

PM Browne: Dealers, Officials Colluded in 'Flagrant Breach' of Duty-Free Policy

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Local News



PM Browne Vows Transparency Amid Government Vehicle Scandal

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has pledged to uphold public trust and ensure full transparency in the unfolding controversy over government vehicle purchases, stating that neither he nor any Cabinet minister is implicated in the matter.

Speaking on the Browne and Browne Show on Saturday about what he described as a “flagrant violation” of procurement and duty-free policies, the prime minister said he would not ignore wrongdoing or protect those found culpable.

“Some believe I should just sweep this under the table,” Mr. Browne told listeners. “But to do that would be to violate the trust the people of Antigua and Barbuda have placed in me.”

Prime Minister Browne was quick to clarify that both he and Minister Maria Browne have “no exposure whatsoever” to the irregularities and dismissed suggestions that the minister had instructed



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

anyone to purchase 200 vehicles, saying the claim was “entirely false.”

“We have never bought 100 vehicles in a single year — the most has been around 90, and that includes heavy equipment,” he explained. “So the idea of 200 vehicles being ordered is simply not true.”

It was revealed that approximately 90 vehicles were purchased this year, of which about 30 were returned to local dealerships

once it was discovered that proper Cabinet approval had not been obtained.

The head of government who also holds the portfolio of Finance and Corporate Governance, identified two car dealerships as being under investigation for breaches of procedure and inflated billing. He said some companies had “captured public servants,” exploiting relationships within departments such as Public Works, the Treasury,

and Solid Waste to secure overpriced contracts.

“These business people have embedded themselves in the system,” Browne said. “Invoices were inflated by 300 or 400 percent — and the public servants just turned a blind eye.”

He cited several examples of questionable transactions, including a 2014 Toyota Corolla sold to the government for \$70,000, an amount he described as “outrageous.”

Prime Minister Browne acknowledged that the issue of inflated government contracts and lax oversight is not new, describing it as “endemic” and dating back to prior administrations. He said audits and negotiations have already reduced millions of dollars in questionable claims, including one construction bill cut from \$17 million to \$9 million and other debts under review.

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we find clear criminal activity,” Browne said. “But restitution will be required where government revenues were lost.”

He also addressed alleged abuses of the duty-free vehicle policy, which, in part, assists lower-income citizens purchase affordable used cars. The prime minister said the policy was never intended to enrich car dealers and that past generosity from some ministers had led to excessive waivers of government taxes.

As a corrective measure, Mr. Browne said he centralised all authority to approve duty-free concessions within the Ministry of Finance.

“For the last two years, only the Minister of Finance — that’s me — has the authority to sign duty-free exemptions,” he said. “No one else can waive taxes or duties.”

Browne described the scandal as an opportunity for systemic reform rather than political blame. He said ongoing investigations would continue, emphasising that accountability must extend beyond politicians to the business community.

“The problem with corruption isn’t the ministers,” he declared. “It’s in the business sector — and it’s time we fix it.”

The Prime Minister said he remains committed to cleaning up public procurement, protecting taxpayer funds, and ensuring greater oversight in government operations.

“I say what I mean, and

I mean what I say. This government will not betray the trust of the people of Antigua and Barbuda.”

The prime minister said he had repeatedly instructed former Comptroller of Customs, Raju Boddu, who resigned last week after being in the position for approximately 13 years, to act as his “eyes and ears” in monitoring Customs operations and to alert him if anyone sought to bypass the established duty-free approval process.

“He gave me every commitment that he would ensure there was no abuse of the taxes,” Browne explained. “But what I have

learned in the last week is that he validated numerous unauthorised waivers.”

He revealed on his radio programme that information from multiple sources — including individuals who benefited from the scheme — revealed that one car dealership had effectively been “running a duty-free factory,” processing exemptions without Cabinet approval. He added that a second establishment may also have been involved, though the evidence there is still being gathered.

The prime minister said he personally instructed the first car dealership “to lock down the [duty-free]

factory immediately — and if he [the proprietor] didn’t, I would send the police.” However, it is said that the individual is cooperating.

Mr. Browne outlined how certain customs officers and dealership employees allegedly manipulated the computerised customs system to erase taxes and duties on imported vehicles.

As the probe continues, the prime minister has affirmed that his administration will end the abuse and fix the system with urgency to avoid further breaches. This includes the rotation of senior employees who hold key positions in various departments.





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Prime Minister Says Breach of Confidence Resulted in Boddu's Resignation



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has shed light on the circumstances that led to the resignation of former Comptroller of Customs Raju Boddu, saying the decision stemmed from a serious breach of confidence over alleged irregularities in the processing of duty-free concessions.

Browne said he personally confronted Boddu after receiving reports of questionable authorisations on vehicle purchases.

"He denied any wrongdoing. In fact, he sent me a message saying he was poor, didn't even own a home, and asked if I was accusing him of anything," Browne said. "But I had documents people sent me that bore his signature. When I raised that, he said if he signed anything, it must have been an oversight. I told him it seemed to me to be wilful neglect."

The prime minister said he made it clear to Boddu that he no longer had confidence in his ability to continue in the role but emphasised that the



Raju Boddu

resignation was not forced.

"I told him straight — I'm not asking you to resign. But if you recognise that there was wilful neglect, then you know what to do," Browne explained.

Mr. Bodu was in India when the situation escalated, which subsequently led to his resignation.

"What I can't understand, is how so many warrants could have been missed or validated when they clearly shouldn't have been. That's a massive oversight."

Prime Minister Browne also referenced rumours circulating in the public domain, suggesting that some car dealerships were allegedly offering unauthorised tax waivers in exchange for cash.

"People tell me they go to buy a new car, and when I approve a 25% duty reduction, they're told there's no such thing — that for \$10,000, you can get everything off," Browne said. "That's what has been reported to me."

While stressing that Boddu continues to maintain his innocence, Mr. Browne acknowledged that he may have placed too much faith in the long-serving customs head.

"I take some responsibility," he said. "Maybe I trusted him too much. He fooled me to some extent. Assuming he's guilty — and he insists he isn't — it still means that trust has been broken."

The Prime Minister noted that Boddu, who earns approximately US \$10,000 per month and whose housing is paid by the government, had been recruited under the previous United Progressive Party (UPP) administration.

Unlike other former customs officials, he noted that Boddu had not exhibited signs of lavish living or personal enrichment — a factor that initially reinforced the perception of integrity.

"There was an assumption that he was operating with probity, but that oversight — in quotation marks — shattered the confidence we had in him."

The prime minister stated that the breakdown in trust made it impossible for Boddu to continue leading the Customs Department.

"I told him, how do you expect me to trust you when so many of those warrants were validated?" the Prime Minister said. "That's why he resigned — he recognised that the trust had come to an end."



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Tranquility Park Flooding Prompts Swift Government Action

The government is moving swiftly to install a new drainage system at Tranquility Park Cemetery after sections of the burial ground became flooded during last week's heavy rainfall.

Maurice Merchant, the Government's Director General of Communications, confirmed that Cabinet has been asked to approve funding and authorise immediate work to correct the issue.

Merchant explained that the extraordinary volume of rain—about nine inches in less than 24 hours—was the main cause of the flooding, which led to standing water over several graves.

“No one should be surprised that this has happened,” he said. “The rainfall was unusual. Even people's backyards remained waterlogged far longer than usual.”

He noted that the flooding was a temporary effect of the intense weather, emphasising that the underlying soil type in the area requires better drainage to handle such downpours.

According to Merchant, the Cabinet instructed Minister of Health, Sir Molwyn Joseph, to commence drainage installation immediately. While the specific technology for the system has not yet been finalised, the government has committed to providing the necessary funding and resources to complete the work as soon as possible.

“It was identified that the lack of proper drainage was the cause,” Merchant said. “Because of the soil type there, proper drainage would have been required for such a downpour. Cabinet has directed the minister to move expeditiously to start the process.”

He assured the public that burials at Tranquility Park will continue uninterrupted, despite the temporary waterlogging.

“This does not prevent the continuation of burials at Tranquility Park,” he said. “Similar conditions were ob-



served at St. John's and Valley Church cemeteries following the same rainfall. Once the ground dries, operations will return to normal.”



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SLBMC Granted Essential Stroke Centre Certification

Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) has officially been certified as an Essential Stroke Centre by the World Stroke Organization (WSO)—a landmark recognition that places Antigua and Barbuda on the global map for specialized, high-quality stroke care.

The certification follows a rigorous assessment of the hospital's stroke care systems, clinical protocols, emergency response, and multidisciplinary collaboration. It confirms that SLBMC meets international standards for the rapid diagnosis and treatment of stroke—one of the leading causes of death and disability worldwide.

“This is a defining moment not just for our hospital, but for our nation,” said Dr. Gaden Osborne, Neurologist and Chair of Subspecialty Services at SLBMC, who led the certification effort. “For years, we’ve been working to ensure that patients in Antigua and Barbuda can access timely, evidence-based stroke care without leaving home. This certification validates that



work and inspires us to keep improving.”

Under Dr. Osborne’s leadership, SLBMC’s stroke team has worked tirelessly to strengthen care coordination, training, and community awareness around stroke response.

During the WSO assessment earlier this year, the team faced a real-time test when a patient presented with stroke symptoms just as evaluators were observing the hospital’s systems. The

team’s quick, coordinated, and effective response demonstrated the strength of SLBMC’s protocols in action.

Dr. Shivon Belle-Jarvis, SLBMC’s Medical Director, praised the milestone as “a powerful example of what’s possible when commitment, collaboration, and compassion come together.”

“Stroke care is one of the most time-sensitive areas in medicine,” said Dr. Belle-Jarvis. “This certifica-

tion is proof that our teams are not only capable but prepared—that we can deliver world-class care right here in Antigua and Barbuda when it matters most.”

SLBMC’s designation as an Essential Stroke Centre aligns with the hospital’s ongoing efforts to advance clinical excellence, expand specialized services, and build a resilient, patient-centered health system for Antigua and Barbuda.


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ACB Caribbean Sets Deadline to Address ATM Woes

ACB Caribbean has responded to its customers amidst growing complaints and dissatisfaction about its ATM services.

In recent weeks, complaints have mounted about the inconvenience being experienced over several of ACB Caribbean's inoperable Automated Teller Machines, causing customers to queue for long periods at those that are functional.

In addition to registering their displeasure about being inconvenienced, customers have also complained of feeling cheated, since they are sometimes made to use the ATMs of other banks using their ACB Caribbean cards, for which a transaction fee is applied. This is the same when ACB's own ATMs are accessed at locations away from the bank's branches.

With its reputation at stake, ACB Caribbean announced last Wednesday that it has set a deadline of 30th November, 2025, to deploy its Smart ATMs.

Further, the remote ATM usage fee of \$1 per transaction has been suspended until the new ATMs the bank is installing become operational, along with expanding their technical coverage and cash replenishment schedules.

In apologising to its customers for the inconvenience they are enduring, ACB Caribbean said it is doing everything to ensure the issues are resolved by the end of next month.

"At this juncture, we have committed to a resolution of the ATM issues by November 30th, 2025, by which date the new ATMs will be operational at multiple locations. We assure you that the team is actively engaged with all stakeholders to meet this deadline."

In its statement, the financial institution noted that sometimes, the solutions to the challenges they encounter are outside of their control, but committed to working overtime in the interest of its customers.



"ACB Caribbean thanks you for your loyalty and ongoing patience and will keep you informed of the progress of the Smart ATM deployment, as we

work to deliver on our promise to you," the statement concluded.



Commentary

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE CARIBBEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE AND CONDEMNATION OF EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

16 October 2025
Kingston, Jamaica

We, the undersigned organisations, are calling for an immediate de-escalation of tensions in the Southern Caribbean. We have taken note of the dangerous rhetoric being pushed by political figures both within and from outside of the Caribbean. Inflammatory remarks from irresponsible leaders are outright endorsing the extrajudicial killings of civilians and may push the region towards unnecessary war.

Caribbean countries are not prepared for war, nor can we be willing to be a part of one. Any leader who sounds the war trumpet is acting against their own national interest and instead in the interests of a foreign power. Our social systems cannot sustain a major refugee crisis, and our economies cannot sustain any interruption to trade.

It is undisputed that the Caribbean region is a place where peace has prevailed for a measurable period of time. The deployment of military assets to Caribbean waters, including multiple warships and a nuclear submarine, raises reasonable alarm and threatens this sense of peace.

We also believe that the recent strikes of the United States in the region, on persons accused of trafficking drugs, amount to summary executions of noncombatants and are therefore clear breaches of international law. Rather than having alleged drug traffickers apprehended and brought before a judicial body with evidence of wrongdoing, what we are seeing are strikes on fishing boats without any evidence that they were involved in drug trafficking, or that they constitute any threat to the security of any nation. The method of attacks has left bodies disintegrated and their families unable to properly mourn them. This has created a sense of fear among fishermen in multiple countries in the region, including Jamaica, who are simply trying to legally earn a living.

We do not believe that the military force being deployed is necessary or proportionate for responding to the alleged drug trafficking in the region. Most drugs from South America travel through the Pacific, not the Caribbean. The major transshipment points for drugs from South America are Colombia and Mexico, not Venezuela, and the governments of Colombia and Mexico have stated this while rejecting the US' claims about Venezuelan involvement in the drug trade. To us, it does not seem that the real issue here is drug trafficking, and we believe that there may be intentions to provoke a war with Venezuela under the guise of combating drug trafficking.

Commentary

The concept of the 'Zone of Peace' originated in regional bodies decades ago. In 1979, the Organization of American States adopted a resolution urging recognition of the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace which sought the removal of superpower rivalry from the waters of the region. A "Zone of Peace" declaration was also formalized by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2014, signalling a commitment by leaders to maintain regional stability through peaceful dispute resolution, non intervention, and respect for sovereignty.

We would like the leaders of Caribbean countries to reaffirm their commitment to maintaining the region as a Zone of Peace by discouraging the deployment of foreign military troops and foreign military hardware. These deployments do nothing to aid our security and, on the contrary, provoke conflict in a way that risks destabilising the entire region.

We also await Jamaica's position on the matter.

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Regional News

CARICOM underscores need to maintain Caribbean region as a 'Zone of Peace'

Amid US military strikes against vessels in Caribbean waters, CARICOM Heads of Government have reiterated their continued commitment to fighting narco-trafficking and the illegal trade in small arms in the region, but say efforts to overcome these challenges should be through ongoing international cooperation and within international law.

In a statement on Saturday, the CARICOM Secretariat said the heads met and discussed various issues on the regional agenda including the increased security build up in the Caribbean and the potential impacts on Member States.

However, it said Trinidad and Tobago reserved its position on the issues.

CARICOM said the heads of government reaffirmed the principle of maintaining the Caribbean region as a Zone



of Peace and the importance of dialogue and engagement towards the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflict. CARICOM said it remains willing to assist towards that objective.

The heads also reportedly reaffirmed unequivocal support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region and the safety and livelihoods of the people of the region.

There have been calls for a CARICOM position on the

US strikes as well as a request from the United States to Grenada to establish a radar listening post on that island to support its operations.

The recent US military action against vessels in the region have killed at least 29 people.

US President Donald Trump has justified the strikes by asserting that the United States is engaged in an "armed conflict" with drug cartels.

However, to some legal scholars, Trump's use of such military force against suspected drug cartels, along with his authorisation of covert action inside Venezuela, possibly to oust President Nicolás Maduro, stretches the bounds of international law.

Two Trinidadian men were allegedly among those killed when the United States bombed a small vessel in international waters near the coast of Venezuela earlier this week.

Trinidadian Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar has said that she is "happy that the US naval deployment is having success in their mission," and that "the pain and suffering the cartels have inflicted on our nation is immense. I have no sympathy for traffickers; the US military should kill them all violently." (Jamaica Gleaner)



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T&T police on high alert after US Embassy warns Americans to avoid its facilities

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) has tightened security across the country to protect citizens and government officials following a US Embassy alert urging Americans to steer clear of US facilities during the Divali weekend.

In a notice issued on Saturday, the Embassy advised American citizens to avoid visiting any of its facilities in Trinidad and Tobago through the holiday period, citing “a heightened state of alert.”

It also urged nationals to remain aware of their surroundings, monitor reputable news sources, and report any suspicious activity to local authorities.

Acting Commissioner of Police Junior Benjamin has since assured that there is no cause for public alarm.

He said the TTPS has activated additional security measures to safeguard citizens, foreign nationals, and key facilities across the country.



“The citizens and the facilities of the US are intact,” he said in an interview on local radio. “We are going to support as much as we can in terms of having our officers so briefed, but we really do not want to create any scare [among] the citizenry.... We stand in support of ensuring the safety and security of all persons — both those who are citizens [of Trinidad and Tobago]

as well as those who are citizens of the United States.”

Commissioner Benjamin also indicated that he had earlier held a briefing with all the heads of the TTPS’ operational units to ensure the protection of government officials.

“We are putting all these mechanisms in place to ensure that persons are safe and that the facilities of all such persons are also protected as well,” he said. “We are very much in a place of readiness, and the police officers are on high alert to ensure the safety and security of all.”

Though saying there had been no discussions with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force or Coast Guard on this particular issue, Commissioner Benjamin said all arms of the national security apparatus work in close coordination.

“We always operate as a team, and therefore I am certain we have support of all [agencies] under homeland secu-



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Regional News



US sanctions former Haitian security head, gang leader for aiding gang coalition

The US Treasury Department slapped sanctions on the former head of Haitian presidential security when the leader of the Caribbean nation was assassinated, and the leader of a Haitian gang Friday.

The agency said the two men supported a coalition of gangs that the Trump administration designated as a foreign terrorist organization earlier this year.

The sanctions were placed on Dimitri Herard, a former police officer who was imprisoned in connection with the assassination of former President Jovenel Moïse in 2021.

The Treasury wrote in a statement that since he escaped from prison in 2024, he “colluded” with Haiti’s most powerful gang coalition, Viv Ansanm, which



has brought the country to its knees in recent years.

Officials said Herard provided “training and firearms” to gang leaders, and “directly backs the Viv Ansanm’s coordinated attacks against State institutions.”

The department also sanctioned Kempes Sanon, the head of the Bel Air gang, one of the many criminal

groups that make up Viv Ansanm’s gang coalition.

Besides helping the coalition consolidate power in the Caribbean nation, the Treasury accused Sanon of “indiscriminate civilian killings, extortion, illicit taxation, and kidnappings in Haiti.”

“Today’s action underscores the critical role of

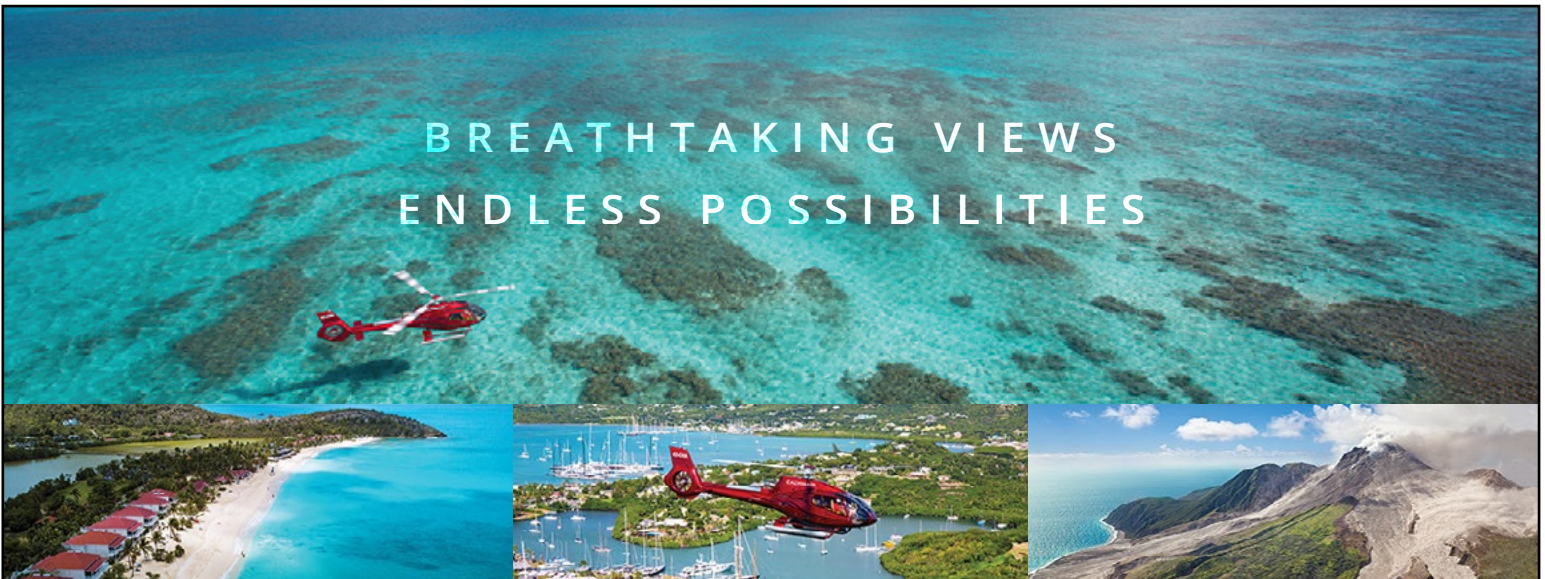
gang leaders and facilitators like Herard and Sanon, whose support enables Viv Ansanm’s campaign of violence, extortion, and terrorism in Haiti,” wrote Bradley T. Smith, director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, in a statement.

The sanctions freeze all their properties in the US and block business transactions with the two men.

Gang violence has crippled Haiti since the 2021 assassination of Moïse, which thrust the country into chaos.

For years, gangs have violently seized control over much of Haiti, terrorizing civilians as the international community has struggled to find solutions to ease the bloodshed. (Jamaica Gleaner)

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Cayman Islands government releases sweeping immigration reform bill

The government of the Cayman Islands has released a bill with its planned immigration law amendments, to which the public has until mid-November to respond.

A statement by government accompanying the announcement of the public release of the proposed amendments, said this as a “decisive crucial point in national policy with the launch of sweeping immigration reforms designed to realign the system with the priorities of Caymanians, while preserving our competitiveness and social cohesion.”

Among the amendments is the extension to 15 years for the timeframe during which a person married to or in a civil partnership with a Caymanian or a permanent resident has to hold their Residency and Employment Rights Certificate (RERC) before they can apply for naturalisation or permanent residency.

The proposed amendments include extending the length of time a person has lived in Cayman from 15 years to 20 years, and from five years to 10 years after being naturalised, before they can apply for the right to be Caymanian.

The amendments also include the introduction of term limits for civil servants, details of which the government announced in May.

The proposed reforms also state that work-permit holders would not be permitted to change employers within the first two years of their permit being granted, “in an effort to curb job-hopping and encourage stability within the labour market”, the government statement noted.

A permit holder would be required to leave Cayman for at least a year before being allowed to apply for another permit.



The bill also includes a clause that states that people who have been granted the right to be Caymanian, known as ‘status’, will be required to provide annual declarations for themselves and their dependents for seven years after being granted the right. Failure to do so will be a ground for revocation of their status.

Holders of RERCs also would be required to provide an annual declaration, or have their certificate revoked.

The amendments also include an age limit to the list of criteria for a Certificate of Specialist Caregivers.

They also have a stipulation that holders of Certificates of Specialist Caregivers and Certificates of Commercial Farmhands would cease to be valid once those individuals turn 65.

Surviving spouses or civil partners, with dependents, will be required to have specific financial standing if they were married for fewer than seven years as part of their application to live

permanently in Cayman.

A holder of the right to be Caymanian by entitlement, who after reaching the age of 18, resides outside Cayman for five years or more, and who fails to notify WORC, will lose that right, under the proposed amendments.

The public consultation period for the bill runs from October 17 to November 14.

Minister for Caymanian Employment and Immigration Michael Myles stated, “Public consultation of a bill is a cornerstone of good governance. This process ensures that every voice is heard and that the Immigration Bill reflects the realities, needs, and aspirations of the people it will serve.

“By engaging with the public, we can craft a fair, transparent, and effective immigration system that upholds our national values and supports both our citizens and those who wish to contribute to our society.” (CMC)

Stampede at funeral of Kenya's former Prime Minister Raila Odinga kills 2

A stampede at a football stadium Friday during the state funeral service for Kenya's former Prime Minister Raila Odinga killed two people and injured more than 100 others.

Kenyans had turned out in large numbers to mourn Odinga after the democratic reformer's death on Wednesday at age 80, reflecting the outsized influence the respected statesman had on political life in the East African country.

A stampede ensued at the stadium in the capital, Nairobi, as the public viewed his body after the service.

Doctors Without Borders, known by its French acronym MSF, said two people died and 163 patients were treated at the scene with 34 of them referred to hospitals.

The Kenyan Red Cross said the chaos "left many in need of urgent care." A source at the country's main referral hospital said they had received dozens of patients.

Odinga's brother, Oburu, urged Kenyans on Friday night to be calm and mourn peacefully.

"Raila should not be teargassed in death. He has been teargassed enough when he was alive, please let us not cause a situation where he is teargassed again," he said.

Thousands filled the stadium where Odinga's casket was covered in the national flag for an Anglican Church service. They chanted and held up portraits of Odinga, while some carried twigs, a symbol of peace and unity in Kenyan tradition.

There was heavy security

at the stadium after three people died during Thursday's public viewing as police tried to control a huge crowd at another stadium.

At least 10 people were injured at Thursday's event after police fired live bullets and tear gas at a surging crowd trying to reach a pavilion where the casket was placed. (AP)





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US will send survivors of strike on suspected drug vessel back to Ecuador and Colombia, Trump says



The two survivors of an American military strike on a suspected drug-carrying vessel in the Caribbean will be sent to Ecuador and Colombia, their home countries, President Donald Trump said Saturday.

The military rescued the pair after striking a submersible vessel Thursday, in what was at least the sixth such attack since early September.

“It was my great honour to destroy a very large DRUG-CARRYING SUBMARINE that was navigating towards the United States on a well known narco-trafficking transit route,” Trump said in a social media post. “US Intelligence confirmed this vessel was loaded up with mostly Fentanyl, and other illegal narcotics.”

After Trump’s announcement, the Pentagon posted on X a brief black-and-white video of the strike. In the clip, a vessel can be seen moving through the waves, its front portion submerged inches below the water’s surface. Then, several explosions are seen, with at least one over the back of the vessel

The Republican president said two people onboard were killed — one more than was previously reported — and the two who survived are being sent to their home countries “for detention and prosecution.”

With Trump’s confirmation on his Truth Social platform of the death toll, that means US military action against vessels in the region have killed at least 29 people.

The president has justified the strikes by asserting that the United States is engaged in an “armed conflict” with drug cartels. He is relying on the same legal authority used by the George W Bush administration when it declared a war on terrorism after the September 11 attacks, and that includes the ability to capture and detain combatants and to use lethal force to take out their leadership. Trump is also treating the suspected traffickers as if they were enemy soldiers in a traditional war.

The repatriation avoids questions for the Trump administration about what the legal status of the two would have been in the US justice system. It may also sidestep some of the legal issues that arose out of the detention of enemy combatants in the global war on terrorism as well as challenges to the constitutionality of the current operation.

To some legal scholars, Trump’s use of such military force against suspected drug cartels, along with his authorisa-

tion of covert action inside Venezuela, possibly to oust President Nicolás Maduro, stretches the bounds of international law.

On Friday, Trump seemed to confirm reports that Maduro has offered a stake in Venezuela’s oil and other mineral wealth in recent months to try to stave off mounting pressure from the United States. Venezuelan government officials have also floated a plan in which Maduro would eventually leave office, according to a former Trump administration official. That plan was also rejected by the White House, The Associated Press reported.

The strikes in the Caribbean have caused unease among members of Congress from both parties and complaints about receiving insufficient information on how the attacks are being conducted. But most Republican senators backed the administration last week on a measure that would have required Trump’s team to get approval from Congress before more strikes.

Meanwhile, another resolution to be considered would prevent Trump from outright attacking Venezuela without congressional authorisation. (AP)



Thieves steal crown jewels in four minutes from Louvre Museum

In a minutes-long strike Sunday inside the world's most-visited museum, thieves rode a basket lift to the Louvre, forced a window into the Galerie d'Apollon — while tourists pressed shoulder-to-shoulder in the corridors — smashed display cases and fled with priceless Napoleonic jewels, officials said.

It was among the highest-profile museum thefts in recent memory and comes as Louvre employees have complained of worker and security understaffing.

One object was later found outside the museum, according to Culture Minister Rachida Dati. French daily Le Parisien reported it was the emerald-studded crown of Napoleon III's wife Empress Eugénie — gold, diamonds and sculpted eagles — recovered just beyond the walls, broken.

The theft unfolded just 250 metres (270 yards) from the Mona Lisa, in what Dati described as “a four-minute operation.” No one was hurt.

Images from the scene showed confused tourists being steered out of the glass pyramid and adjoining courtyards as officers closed nearby streets along the Seine.

Also visible was a lift braced to the Seine-facing façade near a construction zone — an extraordinary vulnerability at a palace-museum.

Around 9:30 a.m., several



intruders forced a window, cut panes with a disc cutter and went straight for the vi-

trines, officials said. Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez said the crew entered from

outside using a basket lift.

The choice of target compounded the shock. The vaulted Galerie d'Apollon in the Denon wing, capped by a ceiling painted for Louis XIV, displays a selection of the French Crown Jewels. The thieves are believed to have approached via the riverfront façade, where construction is under way, used a freight elevator to reach the hall, took nine pieces from a 23-item collection linked to Napoleon and the Empress, and made



International

AROUND THE WORLD

PAGE 19

off on motorbikes, according to Le Parisien.

Daylight robberies during public hours are rare. Pulling one off inside the Louvre — with visitors present — ranks among Europe's most audacious since Dresden's Green Vault museum in 2019, and the most serious in France in more than a decade.

It also collides with a deeper tension the Louvre has struggled to resolve: swelling crowds and stretched staff. The museum delayed opening during a June staff walkout over overcrowding and chronic understaffing. Unions say mass tourism leaves too few eyes on too many rooms and creates pressure points where construction zones, freight routes and visitor flows meet.

Security around marquee works remains tight — the Mona Lisa is behind bullet-proof glass in a bespoke, climate-controlled case.

It's unclear whether staff-

ing levels played any role in Sunday's breach.

The Louvre has a long history of thefts and attempted robberies. The most famous came in 1911, when the Mona Lisa vanished from its frame, stolen by Vincenzo Peruggia and recovered two years later in Florence.

Today the former royal palace holds a roll call of civilization: Leonardo's Mona Lisa; the armless serenity of the Venus de Milo; the Winged Victory of Samothrace, wind-lashed on the Daru staircase; the Code of Hammurabi's carved laws; Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People; Géricault's The Raft of the Medusa. More than 33,000 works — from Mesopotamia, Egypt and the classical world to Europe's masters — draw a daily tide of up to 30,000 visitors even as investigators now begin to sweep those gilded corridors for clues.

The heist spilled instantly into politics. Far-right leader Jordan Bardella used it to attack President Emmanuel

Macron, weakened at home and facing a fractured parliament.

"The Louvre is a global symbol of our culture," Bardella wrote on X. "This robbery, which allowed thieves to steal jewels from the French Crown, is an unbearable humiliation for our country. How far will the decay of the state go?"

The criticism lands as Macron touts a decade-long "Louvre New Renaissance" plan — about €700 million to modernize infrastructure, ease crowding and give the Mona Lisa a dedicated gallery by 2031. For workers on the floor, the relief has felt slower than the pressure.

Forensic teams are examining the site of the crime and adjoining access points while a full inventory is taken, authorities said. Officials have described the haul as of "inestimable" historical value.

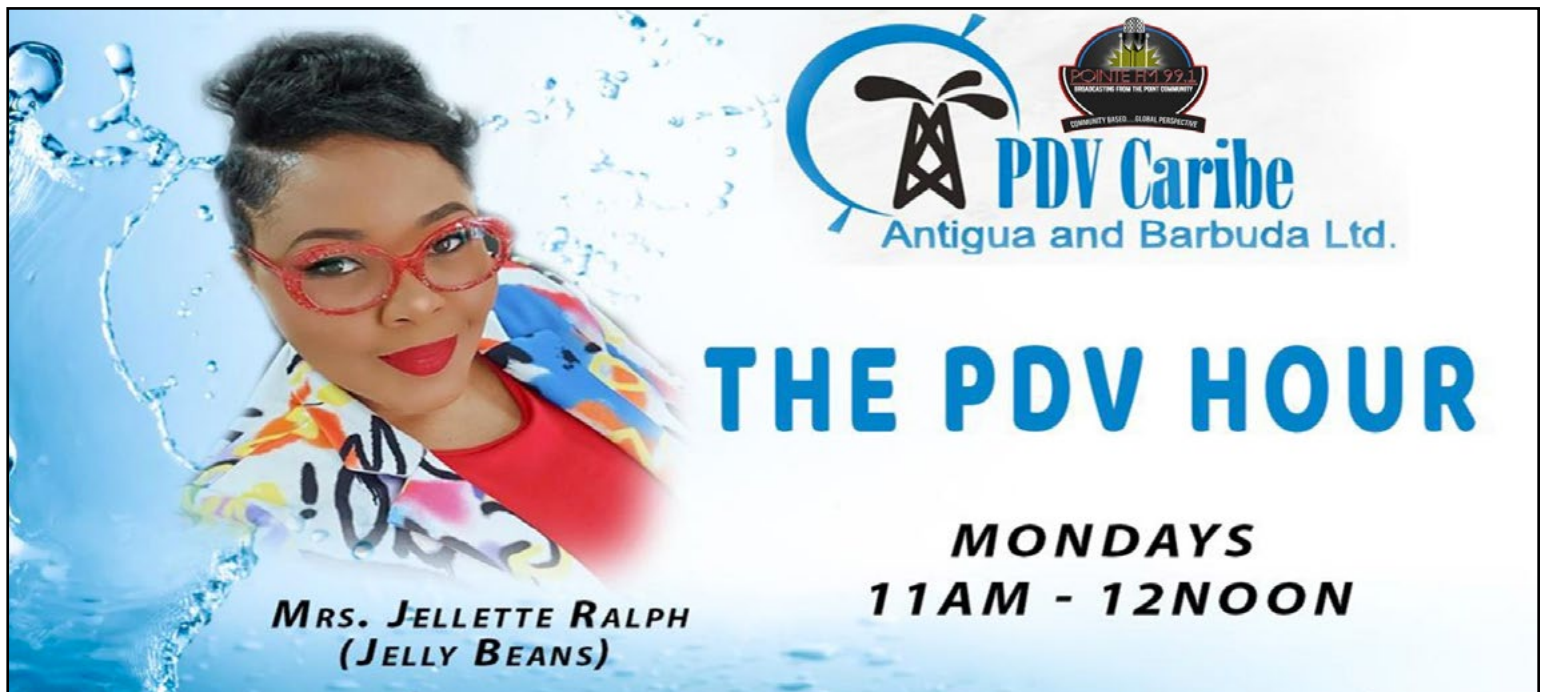
Recovery may prove difficult. "It's unlikely these

jewels will ever be seen again," said Tobias Kormind, managing director of 77 Diamonds. "Professional crews often break down and re-cut large, recognizable stones to evade detection, effectively erasing their provenance."

The Louvre closed for the rest of Sunday as police sealed gates, cleared courtyards and shut nearby streets along the Seine.

Key questions still unanswered are how many people took part in the theft and whether they had inside assistance, authorities said. According to French media, there were four perpetrators: two dressed as construction workers in yellow safety vests on the lift, and two each on a scooter.

Investigators are reviewing CCTV from the Denon wing and the riverfront, inspecting the basket lift used to reach the gallery and interviewing staff who were on site when the museum opened, authorities said. (AP)



PDV Caribe
Antigua and Barbuda Ltd.

THE PDV HOUR

MONDAYS
11AM - 12NOON

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(JELLY BEANS)



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

THE DEPARTMENT OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES ANNOUNCES THE CHRISTMAS HOME AND BUSINESS LIGHTING COMPETITION 2025:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday 01st, October 2025 – *St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda.....*
The Department of Creative Industries is pleased to announce the Christmas Home and Business Lighting Competition 2025.

We aim to evoke the spirit of the season through the creative and dazzling lighting display of our 2025 competitors, the Department encourages all interested Home and Business owners to register for the competition on or before Wednesday, December 17, 2025.

Registration Forms are available Mondays to Fridays, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Creative Industries Headquarters on Old Parham Road, upstairs INET or the National Festivals Office, 1st Floor Cecil George-John Building, Redcliffe Street and Corn Alley.

Pre-judging will commence on December 20th and 21st December, 2025, while the final displays will be judged on December 28 2025. Winners will be announced via Good Morning Antigua, Barbuda on Friday, January 5th 2026.

Home entries will be categorized and judged according to the zones – East, West, North, and South. All Home participants will receive a 100% waiver on electricity service for December 15th 2025 to January 15th 2026, Duty-Free concessions on Christmas Lights and or Decorations and a Cash component for the top three winners in each zone as outlined below.

- **First Place - \$ 3,000.00 XCD**
- **Second Place - \$ 2,000.00 XCD**
- **Third Place - \$ 1,000.00 XCD**

Business entries will receive a 50% waiver on electricity service for December 2025, DutyFree concessions on Christmas Lights and or Decorations and a Cash component for the top three winners as outlined below.

- **First Place - \$ 3,000.00 XCD**
- **Second Place - \$ 2,000.00 XCD**
- **Third Place - \$ 1,000.00 XCD**

Register now to be a part of the joy and splendor of Christmas 2025.

END.

CWI Announces Youth ODI Series Against England Under-19s

Cricket West Indies (CWI) has confirmed a seven-match Youth One-Day International (ODI) series between the West Indies Men's Under-19 team and England Under-19s, scheduled from November 16 to December 1 2025 at the Grenada National Stadium in St George's.

The series forms a crucial part of the squad's build-up to the ICC Men's Under-19 World Cup in January 2026, following their hard-fought 4-3 series win over Sri Lanka in Antigua and Barbuda in August/September this year.

All fixtures will be played at the Grenada National Stadium after the series was relocated from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Cricket West Indies made the request to the National Sports Council of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in March 2025, however, recent correspondence from the council indicated the grounds were unavailable due to international scheduling.

Both teams will arrive in Grenada on November 8, with three days of training scheduled at the venue. A



warm-up match between England Under-19s and a Grenada Under-25 select XI will take place on November 12 ahead of the opening ODI.

CWI Director of Cricket, Miles Bascombe, welcomed the visiting English contingent saying, "This series against England forms an important part of our strategic plan to refine the squad through consistent, high-quality competition.

"The group has already gained valuable experience

and confidence from the recent seven-match series win against Sri Lanka, and this next assignment provides another crucial opportunity for growth.

"England always fields a strong and well-prepared Under-19 team, and we expect another highly competitive contest in Grenada. These matches are vital in ensuring our players continue to develop their skills, temperament, and match awareness, so that by the time the World Cup arrives, they will have significant

exposure to the intensity and demands of international youth cricket."

All matches start at 9:00 a.m. and are scheduled to end by 5:00 p.m. Live streaming will be available on the Windies Cricket YouTube Channel, with live a scorecard accessible for each game via the Match Centre on www.windiescricket.com.

The tour concludes with both teams departing on December 2.



ANTIGUA

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Open Daily -
12:00pm - 10:30pm






Sports News

Hermitage Bay Stay Unbeaten in Business Football League

Defending champions Hermitage Bay Strikers extended their unbeaten run in the 2025 JOMA Caribbean Ministry of Sports Business Football League Championship during the latest round of rescheduled matches.

Hermitage Bay Strikers claimed their third win in four matches by snatching a 2-1 victory against former champions APUA Telecoms in their Group 4 encounter at the Golden Grove Paying Field.

Roy Gregory and Rodney Lawrence each converted once for Hermitage Bay, and Rakeem Joseph scored for APUA Telecoms.

The result allows Hermitage Bay to jump to the top of Group 4 with 10 points, while APUA Telecoms slipped from first to second place with nine points after their perfect start to the competition was ended with their first defeat in four matches.

Villa Tech Enterprise claimed their second win in four matches with a 3-2 victory against Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority in their Group 4 encounter at the St. Johnston's Village Stadium.

Kadeem "Skooda" Campbell had a double conversion, and Roan Harris scored once for Villa Tech Enterprise. Port Authority, who will remain on seven points, slipped from second to



Roy Gregory of Hermitage Bay

third place after their unbeaten run in the competition was ended with their first loss in four matches.

The Department of Immigration remains in fourth place in Group 4 by advancing to seven points, recording their second win in four matches with a 3-2 victory against Cocos Hotel at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park.

Galley Bay Ballers claimed their third win in four matches with a 3-0 victory against Royalton Strikers in their Group 1 affair at the St. John-



Rodney Lawrence of Hermitage Bay

ston's Village Stadium.

Ordel Joseph had a double conversion, and Jermaine Benjamin scored once for the Galley Bay Ballers.

The result allows the Galley Bay Ballers to jump from second place to the top of Group 1 on goal difference with 10 points.

Sandals remain on 10 points and slipped from first to second place in Group 1 after their unbeaten run was ended with their first defeat in five matches in a 4-1 loss to APUA Head



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Nadre Thomas had conversions in the third and 25th minutes, Eroy Gonsalves scored in the 41st minute, and Kelvin Carr scored in the 48th minute for APUA Head Office to claim their second win in three matches. Wallsworth Burton scored in the seventh minute for Sandals.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fresh Acres Enterprise played to a goalless draw in their top-of-the-table Group 2 clash at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park.

The result allows the Ministry of Agriculture to stay unbeaten at the top of Group 2 on goal difference with 10 points from five matches, the same as Fresh Acres Enterprise, who remains in second place.

Sir Vivian Richards Stadium notched up their second win in four matches with a 2-0 victory against the Ministry of Tourism in their Group 2 encounter at Radio Range in Ottos. Audwin Joseph scored both goals in the 30th and 55th minutes.

Keyonna Beach recorded their second win in four matches with a 6-1 drubbing of SkyTiger Services in their Group 3 match at Golden Grove.

Sandals Maintain Perfect Win Record in Business Basketball League

Defending champions Sandals continued their unbeaten run in the 2025 Cool and Smooth Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Business League Championships on Saturday night.

Sandals notched up their eighth win in as many games with a 62-43 victory against Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre at the JSC Sports Complex.

T-Shawn Lewis shot a game-high 20 points, and Keroi Lee scored 13 points and grabbed 18 rebounds for Sandals. Demeitre Leitch converted 12 points and snatched 15 rebounds for Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre, who suffered their sixth loss in 10 games.

Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre recorded their fourth win in this year's

competition with an 88-44 victory against Police in their previous game.

Naeem Joseph produced 19 points, 12 rebounds, and five assists; Demeitre Leitch contributed 15 points, 11 rebounds, and five assists; Raheem Charles also scored 15 points; Regillio Cisse converted 13 points, and Nigel Joseph scored 10 points for Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre.

Javon Simon shot a team-high 19 points and grabbed 13 rebounds, and Julian Henry scored 10 points for the Police, who remain in the cellar after suffering their 11th loss in as many games.

Cornerstone Builders and Maintenance returned to winning form, notching up their fifth victory in nine games with a 58-51 triumph over Fearless Security Services on Saturday.

Takeem Martin sank 17 points and grabbed 12 rebounds, and Jesus Lopez had 14 points and five steals for Cor-

nerstone Builders and Maintenance.

Gabriel De Suza converted 15 points and snatched eight rebounds, and Emeka Emjuru scored 15 points and grabbed 15 rebounds for Fearless Security Services, who remain second from the bottom of the 14-team round-robin league contest after suffering their ninth defeat in 10 games.

H. Wright Promotions notched up their sixth win in nine encounters with a 67-46 victory against Cornerstone Builders and Maintenance.

Donte Trimingham produced 26 points, seven rebounds, and four assists, and Humroy Wright converted 16 points for H. Wright Promotions.

Takeem Martin had 14 points, 13 rebounds, and four assists, and Yohan Nicholas scored 11 points and snatched nine rebounds for Cornerstone Builders and Maintenance, who suffered their fourth loss in this year's competition.

NOTICE

TO: THE LICENSING MAGISTRATE

Magistrate Court
High street
St. John's
Antigua

TO: COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

Police Headquarter
American Road
St. John's
Antigua

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR A TAVERN LICENCE FOR BUSINESS

REGISTERED AS "BAR STOX 2"

I, Yuzhi Yhap of Guang Dong Limited, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE, that it is my intention to apply at the next sitting of the liquor Licence court to be held at the Magistrate's Court, High Street, St. John's, Antigua on Monday 5th January, 2026 next ensuing for Tavern Licence in respect or premises known as "Bar Stox2" situated on Market Street, In the Parish of St. John's, Antigua pursuant to Section (11) (5) of the Licensing (Intoxicating Liquor) Act Cap 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda, Revised Edition 1992.

Dated the 17th day of October, 2025

Your Truly

.....
Yuzhi Yhap
268-780-0868

Sports News

Bangladesh Rout West Indies in First ODI

MIRPUR, Bangladesh (AP) — Leg-spinner Rishad Hossain claimed a career-best six for 35 as Bangladesh crushed West Indies by 74 runs to open their three-match One-Day International (ODI) series on Saturday.

Rishad's figures, the second best by a Bangladesh bowler in an ODI behind Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's six for 26 against Kenya in 2006, helped to wrap up the West Indies innings for 133 in 39 overs.

He also hit a 13-ball 26 as Bangladesh posted 207 all out in 49.4 overs. Openers Brandon King and Alick Athanaze batted resolutely on a typically sluggish Mirpur pitch to give the West Indies a glimmer of hope in the chase.

But the introduction of Rishad in the 12th over changed the momentum.

He took out Athanaze lbw on 27, got a thick edge off Keacy Carty, and got the outside edge of King, the West Indies top scorer with 44, in six overs of work.

King's dismissal left West Indies 82 for three in the 22nd over. Rishad bowled eight overs in a row in his first spell and ripped through West Indies middle order as it lost the next seven wickets for 51 runs.

Pacer Mustafizur Rahman took two for 16 to complement Rishad in demolishing the Caribbean batting lineup.

Earlier, Towhid Hridoy anchored Bangladesh's in-



Brandon King, who top scored for the West Indies, plays an attacking shot during the first One-Day International in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Saturday, October 18, 2025. (Getty Images)

nings after it was reduced over. to eight for two in the third

Hridoy scored 51 off 90 with three fours and rebuilt the innings in a 71-run partnership with Najmul Hossain Shanto, who hit 32.

Hridoy steered off-spinner Roston Chase past cover for a single to raise his 11th half-century off 87 balls then was dismissed by Justin Greaves.

Debutant Mahidul Islam Ankon kept the runs going with 46 and Rishad's aggressive finish propelled Bangladesh past 200. Both teams will meet in the second ODI on Tuesday.



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

SOLID • STABLE • SOARING

NATIONAL YOUTH RALLY
8:30 AM

CHEERLEADING, SPECIAL DRILLS & DJ COMPETITION
11:00 AM

THURSDAY 30 OCT

AT SIR VIVIAN RICHARDS STADIUM

Antigua Barbuda FESTIVALS COMMISSION

Powered By:                



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
**ANNIVERSARY
OF INDEPENDENCE**

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2025 INDEPENDENCE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

25 OCT - 03 NOV

SATURDAY 25 OCT

- **NATIONAL SCHOOLS' PANORAMA**
SIR VIVIAN RICHARDS STADIUM
5:00PM

SUNDAY 26 OCT

- **INDEPENDENCE CHURCH SERVICE**
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH CREEKSIDE
4:00PM

MONDAY 27-29 OCT

- **NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE
BUSINESS DECOR COMPETITION**

MONDAY 27 OCT

- **NATIONAL HEROES DAY
WREATH LAYING CEREMONY**
HEROES PARK- SIR SYDNEY WALLINGS HIGHWAY
10:00 AM

TUESDAY 28 OCT

- **FESTIVAL OF CHOIRS**
ST. ANTHONY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL
8:00PM



TUESDAY 28 OCT

- **BARBUDA DAY ACTIVITIES (TBC)**

WEDNESDAY 29 OCT

- **SCHOOLS' INDEPENDENCE PROGRAMS**
SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE
- **GOLDEN AGE CELEBRATIONS**
VARIOUS COMMUNITIES IN ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
- **THEATRICAL PRESENTATION
"WADADLI ROOTS"**
MULTIPURPOSE CULTURAL CENTRE
7:30PM

THURSDAY 30 OCT

- **NATIONAL YOUTH RALLY** 8:30AM
- **CHEERLEADING COMPETITION** 11:30AM
SIR VIVIAN RICHARDS STADIUM
- **INDEPENDENCE CALYPSO COMPETITION**
JACK IDLE
8:00PM

FRIDAY 31 OCT

- **NATIONAL DRESS DAY**
- **NATIONAL FLAG DAY**

MONDAY 03 NOV

- **INDEPENDENCE FLAG CEREMONY**
BARBUDA
9:00AM
- **NATIONAL FOOD FAIR**
SIR VIVIAN RICHARDS STADIUM
10:00AM UNTIL
- **INDEPENDENCE CEREMONIAL
PARADE & NATIONAL AWARDS**
SIR VIVIAN RICHARDS STADIUM
5:30PM



CWI Announces Restructured 2025 Super50 Cup

Cricket West Indies (CWI) has announced a restructured format for the 2025 CG United Super50 Cup, the marquee 50-over regional tournament set to take place in Trinidad from Wednesday, November 19, to Saturday, November 29.

During CWI's recently held quarterly media briefing, it was announced that changes would be made to this year's tournament, against the backdrop of a challenging financial period for the organisation.

As a result, the rivalry returns with a shift from the traditional 31-match, eight team layout to an abbreviated round-robin structure, with the top two teams qualifying directly for the final.

Trinidad & Tobago Red Force (TTRF), Barbados Pride (BP), Guyana Harpy Eagles (GHE), Jamaica Scorpions (JS), Leeward Islands Hurricanes (LIH), and Windward Islands Volcanoes (WIV) will engage in intense competition over the eleven-day period, with the West Indies Academy and Combined Campuses and Colleges (CCC) outfits being excluded for this year.

Miles Bascombe, CWI's Director of Cricket, said that despite the necessary changes, the opportunity has been created for enhanced competitiveness and quality of play throughout the tournament.

"The CG United Super50 Cup continues to be a cornerstone of our cricket development structure. This reformed format allows us to maintain a high standard of competition while also refocusing our resources on



building a stronger, more sustainable development pathway.

"The reduction in matches means teams must now be more deliberate and strategic in their preparation, ensuring they hit the ground running from the very first game.

"While the absence of the CCC and West Indies Academy from this year's tournament changes the dynamic, it also opens the door for those players to vie for selection within their territorial franchises. This added competition for places should raise the overall standard of play and sharpen the focus of every player involved."

The rivalry will be highly charged with the six franchises aiming to bring home the championship purse of US\$100,000, with US\$50,000 being awarded to the runner-up, while the 3rd and 4th placed teams will each take home US\$25,000. The complete fixture schedule will be released in the

coming days.

No champion was crowned last year in an anticlimax conclusion to the 2024 CG United Super50 Cup, with both finalists, Barbados Pride and Jamaica Scorpions forfeiting the final, which was slated to be played at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad, on Saturday, November 23.

Consequently, Cricket West Indies announced that there is no champion for the 2024 competition. The tournament's organizers made the announcement following a heavily rain-affected final match day.

According to a media release from CWI, around 5:45 pm, the officiating team determined that the final game could proceed at the latest possible start time of 6:17 pm. They informed the players of this and that the toss would be conducted at 6 pm.

Despite assurances from the umpires and match referee that the conditions were safe for play, both captains failed to be present for the toss, allowing time to elapse past the latest starting point.

As a result, both teams failed to take the field, effectively refusing to play. This resulted in a double forfeit, with no champion being declared.

However, Trinidad and Tobago won the competition in 2023, defeating the Leeward Islands Hurricane by seven wickets via the Duckworth Lewis Stern (DLS) method in a rain affected final at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Trinidad on November 11.