"If you can clearly demonstrate the skills needed to join them - outstanding leadership, influence, and networking skills - I strongly encourage you to apply. If you're not quite there yet, I encourage you to take the time to build the experience that will make your application competitive."

"I'm continually inspired by the dedication and drive of the Chevening community, and I look forward to seeing what the next generation of leaders will bring."

Antiguan and Barbudan Dr David Francis was recently named amongst the 2025 cohort of Chevening awardees and will pursue an MSc in Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology at University College London.

Through this training, he aims to strengthen public health systems by enhancing outbreak detection and control, shaping evidence-based policies, and preparing for future antimicrobial threats.

Prospective candidates can submit their applications via chevening.org/apply.

Before applying, candidates are strongly encouraged to review the resources available at chevening.org/guidance and assess whether they are ready to present a competitive application.

Since the programme started in 1983, over 60,000 professionals have advanced their careers through Chevening, demonstrating the UK's commitment to developing the leaders of tomorrow.

More information

For detailed information on eligibility criteria and scholarship specifics, visit chevening.org.

Contact

Kadeem Joseph (Mr) | Political & Projects Officer | Communications and Chevening Lead | British High Commission St John's | Antigua and Barbuda | (268) 771-9011(m) | kadeem.joseph@fcdo.gov.uk



VACANCY

MAINTENANCE MANAGER

The **St. John's Development Corporation (SJDC)** is inviting applications from suitably qualified individuals for the position of **Maintenance Manager**.

The successful candidate will be required to ensure smooth, safe, and efficient operation of the Corporation's facilities by overseeing all aspects of maintenance, including planning, scheduling, execution and quality control. This involves managing resources, leading a team and optimizing maintenance practices to reduce downtime, extend asset life and minimize cost. The Maintenance Manager will be required to work closely with the Executive Director and Board of Directors to support the Corporation's strategic goals.

Key Responsibilities include:

Overseeing daily maintenance of facilities, equipment, and machinery

- Managing and guiding maintenance staff
- Developing preventative maintenance schedules and procedures
- Coordinating with vendors and contractors
- Managing inventory, budgets, and maintenance records
- Ensuring compliance with safety regulations
- Supporting emergency repairs and disaster preparedness initiatives

Minimum Qualifications:

- Degree or certification in Engineering, Facilities/Maintenance Management or a related field (BSc/BA in Business or Facility Management is an asset)
- Minimum 5 years' experience in maintenance management
- Strong technical knowledge in plumbing, electrical, carpentry, and mechanical systems
- Proven leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills

Application Instructions:

Interested persons should submit a cover letter, detailed resume, and copies of relevant qualifications no later than June 15, 2025 to:

The Executive Director
St. John's Development Corporation
P.O. Box 1473
St. John's
Antigua

Or email: hr@sjdcanu.com

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Clarification on Media Report Concerning Patient Property

Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) wishes to address a recent media article alleging that a patient's phone was stolen while admitted at our facility.

To date, the hospital has received no official reports regarding any mobile phone being stolen on our premises. We wish to assure the public that SLBMC takes matters of security and patient safety very seriously. A clear process exists for reporting and investigating such concerns, and any credible report made to us will be thoroughly addressed.

We are, however, concerned by the nature of the article, which could cause unnecessary alarm among patients, families, and the wider community. As a public health institution, we view the media as partners in advancing important conversations around healthcare. However, with partnership comes responsibility, and we urge media organizations and journalists to uphold their ethical duty to:



- Verify information with credible evidence prior to publication
- Avoid sensationalism that may undermine public trust in the health system
- Safeguard patient confidentiality at all times

SLBMC remains committed to

providing safe, compassionate care to all patients and to maintaining the public's trust. Should any credible reports of theft or misconduct be made, we will investigate them thoroughly in line with established procedures.

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Regional News

CARIFESTA XV sets off with a bang in Barbados

On Friday, August 22, Queen's Park in Bridgetown, Barbados, came alive with the spirit of Caribbean creativity during the Opening Ceremony of CARIFESTA XV. A CARICOM press release said it "marked the triumphant return of the Region's premier arts festival."

After a prolonged pause caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA) has returned, uniting artists, cultural authorities, and fans from across the Caribbean and beyond.

The event kicked off with an impressive Parade of Countries, a vibrant display of music, dance, vivid colors, and talent that set the stage for ten days dedicated to cultural exploration and festivities. This year's festival theme, "Caribbean Roots, Global Excellence," highlights the rich cultural legacy of the Caribbean and its significant influence on worldwide artistic innovation. Over 2,500 delegates from 25 nations are expected to participate.

Leaders, ministers of culture, officials from CAR-



ICOM Member States and Associate Members, along with groups of artists, cultural specialists, entrepreneurs, and a large audience, gathered to celebrate the occasion.

CARICOM reports that in her speech, Secretary-General Dr. Carla Barnett praised Barbados as the host nation, commending Prime Minister Honourable Mia Motley, the government, and the people of Barbados for their exceptional hospitality and thorough organization.

She highlighted that hosting CARIFESTA for the third time in Barbados demonstrates the

country's steadfast dedication to regional unity and its strategic focus on arts and culture development.

Dr. Barnett also mentioned the festival's expanding international ties, particularly its strengthening connection with the African Union, which includes debut theatrical showcases from Ghana, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe. She also welcomed participants from Latin America and other regions who continue to support this vibrant cultural dialogue. "The rich and inspiring theme for CARIFESTA XV, 'Caribbean Roots, Global Excellence', is an

affirmation of a simple but powerful truth – our strength lies in understanding that, at the core, our history and our heritage are the source of our impact far beyond the shores of our Region," stated Dr. Barnett.

The Secretary-General stressed that culture is a vital engine for economic development, youth involvement, and regional identity. She emphasized that CARIFESTA plays a critical role in advancing CARICOM's creative economy strategies, promoting innovation, professional growth, and strategic collaborations. (Dominica News Online)

Manchester police probing suspected drowning of toddler

The Manchester police are investigating the circumstances surrounding the suspected drowning of a 17-month-old boy in the parish on Friday night.

The deceased has been identified as Levonte Lewis from the community of Hollywood in Norwood, St James.

The infant is believed to have drowned in a swimming pool at Downs, Newport, Manchester about 11 p.m., reports say.

His body was retrieved and later removed to the morgue.

The matter was reported to the Alligator Pond police, and an investigation is now under way. (Jamaica Gleaner)



U.S. revokes visas of Grenada Finance Minister over Cuban Medical Brigade issue



Finance Minister Dennis Cornwall has become the first Grenadian government official to face direct action from the United States in connection with its stance on the Cuban medical brigade program. According to high-level sources cited by The New Today, the U.S. government under President Donald Trump has revoked

all three of Cornwall's U.S. visas—B1, B2, and A1.

The same sources confirmed that the U.S. also withdrew the visa of Cornwall's estranged wife, Ophelia Cornwall. The government of Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell has reportedly been officially notified of the revocations.

Minister Cornwall, who rep-

resents the St Patrick East constituency and studied in Cuba during the 1980s under the People's Revolutionary Government, publicly stated in Parliament that he was willing to lose his U.S. visa in order to stand in solidarity with Cuba on the medical brigade issue. Foreign Minister Joseph Andall, also a former student in Cuba, has expressed similar views.

The visa revocation prevents Cornwall from traveling to the United States for official duties, including attending meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The U.S. has accused Cuba and its partner governments in Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean of participating in what it describes as a "forced labour" scheme

involving Cuban medical personnel. While The New Today reports that Grenada may be paying 65% of the doctors' salaries directly to the Cuban government in U.S. currency, this claim has not been independently confirmed.

In response to Washington's actions, several Caribbean governments are reportedly in talks with Cuba to revise the terms of their medical cooperation agreements.

No official statement has yet been issued by the Grenadian Congress administration regarding the U.S. decision.

The U.S. embargo against Cuba has been in place since 1960, following the overthrow of the Batista regime by Fidel Castro and his revolutionary forces. (Dominica News Online)

Columbia University student among 5 victims identified in deadly New York tour bus crash



Police identified the five people who were killed in a tour bus crash in western New York on Friday.

New York State Police said in a news release on Saturday that Shankar Kumar Jha, 65, of Madhubani, India; Pinki Changrani, 60, of East Brunswick, New Jersey; Columbia University student Xie Hongzhuo, 22, of Beijing, China; Zhang Xiaolan, 55, of Jersey City, New Jersey; and Jian Mingli, 56, of Jersey City, died in the crash.

Columbia University said in a statement Saturday: "We are devastated by the death of one of our students, Xie Hongzhuo, in the tragic bus accident near Buffalo on Friday."

"This heartbreaking loss is felt deeply across our community. We are in close contact with her family and offering them our full support," the statement continued, noting counseling services are available to students. "Our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with her family, friends, and all who have been touched by this tragedy."

The tour bus, which was traveling from Niagara Falls to New York City, careened out of control and fell on its side along an interstate parkway near Buffalo around 12:45 p.m. Friday.

The bus was carrying 54 people, including the driver and a tour guide. Some of the occupants were ejected from and trapped under the bus, according to authorities.

Dozens of the occupants were hospitalized for their injuries, including several children.

Erie County Medical Center, where 21 passengers were hospitalized for injuries, said that 14 patients remained at the hospital as of Saturday afternoon, but were in stable condition.

Authorities are still investigating the cause of the crash, which did not involve any other vehicles.

However, they said Friday they believe the driver, Bin Shao, 55, of Flushing, New York, "became distracted, lost control, and overcorrected." Shao "had no signs of impairment and the

tour bus had no mechanical failure," according to the news release.

Authorities added that the bus was at "full speed" during the crash, but did not specify how fast the vehicle was driving. Interstate 90 has a speed limit of 65 mph.

It does not appear that the driver has been accused of or charged with any crimes.

A National Transportation Safety Board team was dispatched Friday to investigate the crash. The scope of the investigation will include the crash site, the mechanical condition of the bus, highway design and the driver — including fatigue, distraction and qualifications.

At a Saturday news conference, the NTSB asked witnesses or anyone with video footage to contact the agency.

The tour company operating the vehicle, M&Y Tour Inc. of Staten Island, has not returned requests for comment. (NBC)

Nigerian military airstrikes free 76 hostages, including children



At least 76 hostages, including children, have been freed after Nigeria's military targeted militants with precision airstrikes in the country's northwest, local authorities said.

The airstrikes were launched on targets around Pauwa Hill, located in the Kankara area of Katsina state, in the early hours of Saturday, Nasir Mu'azu, the state's commissioner for internal security, said in a statement.

The air assault was launched in a manhunt for a notorious kidnapper.

The rescued hostages include some of those kidnapped during an attack on a mosque in Unguwan Mantau that led to the death of at least 50 people, the commissioner said.

"However, it was regrettably noted that one child tragically lost his life during the ordeal," Mu'azu said.

In recent months, there has been an uptick in attacks on communities in the northwest and north-central regions of Africa's most populous country, where farmers often clash over limited access to land and

water. An attack last month in north-central Nigeria killed 150 people.

The conflict has become deadlier in recent years, with authorities and analysts warning that more herdsmen are taking up more sophisticated arms.

The commissioner said the air assault is "part of a broader strategy to dismantle criminal hideouts, weaken their networks and put an end to the cycle of killings, kidnappings, and extortion that have plagued innocent citizens."

The West African country is

also dealing with an insurgency in its northeast region that has resulted in the death of around 35,000 civilians and the displacement of more than 2 million others, according to the United Nations.

Also on Saturday, separate airstrikes in the northwest of Nigeria killed 35 militants in a targeted attack.

Despite the efforts by the government of President Bola Tinubu to curb jihadi attacks, the militancy has persisted. (AP)

Zelensky vows to continue fighting as Ukraine marks independence day



President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukraine would continue to fight for its freedom “while its calls for peace are not heard,” in a defiant address to the nation on its independence day.

“We need a just peace, a peace where our future will be decided only by us,” he said, adding that Ukraine was “not a victim, it is a fighter”.

He continued: “Ukraine has not yet won, but it has certainly not lost.”

Zelensky’s remarks came after Moscow said Ukraine had attacked Russian power and energy facilities overnight, blaming drone attacks for a fire at a nuclear power plant in its western Kursk region.

The Ukraine government’s Centre for Countering Disinformation said it had been reported that the shooting down of a drone allegedly caused the fire.

The centre blamed Russia for “spread-

ing manipulations” and said Russia accusing Ukraine of “allegedly carrying out targeted strikes” on the power plant “are typical methods” of Russian propaganda.

There were no injuries and the fire was quickly extinguished, the plant’s press service said on messaging app Telegram. It said the attack had damaged a transformer, but radiation levels were within the normal range.

The United Nations’ International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it was aware of reports regarding the fire, but could not independently confirm them. Its director general said “every nuclear facility must be protected at all times”.

The IAEA has repeatedly called on both Russia and Ukraine to show maximum restraint around nuclear facilities in the war.

Also on Sunday, Russia and Ukraine

both confirmed a prisoner swap had taken place, with 146 soldiers on each side being exchanged.

Russia’s defence ministry also said eight people from Russia’s Kursk region, which was partially occupied by Ukraine for several months, had been handed over and would return home.

Zelensky said those returned by Russia included soldiers, border guards and civilians, most of whom have been in captivity since 2022.

He also said journalist Dmytro Khilyuk, who was “kidnapped in the Kyiv region” at the start of the war, was coming home.

Independence Day celebrations were held in Kyiv, as the country marked its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Canada’s Prime Minister Mark Carney took part in the celebrations, and stood

beside Zelensky at St Sophia's Cathedral as he addressed the crowd:

"I want to say something very simple and important: Canada will always stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine."

He said drones, ammunition and armoured vehicles, part of a \$2bn Canadian dollars (£1bn) military package, would be delivered to Ukraine as early as September, Ukrainian media reported. The deliveries would make up more than half of a support package he announced in July.

Also present was US envoy Keith Kellogg - whom Ukrainian media reported was awarded the Order of Merit, first degree by Zelensky during the ceremony.

After Zelensky thanked him and US President Donald Trump for their support, Kellogg could be heard telling Zelensky: "We're going to make this work".

Andriy Yermak, Zelensky's chief of staff, wrote on Telegram early on Sunday: "On this special day - Ukraine's Independence Day - it is especially important for us to feel the support of our friends. And Canada has always stood by us."

Meanwhile, Zelensky shared a letter from King Charles sending the people of Ukraine his "warmest and most sincere wishes".

"I keep feeling the greatest and deepest admiration for the unbreakable spirit of the Ukrainian people," the King writes. "I remain hopeful that our countries will be able to further work closely together to achieve a just and lasting peace."

Zelensky said the King's "kind words are a true inspiration for our people during the difficult time of war".

The UK government also said Ukrainian flags would appear above Downing Street in recognition of the anniversary.

The Ministry of Defence has confirmed that British military experts will continue to train Ukrainian soldiers until at least the end of 2026, with an extension to Operation Interflex - the codename given to the UK Armed Forces' training programme for Ukrainian recruits.

Norway announced on Sunday that it would contribute about 7 billion kroner (£514m; \$693m) of air defence systems to Ukraine.

"Together with Germany, we are now ensuring that Ukraine receives powerful air defence systems," Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said in a statement.

The two nations are funding two Patriot systems, including missiles, with Norway also helping procure air defence radar.

Also on Sunday, Ukraine and Sweden announced they had agreed to joint defence production, with Sweden's defence minister saying it would "boost Swedish rearmament and meet the needs of Ukraine's armed forces".

Pål Jonson wrote on X: "Ukraine will share and provide technology for its factories in Sweden and defence materiel co-produced in Sweden will be exported to Ukraine."

On Saturday, Russia said its forces in eastern Ukraine had seized two villages in the Donetsk region.

Russian forces have been advancing very slowly, and at great cost, in eastern Ukraine and now control about 20% of Ukraine's territory.

A full-scale invasion of Ukraine was launched by Russia in February 2022.

There has been intense diplomacy over the war this month, with US President Donald Trump meeting his Russian counterpart President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on 15 August.

The summit was billed as a vital step towards peace in Ukraine. However, despite both leaders claiming the talks were a success, Trump has since shown growing frustration publicly over the lack of a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine.

The US president has said he is considering either hitting Russia with further economic sanctions or walking away from peace talks.

"I'm going to make a decision as to what we do and it's going to be, it's going to be a very important decision, and that's whether or not it's massive sanctions or massive tariffs or both, or we do nothing and say it's your fight," Trump said on Friday.

Zelensky has repeatedly called for an unconditional ceasefire and his European allies have also insisted on a halt in fighting.

He has accused Russia of "doing everything it can" to prevent a meeting with Putin to try to end the war.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Putin was ready to meet Ukraine's leader "when the agenda is ready for a summit, and this agenda is not ready at all", accusing Zelensky of saying "no to everything". (BBC)



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Antiguans made winning start at ECCB International Netball Series



Players of Antigua and Barbuda (mostly red uniform) and Anguilla compete during their opening match at the 2025 ECCB International Netball Series in St. George's, Grenada, on Saturday, August 23, 2025. (ECCB)

Antigua and Barbuda made a winning start to the Fifth Annual Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) International Netball Series, which is being hosted in Grenada at the Tanteen Sports Complex in St. George's from August 23 to 30.

Following a welcoming reception at the Point Salines Hotel on Friday, Antigua and Barbuda launched their campaign with a commanding 63-17 victory against Anguilla in one

of only two matches that were completed on a rain-affected opening day on Saturday.

Host Grenada prevailed 65-43 against the Commonwealth of Dominica in the other completed opening day encounter.

But the other two opening-day matches were interrupted by rain. Defending champions Grenada were leading Guyana 41-10 when rain brought a halt to the encounter.

St. Lucia were enjoy-

ing a commanding 35-5 advantage over Montserrat when the rain also came and stopped the encounter. Rain in Grenada also affected matches on the second day of the tournament in which Antigua and Barbuda were slated to face Guyana.

Antigua and Barbuda is among seven ECCB member countries that are participating in the tournament. The others are Anguilla, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada,

Montserrat, St. Lucia, and defending champions St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which won last year's championship in St. Lucia.

Barbados, the Cayman Islands, and Guyana are also participating in the tournament as invited teams.

The opening and closing ceremonies and all matches are being streamed live on the ECCB Connects Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Antiguans finish last at Americas Zone Group III of Billie Jean King Cup



The Antigua and Barbuda's team that is competing in the Americas Zone Group III of the 2025 Billy Jean King Cup in Santa Tecla, El Salvador. (File photo)

Antigua and Barbuda finished in last place in the Americas Zone Group III of the 2025 Billie Jean King Cup in Santa Tecla, El Salvador.

Antigua and Barbuda, represented by a four-member squad at the August 18 to 23 women's team tournament, ended their campaign with a 2-1 loss to Suriname in their playoff for 10th place on Thursday.

Jill Ma-Ajong gave Suriname the lead with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Antigua's Isoke Perry in the first singles. Jolie George-Alexander defeated Faith Bab 6-1, 6-0 in the second singles to draw Antigua level.

But the combination of Kayla Currie

and Anouk Ma-Ajong clinched the tie for Suriname by prevailing 6-1, 6-3 in the doubles against the Antiguan pair of Jolie George-Alexander and Ariel Naomi Kelsick.

Antigua and Barbuda also finished winless and last in their four-team Group C after suffering a 2-1 defeat against the United States (US) Virgin Islands in the final encounter in round-robin pool play.

Isoke Perry gave Antigua and Barbuda the lead with a 6-2, 6-3 victory against Stefani Catazano in the first singles. But the US Virgin Islands hit back to win the other two matches to clinch the tie.

Malena Del Olmo prevailed 2-6, 6-2, 6-1 against Antigua's Ariel Naomi Kelsick in the second singles. Del Olmo partnered with Lisa Messier to crush the Antiguan duo of Jolie George-Alexander and Janae George 6-1, 6-1 in the doubles.

The Antiguan lost their first two matches in Group C, suffering 3-0 losses to host El Salvador and Cuba.

Meanwhile, Group B winners, the Bahamas, and Group A winners, Uruguay, finished as the top two sides in the 11-team tournament and gained promotion to compete in Americas Group II of the Billie Jean King Cup in 2026. The remaining nine teams will remain in the Americas Zone Group III for next year.

The Bahamas finished as winners of the Americas Zone Group III tournament after winning the promotional playoffs among the three preliminary group winners.

The Bahamas recorded 2-1 wins against Uruguay and Group C winners El Salvador. Uruguay prevailed 2-1 against El Salvador, who finished overall in third place.

Cuba finished in fourth place by winning their two matches in their three-team positional playoffs. The Cubans claimed 2-1 wins against Jamaica and St. Lucia.

Jamaica finished in fifth place by pulling off a 2-1 win against St. Lucia, who finished overall in sixth place.

Trinidad and Tobago finished in seventh place by virtue of winning their two matches in their three-team positional playoffs. The Trinidadians pulled off 2-1 wins against Panama and the US Virgin Islands. Panama secured eighth place with a crushing 3-0 victory over the US Virgin Islands, who finished overall in ninth place.

Leewards finish second at regional U-17 tournament two-day contest



Barbados retains the title after winning the 2025 Cricket West Indies (CWI) Rising Stars Boys' Under-17 regional two-day championship in Trinidad on Thursday, August 21, 2025. (CWI Media)

The Leeward Islands Tropical Wave clinched the runners-up spot behind back-to-back champions Barbados in the two-day competition of the 2025 Cricket West Indies (CWI) Rising Stars Boys' Under-17 regional tournament in Trinidad and Tobago on Thursday.

The Leeward Islands ended the two-day competition with a commanding eight-wicket victory against Guyana on the final day of their third-round match at Inshan Ali Park in

Preysal.

Set 100 to win, the Leewards achieved victory at 103 for two off 25.2 overs. Captain Tanez Francis of Antigua struck 64, and Kunal Tilokani hit 22 not out.

Guyana were dismissed for 129 in 56.2 overs in their second innings. Adrian Hetmyer struck 28, Shamar Apple hit 25, and Dave Mohabir scored 24. Leg-spinner Jathan Edward bagged three for 29, Kasim Challenger took three for 31, and Tilokani claimed

two for 38.

Guyana fell for 124 in 35.4 overs in their first innings after winning the toss and opting to bat. Mohabir scored 32, and Apple struck 23. Edward grabbed four for 35, Antiguan pacer Tayari Tonge claimed two for 18, and Tilokani captured two for 30.

In reply, the Leewards made 154 in 34.2 overs. Lawshorn Bergan hit 38 not out, Eirette Richards struck 21, and Antiguan J'Quan Athanaze scored 20. Parmeshwar Ram

claimed three for 22, and Feaaz Baksh captured three for 47.

Barbados retained the two-day title with a comprehensive 10-wicket win against the Windward Islands in their third-round match at the Queen's Park Oval.

Trinidad and Tobago finished in third place with a 10-wicket win against Jamaica in their third-round match at the NCC in Couva.

Windies women step up preparations at camp in Antigua



A player participates in a catching drill during the high-performance training camp at the Coolidge Cricket Ground. (CWI Media)

The West Indies Women's cricket team have just concluded an intensive high-performance training block at the Coolidge Cricket Ground (CCC), as Cricket West Indies (CWI) ramps up its investment in developing the women's game across the region.

The Antigua camp was designed in two phases to maximize opportunities for training. The first group of players concluded a two-week programme earlier this month, while the second group completed their training period this past week under the watchful eyes of their coaching staff, including Senior Women's Head Coach Shane Deitz, assistant Ryan Austin and pathway coach Ulric Batson.

The sessions were carefully designed to cover all aspects of the modern game, from refining technical skills and tactical awareness, to enhancing

physical conditioning and sharpening mental aptitude.

With major international fixtures on the horizon, this training camp was seen as a crucial part of CWI's long-term strategy to consistently elevate the women's programme to world-class levels.

The training push in Antigua runs in tandem with CWI's broader development initiatives, including a partnership with the Super Kings Academy in Chennai, India, where 15 promising players are currently honing their skills in a professional high-performance environment.

Senior Women's Head Coach Shane Deitz shared his rationale for hosting the developmental camp.

"We had a mixture of established players, new players and fringe players

come to Antigua for the last 5 weeks. It's been great to be able to focus on some fundamental technical work and some strength and conditioning work. We were also able to conduct fitness testing and have already seen some improvements in a short space of time.

"Hector Martinez our Strength and Conditioning Coach has been pushing the players, and they are responding very positively. The girls will head to the WCPL now and after the end of that tournament we will have an intense few months of training which will prepare us for a very important 2026."

Looking ahead to next year, the West Indies Women face a demanding calendar headlined by the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in England, a home series against Sri Lanka and Australia, as well as an away assignment in Ireland.

Knight Riders claim 18-run win against St. Lucia Kings in CPL



Players of the Trinbago Knight Riders celebrate after off-spinner Usman Tariq, second right, picked up a wicket against the St. Lucia Kings in their CPL match at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground in Gros Islet, St. Lucia, on Saturday, August 23, 2025. (CPL/Getty Images)

The Trinbago Knight Riders chalk up a hard-fought victory over host and defending champions St. Lucia Kings by 18 runs in the Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League (CPL) at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground in Gros Islet on Saturday.

The Knight Riders made 183 for seven off their 20 overs after David Wiese won the toss for the Kings and elected to field first. The Kings made a good attempt in the run chase but eventually fell short as they were restricted to 165 for six off their 20 overs.

Player of the match Ki-

eron Pollard inflicted the real damage with a blistering 65 off 29 balls, clearing the ropes with six sixes and four fours to propel the Knight Riders to a competitive total.

Opener Colin Munro continued his good batting form, smashing 43 off 30 balls, including five fours and a six, during a 47-run opening stand with Alex Hales, who scored 10.

The Knight Riders captain Nicholas Pooran compiled a calm 34 off 30 balls, while medium pacer Keon Gaston captured two for 38.

After managing to stay in

the hunt with the bat, Kings needed an improbable 29 runs off the final over to snatch victory.

Hopes were raised of an unlikely victory against the odds when Ackeem Auguste, who hit an unbeaten 20 off nine balls, duly launched Andre Russell's first delivery over long on for six.

But Russell had the last laugh, conceding just four more runs and picking up the wicket of Delano Potgieter for 24. Johnson Charles and Tim Seifert gave the Kings a solid start with a 74-run opening stand.

Charles hit a top score of 47 off 37 balls, including four fours and three sixes, while Seifert made 35 off 24 balls, with two sixes and two fours.

Off-spinner Usman Tariq picked up two for 20, and Russell captured two for 38.

The Knight Riders pulled off the win in Kings' own backyard to head up to third position in the CPL table, while the home side suffered their first loss of the competition to go with their abandoned first match, which sees them one place above the Barbados Royals at the foot of the table.



The Falcons batsman Karima Gore, second left, is congratulated by the Patriots' Ashmead Nedd, left, after leading his team to victory in their CPL match at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Sunday, August 24, 2025.

Con't from page 26

fourth place on four points after slumping to their fourth defeat in six encounters.

The Antigua Falcons suffered an 83-run defeat against former champions Guyana Amazon Warriors in their penultimate home game at the same venue on Friday.

The win sees the Warriors move into second position behind the Falcons on the table, but Imran Tahir's side have impressed with two wins in as many games.

It was the Warriors' skip-

per who scooped the player of the match award with a scintillating haul of five for 21 as the Falcons were bundled out for 128 in 15.2 overs in reply to Guyana's imposing 211 for three off their 20 overs.

For the first time in the competition, the side winning the toss decided to set the tone and bat first on a damp night at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

After a delay of 54 minutes for rain, the Warriors set about slamming the boundaries and building an intimidating total.

Shai Hope and Shimron

Hetmyer showed their class with the bat once more with a 106-run third-wicket partnership in 44 balls. Hope top-scored with a classy 82 off 54 balls, including six fours and five sixes.

Hetmyer opened his shoulders in destructive fashion, hitting an unbeaten 65 off 26 balls that included five fours and five sixes.

Romario Sheppard finished the onslaught with 25 not out off eight balls, while Kevlon Anderson chipped in with 22 off 25 balls.

It was always going to be a tricky chase, but the Falcons got off to a fast start through

Rahkeem Cornwall (10 off three balls) and in-form batter Karima Gore (31 off 14), but neither could stay at the crease and do any real damage.

Tahir then stepped up to weave his web; after a double wicket maiden to start, he never looked back, pocketing the best T20 bowling figures of his storied career to win the match for his side.

Bevon Jacobs struggled to make 26 off 25 balls, and Fabian Allen chipped in with 22 off 20 balls. Sheppard picked up two for 16, and Dwaine Pretorius captured two for 44

Falcons end CPL's home-campaign with victory over the Patriots



The Falcons left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan, right, celebrates with wicketkeeper Andries Gous, second right, after capturing one of his wickets in the CPL match against the St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Sunday, August 24, 2025. (CPL/Getty Images)

The Antigua and Barbuda Falcons wrapped up their home matches in the Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League (CPL) with a seven-wicket victory against the St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium on Sunday.

After restricting the Patriots to 133 for nine off their 20 overs, Karima Gore notched up his third half-century in this year's

tournament to lead the Falcons to their third win in six matches at 137 for three in 19.4 overs.

Gore struck an unbeaten 52 off 47 balls, including three fours and two sixes. Opener Jewel Andrew scored a run-a-ball 28, player of the match Shakib Al Hasan cracked 25 off 18 balls, and Rahkeem Cornwall scored 16 off 13 balls.

The Patriots struggled to get any momentum in their innings from the start after losing the toss and being asked to bat first. Opener Evin Lewis top-scored with 32 off 31 balls, including three sixes and a four.

Muhammad Rizwan chipped in with 30 off 26 balls, Kyle Myers scored 18 off 13 balls, and opener Andre Fletcher contributed 16 off 15 balls.

Left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan snapped up three for 11 to reach 500 wickets in T20 cricket, and the Patriots also had the misfortune of suffering three run-outs during their innings.

The result allows the Falcons to remain at the top of the standings with seven points from six matches. The Patriots remain in

Con't on page 25