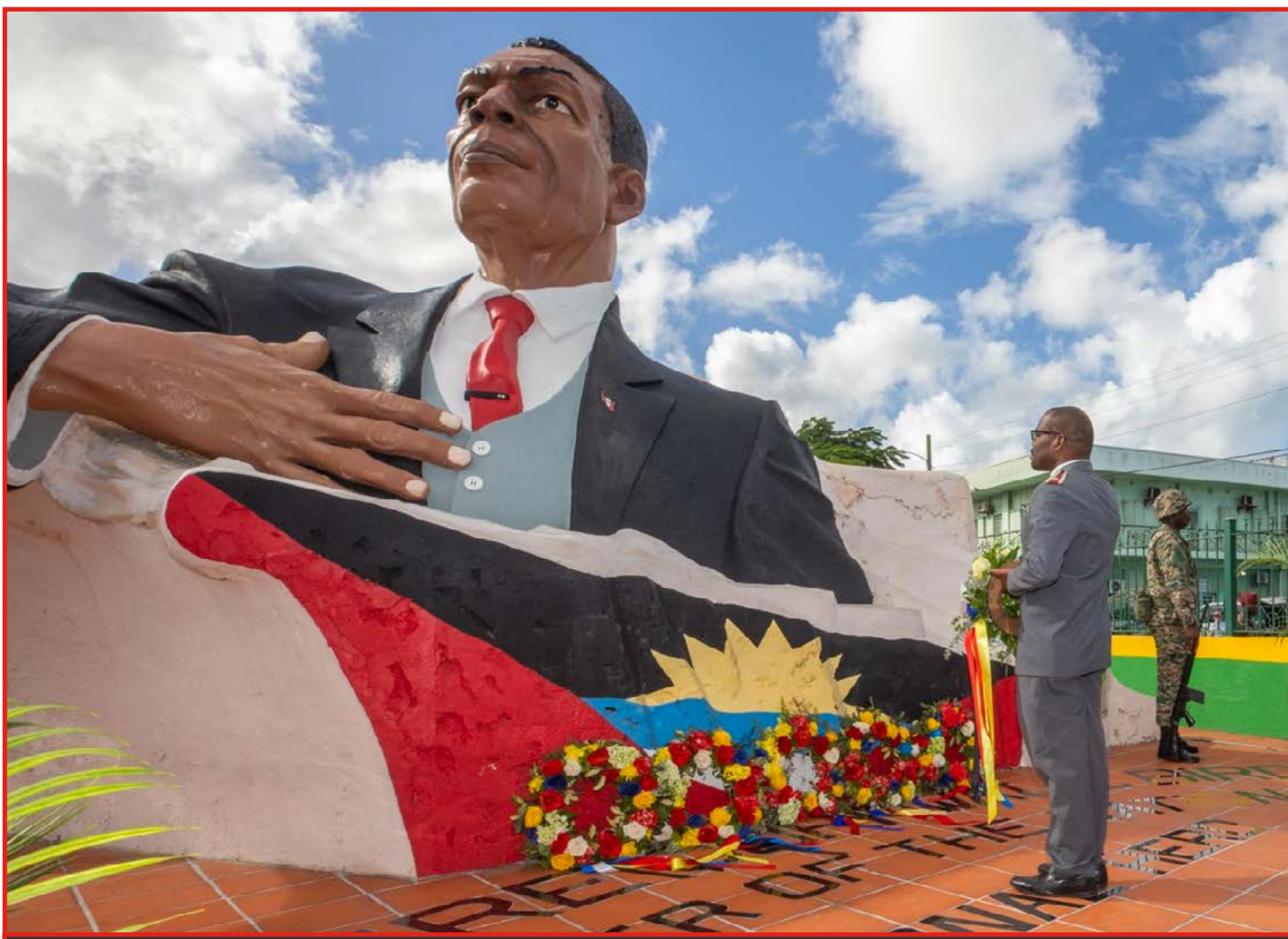


PM Browne: Your Administration is committed to your advancement

Story on page 2



Celebrating the enormous contributions of the Father of the Nation, Sir Vere Cornwall Bird, on VC Bird Day

Local News



PM Browne: Your Administration is committed to your advancement

Prime Minister Gaston Browne is assuring the people of Antigua and Barbuda that 'their administration' is committed to advancing the economic and social well-being of the people of the nation.

The prime minister was speaking on Tuesday as he delivered the feature address at the wreath laying ceremony at the VC Bird Bust on Lower Market Street where government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, students and members of the Antigua and Barbuda Trades and Labour Union and the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party gathered to pay homage to VC Bird, the Father of the Nation.

"We will continue to make sure that we invest in every aspect of our nation's development; to make sure that every sector is advanced for your benefit. So for exam-



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

ple, in agriculture, we will make sure that we increase our investments in agriculture in order to ensure food security and food sovereignty. We will make sure that we continue to invest heavily in health care to provide you with the best quality health care. Also, to include a health insurance scheme, come next year," PM Browne declared.

This, according to the prime minister, is to pro-

vide nationals with the best health care coverage possible.

The nation's leader identified education as a major pillar for growth and development, noting that the government will continue to advance all aspects of the nation's education. "From early childhood education to university and that is why commencing next year we will spend US\$200 million to expand the Universi-

ty of the West Indies FIC. We want to make sure that we have a campus that will continue to provide opportunities for the advancement of our people. We want to make sure that our people can stand toe-to-toe, shoulder-to-shoulder with anyone globally. We want to make sure that you can compete with the best in the world," PM Browne emphasized.

He noted that in entrepreneurship, the government continues to provide funding under the Prime Minister's Entrepreneurial Fund and that is why there is a commitment to have available funds to allow for exploration of opportunities that may present themselves.

According to the prime minister a total of \$7 million have been loaned so far and this figure is likely to increase in the coming year.



THE PDV HOUR

MONDAYS
11AM - 12NOON

MRS. JELLETTE RALPH
(JELLY BEANS)

Sir VC Bird's tenure in office 'was a period of foundational nation-building', says ABLP Chairman, E.P Chet Greene

Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party, E.P Chet Greene, has described the Father of the Nation, Sir V.C Bird's tenure in office as 'a period of foundational nation-building'.

Greene, the country's Foreign Affairs Minister, made the observance in remarks on Tuesday at the wreath laying ceremony at the VC Bird Bust on Lower All Saints Road as part of the activities marking VC Bird Day.

"He did not simply manage a colony; he envisioned and constructed a state for its people. Let us quickly look at some of the pillars he established:

"He believed a nation's greatness is measured by the well-being of its citizens. Under his leadership, we saw the introduction of free secondary education and free medical services, opening doors of opportunity and safeguarding the health of every Antiguan and Barbudan," he indicated.

The ABLP Chairman also credits Sir Vere Bird as the man who oversaw the economic transformation of the country from subsistence agriculture, to one based on tourism. "With foresight, he engineered the shift from a sugar-dependent plantation economy to a modern, tourism driven one. He revolutionized our telecommunications and utilities infrastructure, laying the groundwork for a connected and competitive nation," Greene stated.

Minister Greene sees Sir Vere as the chief engineer of the country's political destiny. Noting that he fought for and won universal adult suffrage, internal self-government and ultimately, full independence. He fashioned the new Constitution, guaranteeing the civil and human rights citizens enjoy today.

Greene added that VC Bird, who not



Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party, E.P Chet Greene

only a staunch nationalist, but that he was also a dedicated and firm believer in regionalism.

"A true Caribbean man, he was a pillar

of regional integration, from the West Indies Federation to being a signatory to the CARIFTA agreement, which paved the way for CARICOM. For this, he is rightly remembered as a "Patron of the Movement for Caribbean integration, development and progress"," Greene observed.

Greene painted a picture of VC Bird as a man who ensured that the successes that Antigua and Barbuda attained did not end with his passing. "The genius of his legacy is that it selflessly created a blueprint and a party capable of carrying it forward across generations. The ABLP is not merely a political organization; it is the institutional embodiment of our national project, a vehicle for peace, progress, stability and security," he remarked.

Team Fries or Wedges?

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AT&LU/ABLP support policies benefitting the youth and the elderly as part of its mandate

The interests of youth in the society as well those for the elderly have always been uppermost in the minds of both the Antigua Trades and Labour Union and the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party.

That's the view of President of the AT&LU, Bernard de Nully is his address to Tuesday's wreath laying ceremony at the Bust of VC Bird that was held as part of the VC Bird Day festivities.

"Our leaders' record of policy initiatives is proof of this claim which is deeply buried in the psyche of all leaders of the twin institutions which we love—the AT&LU and its daughter organization, the ABLP led by the Prime Minister Gaston Browne," de Nully stated.

According to de Nully there are four pieces of legislation which followed after several decades of agitation, caused a new Antigua and Barbuda to emerge.

"First, the 1967 Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda that caused all



President of the AT&LU, Bernard de Nully

domestic decision-making to be transferred from London to St. John's, ushered in a new era. It would allow the esteemed leader, Vere Cornwall Bird, to reverse 300 years of history. No longer would there be a requirement for a colonial Governor to give his assent to legislation adopted by the Parliament," the AT&LU President explained.

De Nully identified the second piece of legislation which seeks to making life for the elderly more materially secure; it

was the 1974 legislation which brought to life The Social Security System. (History shows that prior to losing the 1971 general elections, the ABLP had discussed introducing a similar scheme, however, it was the PLM Administration that introduced this scheme in 1974.)

The AT&LU President names the third important legislation as the 1978 Medical Benefits Scheme Act, adding that the scheme ensures that anyone who fell ill from a list of diseases would receive medical attention and medication virtually

free of cost.

Finally, he singled out the Education Levy Act passed by the parliament in 1994 as the fourth transformative legislation. "This mandatory contribution to the education of our youth is now a model which has been proposed by multilateral institutions to developing countries globally. It is a special fund that goes towards purchasing textbooks, expanding the school plants, providing scholarships, grants and loans that enable acquisition of tertiary education," he outlined.



**11TH JAN
2026**
NIGHT TWO



ONE PEOPLE ONE L VE

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ALL INCLUSIVE

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ANTIGUA CARNIVAL

Minister Turner shines the spotlight at a troubling national issue; a crisis of child abuse

Minister of Social and Urban Transformation, Rawdon Turner, delivered a powerful address on the urgent need to protect the nation's children as he reveals troubling cases of child abuse in both Antigua and in Barbuda.

He was speaking in the House of Representatives on Monday during the debate on the National Budget for Antigua and Barbuda, 2026. His presentation has been described as 'charged with emotion and grounded in heart-breaking reality' as it forced the country to confront an uncomfortable truth: too many children in Antigua and Barbuda are suffering in silence.

In his remarks, Minister Turner noted that he was speaking "not just as a Minister... but as a father, as a son, and as a human being". He revealed harrowing statistics and even more disturbing personal stories of child abuse from January to September this year.

The daunting statistics are; 114 children—not numbers, not cases, but children—were victims of abuse within that short period.

- 27 sexually abused
- 50 neglected
- 22 emotionally abused
- 15 physically beaten

According to the ministry, the Ministry is currently responsible for 91 children in foster care, 12 girls at the Sunshine Home for Girls, and more than 121 referrals along with 65 active court cases involving vulnerable minors.

Most alarming of all, Minister Turner revealed that nearly 30% of these cases occur after midnight, when a child's only hope is that someone in authority will wake up and come.

In Parliament, Minister Turner recounted three real cases that left MPs and observers visibly shaken.



Minister of Social and Urban Transformation, Rawdon Turner,

He told of a little girl who walked into a police station with her grandmother, tears still drying on her face. A doctor confirmed that her stepfather had raped her. But the moment that broke the Minister's heart was when the child asked her mother, "You believe me, right?" — and the mother replied: "No! Not my man! You lying."

The mother later destroyed key evidence, unknowingly washing away the sheets that held the truth.

Another case involved a young boy who arrived at school bruised and starving. X-rays later revealed his arm had been broken with a 2×4 board. The child told officers he counted every blow—ninety-nine—before he passed out. Even then, he still tried to attend school.

When officers intervened, the father attacked them with a chair.

The third case involved a neighbour who called after hearing a child being beaten for three days straight. A lawyer attempted to block entry to the home. When police and social workers

finally got inside, they found a small boy tied to a bed, starved and covered in ligature marks. His own father had bound him, and when he grew tired, he ordered the older brother to continue the beating.

Officers had to switch vehicles multiple times to keep the child safe. He sat trembling in an office late into the night until an officer reassured him: "You're safe now."

Minister Turner acknowledged the overwhelming emotional burden his team faces:

- Social workers crying in their cars between cases
- Foster parents opening their homes without hesitation
- Officers risking their own safety to rescue children
- Staff responding to late-night calls, never knowing what they will find

Yet, despite the trauma, he highlighted a powerful truth: many survivors of abuse have grown up to become lawyers, police officers, nurses, entrepreneurs, chefs, and community leaders. "From broken homes," he said, "to nation builders."

"As long as I am Minister of Social Transformation, no child in Antigua and Barbuda will cry alone."

He reaffirmed his commitment to expanding child protection systems, strengthening interventions, and supporting the frontline heroes who keep the most vulnerable safe.

Minister Turner's passionate appeal is being hailed as a turning point — a moment when the country could no longer look away from the silent suffering of its children.

His message was unmistakably clear: child protection is not a political issue. It is a moral duty.

And the nation must rise to meet it.

Government unveils new low-cost houses for lower income residents



The St. George

\$117,100.00



The Argenta

\$131,000.00



The government has unveiled two new models of low-income houses specifically aimed at those lower income residents whose incomes are still below the threshold required by most financial institutions.

The announcement was made by Housing Minister Maria Browne during her contribution to the debate on the National Budget 2026 for Antigua and Barbuda.

“We heard the cries from many of those who are affected by this dilemma; they

are not indigent enough to qualify for the HAPPI programme and yet not making a big enough salary to qualify for a loan at most financial institutions for the already subsidized homes that we have had on the market. So, that being the case, today, I am happy to announce that the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHAPA) has launched two new model homes that will become available immediately,” she revealed.

The minister said the new

models capture the income bracket that hitherto found itself in a squeeze. The first model will sell for \$131,500.00 and is called the Argenta with two bedrooms, two bathrooms featuring modern, climate-resistance design.

The second model is called the St George. It will sell for \$117,100.00 and it features two bedrooms and two bathrooms.

“You are looking at a home that can be passed on from generation to generation,”

Minister Browne indicated. Both model homes use modular construction. This means that families may carry out extensions as their income levels rise and their economic situation improves.

The homes will be built at several locations including Stadium Heights, Belmont, Table Hill, Gordon, Willikies and Louis Hill in Barbuda. Seventy homes have been earmarked in the first phase of this new development.

Terri London and her team make critical donation to Bendals Primary School



The spirit of community partnership was on full display this week as community activist, Terri London and the Level Up team, in collaboration with Ralph Mims of the R Mims World Group, successfully donated a Hearing Enhancement Device to a young student of the Bendal Primary School. The donation marks a meaningful step toward

improving the child's learning experiences and overall quality of life.

After receiving information about the student's hearing challenges, London and the Level Up team moved swiftly to seek support. Their outreach connected them with Mr. Mims, who immediately joined the initiative to ensure the child received the necessary device.

Representing the student during the presentation was the One Love community, who expressed deep gratitude for the compassionate gesture. Their presence highlighted the strong community network that continues to uplift and support families in need.

The Hearing Enhancement Device will not only enhance the student's aca-

demic participation but also strengthen her ability to engage confidently in social interactions with her peers. London, the Level Up team, the R Mims World Group, and the One Love community all underscored their commitment to ensuring that no child is left behind—especially when timely intervention can transform a life.



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**11TH JAN
2026**
NIGHT TWO



LOVE
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GEN \$100 | KINGDOM \$250 | TIME: 5PM
ALL INCLUSIVE



TICKET LOCATIONS:

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ANTIGUAFESTIVALSOFFICIAL



ANTIGUA CARNIVAL

The Heart of the Harbour: People Power the Antigua Charter Yacht Show 2025



By Zoë Carlton

English Harbour always knows when the season is about to begin. There's a subtle shift in the air: a few early-morning footsteps on the docks, the distant hum of engines warming up, the first glint of polished stainless steel appearing around the headland. Then—almost overnight—the harbour erupts into life as the 2025 Antigua Charter Yacht Show arrives in full colour.

This year's fleet is a spectacle in itself, ranging from nimble 50-footers to towering 300-foot superyachts that look as if they've sailed straight out of another world. Brokers step aboard to explore everything from serene state-rooms and cinema lounges to jacuzzis, helipads, spas, and the indulgent touches that make a charter feel like magic.

A Royal Flush of Yachts

This year, there's a bit of a regal theme. King Benji, fresh on the global circuit, turns heads with sculptural interiors and a toy garage that reads like the Christmas wish list of any thrill-seeker. King Baby makes a tri-

umphant return after a major refit, splashing rock-'n'-roll guitar-themed glamour across the Caribbean with bold design and a cascading jacuzzi. King of Fun — previously known as Magic — brings the party: waterslides, jet skis, Seabobs, beach games and a sleek tender make her part yacht, part floating amusement park.

Luxury With Purpose

While the yachts dazzle, the show is also steering luxury in a new, responsible direction. Sustainability, wellness and meaningful experiences are increasingly central. Environmental stewardship—including emissions offsets—is embedded in the event, reflecting an island with centuries of maritime heritage.

Sailing yachts may be outnumbered at the show, but the variety is breathtaking. From the spectacular 90m motor yacht Norn to the sleek 68' S/Y Cirrus and the awe-inspiring and intriguingly-named S/V Spirit of the C's—the world's largest aluminium sailing yacht—the options for adventure, luxury and style seem limitless. Whether you're chasing speed, elegance, or sheer spectacle, there's a yacht here to

capture every imagination.

The show is also a gateway for local youth. More than ever, Antiguaners are entering maritime training, culinary arts, engineering, navigation, and hospitality. Each yacht represents a pathway—not just a job, but a global career that begins right here in English Harbour.

Unsung Heroes

Yet before anyone tours a suite or tastes a canapé, the real engine of the show is already running. Divers slip into the water before sunrise. Provisioners zig-zag across the island collecting fresh herbs, local snapper, artisan pastries, and the occasional hard-to-find delicacy requested by yachts with discerning guests. Florists slip aboard with armfuls of tropical blooms. Carpenters, electricians, and mechanics move quietly along the docks, ensuring every yacht is flawless by the time the first broker steps aboard.

These are the unsung heroes of the season, and their work reverberates far beyond the marinas. Hotels, taxis, market stalls, laundries, car rentals, craft shops, and restaurants all feel the ripple effect. Luxury may float in the harbour, but the lifeblood of the show is unmistakably Antiguan.

By the time brokers begin their tours, captains share stories of ocean crossings and hidden anchorages. Chefs prepare tasting menus rivalling top restaurants. Stewards demonstrate the service that makes each yacht unique. And the social scene returns with its familiar warmth: breakfast at Copper and Lumber, long coffees at the harbour restaurants, sunset gatherings across the marinas, and the ever-popular chefs' and stewards' competitions that blend skill with spectacle.

Local Businesses: The Heartbeat of the Harbour

Local enterprises are running at full tilt. Jason Pickering of Seagull Inflatables now spends more time on the docks than in the office. “This is when the season comes alive for us. These big yachts mean business—safety gear to service, radios to certify, tenders to repair. We’ve even got a 40-foot tender in the yard right now, and that’s just the warm-up,” he says. For Seagull Inflatables, the show isn’t just a spectacle—it’s a sprint.

Dock Master Tommy Patterson is equally busy. “I tell everyone the yacht show keeps me in shape—I have to get up early now just to keep up with it! But really, it brings a huge income stream to the island. We all benefit when the docks start filling.”

Maurice Belgrave of Maurice Underwater Services has spent most of the last week underwater! He and his team play a crucial behind-the-scenes role in making the boat show a success. From diving to set anchors for arriving yachts to cleaning hulls of algae and barnacles, Maurice and his team ensure every vessel is show-ready. He also manages shuttle operations between marinas, coordinating his crew in uniform to keep the event running smoothly, demonstrating that meticulous preparation and experience are just as vital as the yachts themselves.

“People do come to us, and we try to forget about the hiccups and make the boat show a success.” — Maurice Belgrave

The marine suppliers have been working tirelessly for weeks to ensure every boat arriving for the charter show has exactly what it needs. Long before the first vessel appeared, they were already coordinating shipments from Florida to Antigua, navigating unreliable weekly freight arrivals, limited cargo space on flights, and complex customs delays. Despite challenges ranging from misplaced yacht shipments to holiday-related communication breakdowns, they’ve

continued running around the island daily to secure parts, provisions, and even last-minute specialty items for captains and crews. Their dedication has kept the show afloat, even when it meant finding creative solutions on the spot.

One weary agent told me “I’ve been visiting the boats and seeing what they’re needing for the charter show... basically I’m making sure that the boats get their shipments for all their parts and supplies or provisions, whatever. I had one guy who I deliver I need Maringa and I had to go and strip my tree of all the flowers and leaves in so that he could do his chef competition.”

Safety sits at the heart of the season, and at the skippers’ briefing, ABSAR ensures every captain starts the week aligned, informed, and prepared. “It’s our chance to remind crews what services we offer, from the medical station to emergency response, and to make sure everyone knows where to turn when something needs attention,” says ABSAR Director Cdr Richard Fear.

Even the boats not officially in the show draw attention. Athena is one of the most beautiful on the dock. A 59’ Hinckley, she has stopped visitors in their tracks, with curious onlookers wandering up the gangway hoping for a tour—or even asking to charter her. For her owner, it’s a constant reminder that beauty on the water always attracts admirers, whether planned or not.

The Season Ahead

If the energy of the show is anything to go by, the 2025 season promises to be unforgettable. Bookings are strong, the fleet is dazzlingly diverse and Antigua continues to reign as the Caribbean’s premier yachting hub. From regattas and secluded coves to bustling bars, luxury charters, philanthropic projects and vibrant community events, the island delivers it all. The harbours may glitter with wealth, but the true treasure lies in its people, its culture and the boundless possibilities that rise with every new season—Antigua isn’t just a destination, it’s an experience that keeps calling you back.



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Orange Fire, Orange Frame, Orange Strength, Orange Rhymes.

Sixteen Days, One Phrase: Protect Her Always.

Day sixteen —10th December: Freedom Is Not a Favour



Day Sixteen rises like a closing anthem — the final note of sixteen days singing out for dignity. Today is Human Rights Day, marking the Universal Declaration's bold promise: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." And we must ask — if freedom is guaranteed, why must women still beg for safety? If equality is law, why does protection still feel optional? Why does justice arrive late to too many doors? The UN tells us that one in three women worldwide experience violence. One in three cries behind pretend smiles. One in three reshapes dreams around survival. And in our Caribbean communities, where life is shared closely, violence often hides quietly — wrapped in cultural silence and family shame. But silence does

not protect — it permits.

Across these 16 Days, we walked through every form of violence — domestic harm, economic control, digital harassment, trafficking, disability discrimination, environmental vulnerability, institutional corruption. Each layer revealed the same truth: inequality fuels harm — and justice alone can starve it. UNESCO reminds us that "education strengthens respect for human rights and creates cultures of peace." Peace is not merely the absence of shouting — it is the presence of protection. It is systems working swiftly. It is communities intervening early. It is children taught empathy before anger claims them.

Human rights live in classrooms where consent is taught. They live in police stations where survivors are believed. They live in courts that refuse delay. They live in shelters with open doors and safe beds. They live when men become allies and volunteers become shield-bearers.

Sixteen days were only the spark — the fire must continue. Because rights fade when vigilance sleeps. In Antigua and Barbuda, change stirs — advocacy grows louder, legislation stronger, community education wider. But progress demands consistency. Rights are tested in daily practice — how we treat our daughters in our homes, our sisters in our communities, our colleagues in offices, and strangers on the street.

The UN Secretary-General reminds the world that "human rights belong to all of us — every day, everywhere." That means Monday safety is just as important as International Day solidarity. That means no woman's fear is less urgent because our calendars moved on.

So let us declare:

Freedom is not a favour.
Safety is not optional.
Dignity is not negotiable.

Sixteen Days gave us a language for justice — now let our lives speak it loudly.

No more normalization of harm.
No more tolerance of silence.
No more waiting while women suffer.

Let Human Rights Day mark not an ending, but a beginning — where Antigua and Barbuda becomes a nation known not only for its beauty — but for its bravery in protecting women.

When women are safe, humanity stands taller.

And when dignity is defended, freedom finally becomes real.
Joshuanette Francis
Founder and President, Good Humans 268 Inc.
Mobile: +1 (268) 789 GOOD (4663)
Website: <https://goodhumans268.org/>
Tel 268 727 2120 or 268 463 5674

Antigua Barbuda
**FESTIVALS
COMMISSION**

**10TH JAN
2025**
NIGHT ONE



ONE PEOPLE ONE L VE

**CHRISTOPHER
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GEN \$100 | REGGAE KINGDOM \$375 | TIME: 8PM



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ANNUAL WINTER CHESS TOURNAMENT

SUNDAY

28

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JANUARY 2026-MARCH 2026

AGES: 18 - 30



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GEN \$100 | REGGAE KINGDOM \$375 | TIME: 8PM

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ANTIGUAFESTIVALSOFFICIAL



ANTIGUA CARNIVAL

Regional News

UWP Council rejects Allen Chastanet's resignation following St. Lucia election defeat

By Joanne Clark

For the second time in four years, the United Workers Party's (UWP) National Council has declined to accept a resignation from its political leader, Allen Chastanet, opting instead to keep him at the helm until the party's next convention.

Miramar-Tax-Dollars-728x90

In a statement issued on December 8, the council—described as the UWP's "highest decision-making body"—said it convened to assess "recent political developments," including Chastanet's most recent offer to step down. After what the release called thorough deliberation, members arrived at a "clear and unanimous decision" that the former prime minister should remain in place.

It is the second time the party has rejected Chastanet's attempt to withdraw from leadership. His first resignation was tendered after the UWP's defeat in the 2021 general election. The latest followed the party's heavy loss in the December 1 vote, where the UWP won just one of the 17 contested seats—Chastanet's own.

The statement, signed by Public Relations Officer Leonard "Spider" Montoute, stressed unity and continuity as the party moves into a rebuilding phase.

"The United Workers Party convened a meeting of the National Council, its highest decision-making body on Monday December 8th 2025 to discuss recent political developments,



including the resignation submitted by the Party leader, Allen Chastanet," the release stated.

"After thorough deliberation, the body reached a clear and unanimous decision not to accept the resignation at this time. Allen Chastanet will therefore continue to serve as party leader until the upcoming convention.

"The United Workers Party remains committed to serving the public interest, strengthening our organization and working constructively toward our shared goals.

We thank our members, supporters and the public for their continued trust." — Leonard Spider Montoute, Public Relations Officer.

Chastanet, 65, was the sole UWP candidate to secure a seat in last Monday's general election, which handed a resounding victory to the ruling St. Lucia Labour Party (SLP). Prime Minister Phillip J. Pierre's SLP won 14 of 17 parliamentary seats, while independents Stephenson King and Richard Frederick—both former members of Pierre's previous administration—retained their constituencies.

The council's decision effectively places the party's future direction in Chastanet's hands as the UWP prepares for its next internal leadership contest.



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Regional News

PAGE 25

Canada 'continues to monitor' U.S. boat strikes in Caribbean as questions swirl and allies squirm

U.S. has placed Canada in an impossible position, military expert argues

The federal government says it is keeping a close eye on lethal strikes by American forces on suspected drug boats in the Caribbean, while continuing with operations in the region.

Canada has conducted Operation Caribbe — an anti-drug trafficking mission in partnership with the United States Coast Guard — since 2006.

The Department of National Defence says that mission has nothing to do with the deadly strikes conducted by the U.S.

"The U.S.'s actions are unilateral and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) does not participate," wrote DND spokesperson Nick Drescher Brown. "Canada continues to monitor the situation closely."

Members of HMCS William Hall and U.S. law enforcement agents return to the ship with bundles of cocaine seized from a boat in the Caribbean on May 29, 2025. (Canadian Armed Forces)



Video released by the Pentagon shows the moment a suspected drug boat was struck in the Caribbean on Sept. 2. (U.S. Department of War)

The department says there are no planned changes to Operation Caribbe, but it is "continuously reviewing operational engagements to ensure they remain consistent with Canada's legal obligations and strategic interests."

At least 87 people have been killed in nearly two dozen U.S. strikes in the Caribbean since September.

The strikes mark a drastic change in U.S. policy on drug trafficking in the Caribbean, diverging from efforts to stop and arrest suspected traffickers at sea

and send them to the U.S. to face prosecution.

What should Canada do?

This shift has left Canada and other allies in an impossible position, according to Rob Huebert, director of the Centre For Military, Security and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary.

"I think the Canadian government is quite rightly being very cautious on its activities to ensure Canadians are not caught up in any kind of illegal activities, but at the same token trying to maintain this working relationship we have," Huebert

told CBC News.

The United Kingdom suspended intelligence-sharing with the U.S. in the region in November. Colombia did the same.

France condemned the use of force at G7 meetings in Canada, while Canadian officials remained quiet on the topic.

U.S. lawmakers ramp up pressure to release boat strike video

The Trump administration is facing new pressure from some Republican lawmakers who are demanding footage of a controversial second strike on an alleged Venezuelan drug boat in the Caribbean be made public.

Canada maintains its partner in the region is the U.S. Coast Guard, and not the U.S. Navy, which has been conducting the strikes.

But Huebert said that's a thin distinction, considering both entities are partners in Operation Martillo — the U.S.-led anti-drug-trafficking operation in the Caribbean.

POINTE ON DE STREETZ

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Regional News



Members of HMCS William Hall and U.S. law enforcement agents return to the ship with bundles of cocaine seized from a boat in the Caribbean on May 29, 2025. (Canadian Armed Forces)

“It probably allows for a little bit of political cover,” Huebert said. “In terms of the actual interaction going on, the U.S. Coast Guard is part of the U.S. military.” The Washington Post reported that Hegseth ordered a secondary strike on a vessel off Venezuela on Sept. 2, aimed at killing the survivors of an initial strike.

The secretary of war later said the strike was ordered by Admiral Frank Mitchell Bradley, but Hegseth voiced approval for the decision — while Democratic lawmakers have questioned its legality.

Huebert said this leaves Canada with a tough decision: Do we continue with Operation Caribe despite having an unpredictable partner, or end the long-standing mission and face the consequences?

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth authorized 2nd strike on alleged drug vessel, White House says. Why U.S. strikes on suspected drug boats have Canada ‘between a rock and a hard place’

“If we walk away from it,

obviously the Americans aren’t going to be doing anything to help us in terms of stopping the drugs that are entering Canada,” Huebert said. “They are a very vindictive administration.”

Asked for a response to Huebert’s comments, a White House spokesperson said all strikes had been against “designated narco-terrorists” and that U.S. President Donald Trump “will continue to use every element of American power to stop drugs from flooding into our country.”

Operation Caribe has disrupted and seized more than 123 metric tonnes of cocaine since 2006. Ending the mission would have political and real-world ramifications for Canada — a country already dealing with a growing cocaine problem. Huebert said National Defence Minister David McGuinty can only make it clear Canada cannot participate in illegal activities, and hope the Canadian Armed Forces aren’t dragged into any.

“There isn’t a good solution,” Huebert said.

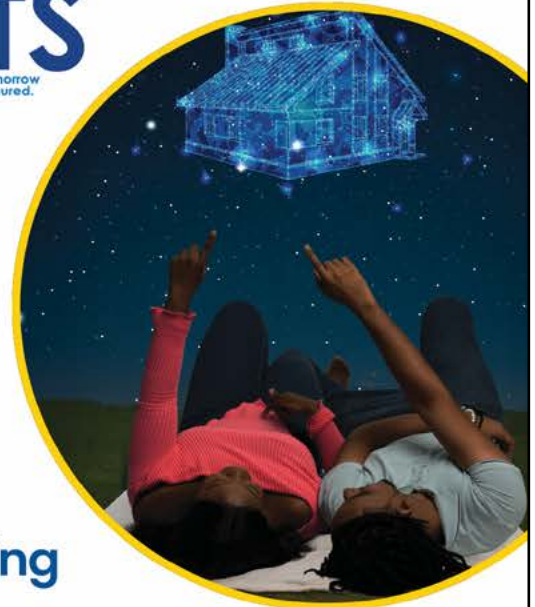


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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

Man who died on Caribbean cruise was served 33 alcoholic drinks: lawsuit



Michael Virgil (L) is seen trying to kick down a door on the Navigator of the Seas cruise ship (R). Fox 11 / Getty Images

A Royal Caribbean cruise passenger who died aboard a ship last year after an altercation with staff was served 33 alcoholic drinks on the night of his death, according to a new lawsuit filed by the man's family.

Passenger Michael Virgil, 35, was detained by security in December last year after he allegedly physically assaulted crew members and threatened other passengers in a drunken rage aboard the Navigator of the Seas.

New accusations about the events leading up to his death say cruise ship staff “negligently” over-served Virgil alcoholic drinks “in a matter of hours,” while he was clearly intoxicated, according to court documents filed in Miami, where the cruise company is based, CBS News reported.

Virgil was on the cruise, which left

from Los Angeles, with his fiancée, Connie Aguilar, and their son, who was seven at the time of the incident.

According to the lawsuit, he became agitated after getting lost while trying to locate his cabin. He was confronted by security staff who reportedly tackled him to the ground, subduing him “with their full body weight.”

In video footage obtained by Fox, Virgil appeared to attempt to kick down a door to a room where a crew member was hiding, screaming profanities, before being held down by security.

At the request of the captain, Royal Caribbean crew also injected Virgil with haloperidol, a medical-grade substance used to treat psychosis. Virgil was also pepper-sprayed, the lawsuit says.

The father “ultimately died in the care of Royal Caribbean staff and crew members,” it added.

Lawyers said that despite having the right to refuse service to visibly intoxicated passengers, cruise ship staff did not and in doing so, failed to protect Virgil's life. The case also claims that the cruise purposefully pushes “all you can drink” packages on customers and lines its Navigator of the Seas ships with bars.

Additional allegations claim that Royal Caribbean displayed negligent training and hiring practices, including of medical and security staff, which lawyers say contributed to Virgil's death.

In a statement given shortly after the incident, a Royal Caribbean spokesperson said an investigation was ongoing: “We are saddened by the passing of one of our guests. We offered support to the family and are working with authorities on their investigation.”

This is the second recent lawsuit brought against Royal Caribbean involving a death and the overconsumption of alcohol.

In October last year, a 66-year-old woman died from falling overboard on a Taylor Swift-themed cruise after staff kept serving her alcohol despite showing clear signs of intoxication, her family claimed in a lawsuit.

“Royal Caribbean didn't just sell drinks—it sold danger,” the plaintiffs' lawyer Spencer Aronfeld said.

“This isn't an accident; it's an industry pattern. We're putting the cruise lines on notice: the days of profiting from over-service while passengers die at sea are over.”

Regional News



ACLU files lawsuit seeking legal basis for Trump's Caribbean boat strikes

Rights watchdog groups in the United States have filed a lawsuit seeking greater clarification on the legal rationale being used to justify the Trump administration's targeting of alleged drug trafficking vessels off Latin America.

The lawsuit, filed on Tuesday by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the group's New York state affiliate NYCLU, and the Center for Constitutional Rights, seeks the release of an opinion from the internal Office of Legal Counsel (OLC), which advises the executive branch on legal matters.

"The public deserves to know how our government is justifying the cold-blooded murder of civilians as lawful and why it believes it can hand out get-out-of-jail-free cards to people committing these crimes," Jeffrey Stein, staff attorney with the ACLU's National Security Project, said in a press release. "The Trump administration must stop these illegal and immoral strikes, and officials who have carried them out must be held accountable."



US President Donald Trump speaks during a cabinet meeting at the White House, on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, in Washington, DC, the United States [Julia Demaree Nikhinson/AP Photo]

At least 86 people have been killed since the Trump administration announced the first strike in early September, in what the president has depicted as a counter-narcotics effort. A total of 22 declared strikes have been carried out in the Caribbean, even though they are widely considered illegal under both international and US law, since drug trafficking is a criminal activity.

The press statement by the groups says that they hope to force a disclosure from the OLC that "apparently blesses the ongoing strikes as lawful acts in an alleged 'armed conflict' with unspecified 'drug cartels'".

NYCLU staff attorney Ify Chikezie told Al Jazeera in a phone call that

the lawsuit was filed after the State Department, Department of Defense, and OLC failed to respond to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request in defiance of legal requirements.

"We believe that the public has the right to see the document justifying the administration's strikes," said Chikezie, adding that the government is trying to evade scrutiny.

Legal experts roundly reject the administration's claim that drug trafficking constitutes an attack on the US and that alleged traffickers are therefore unlawful combatants who can be killed with military force. But despite their likely illegality, the Trump administration has pressed forward with more strikes and has stat-

ed that they will continue, sharing videos of small boats exploding after being struck on social media.

"The Trump administration seems to be making up the idea that we are at war with someone somewhere, but these are ordinary civilians engaged in, at worst, criminal activity, so their killings are simply murder," said Chikezie.

Some have also cast doubt on the administration's stated aim of combating drug trafficking, noting that the strikes have a minuscule impact on drug flows.

The campaign also comes during a period of heightened US threats against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who the Trump administration has accused of coordinating the activities of criminal groups despite internal US intelligence assessments that undercut that claim.

The US has deployed a large contingent of forces to the region, including an aircraft carrier and thousands of troops, prompting speculation about a possible attack on Venezuela to topple Maduro.

Trump criticises ‘decaying’ European countries and ‘weak’ leaders

US President Donald Trump has criticised European leaders as “weak” and suggested the US could scale back support for Ukraine.

In a wide-ranging interview with Politico, he said “decaying” European countries had failed to control migration or take decisive action to end Ukraine’s war with Russia, accusing them of letting Kyiv fight “until they drop”.

European leaders have made attempts to carve out a role in the US-led efforts to end the war, which they fear will undercut the long-term interests of the continent in favour of a quick resolution.

In response, the UK’s Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said all she saw in Europe was “strength”, citing investment in defence as well as funding for Kyiv.

She added two presidents were “working for peace” - referring to



Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky - and “one president - President Putin - has so far simply sought to escalate the conflict with further drone and missile attacks”.

Trump continued to increase pressure on Zelensky to agree to a peace deal, and urged him to “play ball” by ceding

territory to Moscow. Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Zelensky, writing on X later on Tuesday, said Ukraine and Europe were working actively on “all components of potential steps toward ending the war”, that the Ukrainian and European



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POINTE FM 99.1

THURSDAYS 9PM – 11PM

International

AROUND THE WORLD



elements of the plan were now more developed.

He then told reporters he believed the plans would be submitted to the US on Wednesday.

Trump's latest public criticism of Europe comes a day after European leaders came together in London to discuss their continued joint efforts to stop the fighting in Ukraine.

Asked whether Europe could help end the war, Trump said: "They talk but they don't produce. And the war just keeps going on and on."

US officials have held separate talks with Ukrainian and Russian officials in recent weeks in an attempt to broker an end to the war. So far, no agreement has been reached.

Ukraine's president has pressed European and Nato leaders to help deter the US from backing a deal that Kyiv fears would leave it exposed to future attacks.

On Sunday Trump suggested, without evidence, that Zelensky was the main obstacle to peace.

He told reporters that Russia was "fine" with the peace plan outlined to both sides by the US, that contained major concessions for Ukraine and which allies feared would leave it vulnerable to a future invasion.

In the Politico interview, he claimed Ukrainian negotiators "loved" the US-backed proposal and alleged Zelensky had not yet read it.

Trump also repeated previous calls for Kyiv to hold elections and claimed it was "using war" as a reason not to do so.

He said: "You know, they talk about a democracy, but it gets to a point where it's not a democracy anymore."

Zelensky's five-year term as president was due to end in May 2024, but elections have been suspended in Ukraine since martial law was declared after Russia's invasion.

Speaking to reporters after Trump's comments, Zelensky said he was

"ready for the elections" and he would ask for proposals to be drawn up which could change the law.

Elections could be held in the next 60 to 90 days if security is guaranteed with the help of the US and other allies, he told reporters.

Also in the Politico interview, Trump claimed ideological divisions now threatened to fracture Washington's alliances with Europe.

Asked whether leaders who he viewed as weak could still be allies, he replied: "It depends", adding: "I think they're weak, but I also think that they want to be so politically correct. I think they don't know what to do."

The president's remarks came after his administration released its new 33-page National Security Strategy, which warned of Europe's potential "civilisational erasure" and questioned whether some nations could remain reliable allies.

Russia welcomed that strategy - which did not cast Russia as a threat to the US - as "largely consistent" with

Moscow's vision.

Trump also warned on Tuesday many countries in Europe "will not be viable countries any longer" if they keep on the way they are going, adding: "What they're doing with immigration is a disaster."

He singled out Hungary and Poland as doing a "very good job" on immigration, but said most European nations were "decaying".

Responding on Tuesday to the strategy, German chancellor Friedrich Merz said some parts were plausible and some understandable, but other elements were unacceptable from a European point of view.

He rejected the idea that the US needed to "save democracy" in Europe, saying Europeans could address such questions themselves.

The strategy also followed similar rhetoric to Trump's speech to the UN earlier this year, where he had harsh criticism for western Europe and its approach to migration and clean energy.

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Lithuania declares emergency situation over Belarus balloons

The Lithuanian government has declared a “nationwide emergency situation” in response to a series of incursions from neighbouring Belarus by weather balloons carrying smuggled cigarettes.

Prime Minister Inga Ruginiene condemned the balloon incursions as a “hybrid attack” by Belarus that posed a real risk to national security and civil aviation.

This year alone, officials say about 600 balloons linked to smuggling and almost 200 drones have entered Lithuanian airspace, leading to the repeated closure of Vilnius airport.

Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko denies being behind the incursions, alleging the issue has been “politicised” by Lithuania, which is a member of both the EU and Nato.

Lithuania’s decision to impose an “emergency situation” is a step below a state of emergency, which was last imposed in 2022 after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It grants the armed forces additional powers to respond faster and more effectively.

Belarus’s long-time leader is a close ally of Russia’s Vladimir Putin, and Lithuania’s president, Gitanas Nausėda, has said there is a lot of evidence that the balloon threat is a “deliberate action aimed at destabilising the situation in Lithua-



Thousands of cigarettes smuggled from Belarus have been intercepted in recent months and Lithuania calls it a “hybrid attack”

A number of European countries have faced a range of threats from Russia, which the EU has condemned as a “hybrid campaign” that includes sabotage, disruption to critical infrastructure and most recently drone flights near sensitive sites.

Last month, the head of Nato’s military committee, Adml Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, said the Western military alliance was considering a more “aggressive” or “pro-active” stance to Russia’s hybrid warfare.

Responding to the latest threat, Lithuania closed two border checkpoints with Belarus for three weeks from the end of October. Belarus then barred Lithuanian trucks from driving on its roads and hundreds of Lithuanian vehicles are still

understood to be stranded there.

“We are talking about aviation security and international law, and about the fact that such actions could be recognised as terrorism,” Ruginiene said last week, in reference to both the balloons and the blocked trucks.

The weather balloons can fly to a height of 10km (6 miles) and Lithuania’s interior ministry says they have led to Vilnius airport being closed for more than 60 hours since October. Some 30,000 passenger were affected in October alone.

Lukashenko told Belarusian TV on Tuesday that what the Lithuanians were accusing Belarus of was impossible: “It is unrealistic. Even if balloons flew into there, even if they did, I have spoken to pilots and

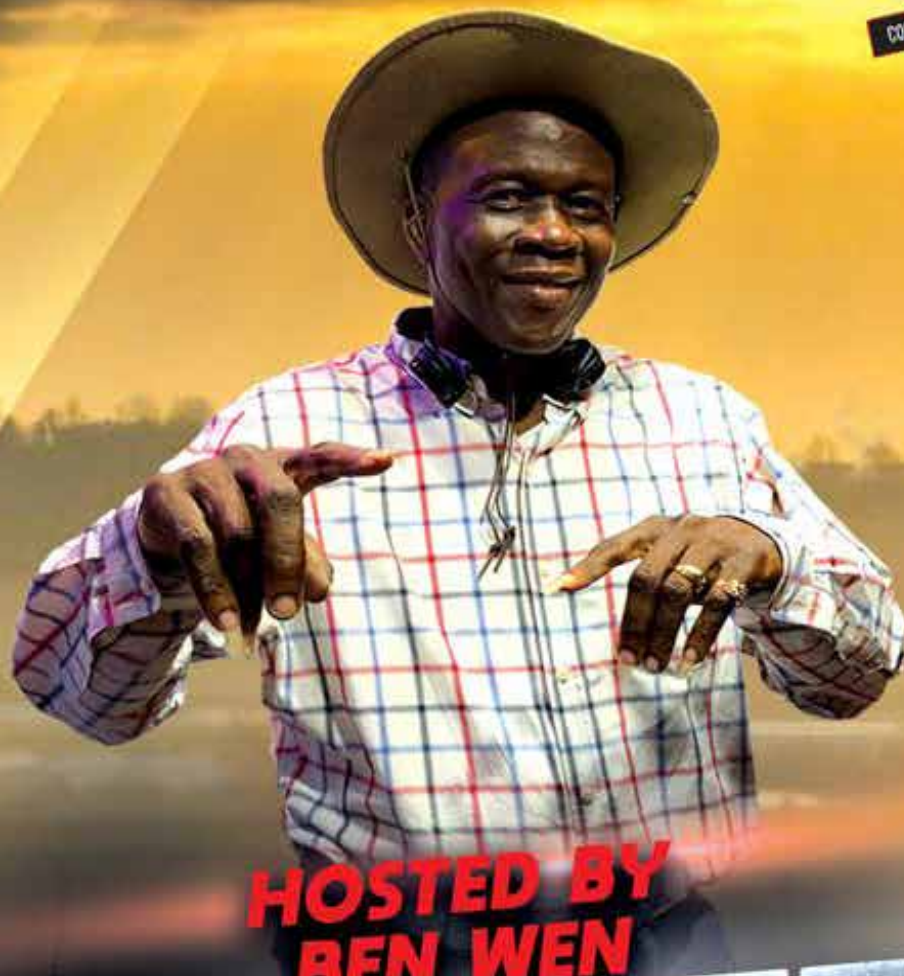
they say that they pose no problem.”

“The question arises why,” he added. “Do they want to fight us? We do not need war. I am convinced that the Lithuanian people do not need war either. Neither do Poles, Latvians and Estonians.”

Although flights into and out of Vilnius airport were disrupted for only a short period on Saturday night, it meant that 1,000 passengers were affected. Authorities said they had intercepted 11 smuggling balloons and seized almost 40,000 packets of cigarettes.

On one night last week, the airport had to suspend operations three times and Finnish airline Finnair has cancelled all evening flights to Vilnius until the end of February because of the balloons.

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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

CRICKET-Shallow says he will not seek re-election in 2028

ST JOHN'S, Antigua, CMC – President of Cricket West Indies (CWI), Dr Kishore Shallow, has announced that he will not seek a third term in office when his term comes to an end.

In a statement streamed on CWI's social media platforms on Sunday, Shallow, who was recently elected as a Member of Parliament and named Minister of Tourism and Maritime Affairs in St Vincent and the Grenadines, said. At the same time, he will continue in his role at CWI, but he will not seek re-election in 2028.

The 41-year-old Shallow took over leadership at CWI from Ricky Skerrett in 2023 and was re-elected unopposed in May of this year.

"I know that some of you may be concerned about



my recent appointment to the Cabinet and what it may mean for my continued service as president of CWI. Let me be up front and transparent with you as I've always been.

"Admittedly, I have thought long and hard about this. My conviction is that the work ahead requires steady leadership and a commitment to completing the reforms already set in motion. It is for this reason that I will conclude my cur-

rent term, but with the intention not to seek re-election," Shallow said in the pre-recorded statement.

In giving his reasons for not stepping down, Shallow said he wanted to complete the reforms needed to improve West Indies cricket, both on and off the field.

He said most of those reforms had already begun, and he was committed to seeing them through to completion during his ten-

ure.

"When I first accepted the responsibility of serving at CWI, I did so with a clear objective: to help restore the integrity of the organisation and advance governance reform meaningfully. Our aim has always been to create a stronger foundation that can ultimately support improved performances on the cricket field.

"While the journey has not been without its challenges, and we have not achieved every goal, we have made significant and measurable progress," Shallow maintained.

"My conviction is that the work ahead requires steady leadership and a commitment to completing the reforms already set in motion."





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CWI President Says There Will Be No Knee-Jerk Reaction To West Indies' Losing Record



West Indies head coach, Daren Sammy

ST JOHN'S, Antigua – President of Cricket West Indies (CWI), Dr Kishore Shallow has maintained that there is no intention to fire West Indies head coach Daren Sammy, despite his losing record since taking charge of all formats earlier this year.

The 41-year-old Sammy, who was appointed all-format coach in April, has faced mounting pressure following a string of bad results.

Since then, the Windies were swept by Australia (3-0) and India (2-0) in their Test series and have won just six of their last 18 T20Is and three of their nine One Day Internationals.

However, speaking during an exclusive interview on Isports i95.5 FM on Thursday, Shallow said Sammy's job would not hinge on the results of the ongoing Test series against New Zealand.

"I don't think that whether we win this series or not will be a result of the current composition of our selection system. It is not, because before each series if we go across and ask across the region if it is the correct squad chosen for the tour, most people will be in agreement, so clearly that is not the issue.

"And even if a player is unavailable due to injury, you can't blame a selector for that either and we are without two of our leading fast bowlers in the current Test series against New Zealand in Shamar Joseph and Alzarri Joseph," Shallow pointed out.

"So, we understand the issue and you won't get a knee-jerk reaction from me, because I understand fully well what it takes for us to be successful consistently, but we have to address the fundamental deficiencies in our system which

we haven't done well over the years."

Shallow admitted, though, that he was less than impressed by the team's recent performances.

However, he said CWI was fully aware of what needed to be done to improve West Indies cricket and was in the process of doing so.

"We haven't seen the sort of performances and I would be the very first to put up my hand and say I'm not pleased with the young team's performance, but this isn't anything new. We've been inconsistent at best with our performances, meaning we haven't been doing well.

"Whenever we've been performing, and we see glimpses of brilliance we've been inconsistent in that case," Shallow said.

"But it goes back about three decades now, so it is not new. I said from the very start that it is not an overnight fix for West Indies cricket... We are not going to produce the results that we are dying for, that we have been waiting for almost impatiently.

"We know our talent, and we've been here before where we have gained a little success that we believe that we can return there. I have no doubt that we can return there but it takes now the implementation of systems and infrastructure across the region and stabilising our financial situation," he added.

Antigua and Barbuda footballer takes part in trials for top UK football clubs



Antiguan and Barbudan player Kylano makes history by being the first national to join Blackburn Rovers FC in the UK by participating in their trials.

Kylano is a member of the Senior National team of Antigua and Barbuda and this development is seen as a significant step forward in his career development. Following these trials, he will have sim-

ilar engagements with Barnsley FC

He is one of five Antiguan and Barbudan footballers on an Athletic Development programme at Future Pro training academy in the UK sponsored by the Prime Minister's Scholarship programme.

"We are immensely proud of Kylano's accomplishments and wish him all the best



during the trials," a PMSP stated. spokesman for the