

# Carnival is reaping the fruits of years of hard work

*Story on Page 2*





# Local News

## Festivals Commission chair 'non-committal' about returning the pageants to Carnival Week



time for other Carnival participants,” she explained.

Additionally, Makhoul revealed that there are growing demands by private promoters for access to the stage and grounds during the final Carnival week to host their events.

When it was suggested that **official Carnival** events should take priority over ‘private events’, Makhoul indicated that she will refer the matter to the Festival Commission for it to consider and to make a final determination.

This year the Teenage Pageant was held on July 19 with the Queen of Carnival show taking place on July 20. The suggestion is that both shows would have had much larger audiences had they been placed within the final Carnival Week.

Chair of the National Festivals Commission, Ambassador Elizabeth Makhoul, is non-committal when asked to share her thoughts on the return of the Queen of Carnival and the Teenage Pageant to the final week of Carnival when all the major shows take place.

Speaking with Point Express at Wednesday’s Prize Giving ceremony, Makhoul said there were several reasons why the pageants were removed from the programme and placed outside the Carnival final week.

However, there is a view by many in the society that since there is no longer the Jaycees Queen show for which Miss Antigua and Barbuda Carnival winner was expected to need extra time to prepare, the main rationale for having the Pageant take place earlier in July no longer exists.

Makhoul explained that the pageants require much time to utilize the Carnival stage for rehearsals to the extent that other participants from other shows are left with little rehearsal time. “Having the pageants take place earlier therefore frees up rehearsal

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## Carnival is reaping the fruits of years of hard work



Minister of the Creative Industries, Daryll Matthews, is expressing much satisfaction with what he termed ‘a very successful’ Carnival 2025 noting that the festival is now at a stage where it is reaping the rewards of years of hard working and planning.

The minister spoke with Point Express Newspaper at Wednesday’s Prize Giving ceremony held at the John E. St. Luce Conference Centre.

“I am quite pleased with Carnival 2025, a lot of work went into the Carnival product over the last few years and we are now beginning to see the results of all that hard work. That hard work involved collaborations with different government entities such as the Tourism Authority as well as our media and our corporate partners. It required a collaborative effort and

a ‘buy-in’ from Antiguan and Barbudans into this festival. It came together nicely this year; our music was on point, our pageantry was there, the support from the public was there as we saw record turnouts at most of our events and I think overall Carnival 2025 was a tremendous success,” he declared.

Asked what stood out for him about Carnival ’25, Minister Matthews said the participation of the people of Antigua and Barbuda. He said it became obvious to him when he saw the turnout at the Calypso Semi-Finals. “Calypso Semi-Finals is not a place that you would expect to see a large turnout, however, this year we did it as a ‘cooler-fete’ as we had done for the Party Monarch semis and the numbers were shocking to me,” he reported.

The minister noted that it has become the norm to

see large turnout for shows such as the Melting Pot, but he was pleasantly surprised this year with the support which the Calypso Monarch competition received, which signals to him that ‘Calypso is alive and well’.

Already the dates for Carnival 2026 have been released with the minister announcing that ‘the vibe continues’ with the Festivals Commission already in place to begin the work off planning next year’s events.





# One Year later...LIAT Air continues to 'spread its wings'



Liat Air, the Antigua and Barbuda-based regional airline, is observing its first year of operations as it seeks to become the regional airline of choice for Caribbean travelers.

Liat Air, which recently had a name change from Liat 20, emerged out of the ashes of LIAT (1974) Ltd. the then regionally owned airline that had its wings clipped permanently by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister Gaston Browne urged his regional counterparts to take remedial action to keep the airline flying, but the other shareholder governments – Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica – felt that they had invested enough money into the airline over many years and that their respective publics felt that 'enough was enough'; it was time to let LIAT (1974) Ltd. die a natural death.

Antigua and Barbuda then decided to go it alone. It made the initial investments into the new airline and then (firstly) sought regional, then international partners. It was the Nigerian airline, Air Peace, that decided to become a partner. It invested millions into LIAT 2020, (the corpo-

rate name of the airline) as well as provide equipment to the new airline including two ATR jets.

Since it began operations a year ago, Liat Air has commenced regular

ami and mainland Africa by the new year.

Recently, a local company owned by Colombian interests have signed a memorandum of understanding with



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flights into thirteen Caribbean destinations; from Jamaica in the north to Guyana in the south and many in between.

Airline officials now are eyeing non-regional routes to perhaps Mi-

Liat Air to operate weekly charters into Colombia starting in September. There is a ready market for travelers to Colombia for health reasons.



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# PM Browne: China has been there for us!

*In Wednesday's edition of Point Express the wrong photo was carried with the article but captioned Ambassador Madame Zhang Yamling for which we profusely apologize. We have therefore reprinted the article with the correct photo of Ambassador Zhang*



**Ambassador Zhang Yanling with Prime Minister Gaston Browne**

In a significant reaffirmation of the longstanding diplomatic relationship, the Governments of Antigua and Barbuda and the People's Republic of China on Friday formalized two major agreements—cementing financial and technical support for national development and sustainable economic growth.

The agreements, signed and exchanged in a formal ceremony attended by Prime Minister the Hon. Gaston Browne and Her Excellency Madame Zhang Yanling, Chinese Ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda, include:

- A \$14 million USD grant for socioeconomic and infrastructure development, and

- A technical cooperation agreement to conduct a feasibility study on Antigua and Barbuda's Blue Economy potential.

In his address, Prime Minister Browne praised China as one of Antigua and Barbuda's "most reliable and generous development partners," noting that this latest grant brings the total value of Chinese-supported development assistance close to \$1 billion USD over several decades.

"China has been there for us—quietly, respectfully, and consistently," PM Browne stated. "From climate resilience and renewable energy to education, infrastructure, and health-care—China has played a

central role in building our capacity and lifting our people."

The Prime Minister emphasized that the newly signed US\$14 million grant will directly support critical projects including the replacement of aging water pipes, an area of urgent national priority due to frequent disruptions. Other ongoing collaborations mentioned include housing developments in Booby Alley and Jennings, agricultural initiatives, and solar energy infrastructure.

Ambassador Zhang Yanling highlighted the broader vision of China's engagement with Antigua and Barbuda, characterizing the partnership as a model of mutual

respect, equality, and shared benefit.

"This agreement is more than symbolic—it marks the beginning of a new phase of implementation," she said. "Our cooperation is aligned with the outcomes of the recent China-CELAC Ministerial Forum, and contributes to our shared aspirations for peace, connectivity, and sustainable development."

She noted that the agreements are tangible outcomes of high-level discussions between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Browne, and reflect China's commitment to supporting Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in their pursuit of resilience and economic diversification.

One of the signed agreements will initiate a feasibility study on Antigua and Barbuda's Blue Economy, with the support of Chinese technical experts. The initiative seeks to identify pathways for economic growth through the sustainable use of ocean and coastal resources—positioning Antigua and Barbuda as a regional leader in marine-based development. Prime Minister Browne welcomed this, stating:

"This study will help us unlock the untapped value of our marine ecosystems and create new opportunities in aquaculture, eco-tourism, and marine research—areas that are vital for our long-



term sustainability.”

Prime Minister Browne also spoke candidly about China’s unique position on the global stage and praised its role in providing development financing that surpasses even multilateral institutions like the World Bank.

“Unlike others, China doesn’t ask us to take sides in geopolitical conflicts,” Browne said. “They respect our sovereignty and support our development based on solidarity, not strings.”

He reaffirmed Antigua and Barbuda’s commitment to China as a “reliable and principled partner”, adding that his government is willing to serve as an honest broker in global diplomacy to foster peace, particularly amid rising tensions between global powers.

“Geopolitical conflicts don’t create value—they destroy it,” he said. “We suffer the consequences disproportionately, which is why we advocate for peace and prosperity for all.”

The ceremony concluded with a strong message of unity and optimism, as both leaders committed to nurturing their countries’ bilateral relationship.

“Our philosophy is one of resilient prosperity,” PM Browne said. “With China’s help, we continue to expand our socio-economic infrastructure and improve the lives of our people.”

Ambassador Zhang affirmed China’s commitment to building a “shared future” with Antigua and Barbuda and reiterated her confidence that the cooperation will yield transformational outcomes in the years ahead.



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# Ministry of Works Refutes Misinformation Circulated by “The People’s Union”

## Press Statement

The Ministry of Works categorically refutes the misinformation being circulated by Mr. Ralph Potter, President of “The People’s Union,” regarding an alleged dispute over employee representation and workplace concerns at the Ministry. The Ministry remains committed to upholding workers’ rights in accordance with the Labour Code, Collective Bargaining Agreements, and established legal protocols, while ensuring the efficient delivery of critical government services.

Recent reports and statements by Mr. Potter have inaccurately portrayed the Ministry’s actions as “unlawful” and dismissive of workers’ concerns. These claims stem from an unplanned visit and subsequent unlawful industrial action on August 1, 2025, initiated by Mr. Potter and representatives of “The People’s Union.” The Ministry wishes to set the record straight based on the facts:

The Antigua Trades and Labour Union (AT&LU) is the legally recognized collective bargaining agent for non-established government employees, including security personnel at the Ministry of Works. No formal notice has been received indicating any transition of this role to “The People’s Union” or any other entity.

On July 31, 2025, Mr. Potter requested an urgent meeting



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via WhatsApp for August 1, 2025, at 9:00 AM to discuss general matters related to security personnel. The Permanent Secretary, Mr. Sean Cenac, responded promptly on the morning of August 1, informing Mr. Potter that he had been fully briefed on the issues, that AT&LU had already met with all security personnel, and that a structured meeting with management was scheduled to address concerns in collaboration with the recognized bargaining agent.

Despite this response, an unlawful industrial action was staged outside the Ministry’s headquarters on August 1, 2025, based on the false claim that workers were being mistreated. In reality, the Ministry is actively working to improve security services fairly and efficiently, as mandated for critical government institutions.

The Ministry acknowledges that “The People’s Union” represents two specific

non-established workers and respects this formal arrangement. Matters related to these individuals are handled accordingly. However, broader issues affecting security personnel are being addressed through the established channels with AT&LU, in line with the Labour Code and Collective Bargaining Agreement.

On August 1, 2025, the Permanent Secretary met with AT&LU representatives to quell the illegal industrial action, reconfirm the Ministry’s commitment to ongoing discussions, and collaboratively resolve workers’ concerns—such as uniforms, supervision, and fair treatment—while preserving the Ministry’s responsibility to ensure efficient operations.

Mr. Sean Cenac, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Works, stated: “We regret the disruption caused by this unlawful action, which appears to be based on incomplete and inaccurate in-

formation. The Ministry is fully committed to our obligations under the law, and is actively engaged in a live, ongoing process with the recognized bargaining agent to assess and resolve all issues. We invite clarification from the Office of the Honourable Attorney General and the Labour Commissioner on any expanded role for ‘The People’s Union,’ but we view attempts to insert unauthorized representation as premature, disruptive, and undermining of established collaborative efforts. Rest assured, we remain committed to the best arrangements for government security objectives while preserving workers’ rights.”

The Ministry emphasizes that employees are free to seek representation in accordance with the law, but employers are duty-bound to engage through recognized channels to avoid chaos and ensure fairness. Claims of contradictions or disrespect in communications are unfounded; the Permanent Secretary has maintained open lines with Mr. Potter on prior matters and responded appropriately to the recent request.

The Ministry calls on all parties to respect legal processes and collaborate positively to support our workers and the public. We will continue to work with AT&LU and relevant authorities to address legitimate concerns swiftly and transparently.



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## Clarification on the matter involving security officers employed by Public Works



The Antigua and Barbuda Trades & Labour Union (AT&LU) wishes to bring clarification to the matter involving the security officers at Public Works.

On 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025 a delegation of security officers from the Public Works met with Industrial Relations Officers of AT&LU, to include the General Secretary. These workers expressed several grievances in relation to their Department.

Having heard from the delegation it was agreed that the first course of action was for the Union to meet with the all of the security officers in that Department. Consequently, meetings were arranged for 24<sup>th</sup> July, 7:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. respectively, at the Public Works Head Office. The purpose of the two meetings was to accommodate the various shifts thus ensuring that every security officer was afforded an opportunity to attend and air his/her views.

The meetings were well attended and the AT&LU recorded the grievances, to include matters concerning: *health and safety; remuneration; uniform; procedural issues; and the person appointed to the position of senior supervisor for that Department.*

The day following the meeting (25<sup>th</sup> July) the AT&LU contacted the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of

Works to arrange a meeting to discuss the grievances expressed by the security officers. The Permanent Secretary agreed to meet with the AT&LU to discuss these matters but also requested an opportunity for him and his team to conduct internal investigations into some of the matters before the meeting. The AT&LU accepted the Permanent Secretary's request since it was not unreasonable.

Five (5) business days later a few security officers (approximately 20 in total) whether coerced or uncoerced decided to engage in protest action by withholding their labour, supported by the People's Union. This protest action was without the knowledge or consent of the AT&LU.

Having learned of the protest action from several Security officers who had decided not to participate in such activity, the AT&LU arrived at Public Works and dialogued with the protesting workers. From the discussion it was clear that the protest action was as a result of the same grievances previously expressed, with the main issue being the appointee to the position of senior supervisor.

Notwithstanding, the previous agreement with the Permanent Secretary, the AT&LU decided to reach out the PS Cenac once again in light of the protest action. Recognizing that the AT&LU had previously reached out on these matters, the Permanent Secretary agreed to meet with the AT&LU Officers and a representative of the se-


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# Local News

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curity officers upon his arrival to Public Works.

From that meeting a framework was established to address grievances, to include the grievance of the security officers. The framework included but not limited to *investigating allegations made by security officers relating to the person appointed to the post of senior supervisor; a joint meeting between security officers, AT&LU and senior officers of the Public Works to include the Permanent Secretary.*

The AT&LU was also able to get the Management of Public Works to agree to full payment for the security officers who were engaged in protest action notwithstanding their decision to withhold their labour.

After the meeting the AT&LU addressed the protesting workers who subsequently ceased their action. The representatives of the People's Union were not present at that time.

As expressed by the AT&LU to the protesting workers, our Union respect the right of workers to take industrial action; provided however, that such action is in accordance with law and good industrial relation practices.

□ The workers had withheld their labour on a day that was the last scheduled workday, before the public holidays (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> August), for some of the security officers. Those security officers were at risk

of losing not only payment for the day of the protest action but also for the public holidays as well;

- The protest action was taken while discussions between the AT&LU and Public Works had already commenced;
- Only the Sole Bargaining Agent is authorized to adjust terms and conditions of employment through the process of negotiations;
- The protesting workers, who are security officers, abandoned their respective post without providing any form of notice of intent to the employer.

The protesting security officers informed the AT&LU that they had not been advised by the People's Union, of the consequences of their action, especially the fact that they could have loss pay for the day of the protest and the public holidays.

While the competitive nature of trade unions in Antigua and Barbuda is a reality, the AT&LU believes that trade unions must, at all times, operate with high ethical standards, putting the workers interest before the trade union's personal aspiration to gain membership by whatever means. Further, the trade union has an obligation to ensure that workers are fully aware of the consequences of their actions and safeguard workers against engaging in any act that could be harmful to them or their goals.

The AT&LU always endeavours to operate in a professional and responsible manner in pursuit of its core mandate to protect and advocate for the rights of workers. In doing so we will always ensure that the actions of workers while pursuing their goals are not detrimental to themselves or the goals being pursued.



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# Local News

## Yachting association unveils marine and yachting calendar for the upcoming year

The Antigua and Barbuda Yachting and Marine Association (ABYMA) is unveiling its calendar of marine and yachting events for the upcoming year in Antigua and Barbuda. Supported by the Ministry of Tourism and working within the UNESCO designated National Parks of Antigua and Barbuda, and with its team for many of the events, it is an enviable array of activities encompassing sailing, rowing, fishing, and more, and promises to be one of the most vibrant year yet.

Significantly, the iconic RORC Transatlantic Race will commence on January 11, 2026, from Lanzarote, marking an historic shift as the race makes its way directly to Antigua, rather than its traditional starting point in Grenada. Alongside existing feeder events of the World's Toughest Row and the Salty Dawgs Rally as well as must-attend Antigua Charter Yacht Show, the season will be off to a phenomenal start.

International racing

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The inaugural Mini Globe Race will hold its prize-giving ceremony in March to celebrate the return of the 19-foot sailboats that circum-navigated the globe, starting from Antigua. The boats are just over half way round at this point, and currently sailing between Fiji and

South Africa.

The Antigua Yacht Club is introducing several invigorating events designed to enhance club racing, with highlights including the RS Elite Small Keelboat Regatta in January and the Caribbean Dinghy Championships, set to take place in October in Antigua.

Franklyn Braithwaite, President of the Antigua and Barbuda Yachting and Marine Association, states, "With all the changes to the calendar this year, it reinforces Antigua's strength in the yachting market as the heart of Caribbean sailing. We look forward to seeing our many long-time friends along with new visitors throughout the year."

The ABYMA is also excited to present the industry to the youth and interested adults of Antigua and Barbuda in order to engage them in opportunities within the yachting industry. The 4th Annual Discover Yachting & Marine will take place from 8-9th October, the main goal of enticing them to consider non traditional career avenues upon graduation,



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

# Local News

## Two people charged with illegal firearms/ammunition possession have been remanded to HMP

The case involving three young persons who have been charged with the illegal possession of firearms/ammunition opened in the magistrate's court on Wednesday.

However, during the proceedings, the prosecution informed the court that it was dropping the charges against one of the three persons, 19-year old Taliek Aska. This generally means that there was not sufficient evidence to link him with the crime.

The case against the other two - 30-year-old Daquan George and 27-year-old Tanesha Martin - is continuing. That case has been adjourned until August 13.

Meanwhile, the presiding magistrate ordered both George and Martin to be remanded in His Majesty's



Prison to await their next court appearance.

Attorney Wendel Alexander-Robinson is representing the two accused. Aska was represented by attorney Kenny Kentish.

The court heard that on Wednesday, 31 July 2025, officers attached to the Gang and Guns Suppression Unit (GAGSU) executed a search warrant at a property in Sutherlands, and during the

search, the officers seized a cache of ammunition and firearm-related items, which include: bullets, magazines for a wide variety of firearms.

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# MW MINISTRY OF WORKS AND HOUSING

## Works Ministry cautions drivers about ongoing disruptions to traffic flows

The Ministry of Works' Project Implementation Management Unit (PIMU) is advising the general public that single-lane traffic continues to be in effect to facilitate ongoing road infrastructure repairs on the Sir Sydney Walling Highway.

Road markings and bus lay-by installations will continue this week, from Willikies westwards, starting daily at approximately 8:00 a.m.

On Anchorage Road, a partial road closure will continue between Thursday 7th August, 2025 and Saturday 9th August, 2025 to facilitate asphalt works, concrete works and traffic signs installation. The diversion route remains in effect.

All businesses are remain open.

Flag persons will be employed, and motorists are encouraged to follow all instructions to ensure a cautious and safe passageway, as heavy-duty equipment will be operating near the works.

C.O. Williams Ltd. sincerely regrets the inconvenience. The road work is a part of the Second Road Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project being carried out by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

Stakeholders are asked to adjust their travel plans to allow for delays.

Telephone queries can be made by calling the C.O. Williams Project office at 562-9573.





# Local News

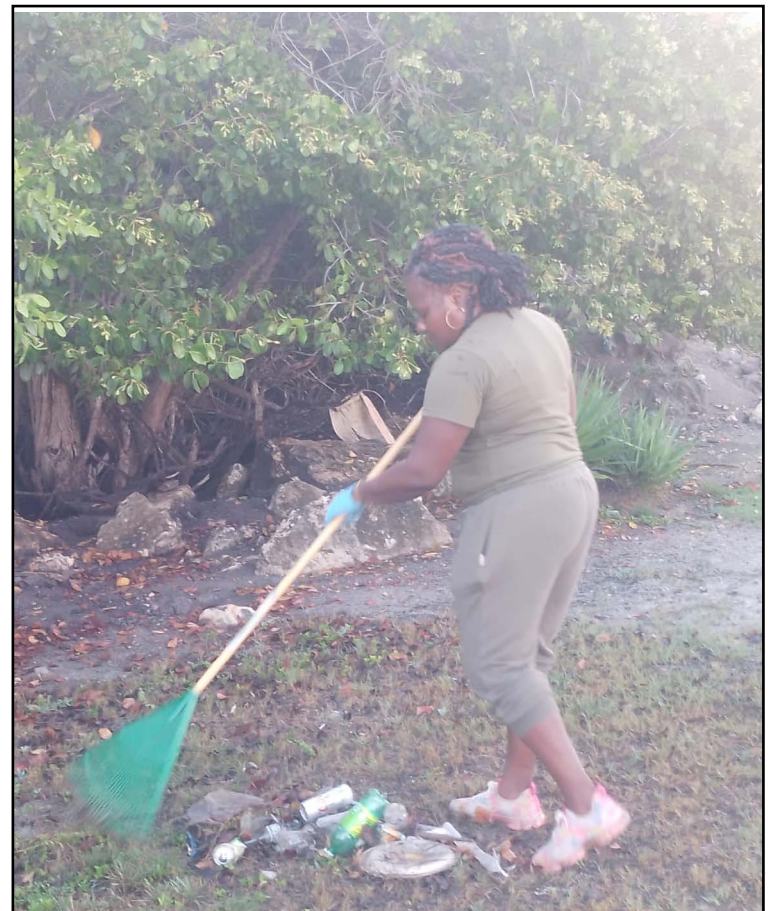
## Bonnietha John tackles littering problem in Barbuda head on



**Littering in Barbuda**



**It may be a solo effort, but Bonnietha John shows that she is committed**



**Bonnietha John embarks on a clean-up campaign**

“Enough is enough, let’s tackle littering in Barbuda,” that the appeal being made by civic activist on the sister isle, Bonnietha John following a recent clean-up operation in Barbuda.

She said there needs to be serious awareness raised about the growing issue of littering on the island of Barbuda.

“It is **not** acceptable or cool for residents or volunteers to constantly clean up after those who deliberately leave their mess behind. This pattern of neglect and disrespect for our environment

cannot continue unchecked. If we allow it, it will only become the norm,” she declared.

According to John it is time for accountability. “The introduction of litter wardens and the enforcement of fines for violators must become a priority. These are not just suggestions. They are necessary actions to protect the beauty and health of Barbuda for present and future generations,” she stated.

John, a recent candidate in the Council elections, is calling for accountability for those who have been

elected to serve the people of Barbuda. She also wants litter wardens to be appointed for Barbuda who will

impose fines against those who wantonly engage in littering.



# CLIMATE CONSCIOUS

RHYME AND RESOLVE: CLIMATE CALLS

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268 Inc

## From Fête to Fresh: A Carnival Rhyme for a Cleaner Time



Our Carnival's magic, it's bright and it's loud,  
 It dances through streets, it gathers a crowd.  
 The colors, the costumes, the laughter, the beat,  
 The joy in the air makes the moment complete.  
 But when music fades and the bands drift away,  
 The streets tell a story of the very next day.

Bottles and wrappers, confetti that's torn—  
 Is this the scene that our children should mourn?  
 A child on the sidelines, eyes wide with delight,  
 Sees dancers and drummers in costumes so bright.  
 Yet also they notice, once fun is all done,  
 The workers who clean under hot morning sun.  
 If every event, from the beach to the school,  
 Teaches "I dirty, they clean"—is that cool?  
 Or should we be raising a cleaner parade,  
 Where pride in our place is the habit we've made?  
 "When celebrations end, let's leave memories, not  
 mess"—

This simple small truth can lead us to success.  
 SDG 12 is the goal that we seek,  
 Responsible choices in all that we tweak.

Bins on the street, both recycling and trash,  
 Cut single-use plastics, let bad habits crash.  
 Let bands take the lead, show the world they can  
 shine,  
 By keeping their revels both clean and divine.  
 For too long the burden has fallen below,  
 On crews working overtime, moving in slow.  
 Our national budget can't carry the weight,

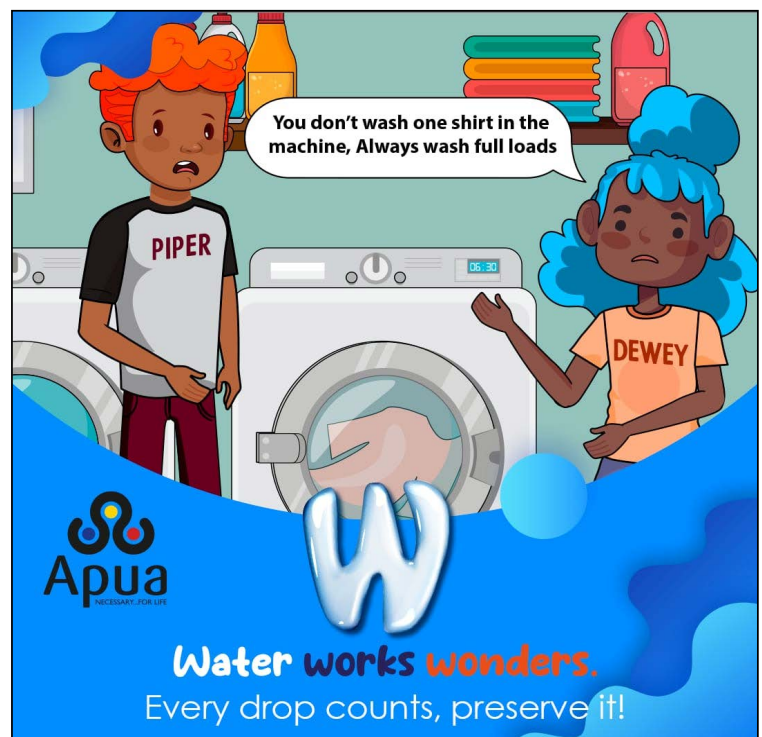
# UNSUNG HERO AWARD

Of cleaning each block from the night's grand fête.  
 It's time for the bands, the events, and the team,  
 To factor in cleanup, to live the clean dream.  
 Not passing the bill to the treasury's door,  
 But taking responsibility—that's what pride's for.  
 Debbie Valentine shared on Facebook one day,  
 Her words paint a picture in a heartfelt way:  
 "I just came from cleaning St. John's and ARG,  
 I'm tired—please pay us, don't wait months to see."

Her voice speaks for many who sweep through the night,  
 Who keep our streets shining till morning's first light.  
 They're more than just cleaners—they're guardians true,  
 Protecting our health and our islands' view.  
 Waste engineers, you're the heroes we cheer,  
 Your work is essential, we hold it sincere.  
 But wouldn't it feel like a festival win,  
 If cleanup crews found there was less to bring in?  
 Waste can be magic—black gold from the ground,  
 When compost and recycling spin things around.

A bottle reborn as a chair or a toy,  
 A can turned to art bringing beauty and joy.  
 So picture a Carnival clean from the start,  
 Where caring for streets is a matter of heart.  
 Where tourists take photos of order and grace,  
 And locals feel proud of their own festive place.  
 We all have a role, from the bands to the crowd,  
 To vendors, to children, let's all say it loud:  
 "A cleaner Carnival is a gift we can give,  
 To the next generation, the way we should live."

Big shout to the crews who have swept and have shined,  
 Your work shows the strength of community's mind.  
 But let's lighten your load for the years still ahead,  
 By keeping the streets clean before we're in bed.  
 The question remains for the season to come:  
 Will we keep up the cycle of cleaning what's done?  
 Or will we rewrite how our festival's seen—  
 A celebration that's joyful and sparkling clean?





## Three Dominicans awarded 2025 Chevening Scholarships



Dominican nationals have been selected for the prestigious Chevening Scholarship for the year 2025. Whitney Mélinard, Christianna Paul, and Austine Bell will pursue postgraduate studies in the United Kingdom under the UK government's global scholarship programme.

Whitney Mélinard, an Indigenous advocate from the Kalinago Territory, will pursue a Master of Science in Policy Research at the University of Bristol. She holds a Bachelor of Science in International Relations with Sociology from the University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus.

Mélinard is the President of Koupounole Inc., soon to be rebranded as the Philz Foundation, a youth- and Indigenous-led organization focused on social and climate justice. Her work

centers on intersectional advocacy, climate resilience, and human rights.

Austin Bell, an economist and financial professional, will study for a Master of Science in Finance and Economics at the University of Warwick. He earned his BSc in Economics and Finance from UWI Cave Hill, where he also served as President of the Dominica Student Association.

Currently employed at the Central Bank of Barbados, Bell conducts research on regional economic challenges. His academic and professional pursuits are aimed at improving economic outcomes for Dominica and the wider Caribbean.

Christianna Paul will pursue a Master of Science in Project Management and Innovation at the University of Strathclyde. She holds a BSc in Entrepreneurship from UWI and is the

founder of WePlanet Inc., a non-profit promoting eco-conscious living through incentive-based solutions.

Paul has served as Evaluation and Partnerships Manager at Island Impact Ltd., supporting grassroots organizations in strategic planning and project development. Her accolades include being a One Young World Ambassador (2024), a Commonwealth Secretary-General's Innovation Award winner (2023), and a participant in multiple international youth forums.

The Chevening Scholarship enables emerging leaders from around the world to study in the UK and build global networks. The selection of Mélinard, Bell, and Paul highlights Dominica's growing presence in international academic and advocacy circles. (Dominica News Online)

## Police investigating whether skeletal remains found in Clarendon are human



The Jamaica Constabulary Force says skeletal remains were discovered on Tuesday in a remote section of Buzz Rock, Effortville in Clarendon.

However, the police say it has not been established whether the remains are of human or animal origin.

Reports from the May Pen police are that at about 11:30 a.m., lawmen were

conducting an operation in the area when they discovered the remains.

The police say due to the terrain, the forensic and fire department personnel are unable to retrieve the remains.

Investigations are ongoing and further information will be provided at an appropriate time, the police say. (Jamaica Gleaner)

# Regional News

## Two more artists added to WCMF lineup for 2025



Masicka, one of dancehall's most consistent hitmakers from Jamaica and American R&B singer Kehlani, will join the line-up for the 25th Edition of the World Creole Music Festival (WCMF) scheduled to take place from October 24 to 26, 2025 at the Windsor Park Sports Stadium.

The special commemorative theme for the event will be: "Global Echoes of the Nature Island: Celebrating 25 Years of Creole Music, Magic, and Memories."

According to a recent press release from the CEO of Discover Dominica Authority (DDA) Marva Williams, this edition highlights a fusion of musical talent and cultural pride, showcasing performances by regional icons, local legends, and international stars over three nights.

**Night One: Fire & Foundation — Friday, October 24**

A tribute to the pioneers and influential figures who have shaped Caribbean music:

- Burning Flames (Antigua)
- Midnight Groovers (Dominica)
- Halibut (Dominica)
- Gilles Fontaine (Dominica)

- Nu Look (Haiti/USA)
- Romain Virgo (Jamaica)
- Oswald (St. Maarten)
- TK International (Dominica)
- Steel Pulse (UK/Jamaica)
- Masicka (Jamaica)

**Night Two: Creole Carnival — Saturday, October 25**

An energetic display of Creole expression and cross-Caribbean vibrancy:

- Asa Bantan (Dominica)
- WCK (Dominica)
- The Bouyon Assembly (Dominica: Rohie, Ridge, Pudaz, Kenny G, Quan, DJ MJ, Little Boy, Faithi "Bouyon Barbie," and Ebony Empress; Guadeloupe: Jixels and Shanika)
- First Serenade Band (Dominica)
- Gordon Henderson (Dominica)
- Ophelia Marie (Dominica)
- Lynford John (Dominica)
- Joé Dwét Filé (Haiti/France)
- Kes The Band (Trinidad & Tobago)
- Spice (Jamaica)
- Vybez Kartel (Jamaica)

**Night Three: The Grand Finale — Sunday, October 26**

A spectacular closing featuring regional icons and international chart-toppers:

- Tiwa Savage (Nigeria)
- Bunji Garlin & Fay-Ann Lyons (Trinidad & Tobago)
- Extasy Band (Dominica)
- Ezra "Da Fun Machine" (St. Lucia)
- Kassav (Guadeloupe & Martinique)
- Michele Henderson (Dominica)
- Elisha Benoit (Dominica)
- Trilla G (Dominica)
- Nice (Dominica)
- Reo (Dominica)
- Shelly & Signal Band (Dominica)
- Kehlani (USA)

The show's Organizers stated:

"The World Creole Music Festival, first held in 1997, has grown into one of the Caribbean's leading cultural events. It celebrates Creole music in all its forms—zouk, bouyon, kompa, reggae, dancehall, soca, afrobeat, and more—while promoting regional unity and artistic innovation.

Fans, visitors and culture enthusiasts are encouraged to plan an extended stay—whether for a few days or a full two weeks—to soak in the festival atmosphere, enjoy fringe events before and after the main stage performances, explore Dominica's breathtaking attractions and experience its warm island hospitality.

For more information and ticket purchases, visit [www.dominicafestivals.com](http://www.dominicafestivals.com) and follow Dominica Festivals on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn for ongoing updates and exclusive festival content." (Dominica News Online)



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## Twenty killed after trucks overturn in Gaza, Hamas-run civil defence says

Twenty people have been killed and more than 30 injured in central Gaza after four trucks overturned on a crowd, the Hamas-run civil defence agency says.

Crowds rushed to the vehicles on a road south east of Deir al-Balah on Tuesday evening. They climbed on top of the trucks, causing the drivers to lose control, local journalists told the BBC.

The area was under Israeli military control and the roads were rugged and dangerous, civil defence agency spokesman Mahmoud Basal said.

The private transport association now operating in Gaza said that 26 commercial trucks entered the territory on Tuesday. Six were looted, and four of those overturned, resulting in deaths and injuries.

Israel announced that it would start to allow the gradual entry of goods into Gaza via the private sector to “increase the volume of aid” entering the enclave while reducing reliance on the UN.

The approved supplies include baby food, fruits, vegetables, hygiene products and basic staples.

The BBC has contacted the Israeli ministry of defence for comment.

Hamas said civilians had been waiting for basic supplies to be delivered via road for weeks. “This often results in desperate crowds swarming the trucks,” its media office said.

Aid trucks have been frequently rushed, leading to chaotic scenes.

In a separate incident on Wednesday, Jordan said Israeli settlers attacked a Gaza-bound aid convoy of 30 trucks and accused Israel of failing to prevent such attacks.



The convoy crossed the Jordanian border and was heading towards Gaza’s Zikim crossing. Settlers blocked the road and pelted the trucks with stones, smashing windscreens.

“This requires a serious Israeli intervention and no leniency in dealing with those who obstruct these convoys,” government spokesman Mohammad al-Momani said.

He added this was the second attack on a Jordanian aid convoy, following a similar incident on Sunday.

On Wednesday the Hamas-run health ministry reported five new deaths as a result of malnutrition, bringing its total to 193 since the start of the war, including 96 children.

More than 100 international aid organisations and human rights groups have warned of mass starvation in Gaza and accuse Israel of impeding the distribution of crucial aid.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister, denies there is starvation in the territory and insists his country is not blocking aid.

Last week, Israel’s military said it would open humanitarian corridors to

allow aid convoys into Gaza following mounting international pressure.

It also announced what it called a “local tactical pause in military activity” for humanitarian purposes in three areas and permitted foreign aid drops.

About 90% of Gaza’s 2.1 million people have been displaced, some repeatedly, and are living in overcrowded and dire conditions.

The UN has repeatedly called for the full and sustained entry of humanitarian supplies, but access remains sporadic and many aid trucks are looted.

Israel insists there are no restrictions on aid deliveries and has repeatedly rejected what it describes as “the false claim of deliberate starvation”.

Israel launched its military offensive in Gaza in response to Hamas’s attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others taken to Gaza as hostages.

At least 61,020 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in Gaza since then, the Hamas-run health ministry says. (BBC News)



## Malawi and Zambia become first targets of U.S. visa bond pilot project



The U.S. Department of State has announced that, beginning August 20, 2025, nationals of Malawi and Zambia will be subject to visa bond requirements under a pilot program established by a Temporary Final Rule (TFR) and authorized by Section 221(g) (3) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The policy is based on B1/B2 visa overstay rates reported in the Department of Homeland Security's Fiscal Year 2023 Overstay Report.

Under the new rule, citizens or nationals traveling on passports issued by Malawi or Zambia who are otherwise eligible for a B1/B2 visitor visa must post a bond in

the amount of \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000. The bond amount will be determined during the visa interview. Applicants must also submit Form I-352, issued by the Department of Homeland Security, and complete payment through the Department of the Treasury's online platform, Pay.gov. This requirement applies regardless of where the visa application is submitted.

Applicants are instructed to submit Form I-352 only after receiving direction from a consular officer. A direct link to Pay.gov will be provided, and applicants are warned not to use third-party websites to post the bond, as the U.S.

Government will not be responsible for any payments made outside official systems. Posting a bond does not guarantee visa issuance, and any fees paid without consular instruction will not be refunded.

Visa holders who have posted a bond must enter and exit the United States through one of three designated ports of entry: Boston Logan International Airport (BOS), John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), or Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD). Failure to comply with this requirement may result in denial of entry or improper registration of departure.

The full bond amount

will be refunded if the visa holder complies with all terms of their nonimmigrant visa status and the conditions outlined in Form I-352 and the Federal Register. The bond will be canceled and refunded automatically in the following cases: timely departure from the United States, non-use of the visa before expiration, or denial of admission at the port of entry.

The Department of Homeland Security will determine whether a visa holder has breached the terms of the bond. The Department of State will refer cases of apparent noncompliance to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for review. Breach determinations may include overstaying the authorized period, remaining in the U.S. without departure, or attempting to adjust immigration status, including seeking asylum.

The pilot program represents a targeted effort to address visa overstay concerns and ensure compliance with U.S. immigration regulations. (Dominica News Online)

## One dead and thousands evacuated as wildfire spreads in France



An elderly woman has died and another person is missing after a massive wildfire swept through parts of southern France, destroying homes and forcing thousands to flee.

The woman died in her home, seven firefighters have also been treated for smoke inhalation and one person is still missing, authorities said. Two people are in hospital, one of whom is in a critical condition.

The blaze broke out on Tuesday near the village of La Ribaute in the Aude region, and has already burned more than 13,000 hectares (50 sq miles) - an area larger than Paris - making it the largest wildfire in France this year.

More than 1,800 firefighters, supported by 500 vehicles, were deployed to the

area.

The main affected villages are Lagrasse, Fabrezan, Tournissan, Coustouge and Saint-Laurent-de-la-Cabrerisse.

Officials say the fire is advancing rapidly, driven by strong winds, dry vegetation and hot summer weather.

Jacques Piraud, mayor of the village of Jonquières, where at least four houses burned, told *Le Monde* that around 80% of the village was burnt.

"It's dramatic. Its black, the trees are completely charred," he said.

Images show blackened, burnt out cars and people sitting on beaches three hours away where thick black clouds were still visible.

"This is a disaster of un-

precedented scale," firefighter spokesman Eric Brocardi told RTL radio.

At least 25 homes have been destroyed and more than 2,500 households are without electricity. Authorities have closed roads across the region and warned it is still too dangerous for residents who fled on Tuesday night to return home.

President Emmanuel Macron expressed his support for firefighters and local officials on X, saying all government resources were being mobilised. He urged residents to follow evacuation orders and exercise "the utmost caution".

Prime Minister François Bayrou is expected to visit the affected area later on Wednesday.

Lucie Roesch, secretary general of the Aude area,

said firefighters were monitoring the fire's perimeter to prevent new outbreaks. She said: "The fire is advancing in an area where all the conditions are ripe for it to progress."

The region has become increasingly vulnerable in recent years due to lower rainfall and the removal of vineyards, which once helped slow the spread of wildfires.

Despite planes dropping water bombs on the flames, Roesch warned the fire "will keep us busy for several days. It's a long-term operation".

A combination of low rainfall, high temperatures and the removal of vineyards - which once helped act as natural firebreaks - has made for worsening fire conditions in Aude.

Scientists have long warned that the Mediterranean's soaring hot and dry summers place the region at high risk of severe wildfires. According to France's emergency management service, nearly 15,000 hectares (57.9 square miles) have burned nationwide this summer in more than 9,000 separate fires. The Aude blaze now accounts for the vast majority of the damage. (BBC News)



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## CWI names Windies squad for ODI series against Pakistan



**Players of the West Indies senior men's cricket team**

Cricket West Indies (CWI) has announced the 15-member squad for the 50-over leg of the white ball home series against Pakistan, set to take place at the iconic Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad.

The series will feature three CG United One-Day Internationals (ODIs) on August 8, 10 and 12.

Hunting a fourth consecutive ODI series win at home, the squad has the nucleus of players who were successful during home series wins against England and Bangladesh to end 2024 as well as the tour of the United Kingdom earlier this year.

The highly anticipated

tour will be the final one of the "Full Ah Energy" home series and provides an opportunity for CWI to focus on building its ODI team ahead of the 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup.

Antiguan pacer Alzarri Joseph has been given an extended rest to continue workload management, while Romario Shepherd makes a return after missing the matches against Ireland and England earlier this year.

Head Coach Daren Sammy is excited for the team to continue the momentum of the last 18 months.

"Pakistan presents a different test and challenge as

we continue our push for automatic qualification for the 2027 World Cup," Sammy said.

"While qualifying is our immediate goal, maintaining a winning mentality and team cohesion is essential for long-term success."

Sammy also added, "The upcoming matches against teams like Pakistan, who are ranked higher, provide crucial opportunities to earn valuable ranking points to improve our standing ahead of the World Cup."

West Indies CG United ODI Squad: Shai Hope (captain), Jewel Andrew, Jediah Blades, Keacy Carty, Ros-ton Chase, Matthew Forde,

Justin Greaves, Amir Jan-goo, Shamar Joseph, Brandon King, Evin Lewis, Gudakesh Motie, Sher-fane Rutherford, Jayden Seales, and Romario Shepherd.

Team Management Unit: Head Coach Daren Sammy, Manager Rawl Lewis, Assistant Coach (batting) Floyd Reifer, Assistant Coach (bowling) Ravi Ram-paul, Assistant Coach (fielding) Rayon Griffith, Physio-therapist Dr. Denis Byam, Strength and Condition-ing Coach Ronald Rogers, Massage Therapist Fitzbert Alleyne, Analyst Avenesh Seetaram, and Content and Media Officer Jerome Foster.



## Wiese named captain of St. Lucia Kings for 2025 CPL campaign



**David Wiese**

St. Lucia Kings head coach Daren Sammy has announced that veteran South African allrounder David Wiese will lead the defending Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League (CPL) champions in the 2025 season.

In a video message posted on social media, Sammy, the franchise's most iconic figure and namesake of the Daren Sammy Stadium, confirmed Wiese's appointment ahead of the team's opening match on August 23 at home in Gros Islet.

"Hello St. Lucia Kings fans, CPL

2025 is almost here and it's time for you to know who will lead us in our title defence of 2025, and it's no other than David Wiese," Sammy declared.

"Someone who's part of the family, who's been with us over a number of years, put in some excellent performances throughout the years. We cannot wait to start our first home game."

Wiese, known for his powerful hitting and crafty seam bowling, has been a consistent contributor for the Kings in recent seasons and played a key role in their historic title win in

2024. His experience and calm leadership have made him a fan favourite and a respected figure in the dressing room.

Sammy also issued a rallying cry to the fans ahead of the new campaign, urging them to turn out in their numbers to support the team and its new captain at the Daren Sammy Stadium, affectionately dubbed "The Blue Fortress" by supporters.

"We know St. Lucia Kings fans are the best fans. You will come out at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground and paint it blue as you support our new captain and the St. Lucia Kings team this season," he said.

"Get your tickets, 23rd, we're looking to see you at home. Let's make it a grand occasion."

Wiese becomes the latest in a line of high-profile leaders for the Kings, who are aiming to become the first team to win back-to-back CPL titles since the Trinbago Knight Riders achieved the feat in 2017 and 2018.

The 2025 CPL will commence with the opening match between St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots and Antigua and Barbuda Falcons at Warner Park in St. Kitts on Thursday, August 14.

The Antigua and Barbuda Falcons will play their first of five home matches at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Northsound against Barbados Royals on Saturday, August 16



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# Sports News

## US Open singles champions will get a record \$5 million in 2025



**The US Open logo is shown on the Arthur Ashe Stadium, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020, in New York. (AP)**

Prize money at the US Open will rise to nearly US\$85 million across all competitions this year, including a record US\$5 million each to the women's and men's singles champions, and total player compensation is jumping 20 percent to US\$90 million, the most in tennis history.

The US Tennis Association announced the payouts Wednesday for the year's last Grand Slam tournament, which begins with the new mixed doubles event and its US\$1 million top check on Aug. 19 and 20. Singles competition starts on a Sunday for

the first time — Aug. 24 — as those brackets expand from 14 days to 15.

The increases at Flushing Meadows — where last year's total compensation was US\$75 million — come as the sport's leading players have been in discussions with each of the four major tournaments in a bid to receive a higher percentage of revenues at the US Open, Wimbledon, French Open, and Australian Open.

Novak Djokovic, Coco Gauff and 2024 US Open champions Aryna Sabalenka and Jannik Sinner were among 20 players who signed a

letter sent to the heads of the four Grand Slam events in March seeking more prize money and a greater say in what they called “decisions that directly impact us.” Since then, some players have held talks with the majors.

The previous high amount for a US Open singles championship was US\$3.85 million in 2019, before decreasing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's US\$5 million check represents a 39 percent hike from last year's US\$3.6 million. The same percentage increase was applied to

the singles runners-up, who get US\$2.5 million each. Semi-finalists will earn US\$1.26 million, a 26 percent rise.

At Wimbledon, which ended last month, prize money went up about seven percent to about US\$73 million at the exchange rate when the All England Club announced its player payments. The singles champions were paid about US\$4 million apiece.

In New York, the winning teams in women's and men's doubles will receive US\$1 million, a new high for those events at the US Open, where total prizes for qualifying are going up to US\$8 million, a 10 percent increase.

The \$85 million in 2025 U.S. Open prize money includes singles, doubles, qualifying and wheelchair events.

Wednesday's news comes after the USTA said in May that its main arena, Arthur Ashe Stadium, would be overhauled as part of an US\$800 million project touted as the “largest single investment” in US Open history.



## Thrilling Women's Copa America final can't hide challenges ahead



**Brazilian players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Women's Copa America final football match between Colombia and Brazil at the Rodrigo Paz Delgado Stadium in Quito, Ecuador, on Saturday, August 2, 2025. (AFP)**

QUITO (Reuters) - The Women's Copa America in Ecuador ended with a thrilling final as Brazil edged Colombia in an eight-goal spectacle to win their ninth title but logistical challenges and half-empty stadiums showed the hurdles that face South American women's football.

Colombia pushed Brazil to the brink in a decider capped by a Marta masterclass as her side won 5-4 in a shootout after a roller-coaster final in Quito had finished 4-4, delivering a level of play organisers hoped to see when the tournament began.

CONMEBOL president Alejandro Dominguez said ahead of the opener, "We are confident that the Copa America in Ecuador will confirm the growth and expansion that South American women's football is currently experiencing."

However, the event faced criticism over facilities from the start when Brazil complained after teams were

forced to warm up in cramped indoor spaces, while Chile forward Yanara Aedo called the lack of VAR in the early rounds "disrespectful."

Widely praised as the best final in the tournament's history, the match drew the highest attendance of the 2025 edition, with the Ecuadorian Football Federation pleased that 23,798 fans turned out at the Estadio Rodrigo Paz Delgado.

Still, that number fell short of filling the 41,575-seat venue, with ESPN reporting that the tournament's average attendance stood at 962 per match before the final.

Media reports also said locals and international visitors were unaware the Women's Copa America was even taking place.

Following Colombia's penalty shootout win over Argentina in the semi-final at the same venue, responses gathered by CNN pointed not to a lack of interest or ticket accessibility

- with prices starting at US\$5 - but a broader failure in promotion.

Tickets only went on sale on July 4, eight days before the opening match, underlining how late planning hurt visibility.

"It's a shame that the tournament has been played here in Ecuador and we don't know about it and the stadiums are empty," a local mother who attended the match with her son told CNN.

The gap between on-field quality and local engagement was also highlighted by the increase in international viewers.

FOX Sports said on Tuesday that 302,000 tuned in to watch the final — up 273 percent from 2022 — making it their most-watched Women's Copa America broadcast. Overall viewership averaged 79,000, a 114 percent jump across the network's two channels.

The first CONMEBOL Women's Nations League kicks off in October, serving as South America's path to the 2027 World Cup, but beyond qualification, the tournament offers a fresh chance to address the off-field issues at the Women's Copa America.

With players already performing at a world-class level, CONMEBOL has the audience and the talent to showcase.

The question is will South America's governing body invest in promotion, infrastructure and planning to match Europe's record-breaking women's Euros, which had their highest-ever attendances this year, while its own stadiums were half empty.



## Mixed fortunes for Antigua in Americas Group IV Davis Cup

Antigua and Barbuda suffered defeat in their second match in the Americas Group IV Davis Cup Competition, which is taking place for the fourth successive year in Trinidad and Tobago from August 4 to 9.

Antigua and Barbuda, which is represented by a four-member team in the 10-team competition, suffered a 3-0 loss against the Bahamas in their second encounter in Pool B at the National Racquet Centre in Tacarigua, Trinidad, on Tuesday.

Donte Armbrister crushed Antiguan Deandre Weeks 6-0, 6-0 in the opening singles.

Antigua and Barbuda's top and only professional player, Jody Maginley, put up a good fight but lost the second singles 3-6, 6-4, 4-6 to Bahamian Denali Nottage.

Armbrister joined Kofi Kyle Bowe to wrap up the match by beating the Antiguan pair of Rodain Shaquan Monelle and Ron Murraine 6-0, 6-2 in the doubles.

The second win in as many matches carries the Bahamas to the top of the standings in Pool B. The Bahamas launched their campaign with a 2-1 victory against Cuba on Monday.



**Antigua and Barbuda's top player Jody Maginley won his opening singles match at this year's Americas Group IV Davis Cup Competition in Trinidad and Tobago. (File photo)**

Antigua and Barbuda made a successful start to their campaign in the competition with a 2-1 victory against Panama in their opening Pool B encounter on Monday.

The Antiguan had to overcome a one-nil deficit after Rodain Shaquan Monelle lost the opening singles 6-1, 6-0 to Chad Valdez of Panama.

But Antigua and Barbu-

da hit back to level the tie, with Jody Maginley beating Guillermo David Rodriguez Pinilla 6-0, 6-3 in the second singles match.

Maginley and Monelle combined forces to clinch victory by ousting Valdez and Pinilla 7-6, 6-0 in the doubles match.

Antigua and Barbuda finished in sixth place in last year's Americas Group IV Davis Cup nine-team competition at the same venue.

This year's Antigua and Barbuda four-member team comprises Jody Maginley, Rodain Shaquan Monelle, DeAndre Weeks, and Ron Murraine.

Cordell Williams Sr. is the team's non-playing captain and coach. Williams is also the president of the Antigua and Barbuda Tennis Association (ABTA).

Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Panama, the United States (US) Virgin Islands, Suriname, and St. Lucia are competing in the men's tournament.

The 10 participating teams are divided into two zones. Antigua and Barbuda are contesting Pool B along with Cuba, Panama, the Bahamas, and Suriname.

Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, the US Virgin Islands, and St. Lucia are contesting Pool A.

The top two teams in each pool will advance to contest promotion play-offs. Nations finishing third and fourth in the pools will compete in positional play-offs.

The two top teams at the end of the competition will be promoted to compete in Americas Group III in 2026.