

# Scores of people attend free dental clinic daily

*Story on page 2*



*Photo courtesy: Wayne Mariette*

**The funeral procession of Sir Gerald Watt making its way to the burial site, the St. George's Anglican Church yard**

# Scores of people attend free dental clinic daily



**Georgene "Mama G" Crowe**

Some sixty-five dentists, hygienists and volunteers from the non-profit group Great Shape Inc. are in Antigua conducting a two-week dental clinic in collaboration with Sandals Foundation and the Ministry of Health.

Co-Founder of the US-based organization, Georgene Crowe, affectionately called Mama G, said the clinic is being organized under the group's 1000 Smiles Dental Project which it has so far conducted in Jamaica, St. Lucia, Grenada, the Turks and Caicos Islands and now for the first time, Antigua and Barbuda.

"Our team comprises all professionals – dentists, hygienists, and dental assistants - along with support our support staff. They perform cleanings, extractions, fillings and root canals. The clinic runs for two weeks with some members leaving at the end of this week and additional members joining us for the final week," she explained.




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Crowe said the Ministry of Health has provided two nurses to assist with vitals as well as providing pharmaceutical services for patients in need of certain medications. She revealed that the response from the Antiguan public has been very good and she commended those attending the clinic for the manner in which they conducted themselves.

“The Antiguan people are peaceful and mellow. They wait in line in the queue for a long time without making a fuss and nobody getting vex with each other; it was amazing,” she reported.

On Tuesday, a total of 179 patients received dental services at the clinic. The figures for Wednesday were not immediately available, but scores of people were on hand waiting to have their specific needs looked at by a dental team.

Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Kamaria DeCastro, welcomed the operations of the dental clinic in Antigua and Barbuda noting that it is perhaps the first time that a free dental clinic is operating in the country over a two-week period. She added that those patients who may need more specialized services may also receive such care at the clinic.

“There are also plans for one of the registered dentists to stay on longer to work along with local doctors to do follow-up care for patients in need of such services,” Dr. DeCastro explained.

The members of the 1000 Smile Project conducting the clinic are from the United States, Canada and a number of the Caribbean territories where the dental clinic has visited.



## Ministry of Health appeals for more nationals to train as nurses

The government through the ministry of health is pursuing several strategies to solve the chronic problem of shortages of nurses in the healthcare system that have plagued the country for many years.

Health officials say there are a number of factors contributing to this shortage; chief of which is the steady stream of migration that takes place each year where qualified nurses are lured away to developed countries, mainly Canada, the United States and the UK with more lucrative salaries and greater benefits.

Recognising the importance of nurses to the healthcare system, Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph said the government had to act proactively to deal with the problem as the current ratio of one nurse to ten patients is woefully inadequate. There are 260 local nurses employed in the system. The overall demand for nurses is approximately 400.

One strategy to attract more nurses, he revealed, involves the recruitment of nurses from overseas. Already there are 33 Cubans nurses on contract in the healthcare system. This month, the government intends to welcome a total of 120 nurses from Ghana who will be absorbed into the system following a



**Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph**


three-week period of orientation.


However, according to the minister the long-term goal is to attract more local nurses to join the healthcare system as the overseas nurses are all employed under contracts. In the case of the Ghanaian nurses, they will be employed under three-year contracts which will come up for review when they expire.

Sir Molwyn said the main strategy remains getting more locals into the system and the government is partnering

with the University of the West Indies FIC, to train local nurses. Currently, there are just over one hundred nurses at various levels of training at the university. The minister announced that the government will offer three scholarships for nurses to specialize in specific areas of medicine.

The minister said they will all join the system at the end of their training. This, he noted, is the preferred course of action to solve the chronic shortage of nurses in Antigua and Barbuda.





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## Three-day Urban Search and Rescue Training Underway at Crabbes



der the banner of the US Southern Command which is made up of both military and civilian personnel, responsible for providing contingency planning, operations, and security co-operation for the Caribbean, Central and South America.

Urban Search and Rescue focuses on locating and removing victims in an urban area namely a structural collapse.

Individuals involved in the training are from the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force, the Fire Department, the Police Force, the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the National Office of Disaster Services (NODS).

Disaster Response Specialist with the US Department of State Diplomatic Security Chris Schaff says the team of trainers is representing three different

organizations – the US Department of State, Burnaby Urban Search and Rescue out of Canada and Haiti Air Ambulance.

He says the goal is to get participants ready for a full-scale exercise during Tradewinds in June and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November.

Earlier this week, participants have been sharpening their knowledge in lifting and moving large objects, vehicle extrication which is removing trapped or injured persons safely from a vehicle involved in a collision, taking care of a patient after a rescue, moving patients to an aircraft for medical treatment and rope rescue.

The training, being conducted at the Defence Force Training Facility at Crabbes, ends on Thursday.

Approximately 40 first responders are involved in a search and rescue training in preparation for the annual security and disaster response Caribbean-focused exercise Tradewinds and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to be held later this year in Antigua and Barbuda.

The Urban Search and Rescue training (USAR) is being carried out un-



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## The Ministry of Work says members of the public are ignoring its signs



The Ministry of Works is complaining about the several setbacks it has encountered as it undertakes multiple road rehabilitation projects across the country, because members of the public are ignoring its signs.

In a media release, the ministry is urging the public to respect all signs, road blocks and detours that it has mounted at its various work sites.

“Work is currently progressing on the Jennings Extension Road toward Hermitage Bay, and at several other sites. Unfortunately, some members of the public have disregarded clearly marked signs and road blocks, leaving bicycle tracks, footprints, and vehicle tyre tracks in fresh concrete,” the media release revealed.

The ministry is therefore making an urgent appeal to the public to;

- ▶ Respect all road signs and barriers placed along Hermitage Main Road and other work sites.
- ▶ Use the designated detour routes, which have been clearly marked for your safety and convenience.

The ministry wants the public’s cooperation as it implements its mandate to improve the nation’s road infrastructure.



Meanwhile, the Ministry announced that the night works being carried out at Collins, near Pares Village continued overnight Wednesday and are scheduled to continue for the remainder of the week.

Members of the public are advised to exercise caution as heavy duty equipment will be in operation.



Additionally, road users are asked to adhere to the detours, and to follow all instructions provided by employees controlling traffic.

The ministry also wants motorists to remove their vehicles prior to the start of the works, slated for 7:00 o’clock nightly.

## Sir Ronald Sanders Urges Hemispheric Action as Haiti's Crisis Deepens



Antigua and Barbuda's ambassador warns that statements alone will not halt violence or restore governance

Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States and the Organization of American States has called for renewed urgency and tangible action to address the deepening crisis in Haiti, warning that prolonged delay continues to exact an unbearable toll on the Haitian people.

Addressing a meeting of the OAS Permanent Council on Tuesday, Sir Ronald Sanders spoke on the anniversary of Haiti's devastating 2010 earthquake, reflecting on a tragedy whose effects still reverberate across the country's social and institutional fabric.

"Sixteen years ago, Haiti was struck by a catastrophic earthquake whose human toll remains seared into our collective consciousness," Sanders said. He noted that the destruction inflicted then would have overwhelmed even the strongest states, but for Haiti it compounded existing vulnerabilities and set back already fragile institutions.

Today, he said, the country faces a different but equally destructive ca-



**The new Permanent Representative of Haiti to the OAS, Jean Josué Pierre, presented his credentials to Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin.**

lamity. Armed gangs have imposed a climate of fear across large swathes of the capital and beyond, seizing neighbourhoods, paralyzing daily life, and hollowing out democratic and constitutional order. Ordinary Haitians, Sanders told the Council, now live with fear as a constant companion.

The Ambassador expressed concern that, even as conditions worsen, the region's response risks losing momentum. He questioned whether any other country in the hemisphere would be permitted to slide so far into collapse while the collective response remains dominated by discussions, deferred decisions, and carefully phrased declarations.

"Haiti needs more than expressions of solidarity," Sanders said. "It needs action—deliberate, coordinated, and effective action, particularly from

those with the means and capacity to deliver it."

He rejected arguments that the hemisphere lacks capability, noting that governments have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to act decisively when political will aligns with purpose. The challenge, he suggested, lies not in capacity but in resolve.

Among concrete steps, Sanders proposed the establishment of an OAS Fund for Haiti, supported by contributions from all member states, as part of a broader recommitment to sustained engagement.

"The credibility of our collective resolve," he concluded, "will be measured not by what we say, but by what the Haitian people continue to endure—every hour of every day."

## Winners of the Summer Writing Challenge get special recognition

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries celebrated the winners of the 2025 Summer Writing Challenge at a luncheon award ceremony at the Hodges Bay Resort on Wednesday.

In 2022, the Summer Writing Challenge was launched to provide young Antiguan and Barbudans, aged 6 to 17, with an opportunity to explore critical issues and express their ideas in writing during the many weeks of the summer holidays. In 2024, 18 year olds who were still in Secondary school were allowed to participate. In 2025, students wrote poems, essays or dramatic pieces on one of the five themes: OAS, Volunteerism, Man and Animals, Mental Health and Sports.

Students from Newfield Primary, Liberta Primary School, All Saints Secondary School, Antigua Grammar School, Island Academy International, Ottos Comprehensive School and Sir Novelle Richards Academy emerged winners from among a total of 127 participants. The winners in the various categories are:

### *Names of Winners Theme Schools*

#### **6-9 years**

1. Noah Michael (topic: Man and Animals) Liberta Primary School



**Mrs. Cheryll Rogers**

2. Khor Johnson (topic: Mental Health) Newfield Primary School

#### **10-13 years**

1. Kirvin Marcellin (topic: Volunteerism) All Saints Secondary School
2. Jhamely Paredes (topic: Volunteerism) Ottos Comprehensive School
3. Micah Thomas (topic: Man and Animals) Antigua Grammar School

#### **14-18 years**

1. Kesus Barnes (topic: Volunteerism) Irene B. Williams School
2. Ti-ikha Edwards (topic: Mental



**Dr. Desryn Collins**

- Health) Island Academy International
3. Jaiheel Goodwin (topic: Sports) Sir Novelle Richards Academy

The competition is fully sponsored by Mrs. Cheryll Rogers, and Education Officer for Language Arts, Dr. Desryn Collins who initiated the challenge, has expressed

appreciation for Mrs. Roger's commitment to partnering with the Ministry of Education in giving students a regular platform to express their ideas responsibly. She firmly believes that the only way for students to improve their writing craft is by extensive writing and encourages all students to participate in future challenges.

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## Flow Antigua and Barbuda Donates Laptops to JCI Antigua

Flow Antigua and Barbuda has reinforced its ongoing commitment to youth leadership development and community advancement through the donation of two laptop computers to JCI Antigua. The devices were officially handed over to JCI Antigua President Collet Gordon, accompanied by Secretary General Akilah Anderson, during a brief presentation ceremony.

This contribution underscores Flow's dedication to empowering organizations that make meaningful contributions to national development. The laptops will strengthen the operational capacity of JCI Antigua's Secretariat, supporting the organization's administrative functions and its various community-driven programs.

Speaking at the handover, Wayne Hull, Country Manager of Flow Antigua and Barbuda, highlighted the company's continued support for initiatives that positively impact communities across the nation:

"Flow is proud to support organizations that are actively shaping our communities. We believe these devices will help strengthen JCI Antigua's ability to empower young leaders and drive meaningful impact across the nation."

Founded in 1960, JCI Antigua has a long history of championing youth empowerment, leadership development, and



community upliftment. Flow's contribution reflects the company's belief in fostering partnerships that encourage growth, innovation, and national progress.

Expressing sincere gratitude on behalf of the 2026 Board of Directors, Senators, and general members of JCI An-

tigua, President Gordon said: "This donation will significantly increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our Secretariat. It is both timely and much needed as we continue to fulfill our mission of developing young leaders."

# Eulogising Sir Gerald Watt



## Former colleague and his son speak glowingly about the late Speaker

Attorney Dr. David Dorsett, who shared a law firm with the late Speaker of the House of Representatives, delivered a deeply personal tribute Wednesday to **Sir Gerald Owen Anderson Watt**, portraying the late senior counsel as a relentless advocate for justice, a demanding but compassionate mentor, and a lawyer who built a legal legacy grounded in principle rather than convenience.

Speaking during the official funeral service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Dorsett reflected on more than 20 years working alongside Sir Gerald in legal practice, describing him as a “giant of a man” whose presence, discipline and standards shaped not only a law firm, but generations of attorneys.

Dorsett structured his tribute around Psalm 90, noting that Sir Gerald lived for 31,771 days — nearly 87 years — and used those days with purpose. He said Sir Gerald understood that life was bounded and brief, but believed deeply in using that time to build insti-



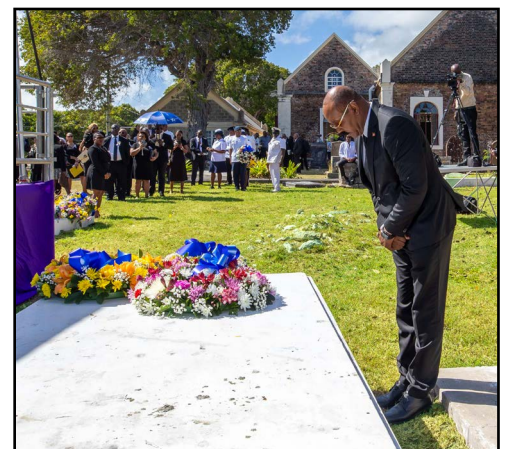
tutions that would endure.

“He built something that he intended was to last,” Dorsett said, referring to the law firm Sir Gerald founded and

carefully architected. He said those who followed him were left with “big shoes to fill,” but also a clear blueprint for professional conduct.

Dorsett described Sir Gerald as a lawyer who rejected easy money and was often drawn to hard cases others avoided. He said Sir Gerald viewed the law as a tool to help people in trouble, not to profit from their distress, and was driven by a desire to see justice prevail wherever possible.

Meanwhile, when Sir Gerald’s son, Gavin Watt, delivered the eulogy, he spoke of remembering his father not only as a towering legal figure but as



a devoted father, husband and man of deep passion.

“We’re here to celebrate the life of my father,” Watt told mourners, trac-



ing his journey from “Gerald Anderson Watt” to one of the country’s most respected legal minds.

Gavin Watt said passion defined his father’s life, both at home and in his professional work. “I would say you have to have passion, and I think that’s one of the things about my father that everyone here sees,” he said.

He spoke of witnessing firsthand his father’s love for family and his dedication to building a lasting legacy in Antigua and Barbuda. “As a son, I got to see the love that he had for my mom,

our family, our entire family,” he said. “I saw his passion for work and how to build a legacy in Antigua.”

Watt shared childhood memories of early Saturday mornings spent together before his father left for work. “He would say, ‘Okay, I have some time here now, but I’m soon going to have to go and work,’” he recalled. “So he would say to me, ‘Okay, let’s watch a little TV.’”

Those moments often included western films and cricket, two lifelong passions of Sir Gerald. “My father was

very much into westerns,” Watt said. “But he was also very passionate about cricket. Even if they weren’t winning, he would watch.”

The eulogy also painted a picture of Sir Gerald’s strong personality and sense of humor, even during family disagreements. Watt recalled that after arguments, his father would sometimes say, “I don’t need to argue with you — I get paid to argue,” a line that always signaled the tension had passed.

# NURSING OUR TROUBLES



**Dr. James E. Knight**

Our nurses find it hard to live on their salaries. So do teachers. Their jobs can be stressful, especially if they work well. Police officers can also complain. They are all essential.

A salary increase is always welcome, and certainly, there have been increases over the years. But does a salary increase on its own bring down the cost of living? Don't the costs of goods and services also increase, as well as do taxes, in whatever form? Don't house and apartment rental costs increase? The truth is that salaries can never catch up; what it costs to live is what must come down. That cannot be accomplished with individual salaries.

While doing a potentially stressful job, especially one in which they are expected to be calm, patient and polite, even while dealing with the most difficult human beings, people need not to be struggling to get by in their domestic lives. Of course not. So, what are the complaints?

A major complaint, if not *the* major complaint these days, is the inability to afford the ownership or rental of a decent dwelling place. That is, mortgage or rent. Then there are those who have young children who must be cared for while the parents are working on various shifts. That carries a significant cost. Without reliable public transportation, vehicle ownership and maintenance become necessary. It is unrealistic to expect any salary increases that could solve these problems.

In its manifestos for the 1980 and 1989 general elections, the Antigua-Caribbean Liberation Movement, the ACLM, addressed these issues. On page 37 of the 1980 manifesto, there is a description of COMMUNITY COMPLEXES and DAY CARE CENTRES, and a promise that "ACLM will seek to provide this [day care] programme as a fundamental priority".

On the same page, on the question of transportation, we read: "ALCM will develop a COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, leaving room for private bus owners". "[This] will reduce Antigua's high energy bill, in that it will reduce the high demand for cars ..."

"HOUSING – A RIGHT, NOT A PRIVILEGE", is what the ACLM declares on page 41 of the same manifesto. "An ACLM government will build each year, at least the minimum [number of] houses required by all international estimates ..." An ACLM government would construct furnished apartments for new families and single men and women, in order to ease con-

gestion in the city and the hunger for houses." The ACLM also advocated since that time, that government establish a regulatory body to control home rental costs and conditions, just as we have a Prices and Consumer Affairs department.

Then, in the 1989 manifesto, ACLM once more lays out its comprehensive plan for making house ownership easier, beginning on page 48 of that document. Repeatedly, at public meetings, ACLM advocated special housing programme for nurses, teachers and police officers. These all have very strong bargaining bodies, especially the nurses and teachers.

The problem is that instead of consistently advocating and pushing for these

absolutely necessary reforms, the bargaining bodies tend to go almost dormant when a party that they favour is in power, making no open complaints. Then, as soon as that party loses power, they declare absolute and acute crisis, and spring into action, making immediate demands that are often quite unreasonable. So what should be progressive advocacy and activism can only be seen as political trouble-making.

The solution to the troubling issues that our nurses may have, cannot be running away to work hard overseas, looking after others, after getting their training at the expense of their own people, who need their care. It's at the national level that we must treat our own sores. We must nurse our troubles.



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## Strengthening the Future of Exports: Is it time for a National Export Authority?



By Jeniece St. Romain

Antigua and Barbuda is rightly celebrated its beaches and warm hospitality, with a world-renowned tourism product and thriving service industry that has carried this country through storms, both literal and economic, and which continues to anchor our foreign exchange earnings.

But despite this, it is no secret that merchandise exports remain small, hovering around USD \$30 million annually, in comparison to imports in the twin-island state which exceed USD \$800 million. While this gap, known as a trade deficit, is not unusual for a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), it is one that has been continuously acknowledged by many as risky for Antigua and Barbuda, in the face of global pandemics, such as COVID-19, natural disasters, such as hurricanes, and during times of economic uncertainty and global downturns.

While there is undeniable progress in Antigua and Barbuda's current economic performance, with real GDP growth surpassing pre-pandemic levels, even in times of strength there must be consideration of where improvement can be made on inherent structural weaknesses. It is common knowledge that an economy built almost entirely on one export sector is

innately fragile, and while there are existing support mechanisms and efforts being deployed by the Government, including investment in strategic industries other than tourism, we need to ask ourselves how such efforts can be further buttressed.

One answer may lie in further developing Antigua and Barbuda's export profile and infrastructure. From a trade law perspective, Antigua and Barbuda benefits from World Trade Organisation membership, the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, and a number of other bilateral and



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multilateral agreements and economic partnerships, as a result of which we enjoy certain preferential and duty-free access to major markets. Yet, these advantages remain underutilized by our business owners, entrepreneurs and potential exporters due to financial barriers, as well as inadequate export promotion infrastructure.

Trade law obligations such as sanitary and phytosanitary standards and other regulatory requirements, carry compliance costs. For a small producer of agro-processed goods or fisheries products in Antigua and Barbuda, these costs can be insurmountable without targeted institutional support.

In order to equip businesses to take advantage of the market access we enjoy globally and to develop national export capacity, it may be time for Antigua and Barbuda to consider establishing a National Export Authority. While there is a regional export development agency, the Caribbean Export Development Agency headquartered in Barbados, if Antigua and Barbuda is serious about tapping into export markets beyond tourism, a dedicated, stand-alone domestic body with a core mandate of “national export development and export promotion,” may be necessary, in the same way that Barbados has Export Barbados, and Jamaica has JAMPRO, the Jamaica Promotions Corporation.

In many small island economies, export authorities act as practical, hands-on institutions; they provide market intelligence, exporter training, certification support, and buyer matchmak-

ing. Importantly, they also coordinate across various institutions such as customs, standards bodies, ports, and finance institutions so that exporters are not left to navigate bureaucracy on their own.

At present, responsibility for exports is spread across multiple institutions. The Ministry of Trade manages policy and provides support, the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority focuses on investment facilitation, and regional bodies, and banking institutions provide project-based assistance. However there is no single institution that is mandated to take an Antiguan business from concept to export ready products.

For a micro-exporter such as Antigua and Barbuda, having an export institution to support SMEs in product selection, standards compliance, packaging and branding and buyer matchmaking and logistics would mean all the difference between repeatedly hearing broad statements about the need to move away from tourism, and seeing increased Antiguan and Barbudan products loaded into shipping containers at the Port Authority, destined for international markets.


In Antigua and Barbuda’s present context, an Export Authority would not need to be large or costly, it would just need a clear legal mandate, and to work closely in coordination with existing agencies to grow non-tourism exports deliberately and systematically. This effort must also be complemented by a serious export strategy that also addresses finance.

Re-energising the Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank (ABDB) which was established to support productive sectors of the economy, and historically played an important role in agriculture, sea island cotton, fisheries, and small enterprise development, presents an opportunity to further strengthen Antigua and Barbuda’s export strategy. In many countries, development banks support exports through specialised instruments such as pre-shipment financing, guarantees, concessional loans and co-financing arrangements that reduce risk for exporters.

Aligning ABDB with a specific export finance directives, alongside a national Export Authority could fill the gaps preventing Antiguan and Barbudan SMEs from entering export markets, and facilitate increased trade flows, allowing export earnings to contribute more meaningfully to GDP while modestly improving the trade balance.

Building an export economy in Antigua and Barbuda requires institutions that are designed for delivery. It is time for us to consider whether we are prepared to build, or revitalise, systems that allow for our export potential to materialise.

Jeniece St. Romain, LL.B, LEC, LL.M, is an Attorney-at-Law called to the Antiguan Bar with expertise in international trade law and development policy. This article reflects her personal views and not those of any public authority or institution with which she is affiliated.



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## Jesma Paul-Victor says reappointment as opposition leader beyond political allegiance or personal interest



Opposition Leader Jesma Paul-Victor has made it clear that her reappointment as Leader of the Opposition in Dominica's House of Assembly was not influenced by any political allegiance or personal interest.

She was reappointed on Monday.

Paul-Victor, who represents the Salisbury constituency, was officially appointed on Monday, January 16, 2026, and took the prescribed oath of office today. We have not been able to independently verify this, however Dominica News Online (DNO) understands that her reappointment follows a letter to the President of Dominica from Marigot MP Anthony Charles – the only other elected opposition member – requesting that she be named to the position.

Both Paul-Victor and Charles entered parliament as independent candidates after winning seats in the December 20, 2022, snap general election. With only two opposition members elected, neither was able to command majority support among non-government MPs. To address this, they agreed to a power-sharing arrangement in which they would alternate as Leader of the Opposition.

"We, the elected members of parliament, Honourable Anthony Samora Charles and Honourable Jesma-Paul Victor, hereby inform the people of

Dominica of our decision concerning the appointment of Honorable Jesma Paul-Victor as leader of the opposition in the House of Assembly," she said during a statement. "After careful consideration of the present circumstances facing our country, we exercised our constitutional responsibility to support the appointment of the leader of the opposition."

She continued, "This decision was not taken lightly, nor was it influenced by political allegiance or personal interest. It was guided solely by what we believe to be in the best interest of Dominica."

According to Paul-Victor, Dominica is currently confronting significant economic and social challenges.

"In such periods, the effective functioning of democratic institutions is essential," she stated. "The absence of a formally appointed legal public opposition would weaken and delete critical national processes."

She asserted that Dominica cannot afford a prolonged vacancy in this important constitutional office.

"Our action ensures that Parliament continues to function in accordance with the Constitution. It enables the proper constitutional or statutory and constitutional bodies that require consultation with or input from the leader of the opposition," Paul-Victor emphasized.

She went on to add that her appointment also facilitates the effective operation of parliamentary committees that strengthens debates, scrutiny, and accountability in the House of Assembly. "Above all, it safeguards the people's rights to representation, transparency, and good governance," she asserted. "We recognize that this decision has generated public discussion and differing opinions."

She said the opposition respects these views.

However, Paul-Victor pointed out that leadership sometimes requires difficult

decisions that may not be universally understood or immediately accepted.

"We did not act to advance the interests of any political party. We acted to preserve the integrity and the continuity of the parliamentary system," she remarked. "As independent representatives, we are not bound by party affiliation, our mandate is to serve our constituents and the wider public with honesty, fairness, and independent judgement."

She said supporting the appointment of a leader of the opposition does not compromise that independence, "rather it reinforces our commitment to constitutional order and democratic stability."

"We therefore emphasize that this decision does not align us with any political party. We remain independent in thought, voice, and action," she stated. Paul-Victor was first appointed on December 20, 2022, for an 18-month term. Her tenure was scheduled to end on June 19, 2024, at which point Charles was expected to assume the role. Paul-Victor submitted her resignation on June 20, 2024, but the President's office reminded her that, under section 66 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Dominica, both opposition MPs were required to submit a joint letter indicating their choice of leader. Without this joint submission, Charles' appointment could not proceed.

That month, Charles told Dominica News Online (DNO) that he was prepared to take up the leadership role and emphasized the importance of adhering to the agreed 18-month rotation. He also announced his membership in the newly formed United Progressive Party (UPP) and expressed plans to collaborate with other independent candidates from the last election. (Dominica News Online)

## 270 Students Participate in the 2026 Caribbean STEM Olympiads

The Caribbean Science Foundation (CSF) held the Medal Awards and Closing Ceremony on 18 January 2026 to celebrate the medallists of the fourth annual Caribbean STEM Olympiads (CSO).

The event, which was held in a virtual format, awarded platinum, gold, silver and bronze medals to teams and individuals from seven Caribbean countries (Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago). The medallists represented either their educational institutions or themselves, and competed in the Math, Computer Coding, and Robotics & Electronics Systems Olympiads at three different age levels (13 – 15, 16 – 18 and 19 – 21 years of age).

In the competitions, the focus was on rewarding inventiveness, as well as critical, logical and analytical thinking. In particular, the Math Olympiad was held in a Jeopardy-style format and covered the fundamentals in topics ranging from consumer arithmetic at Level I to vector calculus at Level III. The Computer Coding Olympiad tasked applicants with creating apps, games, and websites aimed at solving



a challenge faced by Caribbean communities. The list of challenges included geohazards and climate change, tourism, non-communicable diseases, inter- and intra-country transportation, energy security, food safety and security, and financial education.

The Robotics & Electronics Systems Olympiad tasked the Level I applicants with building innovative systems from kits, whereas the Level III robotics and electronics systems teams were required to design and assemble their robots starting

from the basic components. This year, to encourage greater participation and

enhance the quality of the projects, the CSF offered Amazon gift cards worth up to US\$ 150 to Robotics & Electronics Systems teams that registered early.

Registration for the Olympiads continues to increase each year, and this year a total of 270 students from 9 Caribbean countries registered for the Olympiads. After the preliminary rounds, 90 students (in 42 teams) made it to the finals: 41 in the Math Olympiad, 26 in the Computer Coding Olympiad, and 27 in the Robotics & Electronics Systems Olympiad, with some students participating in more than one Olympiad.

Medal certificates and cash prizes of US\$ 500, 400, 300 and 200 were awarded to teams winning platinum, gold, silver, and bronze medals, respectively. The Medal Awards and Closing Ceremony revealed that Jamaica led the medal count with 10 medals, followed by Trinidad and Tobago with 5 medals, Belize with 3 medals, Barbados, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with 2 each, and Saint Kitts and Nevis with 1 medal.

(Dominica News Online)



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# Regional News

## Prison superintendent reports a drop in inmate population; states commitment to rehabilitation

Superintendent of the Dominica State Prison Jeffrey Edmond has reported a significant drop in the inmates' population, moving from 261 in 2023 to 226 in 2025.

He made the announcement while presenting the end-of-year report of the Dominica State Prison at a press conference recently.

Presently, the prison population is 208 males and two females.

"We have seen a significant drop in our inmate population moving from averages of 261 in 2023 and 254 in 2024 to 226 in 2025," he revealed. "Of special mention is a drop in the remand population."

According to him, this reduction reflects the state's commitment to facilitating positive outcomes for individuals within the prison's care.

Meanwhile, he said, the Government of Dominica has invested tremendous sums of money to procure a walk-through and baggage scanner amounting to \$170,000 and an up-to-date CCTV monitoring system.



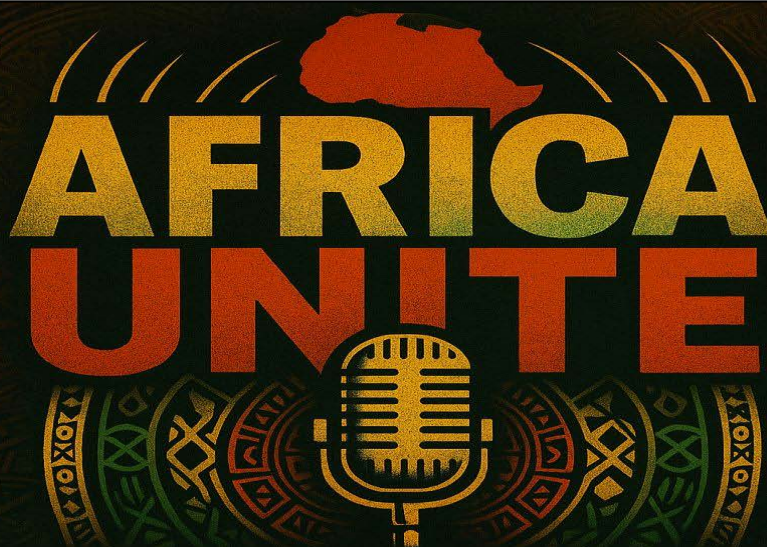
"When these equipment are commissioned, it will greatly enhance our security systems at the prison. Both the scanners and the CCTV monitoring systems are about 95 percent complete," he said. "Training in the use of these equipment will commence shortly."

Furthermore, Edmond said the prison service remains committed to implementing innovative programs and initiatives that promote rehabilitation,

reduce recidivism, and foster positive outcomes for individuals under our care.

"We appreciate the support of our partners, stakeholders, and the community in our shared mission to transform lives and build a safer, more inclusive society," he said.

Edmond thanked all prison officers for their unwavering effort and support systems. (Dominica News Online)



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## Colombia slashes wages for legislators as public spending balloons ahead of election



Colombia's president on Tuesday reduced wages for members of Congress by approximately 30%, as the South American nation faces a budget crunch and gets ready to hold elections in the first semester of this year.

Congress members in Colombia earned approximately \$13,000 a month last year, an amount that was about 32 times greater than the nation's minimum wage.

The vast disparity in the earnings of legislators and average Colombians has often come under scrutiny in the South American country, with some members of Congress in recent years proposing bills to reduce their own wages.

But those initiatives have failed multiple times, and have been blocked by legislators who have argued that they need high wages for myriad reasons, that include investing their savings

into future political campaigns.

With a decree issued on Tuesday, Colombian President Gustavo Petro eliminated a portion of the wages of Congress members known as the "bonus for special services" that was introduced over a decade ago to help cover relocation costs for members of Congress.

Without this bonus, wages received by Colombia's pampered legislators will drop to about \$9,400 a month, in a country where most workers earn monthly wages of about \$500 or less.

In its decree Tuesday, Colombia's government said that wages currently received by legislators are "disproportionate in relation to the average income of the (nation's) population and the country's economic reality."

"Austerity measures are necessary to the extent that they don't affect the fundamental rights of citizens" the decree said.

The measure will come into effect in July once a new Congress has been elected. Colombia holds legislative elections in March, which will be followed by presidential elections in May.

The move was praised by some members of Congress, including senator Angélica Lozano who described it on X as "a minimal measure of equity."

However the president of Co-

lombia's senate Lidio García criticised the wage reduction, saying that Petro was trying to "punish" legislators who did not approve his social and economic reforms, including a tax bill that was rejected by Congress in December.

"While he was a congressman, for almost 20 years, Gustavo Petro received the special services bonus, without complaining about it," García wrote on his X account.

Colombia's government recently issued an economic emergency decree that enables Petro to raise taxes without congressional approval.

The government says it is trying to increase its budget by \$4 billion this year, to cover payments to health insurance companies, pay for fuel subsidies and invest around \$700 million in infrastructure that will enable the military to counter drone attacks from rebel groups. (AP)

## E.U. halts approval of U.S. trade deal after Trump's Greenland tariff threat

The European Union's legislative body on Wednesday halted work on the formal approval and implementation of the trade deal it reached last summer with President Donald Trump.

"Given the continued and escalating threats, including tariff threats, against Greenland and Denmark, and their European allies, we have been left with no alternative but to suspend work" on the deal, said Bernd Lange, the chairman of the European Parliament's international trade committee.

"Until the US decides to re-engage on a path of cooperation rather than confrontation," no steps to move the deal forward would be taken, Lange said in a statement.

"Our sovereignty and territorial integrity are at stake," he added in a post on X. "Business as usual impossible."

The announcement came after Trump on Saturday said he would hit seven European Union countries, plus the U.K., with tariffs if they did not allow the United States to control Greenland.

The E.U. trade deal was reached in July during a visit by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to Trump's golf club in Turnberry, Scotland.

The core of the deal was a cap on U.S. tariffs applied to most imports from the E.U. at just 15%. The rate



was among the lowest received by any trading partner last year.

Some imports from the E.U., such as generic pharmaceuticals would have had all tariffs removed.

In exchange for the lower tariff rate, the European Union, America's largest trading partner, would have lowered tariffs on some goods it imports from the United States. This would have helped American agricultural and industrial companies sell products into the 27-country bloc.

The total trading relationship between the U.S. and E.U. was worth \$1.5 trillion in goods and services annually, as of 2024. The U.S. imports more than \$600 billion in goods from the bloc each year on average, while Europeans buy more than \$360 billion of U.S. goods, according to data from the U.S. Trade Representative.

When the so-called "Turnberry deal" was first announced, the European Commission hailed its po-

tential, saying it "restores stability and predictability."

But all that changed with Trump's Saturday tariff threat.

"In politics as in business, a deal is a deal" Von der Leyen said on Tuesday at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "When friends shake hands, it must mean something."

During his own Davos speech, Trump said that the U.S. would not use force to seize Greenland. But he did not take his threat of a 10% tariff starting Feb. 1 off the table.

Lange, the E.U. trade official, held a press conference following Trump's speech and called the president's assurances about force in Greenland "a small positive element."

Nonetheless, "It's totally clear that with this 10%-25% [tariffs] pressure, he is really getting into a new quality of relation," said Lange.

As long as Trump's tariff threat remains in place,

"There will be no possibility for compromise" Lange said.

On Thursday, leaders of the 27 E.U. countries will meet to discuss their coordinated response to Trump's Greenland threats.

This may include a package of retaliatory tariffs worth nearly \$110 billion, which would impact a wide range of U.S. exports, from Boeing airplanes to soybeans to Kentucky bourbon.

Another potential retaliatory measure would be to deploy the bloc's "Anti-Coercion Instrument," a policy option sometimes referred to as the E.U.'s trade "bazooka."

The ACI would allow the European Commission to target nearly any U.S. goods or services in Europe with a wide range of restrictions and barriers.

These could include investment restrictions, the lifting of intellectual property protections for American companies, the suspension of business licenses, and outright bans on market access to the Eurozone.

Originally proposed in 2021 to give the E.U. a powerful set of tools to counter potential Chinese economic coercion, the trade bazooka has never been deployed before.

On Wednesday, Lange said he was in favor of putting the bazooka into use. (NBC)

## Former flight attendant posed as a pilot and received hundreds of free flights, U.S. authorities say

A former flight attendant for a Canadian airline posed as a commercial pilot and as a current flight attendant to obtain hundreds of free flights from U.S. airlines, authorities said.

Dallas Pokornik, 33, of Toronto, was arrested in Panama after being indicted on wire fraud charges in federal court in Hawaii last October. He pleaded not guilty Tuesday following his extradition.

According to court documents, Pokornik was a flight attendant for a Toronto-based airline from 2017 to 2019, then used fake employee identification from that carrier to obtain tickets reserved for pilots and flight attendants on three other airlines.

U.S. prosecutors said Tuesday that Pokornik even requested to sit in an extra seat in the cockpit — the “jump seat” — typically reserved for off-duty pilots. It was not clear from court documents whether he ever actually rode in a plane’s cockpit, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office declined to say.

The indictment did not identify the airlines except to say they are based in Honolulu, Chicago and Fort Worth, Texas. Representatives for Hawaiian Airlines, United Airlines and American Airlines — which are respectively based in those cities — didn’t immediately respond to emails from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Air Canada, which is based in Toronto, also did not respond to an email seeking comment.

Canned tuna recalled for ‘potentially fatal’ botulism risk mistakenly re-shipped to 9 states

The scheme lasted four years, the U.S. prosecutors in Hawaii said.

A U.S. magistrate judge on Tuesday ordered Pokornik to remain in custody. His federal defender declined to comment.

In 2023, an off-duty airline pilot riding in the cockpit of a Horizon Air



flight said “I’m not OK” just before trying to cut the engines midflight. That pilot, Joseph Emerson, later told police he had been struggling with depression.

A federal judge sentenced him to time served last November.

The allegations against Pokornik are reminiscent of “Catch Me If You Can,” the movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio that tells the story of Frank Abagnale posing as a pilot to defraud an airline and obtain free flights. (NBC)



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## Five Islands take over lead in First Division League



*Players of the Five Islands football team*

Five Islands FC jumped to the top of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League after ending the unbeaten run of the Freemans Village Scorpions on Tuesday.

Five Islands FC leapfrogged Freemans Village after pulling off a 3-1 victory against the Scorpions in a top-of-the-table clash at the ABFA Technical Center.

All the goals came in the first half, with strikes from Jamal Joseph in the seventh minute and Lazaro Saurez in the 19th minute giving Five Islands a two-nil lead.

Darius Hector reduced the deficit for Freemans Village with a 27th-minute conversion. But Demario Roberts restored Five Islands' two-goal advantage with a 37th-minute conversion to wrap up his team's victory.

Their seventh win in 13 matches al-

lows Five Islands FC to jump from second place to the top of the First Division with 25 points. The Freemans Village Scorpions slipped from first to second place with 23 points after suffering their first defeat in 10 matches.

Empire FC consolidated their third-place position after playing to a goalless draw with neighbours Greenbay Hoppers at the ABFA Technical Center.

The result allows Empire FC to advance to 21 points after salvaging their third draw in 12 matches. The Greenbay Hoppers remain in fifth place with 19 points after securing their first draw in 10 matches.

The Swetes Vipers FC and SAP FC fought to a 1-1 draw at the Mock Pond playing field in All Saints. Kimoi Alexander scored in the 33rd minute to give the Swetes Vipers a one-nil lead at halftime.

Tyrique Tonge converted a penalty kick in the 59th minute to snatch the equalizer and the draw for SAP FC.

The result allows the Swetes Vipers FC to move on to 17 points after securing their fifth draw in 12 matches. SAP FC moved on to 14 points after salvaging their fifth draw in nine matches.

Meanwhile, North Coast Academy Juniors and Glanvilles FC battled

to a 1-1 draw in their match in the ABFA's Second Division at Mount Pleasant playing field.

Roshaun Martin scored for Glanvilles FC, which advanced to four points after salvaging their first draw in six matches. North Coast Academy Juniors moved on the 11 points after securing their second draw in nine matches.

Markland Wright struck a hat trick as JSC Progressors recorded their second win in nine matches with a 3-0 victory against Herberts United FC at the Pigotts playing field. Wright had conversions in the 12th, 30th, and 80th minutes.

The result allows JSC Progressors to move on to seven points, while Herberts FC remains on four points after crashing to their fifth defeat in seven matches.

# Sports News

## OCS and FIPS among winners in school basketball league

Ottos Comprehensive School (OCS) and Five Islands Primary School (FIPS) recorded wins in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday.

Ottos Comprehensive School made a successful start to their campaign in the Mini Boys Secondary Division by snatching a 16-11 victory against the Princess Margaret School.

Malic Simms sank six points, while Levi Richards and Ethan Browne each converted four points for Ottos Comprehensive School. Kevani Whyte scored six points for Princess Margaret School.

Five Islands Primary notched up a 12-5 victory over Greenbay Primary in the Mini Girls Primary Division.

Stevea Carr scored eight points for Five Islands Primary, while Shalana Powell converted four points for Greenbay Primary School.



Coach Oslin 'Pigeon' Gregory speaks to the players of the Ottos Comprehensive School during a timeout against Princess Margaret School in the Mini Boys' Secondary Division in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday, January 20, 2026. (Photo courtesy of the school basketball league)



## Mixed fortunes for England's Bangor Team on tour in Antigua

The visiting Bangor Team of England enjoyed mixed fortunes during two 10-over softball cricket matches, which were organized by the Mandy Premier League (MPL), during their goodwill tour to Jumby Bay in Antigua.

TG Welding pulled off a 70-run victory over the Bangor Team of England during their first encounter at the Powells playing field on Tuesday evening.

TG Welding made 155 for four off their allotted 10 overs. Player of the match Dimitri Lucas hit an unbeaten 59, which included eight fours.

Visual Gobin struck 25, Deran Benta made 16, and Demari Benta scored 12. Grimshaw claimed two for 21, and Naheem captured one for 45.

In reply, England's Bangor Team was restricted to 85 for seven off their 10 overs. Smith hit 39, and Marshall scored 12.

Dorian Grant snapped up three for 13, George Elvin took one wicket for eight runs, Daren Benta had one for 10, and Hughan Tonge captured one for 11.

The Bangor Team of England rebounded to snatch a three-run victory against Long Island Lightning in a match that was reduced to seven overs.

England's Bangor Team made 83 for seven off their seven overs.

Grimshaw hit 22, Scott made 17, and Benta scored 12.

Tony Straker took two wickets for six runs, Michael Greaves claimed one wicket for three runs, Isaac picked up one wicket for four runs, and Sean Richards captured one for 17.

In reply, Long Island Lightning was restricted to 80 for four off their seven overs. Player of the match Michael Greaves slammed 42, including six sixes. Isaac made 15, and Richards scored 12.

Williams grabbed three wickets for six runs, and Smith captured one wicket for two runs.



*Dimitri Lucas*

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## ICC rejects Bangladesh demand to shift T20 World Cup matches



**Players of the Bangladesh T20 cricket team**

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - The International Cricket Council on Wednesday rejected Bangladesh's demand to shift their matches at next month's Twenty20 World Cup outside India, dismissing any security threat to the team following political tensions between the South Asian neighbours.

Uncertainty loomed over the global showpiece after Bangladesh refused to tour India and demanded to play their matches in Sri Lanka, which is co-hosting the tournament.

The stalemate prompted an emergency ICC board meeting in which the governing body decided against tinkering with the tournament schedule.

"The decision was taken after considering all security assessments conducted, including independent reviews, all of which indicated there was no threat to Bangladesh players, media persons, officials and fans at

any of the tournament venues in India," the ICC said in a statement.

"The ICC board noted that it was not feasible to make changes so close to the tournament and that altering the schedule under the circumstances, in the absence of any credible security threat, could set a precedent that would jeopardise the sanctity of future ICC events."

It leaves Bangladesh with the options of either changing their stance or getting replaced in the 20-team tournament beginning on February 7.

Political relations have soured between the neighbours in recent times and Bangladesh player Mustafizur Rahman was dropped from this year's Indian Premier League (IPL) despite him signing for its Kolkata franchise.

Bangladesh responded by refusing to tour India and banning broadcasts

of the IPL in the country.

An ICC delegation arrived in Dhaka last weekend to find a solution but the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) stuck to its guns.

"Despite these efforts, the BCB maintained its position, repeatedly linking its participation in the tournament to a single, isolated and unrelated development concerning one of its players' involvement in a domestic league," the ICC said alluding to Mustafizur's IPL snub.

"This linkage has no bearing on the tournament's security framework or the conditions governing participation in the T20 World Cup."

Pakistan will play their World Cup matches in Sri Lanka in keeping with their policy of not touring India over geopolitical tension between the neighbours.

## Afghanistan beat West Indies to take T20 series



West Indies batsman Johnson Charles is bowled by Mujeeb Ur Rahman during the second T20 International in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. (Getty Images)

**Afghanistan beat West Indies by 39 runs in the second Twenty20 International (T20I) in Sharjah on Wednesday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series, with spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman claiming his first career T20I hat-trick.**

A third successive T20I half-century from Darwish Abdul Rasooli, and an anchoring fifty from Sediqullah Atal helped Afghanistan to make 189 for four off their 20 overs after being sent in to bat.

Rasooli slammed 68 off 39 balls and Sediqullah Atal struck 53 off 42 balls. Rasooli and Atal enjoyed a 115-run third-wicket stand to hold Afghanistan's batting innings together.

Azmatullah Omarzai added an unbeaten 26 off 13 balls to lift the hosts

to a competitive total. West Indies medium pacer Matthew Forde captured two for 25.

On Monday, Rasooli had smashed 84 in a 162-run stand with Ibrahim Zadran to set up Afghanistan's series-opening win, and on Wednesday he combined just as effectively with Atal.

As in the first game, Afghanistan lost both openers inside the powerplay, and Rasooli ensured there were no stutters by taking the aggressive route against the West Indies bowling attack.

Helped by let-offs from the West Indies fielders, Rasooli reached his fifty in 22 balls, his third in a row for Afghanistan, while Atal was more watchful.

In reply, the West Indies were bowled out for 150 in 18.5 overs despite half-centuries from Brandon King (50)

and Shimron Hetmyer, who struck 46 off 17 balls.

Mujeeb finished with figures of four for 21 from four overs and completed his hat-trick with the first ball of his third over, becoming the third Afghan player to take a T20I hat-trick after Rashid Khan and Karim Janat.

Right-arm pacer Azmatullah Omarzai claimed two for 20, and left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi captured two for 28 as Afghanistan tightened control in the middle overs.

The win made it a hat-trick of T20I series wins for Afghanistan. The two teams meet again at the same venue on Thursday for what will be Afghanistan's final T20I before the T20 World Cup. West Indies will seek a consolation win before their tour of South Africa.