

Prime Minister Gaston Browne New Years Message

Story on page 3



January 1, 2026, 12:06am! View from The Lookout Shirley Heights as the smoke cleared from the fireworks that welcomed the New Year!

Editorial

Destined to Fulfill Purpose



As we welcome the dawn of a New Year, we do so with gratitude for the journey behind us and faith in the road ahead. Each new beginning carries with it fresh possibilities, renewed hope, and

the quiet assurance that our lives and our nation are not accidental, but guided by purpose. Even amid uncertainty, change, and challenge, we are reminded that growth is often born out of perseverance and belief.

At PointVille Communications Inc. Owners of PointFM 99.1, Platinum-FM 97.9, PointExpress Newspaper, PointeTV, our commitment remains steadfast: to inform responsibly, to elevate meaningful dialogue, and to reflect the voices, aspirations, and realities of our people. As we step into this new chapter, we reaffirm our role as a trusted platform—one that champions truth, accountability, culture, and progress. We believe that an informed

society is an empowered society, destined to rise and fulfill its purpose.

On behalf of the management and staff of PointVille Communications Inc., I extend sincere thanks to our readers, partners, and supporters for your continued trust and loyalty. May this New Year bring clarity of vision, strength of spirit, and unity of purpose to you and your families. Let us move forward together—confident, resilient, and destined to fulfill purpose.

*Luther Lee
Chairman
Board of Directors
PointVille Communications Inc.*




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Prime Minister's New Years Message



New Year's Address to the Nation 2026

By The Honourable Gaston A. Browne,
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

31st December 2025

My Fellow Citizens & Residents,

As Antigua and Barbuda crosses the threshold into a new year, we do so not by chance—but purposefully:

With discipline.

Optimism

Sacrifice.

And by collective resolve.

Despite the myriad challenges; we enter this year more confident, more hopeful, and more prosperous, than at any other moment in our nation's history.

Only weeks ago, our National Budget laid out the facts clearly:

A people-centred economy that is gaining momentum;

Social progress advancing with purpose;

And a nation standing taller, because it has chosen hard work and smart work over fantasy.

As the old wisdom reminds us, "Progress is impossible without change;" lets therefore continue to defeat fear

and resistance, focusing primarily on the achievement of a positive future of resilient prosperity, for our nation and its people.

Despite the various challenges, including the escalation in global prices from increased tariffs in the United States, the year behind us was a year of bounty.

But the year before us offers something even greater—the opportunity to turn success into permanence, if we continue forward together.

Learning from the Road Behind Us

The road behind us tells the story of storms endured and challenges met.

The road ahead calls us to rise—to lift our eyes beyond immediate trials, to steady our hands in unity,

and to claim the bright future waiting for us.

Character is developed through challenges, driven by purpose and perseverance.

Through these challenges - Antigua and Barbuda has been strengthened, into a vibrant and resilient nation.

Navigating a Changing World

Even as we begin this year from a position of strength, we do not pretend that the world beyond our shores is calm.

Global currents shift from time to time, creating geopolitical challenges.

Decisions taken elsewhere ripple across small states such as ours.

Recent decisions by the Government of the United States restricting the issuance of new visas for nationals of Antigua and Barbuda have understandably caused concern among our people.



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Let me therefore speak plainly—and reassuringly.

All existing United States visas held by Antiguan and Barbudans remain valid and will be honoured.

At the same time, your Government has already begun the careful and constructive work required, to establish a system through which new visas can be issued in an orderly and systematic manner.

We will continue to engage respectfully, persistently, and in good faith—guided by our long-standing relationship with the United States and by our solemn duty to protect the interests of our people.

Our relationship with the United States is one that we value and expect to continue to grow from strength to strength.

In moments like these, we remember a simple truth:

“Calm seas never made a skilled sailor.”

Our strength has never been found in gripes, but in competence;

not in anger, but in steadfast diplomacy;

not in retreat, but in resilience.

Our Caribbean Family

At times, voices may differ within our Caribbean family.

Choices may be made by others that we do not share.

However, we respect those choices—just as we have always respected the sovereign right of every CARICOM member, to act in its own perceived interest.

But it must also be said—calmly and truthfully—that Antigua and Barbuda has consistently contributed, through trade, cooperation, advocacy and shared sacrifice, to the economic and social benefits enjoyed across our Community.

We do so not out of weakness, but out of principle and solidarity.

As Marcus Garvey reminded us, “A

people without unity are a people easily defeated.”

Despite moments of strain or misunderstanding, we remain steadfast in our commitment to CARICOM—recognising now, as always, that in unity there is strength, and that small states are strongest when they stand together with dignity, reason, and mutual respect.

From Budget to Living Reality

This past year, we delivered a Budget shaped not merely by numbers, but by the needs, hopes, aspirations and dignity of our people—a people-centred Budget for a people determined to move forward.

But budgets alone do not build nations.

“Vision without action is merely a dream; action without vision is useless.”

It is now our shared national task—government and citizens alike—to breathe life into that vision:

to make it real in every home, every village, every community.

A Nation as One Family

In this new year, let us resolve to see ourselves not as rivals, not as political tribes, not as divided camps—but as one family, bound together by duty and a common destiny.

For too long, petty quarrels have stolen our energy.

For too long, lies, deceptions, and reckless allegations have dragged public life into the mud.

For too long we have failed to defend and promote the paramountcy of our nation.

We cannot climb if we are always pulling each other down.

We cannot build if we are constantly tearing at the foundations.

There comes a time when a nation must choose—

between the noise of division and the music of unity;

between smallness of individuality

and greatness of collective purpose;

between the easy path of conflict and the noble road of cooperation.

As Abraham Lincoln warned, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

That time for unity has come; that time is now.

Strength Beyond Size

We are a small state.

We lack economies of scale and military might.

But there is a profound difference between a weak state and a strong nation.

Strong nations endure not by might, but because their people stand together.

They face challenges with reason, not rage;

with realism, not rhetoric.

With hope not pessimism.

They understand that compromise is not surrender,

but often the condition for reciprocity.

And we know this truth:

unity at home is our first line of defense abroad. Let’s unify our country and stand in solidarity with each other.

On Leadership and Duty

Leadership is not an ornament of power;

it is a test of spirit, commitment and competence.

It is to bear responsibility not for applause, but for positive outcomes;

not for comfort, but for consequence.

For me, leadership is not privilege—it is commitment; a commitment to serve and empower.

It is the quiet courage to stand firm, when it would be easier to capitulate, or step aside;

to believe in tomorrow when today is unkind.

The road of leadership is often lonely, but the purpose is clear: To Serve my people,

Lift them up,
Empower them
To mend our society,
and to keep alight the flame of hope
entrusted to my hands.

A Call to Civic Pride and Discipline

We must now go forward with purpose, in achieving our vision of transforming our country into an economic powerhouse.

Let us elevate the pride in our land—in the beauty God has placed in our care.

Let us keep our streets clean, our neighborhoods beautiful and orderly; our public spaces worthy of a proud people.

For how we treat our surroundings reflects how we value ourselves.

Let us set aside slothfulness, bitterness, hatred and take up the discipline, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship that build nations.

Let every young person pursue a skill or a degree.

Let every adult commit to learning, improving, and contributing to nation building, irrespective of his or her political persuasion, age, color, creed or class.

As wisdom teaches us, “Excellence is never an accident; it is the result of intention and effort.”

Let us pursue a culture of excellence in all of our endeavors.

Taking Ownership of Our Future

My fellow citizens,

As we build a stakeholder society, the

commanding heights of our economy must rise on the strength of our own people—working in partnership with those from abroad, who believe in our vision and invest in our future.

This is the year to believe in ourselves; in the superiority of our strength of character, resilience and talents.

Let us invest our time, our resources, and our creativity in building a resilient, competitive, globally admired nation—a lifestyle super power, a paradise for our people; first, foremost, and always.

Toward a New Dispensation

Let us walk into this new year as one people—

not perfect, but striving;

not always in agreement, but always in solidarity;

not driven by anger, but guided by the values of equity, hope, truth, love and justice.

And let us remember this:

hope is not passive.

Hope is not a wish whispered into the wind.

Hope is work.

Hope is courage.

Hope is the daily choice to lift each other up and move this nation forward—step by step, hand in hand.

If we do these things—

if we stand together as one family with empathy and support for each other;

if we honour our land with our labour and our future with our discipline;

if we choose unity over division and truth over lies and deception—

If we choose peace, love and unity over crime and violence -

then no force on earth can hold our nation back.

For there is a power that rises whenever a people walk together.

There is a strength that grows whenever a nation believes in its own destiny.

And there is a light that shines—brighter than any challenge, stronger than any doubt—whenever a country stands as one.

Closing

So let this be the year we rise.

Let this be the year we build.

Let this be the year we move as one people, with one purpose, toward a future of resilient prosperity.


May this year be guided by vision, strengthened by unity, and blessed with the guidance of Almighty God.

On behalf of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, I thank our citizens and residents for their contribution to the advancement of our nation in 2025 and I extend to our blessed nation and its people this heartfelt wish:

that the year before us may be even more prosperous, more hopeful, more peaceful, and more abundant than the bounty we created together in 2025.

May God bless you,



and may God bless our beloved Antigua and Barbuda.



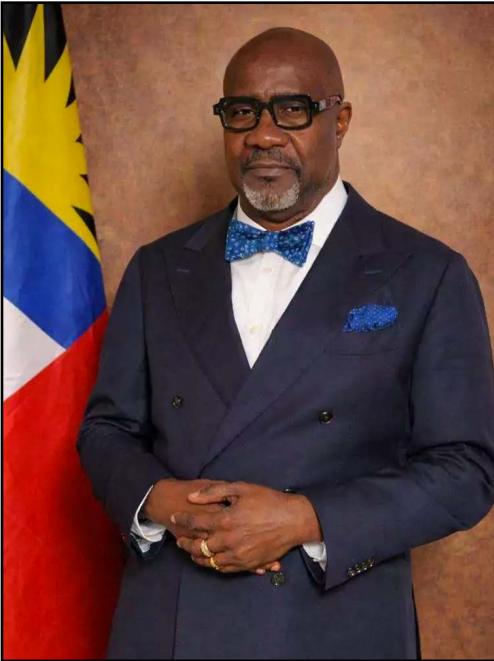
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Chairman Urges Early Action on Voter ID Renewal and Registration Electoral Commission frames participation as a year-round civic duty



Electoral Commission Chairman Arthur G. B. Thomas

In a Christmas message that doubled as a quiet call to action, the **Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission** reminded citizens that democracy does not run on seasonal enthusiasm alone. It runs on preparation.

Addressing voters across Antigua and Barbuda, Commission Chairman **Arthur G. B. Thomas** urged eligible citizens to take advantage of the Voter Identification Card Renewal Programme and the Continuing Registration Programme now, rather than waiting for the pressure and congestion that typically follow an election announcement.

The message, issued on behalf of the Commission, the Supervisor of Elections, and staff, thanked voters, political parties, and independent candidates for their engagement throughout 2025. That cooperation, Thomas noted, is the quiet infrastructure beneath the ballot box, the trust that allows elections to function smoothly and credibly.

Looking ahead to the new year, the Chairman framed electoral participation as a shared national responsibility. Public trust, informed engagement, and respect for electoral integrity were

described as essential ingredients in maintaining the country's democratic health.

The reminder was practical as much as it was philosophical. Renewing voter ID cards early and registering promptly, the Commission emphasized, reduces administrative strain, shortens queues, and protects the efficiency and integrity of the electoral process. In other words, democracy works best when citizens arrive prepared, not rushed.

The Commission reaffirmed its com-

mitment to transparency, excellence, and public service, signalling that voter readiness and institutional readiness must move in step.

As the holiday message closed with wishes for peace, prosperity, and renewed dedication to shared ideals, the subtext was clear. Democracy is not something Antigua and Barbuda dusts off at election time. It is a living system, maintained steadily, card by card, name by name, year by year.

NOTICE

**TO: Your Worship
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Antigua.**

**TO: The Commissioner
Police Headquarters
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Antigua.**

Dear Sir/Madam,

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I, Nekisha Phillip of Browne's Ave, with a registered business situated at Bishop's Gate Street, Antigua and Barbuda, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that it is my intention to apply at the next sitting of the liquor licensing Court to be held at the Magistrate's Court at High Street, St. John's, Antigua on Thursday 8th January, 2026 next ensuring for a Liquor Licensing Pursuant to section (11) (5) of the Licensing (Intoxication Liquor) Act Cap. 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda 1992 Revised Edition, in respect of premises known as "Vortex Shop & Bar" Bishope Gate Street in the parish of St. Johns, Antigua and Barbuda.

Dated the 19th day of December, 2025



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A New Voice Enters the Political Arena

Participation is welcome. Substance will determine its value.

From this newspaper's standpoint, the arrival of the Antigua and Barbuda National Congress on the political landscape is, at its core, a reminder that democratic space in Antigua and Barbuda remains open, active, and contested. That is not something to be feared. It is something to be managed responsibly.

Political movements do not emerge in a vacuum. They arise from dissatisfaction, ambition, conviction, or a mix of all three. In that sense, the ABNC's formation reflects a continuing appetite among some citizens for alternatives, sharper accountability, and a different tone in national leadership. Those impulses are neither illegitimate nor new, and any serious democracy must make room for them.

At the same time, political participation is only the first step. What ultimately matters is whether new entrants elevate the national conversation or add to its noise.

This paper has long been aligned, philosophically and practically, with the governing direction of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party administration. That alignment is rooted not in blind loyalty but in an assessment of outcomes: economic sta-

bilisation after repeated global shocks, expanded infrastructure, sustained social programmes, and a more confident projection of Antigua and Barbuda's interests internationally. These are measurable realities, not talking points.

That said, alignment does not preclude critique. No administration benefits from unchallenged authority, and no media house serves the public well by confusing advocacy with absolution. Our role is to support progress while interrogating its execution; to defend national stability while questioning inefficiencies, excesses, or blind spots when they arise.

It is within that framework that the ABNC's entry should be assessed.

Bold language about accountability, transparency, and fiscal discipline resonates easily in a political climate where public trust is fragile and memory is selective. But repetition of grievance is not policy. The country has outgrown politics that relies primarily on moral indictment without offering clear, workable alternatives grounded in economic and institutional reality.

Antigua and Barbuda is not governed in theory. It is governed under constraints: a small tax base, climate vulnerability, debt legacies, global market exposure, and social ob-

ligations that cannot be wished away by rhetoric. Any group aspiring to national leadership must demonstrate not only what it opposes, but how it would govern differently, sustainably, and credibly.

We therefore welcome the ABNC to the democratic field, not as disruptors by default, but as participants who will now be measured by the seriousness of their ideas, the discipline of their proposals, and the maturity of their engagement.

What the country does not need is politics as spectacle. Attention-grabbing posture, perpetual scan-

dal framing, or divisive interventions designed to derail rather than debate do little to improve lives. They erode confidence without offering direction.

What the country does need is constructive dialogue. Competing visions tested openly. Policies argued on evidence, not volume. Criticism that sharpens governance rather than corrodes it.

Democracy works best when more voices enter the room and understand the weight of what they are asking to hold. The door is open. The standard, however, remains high.



December 30, 2025
St. John's, Antigua

STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The **Antigua and Barbuda National Congress (ABNC)** is a new organisation established to end the disturbing, decades-long trend of lack of accountability, transparency and fiscal discipline displayed by government under both the Antigua/Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) and the United Progressive Party (UPP).

In the past year only, our nation has been repeatedly caught in scandal after scandal, after scandal, after scandal!!

We exist in a persistent drought for truth and honourable conduct from those tagged with honourable titles. We suffer through excessive and crippling taxation, the absence of consistent quality health care and basic infrastructure, among others. Worst yet, on every single occasion and issue – from nepotism to non-performance, criminal conduct to chronic waste, exploitation to self-enrichment, criticism from one as against the other is simply countered by a reminder of when the same or similar thing was done by the criticiser. Both the ABLP and UPP appear content with playing 'punchinella' but governance is not a children's game and their approach is neither clever nor entertaining.

The **Antigua & Barbuda National Congress (ABNC)** is pleased to present itself as an agent for the delivery of standards of governance that produce economical and other tangible benefits, which serve the interest of the State of Antigua and Barbuda and by extension HER PEOPLE.

The **ABNC** is committed to engage with individuals who are guided by our nation's motto – "Each Endeavouring, All Achieving". Though mindful of the claims of a historical disadvantage of supposed 'third parties' in Caribbean politics, we are undaunted in our belief that for actual GOOD governance and a BETTER life, **ABNC** is poised to be your BEST option.

We look forward to having the opportunity of being elected to govern this country and to redefining how our people perceive and benefit from public service.

Respectfully,

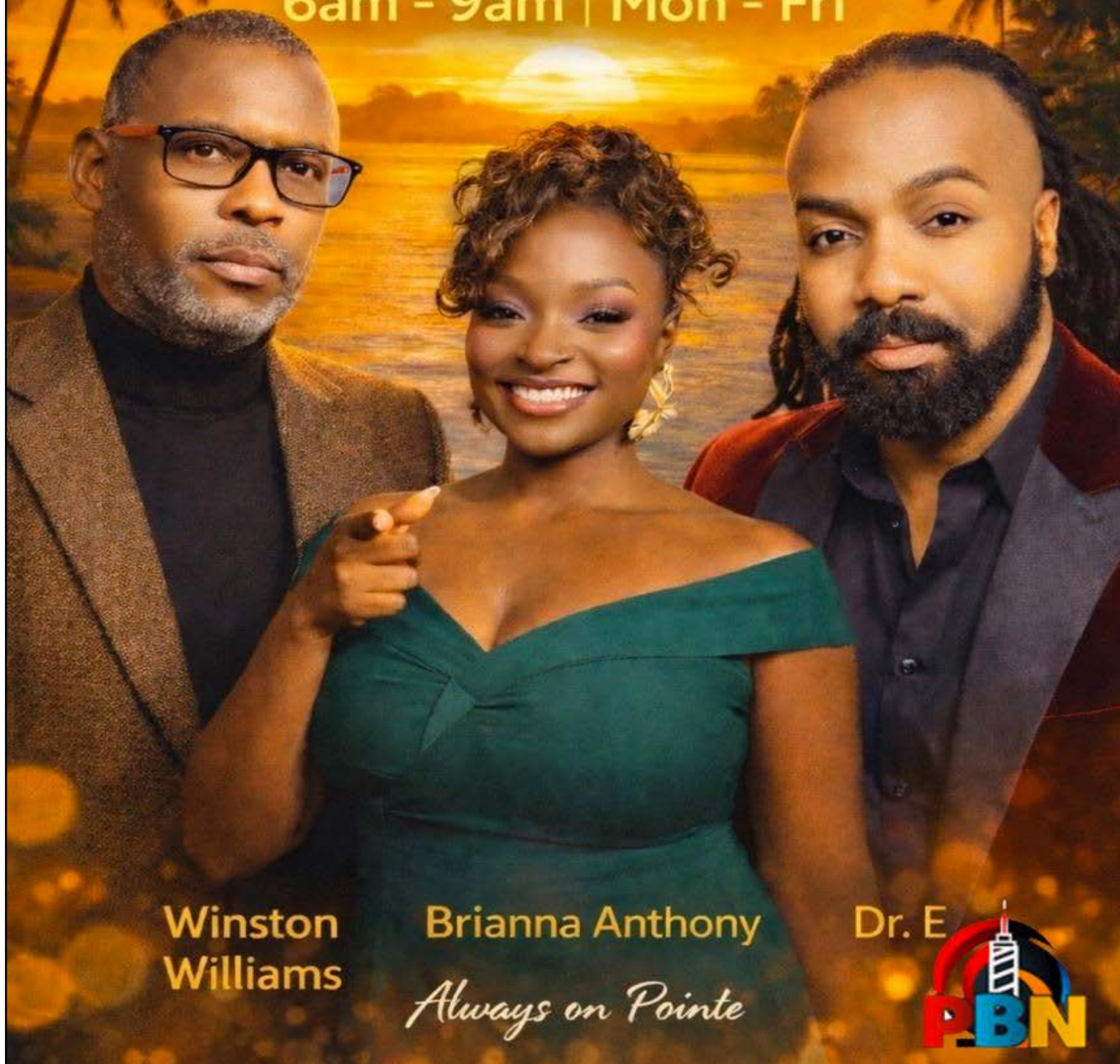
Gail S. Pero-Weston
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Local News

Opposition Leader Opens 2026 With Sharp Attacks and Early Candidate Signals



Leader of the United Progressive Party, Jamale Pringle

As Antigua and Barbuda entered 2026, Leader of the Opposition and Political Leader of the United Progressive Party, Jamale Pringle, adopted his usual confrontational tone, leaning heavily on grievance and political accusation rather than reflection or renewal.

While his traditional New Year began with greetings to citizens at home and in the diaspora, it quickly shifted to a sustained critique of the government, marked by repeated unproven allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and abuse of authority. Much of the content revisited familiar tirades that failed to impress in 2025.

Observers noted that the speech's dominant tone sat uneasily with the season in which it was delivered. At a time typically associated with calm, hope, and a national reset, the address was framed primarily around division,



Malaka Parker

confrontation, and institutional distrust, with limited emphasis on unity or shared national purpose.

Beyond rhetoric, the most concrete development in the address was the announcement of the UPP's slate of caretakers and prospective candidates for the next election cycle.

Among those named were political wanderer **Malaka Parker** and a placeholder for St George, whom the streets have already identified as Kelton Dalso, who also fits the political wanderer brand. Their inclusion has already prompted quiet debate about political consistency and ideological grounding within the Opposition's ranks, particularly as voters increasingly scrutinize loyalty, track records, and clarity of purpose heading into the next general election as part of the electable card.

It is noteworthy that Watts, the current



Kelton Dalso

representative for St. George is off the slate after one term with no explanation provided. This cannot be a good signal for the long-term stability as the party asks to be considered to govern.

The address also touched on foreign relations, citizenship by investment, and United States visa access, again attributing current challenges primarily to the government. However, observers noted Pringle offered no detailed policy pathways or explanations of how a future administration would navigate the diplomatic, fiscal, and geopolitical constraints facing a small island state.

With 2026 already looking as more of the same from the UPP, while the ruling administration looks to consolidate gains and move the country further along, it is clear that the coming months will test the credibility and coherence of the alternative being offered to the electorate.

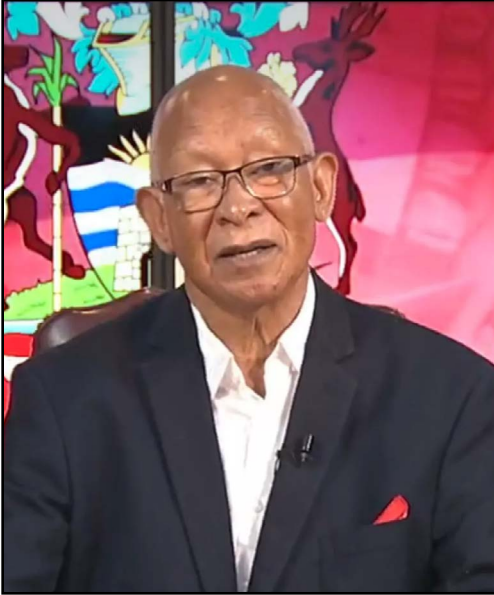


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MORE IN THE MORTAR THAN THE PESTLE

The UPP's Hidden Agenda to Defame by Lies and Half-Truths



ambassador lionel max hurst

A piece of rubbish, written by an unidentified UPP supporter, repeats the same untruths and the barely-concealed political motives, dressed-up as reasoning; it defies the logic which national success has vitiated. The article reveals envy, the inability to appeal to reason by reliance on emotion, the use of nasty names and a complete defiance of measurable truth.

“Antiguans and Barbudans are being locked out of the world in real time”, the writer begins. The “world”, it appears, is the United States and the proclamation issued by the US President on 16 December 2025. That the US State Department partially reversed that decision by assuring our diplomats that Antigua and Barbuda passport holders with valid B1-B2, F, M, J visas will continue to enter the US, is completely left out of the 1,000 word diatribe. Why conceal this truth? Because if it is included, his argument about the Prime Minister and wrong choices would fall apart.

“The CIP as a convenient scapegoat” is another of his headline quotes that falls against the truth. The Proclamation issued by the US White House speaks to *Antigua and Barbuda’s Citizenship By Investment Program* and the absence of a residency requirement, which the US concludes imperils its own “national security”. Unless the writer knows more than the US State Department and the US White House, then he is speculating. He misleads his audience by pretending to know more when he is doing what the UPP does all the time: invent its own truth. When our diplomats provided the evidence that the residency basis was inaccurate, the US State Department softened its approach and returned validity to visa holders. Of course, to mention this fact would render his fallacious argument *null and void* because the US Government specifically cited the CIP as the only reason for its actions.

“The Pernicious Partnership” is his third and essentially the most specious of his arguments. He argues that Antigua and Barbuda’s friendship with Venezuela is the root cause of the US action. By making friends with Venezuela, and by accepting assistance from that Caribbean/South American country, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda has incurred the ire of the US Government. He mentions PDVSA, the ownership component of WIOC, and ends with an assault on the Honourable Maria Browne. The misogynist attacks have not ceased since the Minister has displayed incomparable competence, high integrity, and imperiled their campaign contributions by

lifting the blanket on certain corrupt practices.

Venezuela’s friendship with Antigua and Barbuda goes back more than 50 years when Sir George Walter, the Premier in 1974, sought and received millions of dollars in loans to rescue a bankrupt LIAT. When Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer saw collapse of the economy of Antigua and Barbuda in 2009, he sought and received US\$50 million in loans by way of a telephone call to President Chavez. The generous agreement to reduce the cost of petroleum to US\$100 per barrel by crediting the amounts exceeding \$100 to an open loan that goes towards social programs, is generosity of the highest order. Sovereign states decide which countries are their friends and of which to be wary.

The writer’s prediction of *“an economic spiral ahead”* and *“a final reckoning”* are failed predictions which the UPP suggested would happen when personal income tax, introduced in 2005, was eliminated in 2015. The economy has grown on average of 6% each year—except when a hurricane battered the nation. They hate progress, opposing an UWI campus, opposing hotel development in Barbuda, opposing hotel construction on beach-front properties in Antigua. They would fail as a government, for they fail as an opposition. They are capable of destruction and nothing more. The ABLP has demonstrated excellence in leadership, in the past and present. Envy and hate cannot be elements in striving. They are inherently destructive.

Amb. Lionel Hurst

Local News

Two recipients accept the Halo Foundation Guiding Light Award for uniformed bodies



Their Excellencies, the awardees and institution leaders Patricia Salmon (extreme left) and Suzette Spencer- Burton (extreme right).

Joshua Roberts and Kerisha Sweeney were officially honoured as the 2025 recipients of the annual Guiding Light Awards, receiving medals and certificates from Their Excellencies Sir Rodney and Lady Williams on behalf of the Halo Foundation.

The awardees now join a distinguished and select group of honourees since the awards were established in 2022. They were encouraged to continue serving as beacons of inspiration to their peers, exemplifying the values of leadership, service, and selflessness.

During his congratulatory remarks, His Excellency Sir Rodney Williams underscored the significance of the award, noting that going above and beyond one's calling is a true testament to character. He further highlighted that the Guiding Light Awards, which were the brain child of Her Excellency Lady Williams, were designed to amplify and celebrate the positive actions and contributions of the nation's uniformed youth. .

Also present at the event were family members of the recipients , Commis-



H.E. Lady Williams presents award to Girl Guide Kerisha Sweeney



H. E. with Scout Joshua Roberts.

sioner of the Girl Guides Mrs . Suzette Spencer-Burton and Scout Commissioner Mrs. Patricia Salmon .

The selection of the awardees was made by the individual institutions.



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Four Charged After Modified Flare Gun Found During Vehicle Stop

Police have charged four young men following the discovery of a modified flare gun during a vehicle stop conducted across several communities in Antigua.

The incident occurred around 3:10 p.m. on Saturday, December 27, as officers from the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda carried out mobile patrols in areas including Grays



Farm, Green Bay, Hatton, Five Islands, Hawksbill Beach, Yeptons, and Deep Bay.

A search of a silver Honda Fit occupied by the men allegedly revealed a modified flare gun concealed under a seat. All four occupants were taken into custody and charged with possession of a modified flare gun. They are expected to appear before the court.

Two Men Charged in Separate Cannabis Seizures

Two men have been charged with unlawful possession of cannabis following separate police operations conducted on December 30 and December 31.

In the first incident, 32-year-old Roshawn Elliott of Potters Village was charged after police reportedly found him in possession of approximately 1.1 pounds of

cannabis during an operation in the Potters area.

In a separate case, 48-year-old Terrance "Funk" Roberts of Federation Road, Grays Farm, was charged after officers allegedly seized 267.8 grams of cannabis during an operation along Fort Road. Both men are expected to answer to the charges in court.



Skerritt's Pasture Man Charged in Alleged Cheque-Forgery Scheme

Police have arrested and charged a Skerritt's Pasture resident in connection with a series of alleged cheque-forgery schemes targeting commercial banks in St. John's during the busy pre-holiday period.

Ian Michael Martin is accused of cashing forged cheques totalling EC\$17,670.56 and attempting to obtain an additional EC\$65,588.67 during incidents reported on December 23 and 24, 2025, at banks along Friars Hill Road and at Market and High Streets.

He has been charged with intent to defraud, larceny, uttering forged documents, attempting to obtain property by deception, and receiving proceeds of crime.



The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda has reaffirmed its commitment to pursuing criminal activity and is urging members of the public to remain vigilant and to report any suspicious activity or behaviour.



Ministry of Creative Industries

The Ministry of Creative Industries is pleased to officially announce the staging of the 2025 Antigua and Barbuda National Music Awards (ABN-MA) on Thursday, February 26, 2026.

The Antigua and Barbuda National Music Awards was established to formally recognize, honour, and celebrate the outstanding contributions of musicians, producers, composers, writers, vocalists, arrangers, educators, and practitioners whose work continues to shape and elevate the nation's music and entertainment industry. The platform serves not only as a celebration of excellence, but also as a catalyst for growth, innovation, and higher standards within the musical arts across the twin-island state.

Following the success of its previous edition, the 2025 awards will continue to expand its reach and impact, bring-

ing together creatives from across genres, generations, and communities while fostering deeper appreciation for the diversity and richness of Antigua and Barbudan music.

Nominations for the 2025 Antigua and Barbuda National Music Awards will officially open on January 6, 2026, with the full list of award categories to be announced on the same date. Creatives, industry professionals, and members of the public are encouraged to participate in the nomination process and support the recognition of excellence within the local music industry.

The Ministry of Creative Industries reaffirms that the National Music Awards remains an essential national platform, one that not only honours achievement but also inspires young creatives, strengthens cultural identity,

and supports the long-term development of the creative and cultural industries.

As Antigua and Barbuda looks ahead to 2026, the Ministry of Creative Industries extends best wishes for a successful, productive, and culturally vibrant year to all creatives, stakeholders, partners, and members of the wider community. The Antigua and Barbuda National Music Awards stands as a testament to what is possible when talent, dedication, and national pride come together.

Further details regarding categories, nomination guidelines, and event updates will be shared through official platforms in the coming weeks.

End



Press Release

Ge'Eve Phillip Continues Regional Dominance In the Queen of Queens Calypso Competition with 1st Runner-Up Finish

For Immediate Release – Wednesday 31st December 2025 – St. John's, Antigua.....

The Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission (ABFC) proudly congratulates Ge'Eve Phillip on yet another outstanding regional achievement, having secured 1st Runner-Up with 947 points at the Queen of Queens Calypso Show held in Montserrat on Tuesday, 30th December 2025.

With commanding performances of "One Man" and "Daughter Come," Ge'Eve captivated both judges and audience alike. Her flawless vocals, commanding stage presence, and sharp lyrical storytelling delivered yet another iconic performance, marking an additional milestone in her already impressive professional calypso career.

Hon. Daryll S. Matthew, Minister responsible for Creative Industries, applauded the achievement, stating: *"This is a monumental accomplishment for Antigua and Barbuda. Ge'Eve's talent, discipline, and consistency continue to prove that we are a formidable cultural force within the region. To emerge 1st Runner-Up among heavy hitters such as Terri Lyons, Roslyn of Tobago, and other seasoned performers is no small feat."*

Ambassador Elizabeth Makhoul, Chairperson of the Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission, also expressed pride in Ge'Eve's success: *"We are proud to see our young people shining on such a prestigious regional stage. Ge'Eve's achievement is a testament to her talent, work ethic, and passion. She is paving the way for the next generation, demonstrating that age and gender are no barriers to excellence."*

This latest achievement represents another significant chapter in Ge'Eve Phillip's remarkable musical journey. She made her debut in 2013 at just seven years old in Antigua and Barbuda's Junior Calypso competitions, going on to secure an unprecedented 11 Junior Calypso titles. In 2022, at the age of 16, she entered the senior arena with "Small but Meh Tallawah," earning 1st Runner-Up in the Calypso Monarch competition. In 2025, she went on to dominate the national Calypso Monarch title before capturing the Leeward Islands Calypso Monarch crown in Anguilla.

The Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission extends heartfelt congratulations to Ge'Eve Phillip on this outstanding achievement. Job well done, daughter, the nation stands proud.



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Regional News

JCF to adapt KOBAN-Brazil policing to strengthen community relations

The Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) is looking to adapt the KOBAN-Brazil community policing as a model for strengthening police-citizen relations in the fight against crime in Jamaica. Practised in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the Japanese-style community policing system focuses on small, accessible police posts for community interaction. The objective is to build trust and collaboration between law enforcement and local communities.

Thirty-seven members of the JCF completed specialised hands-on training in the system in September 2025, delivered by the Military Police of the State of Sao Paulo, to integrate these new strategies across all JCF divisions for a more effective, community-focused force.

The training was undertaken as part of the 'Jamaica Capacity-Building on the Community Policing-KOBAN System' programme, which is a tripartite agreement involving Jamaica, Brazil, and Japan, aimed at strengthening Jamaica's national security and safety. Head of the National Police College of Jamaica (NPCJ), Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Merrick Watson, said the KOBAN system is intended to complement the model used by members of the JCF.

He noted that participants in the training have been equipped to promote greater cooperation, foster deeper public engagement and, ultimately, improve overall efficiency in ensuring the safety and security of communities.

Speaking at the closing ceremony held at the NPCJ's Twickenham Park location in St. Catherine in September, ACP Watson said that the insights gained from the training offer a powerful toolkit that will allow the JCF members to be more proactive, more visible, and more responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. He said that the training "reinforces the belief that true community and



safety is built on partnership and trust, pillars of community policing that the JCF Community Safety and Security branch champions every day".

He told the graduates that the new knowledge and tools acquired "should assist each of you to comprehend and modify strategies, promote teamwork, and enhance our collective effectiveness in maintaining public engagement and safety".

He charged them to take this knowledge back to their divisions and integrate these enhanced community policing strategies into their daily operations.

"The training is not just about adapting a model but embracing a philosophy that places the community at the heart of Jamaica's policing efforts," he pointed out, urging the officers to apply what they have learned with diligence, innovation, and in an unwavering commitment to service.

"Let this be the beginning of a sustained effort to build stronger, safer communities across Jamaica, inspired by the best global practices. Your insight, your enthusiasm, and your dedication are crucial as we move forward," he added.

Ambassador of Japan to Jamaica, Ya-

suhiro Atsumi, said his country shares the same aspirations as Jamaica and Brazil for the attainment of peace, stability, peaceful resolution of conflicts and practices that lead to consensus-based decision-making.

"Indeed, since 37 JCF members have completed training, I am even more confident that significant benefits will be reaped by Jamaica through the modelling and implementation of a Japanese-style community policing cooperative system over time," he said.

Chargé d'Affaires, Brazilian Embassy in Jamaica, Antonio Otavio Sá Ricarte, hailed the tripartite collaboration as a "vision for a safer, more engaged, and more inclusive society".

He said that the dedication of the trained officers "represents the future of community policing in Jamaica, rooted in respect, dialogue, and service".

The KOBAN training focused on theoretical frameworks, core principles, practical tools, and strategies for community engagement.

Fifteen JCF members travelled to Brazil from March 1 to 22, 2024 for instruction, with 37 completing training under the programme. (Jamaica Gleaner)

CDB's Cultural and Creative Industries Innovation Fund announces USD 190,000 in grants to promote regional events and conferences



The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), through its Cultural and Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF), has unveiled a funding opportunity amounting to USD 190,000. A CDB release shared that the initiative aims to support regional events and conferences that promote the development and competitiveness of the Caribbean's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). The deadline for applications is set for January 31, 2026.

This call for proposals invites submissions for activities scheduled between March 1, 2026, and February 28, 2027, that align with key growth priorities for CCIs.

The release specifies that eligible projects should focus on fostering policy discussions to create a more conducive environment for the sector, enhancing the capacity of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to boost their

competitiveness, improving sector data and market insights, promoting trade and marketplace activities, or safeguarding cultural heritage.

In launching this funding round, Malene Joseph, Fund Coordinator, emphasized, "CDB, through this grant call, aims to support home-grown activities that help unlock pathways for our creative Caribbean talent and businesses to become even more empowered. Beyond facilitating necessary policy dialogue and building data-driven insights CIIF is further enabling creative MSMEs by offering financial support to these targeted events."

A total of six grants will be awarded from the available USD 190,000, distributed across three different categories. Two grants of USD 25,000 each will focus on enhancing the enabling environment for cultural industries. Two addi-

tional grants of USD 20,000 will support initiatives centered on data intelligence and sector insights. The remaining two grants, totaling USD 50,000, will be allocated to activities that prepare MSMEs for market entry and facilitate market access.

Applicants must be officially registered organizations, including Business Support Organizations (BSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), universities, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), or government agencies operating within the Creative Industries sector.

Candidates should have a minimum of three years of experience in hosting industry-related events and must provide a co-financing contribution of at least 10% of the total project budget. Interested parties can submit their proposals through <https://cdb.submittable.com/submit>.

Additionally, CIIF will organize a virtual consultation on January 14, 2026, to assist prospective applicants.

CIIF, founded in 2017, assists the Caribbean's cultural and creative sectors to become more competitive on a global scale. The fund reportedly promotes innovation, collaboration, and sustainability by providing technical assistance and grants to stakeholders across the Bank's 19 Borrowing Member Countries. (Dominica News Online)

Regional News

St Kitts and Nevis welcomes Nigerian volunteers to enhance the island's education sector



Five volunteers from Nigeria's Technical Aid Corps (NTAC) are preparing to serve within the Ministry of Education of Saint Kitts and Nevis, as the island nation intensifies efforts to enhance teaching in mathematics, fundamental sciences, and related disciplines.

The St Kitts and Nevis government, via press release, shared that the Nigerian volunteers were officially greeted by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Honourable Dr. Geoffrey Hanley, during a formal event held at the Joseph N. France General Hospital on Monday, December 29, 2025.

Reportedly, these five professionals are part of a broader group, with an additional twelve individuals volunteering mainly in the healthcare sector, all for a period of two years.

Commenting on the initiative, Dr. Hanley highlighted, "This initiative reflects

the enduring friendship and cooperation between our two nations, and it underscores the shared commitment of advancing education and health for the benefit of our people."

He also mentioned ongoing discussions with Nigeria's Ministry of Education regarding further assistance in areas such as autism, disabilities, and potential scholarship opportunities.

Expressing gratitude, Deputy Prime Minister Hanley acknowledged the leadership of Prime Minister Honourable Dr. Terrance Drew and the support provided by Senior Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, the Right Honourable Dr. Denzil Douglas, in fostering this cooperative relationship between Saint Kitts and Nevis and Nigeria.

Both the prime minister and the senior minister participated in the event. (Dominica News Online)

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US military strikes 5 more alleged drug boats, killing 8 persons

The United States military said Wednesday it struck five alleged drug-smuggling boats over two days, killing a total of eight people while others jumped overboard and may have survived.

US Southern Command, which oversees South America, did not reveal where the attacks on Tuesday and Wednesday occurred. Previous attacks have been in the Caribbean Sea and in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

A video of Tuesday's attack posted by Southern Command on social media shows three boats traveling in a close formation, which is unusual, and the military said they were in a convoy along known narco-trafficking routes and "had transferred narcotics between the three vessels prior to the strikes." The military did not provide evidence to back up the claim.

The military said three people were killed when the first boat was struck, while people in the other two boats jumped overboard and distanced themselves from the vessels before they were attacked. Southern Command said it immediately notified the US Coast Guard to activate search and rescue efforts.

Southern Command's statement did not say whether those who jumped off the boats were rescued.

Calling in the Coast Guard is notable because the US military drew heavy scrutiny after US forces killed the survivors of an attack in early September with a follow-up strike to their disabled boat. Some Democratic lawmakers and legal experts said the military committed a crime, while the Trump administration and some Republican lawmakers say the follow-up strike was legal.

US forces attacked two more boats on Wednesday, killing five people who were allegedly smuggling drugs along known trafficking routes, Southern Command said in a separate statement. It did not provide evidence of the alleged trafficking or reveal the body of



water in which the attacks occurred. Videos posted with the statement on social media showed a boat in the water and explosions.

The latest attacks bring the total number of known boat strikes to 35 and the number of people killed to at least 115 since early September, according

to numbers announced by the Trump administration.

President Donald Trump has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs into the United States and asserted that the US is engaged in an "armed conflict" with drug cartels.

Along with the strikes, the Trump administration has built up military forces in the region as part of an escalating pressure campaign on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who has been charged with narco-terrorism in the United States.

Meanwhile, the CIA was behind a drone strike last week at a docking area believed to have been used by Venezuelan drug cartels, according to two people familiar with details of the operation who requested anonymity to discuss the classified matter.

It was the first known direct operation on Venezuelan soil since the US began strikes in September, a significant escalation in the administration's pressure campaign on Maduro's government. (AP)



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Dozens feared dead after fire sweeps through Swiss ski resort bar



Dozens of people are feared dead and around 100 more were seriously injured after a fire broke out during New Year's celebrations at a bar in the Swiss Alps, authorities in the country said Thursday.

"Several tens of people" were presumed killed at the bar called Le Constellation in the Alpine ski resort municipality of Crans-Montana, Valais canton police commander Frédéric Gisler said at a news conference.

Work was underway to identify the victims and inform their families, Gisler said. "That will take time," he said, adding that it was not possible to give a precise number of dead.

NBC News verified footage posted to social media that showed the building ablaze, with thick smoke billowing into the air as crowds gathered around and some people ran toward the scene. Screaming could be heard in the background.

Another video posted to TikTok showed emergency services on scene in the aftermath of the blaze and the area sealed off with police tape.

The fire started at around 1:30 a.m. (7:30 p.m. ET Wednesday), police spokesperson Gaëtan Lathion said in a separate interview with The Associat-

ed Press. "More than a hundred people were in the building, and we are seeing many injured and many dead," he said. "We're just at the beginning of our investigation, but this is an internationally renown ski resort with lots of tourists," he added.

Swiss President Guy Parmelin whose first day in office was on Thursday, wrote on X that the government's "thoughts go to the victims, to the injured and their relatives, to whom it addresses its sincere condolences." What was meant to be a moment of joy turned into mourning, he added.

Out of respect for victims' families, he delayed a traditional New Year's address to the nation meant to be broadcast Thursday afternoon, Swiss broadcasters SRF and RTS reported.

Italy's foreign ministry said in a statement that Swiss police believed around 40 people had died in the fire. The victims could not be immediately identified because of the severity of their burns, it added. France's foreign ministry said two French nationals were injured in the fire.

The U.S. Embassy in Switzerland urged American citizens in the country to "notify family and friends of their safety," in a post on X.

The number of injured was so large that the intensive care unit and operating theater at the regional hospital quickly hit capacity, Mathias Rénard, a regional councilor said at the same news conference. Patients were being transferred elsewhere, he said. Some of the victims were from other countries.

Beatrice Pilloud, the attorney general of the Valais canton, added that it was too early to determine the fire's cause as experts had not been able to go inside the wreckage. "At no moment is there a question of any kind of attack," she added.

In separate statement, police from the Valaisanne canton, or region, said a no-fly zone had been imposed over Crans-Montana, which sits in the region of Valais around two hours from the Swiss capital of Bern.

"Numerous emergency personnel from the police, fire brigade and rescue services immediately responded to provide assistance to the many affected individuals," the statement said. A reception center and helpline have been set up for impacted families, it added.

Authorities also called on local residents to show caution in the coming days to avoid any accidents that could require already overwhelmed medical resources.

The community in the heart of the Swiss Alps sits just 25 miles north of the Matterhorn. The municipality was formed only nine years ago, on Jan. 1, 2017, when multiple towns merged.

At the end of this month, it is set to host an international speed skiing championship — the FIS World Cup, where world's best skiers will race each other downhill from the top of one of the mountains, according to the resort's website. (NBC)

The Last Countries to Enter 2026: Where the New Year Ends

While fireworks burst across the Pacific and the first cities toast January 1, much of the world is still waiting. The arrival of the New Year does not happen all at once. It unfolds across time zones, stretching nearly a full day from its earliest celebrations to its final moments.

At the very end of the global clock sit American Samoa and Niue, the last inhabited places on Earth to welcome 2026. Even later still, though without celebration, are the uninhabited U.S. territories of Baker Island and Howland Island, the final geographic points to cross into the new year.

A Tale of Two Samoas

Each New Year, attention often turns to one of the world's most unusual time contrasts: the divide between Samoa and American Samoa. Though separated by just 60 miles (96.5 kilometres), the two sit on opposite sides of the International Date Line, creating a time difference of 25 hours.

In 2011, independent Samoa shifted its time zone to align more closely with major trading partners in Asia and the Pacific. The move made Samoa one of the first countries to greet the New Year, while American Samoa remains among the last. The result is a rare phenomenon that has captured global attention: it is possible to celebrate New Year's Eve in Samoa, then cross the date line and celebrate it again the following day in American Samoa.

Quiet Endings to a Global

Celebration

Unlike the large-scale, televised celebrations in cities such as Sydney, London, or New York, New Year's Eve in American Samoa and Niue is typically understated. The night is marked by family gatherings, church services, and small community events, with an emphasis on reflection rather than spectacle.

For visitors, these islands offer a striking contrast to the crowded countdowns



elsewhere. There are no towering fireworks displays or packed city squares, only the slow turning of the calendar in places where the New Year arrives quietly and deliberately.

The World's Final Time Zone

Beyond the inhabited islands lies the last official time zone on Earth, UTC-12. Here sit Baker and

Howland Islands, remote coral atolls designated as U.S. national wildlife refuges. They have no permanent residents, only occasional visits by scientists and conservation staff.

When these uninhabited islands finally cross into January 1, the global journey into the New Year is complete. It is a reminder that while the world often celebrates together, time itself

moves in stages, ending not with fireworks, but with silence on distant stretches of the Pacific Ocean.

From bustling cities to quiet islands and empty atolls, the arrival of 2026 is less a single moment than a rolling wave, one that circles the globe before finally coming to rest at the far edge of the map.



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Lions to host fund-raising contest ahead of new ABCA season



The New Winthorpes Lions team, the 2025 ABCA Super40 Cup Champions after beating Empire Nation in the final at the New Winthorpes playing field on Sunday, July 6, 2025. (File photo)

In preparation for the 2026 Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) domestic season, the CMW New Winthorpes Lions Cricket Club will conclude a series of fundraising events with a six-a-side knockout competition in early January.

The fun-filled six-a-side contest is scheduled to take place at the New Winthorpes playing field on the weekend of January 10 and 11, starting at 10 am.

Each team will comprise six players, with each player, except the wicketkeeper, allowed to bowl one over during five-over-per-team matches.

According to New Winthorpes Lions coach Abdiel Hughes, participants will be able to earn cash prizes during the two-day competition in which 16 teams are expected to compete.

There is an EC\$20 entry fee per player. Man of the Match winners in group stages will get \$50 and a trophy and will receive EC\$100 and a trophy in the semifinals.

The player who hit the most sixes during the entire competition will receive a reward of EC\$100. The winner of the competition will get a grand prize of EC\$1,000, and runners-up will get EC\$500.

"The highlight of the competition is there will be a man of the match in every game, so hence players will be walking away with something much more than what you pay to register and enter the competition," Hughes stated.

"So the man of the match in each of the matches in the preliminary round will get 50 dollars and a trophy, but when we get down to the semi-finals, the man of the match will receive 100 dollars and a trophy.

"For the final, the winning team will get 1,000 dollars, and the runners-up will receive 500 dollars."

Hughes said teams can use the six-a-side competition as a preseason contest in preparation for the start of the 2026 ABCA domestic season, which is slated to bowl off the following weekend.

"So there is no way that any cricket team should not use this opportunity to use it as a preseason because, apparently, the ABCA tournament is scheduled to start the following weekend," Hughes said.

"So this would be a nice start to get ready for the new season with a little financial perk. However, it is an open contest, and any team can participate; it is not just for teams that are taking

part in the ABCA competitions.

"There are quite a few teams that do not compete in the ABCA competitions that have shown interest and are expected to participate in the six-a-side event."

Hughes adds that there will be no vendors allowed to ply their trade at the event, but the New Winthorpes Cricket Club will provide food and drinks for sale as part of their fundraising venture.

The New Winthorpes Lions Cricket Club won a total of two major championship titles in the 2025 ABCA season.

The New Winthorpes Lions shared the title in the inaugural Antigua and Barbuda T20 Premier League with the Liberta Blackhawks after the final was abandoned due to rain.

The Lions also won the ABCA Super40 Cup by beating Empire Nation in the final.

However, the Lions had to settle for the runners-up spot in the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Parish League Sir Vivian Richards Thursday League after losing to the Jennings Tigers in the final.

Sports News

Campbelle to lead side in Super50 and T20 Blaze

GEORGETOWN, Guyana – West Indies Women wicketkeeper/batsman, Shemaine Campbelle has been appointed captain of Guyana Women's team, which will compete in next year's Regional Super50 Cup and T20 Blaze tournaments in St. Vincent.

However, while they will have the experienced Campbelle at the helm, Guyana will have to do without the services of talented all-rounder Cherry-Ann Fraser, who will miss the tournaments due to injury.

The Guyana Cricket Board (GCB) announced the squad on Sunday, which will be encamped from January 2 to 7 under the guidance of head coach Tremaine Smartt and assistant coach/manager, Clive Grimmond.

Guyana will be hoping to defend the T20 Blaze title they won this year, while adding the Super50 trophy to their cabinet.

They play their first match of the T20 Blaze against the Windward Islands on January 13 at Arnos Vale.

Campbelle will have off-spinning all-rounder Ashmini Munisar as her vice-captain in a strong squad that features several other West Indies



Guyana women are the defending T20 Blaze champions

Women's players in Shabika Gajabi, Sheneta Grimmond, Realeanna Grimmond, Plaffianna Millington and Mandy Mangru.

"The team, which achieved remarkable success earlier this year by capturing the T20 Blaze Championship, is focused on maintaining its winning form.

"Preparations have already begun within the GCB to ensure a smooth and effective build-up to the tournaments, emphasising player readiness, strategic planning, and overall team cohesion," the GCB said.

"The GCB is committed to providing the team with the resources and

preparation necessary to defend their T20 Blaze crown successfully while aiming to make a strong impact in the Super50 Championship."

Full Guyana Women Squad: Shemaine Campbelle (captain), Ashmini Munisar (vice-captain), Shabika Gajabi, Sheneta Grimmond, Realeanna Grimmond, Nyia Latchman, Kaysia Schultz, Laurene Williams, Latoya Williams, Analesia D'Aguiar, Plaffianna Millington, Mandy Mangru, Feona Benjamin, and Tremaine Marks.

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Gabon government sack Aubameyang and national team



Gabon team poses for a group photo during the Africa Cup of Nations group F soccer match between Gabon and Ivory Coast, in Marrakech, Morocco, Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2025. (AP)

RABAT (Reuters) - Gabon's government have announced the suspension of the national team, the sacking of the coach and kicked Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang off the squad in the wake of three defeats at the Africa Cup of Nations finals.

Gabon's Minister of Sports announced on television the suspension of the national team after they finished last in their group and were eliminated from the tournament in Morocco.

"Given the Panthers' disgraceful performance at the Africa Cup of Nations, the government has decided to dissolve the coaching staff, suspend the national team until further notice, and exclude players Bruno Ecuele Manga and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang," said acting sports minister Simplicie-Desire Mamboula after Wednesday's 3-2 loss to the Ivory Coast in Marrakech.

Gabon, coached by former defender Thierry Mouyouma, had already been eliminated after losing their opening pair of Group F fixtures to Cameroon and Mozambique.

But in their final outing Gabon had a 2-0 lead over the defending champions before conceding three goals and going down to a second string Ivorian line-up.

Neither Aubameyang nor veteran defender Ecuele Manga played on Wednesday, with Aubameyang having returned to his French club Olympique de Marseille for treatment on a thigh injury.

The former African Footballer of the Year responded on social media, saying on X, "I think the team's problems are much deeper than the individual I am."

Aubameyang, at 36, had likely played his last game for Gabon in their defeat by Mozambique as was also likely the case with the 37-year-old former Cardiff City defender Ecuele Manga.

Disbanding the national team used to be a common reaction in Africa to disappointing results but since world football's governing body FIFA have taken a hard stance against government interference in the running of football associations, it has been a rare occurrence.

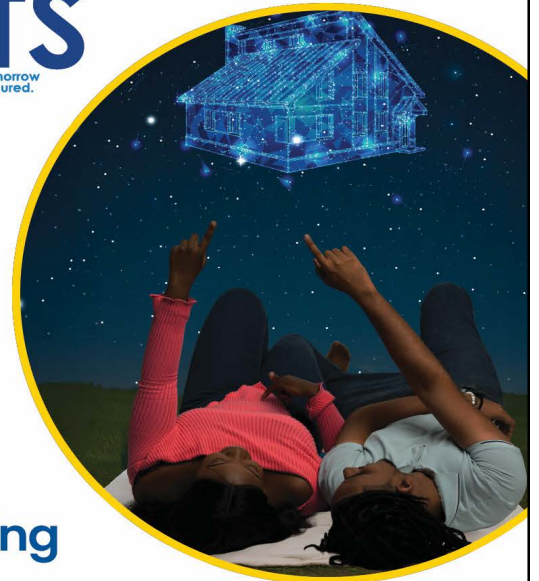


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Chelsea part ways with manager Maresca amid poor run of form

MANCHESTER, England (Reuters) - Chelsea parted ways with Enzo Maresca on Thursday, a dramatic fall from grace for the Italian who was named manager of the month for November before the club won just one of their last seven league games to fall out of the Premier League title race.

The Italian, who joined Chelsea in 2024 after steering Leicester City to Premier League promotion, leaves 18 months to the day since he was tasked with reviving the club's fortunes after two years of failing to qualify for the Champions League.

Maresca eventually guided the London side to Champions League qualification with a fourth-placed finish, the Conference League trophy and the Club World Cup title in his first season with a young but expensively-built squad.

But a poor run of form in December and an uncharacteristic outburst from the Italian prompted the club hierarchy to take action and part ways with the 45-year-old manager.

"Chelsea Football Club and head coach Enzo Maresca have parted company," the club said in a statement.

"With key objectives still to play for across four competitions including qualification for Champions League football, Enzo and the club believe a change gives the team the best chance of getting the season back on track."

Chelsea were as high as third in November and were among the title contenders, high on confidence after they had also crushed Barcelona 3-0 in



Chelsea's head coach Enzo Maresca sits on a bench ahead of the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Qarabag and Chelsea in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Nov. 5, 2025. (AP)

the Champions League at Stamford Bridge.

But they have since slipped to fifth in the league to sit 15 points behind leaders Arsenal at the halfway stage of the season.

Last month, Maresca voiced frustration over issues behind the scenes, saying he felt he had a lack of support from the club, describing a period after a 2-0 win over Everton as "the worst 48 hours" of his tenure.

The Italian did not clarify what he meant by the comment but the damage seemed to have been done as Chelsea's league form nosedived.

Although Chelsea beat Cardiff City to reach the League Cup semi-finals,

they picked up only two points in their last three Premier League games.

Off the pitch, there was also the unwelcome distraction of rubbishing links to the Manchester City job as Maresca pointed out that he was committed to Chelsea where he had a contract until 2029.

But Tuesday's 2-2 home draw with Bournemouth -- where fans chanted, "You don't know what you're doing," when he substituted playmaker Cole Palmer while they also booed at the final whistle -- proved to be his final match in charge.

The club did not say who would take charge ahead of Sunday's match against second-placed Manchester City.



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Sports

FRIDAY 02ND JANUARY 2026

POINT EXPRESS
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

Golden Grove drop points but continues to lead First Division

The Golden Grove FC dropped points for the third time but opened up a one-point gap over the Freemans Village Scorpions at the top of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League.

Golden Grove FC recorded their second draw in nine matches with a 2-2 stalemate with Bolans FC at the Golden Grove playing field in their latest outing.

Adonijah Dyett scored twice for Golden Grove FC, while Jaric Richards converted both goals for Bolans FC.

Adonijah Dyett scored with a strike in the 25th minute and converted a penalty kick in the 41st minute to give Golden Grove a two-nil lead at halftime.

But Richards also scored in the 65th minute and converted a penalty kick in the 87th minute to equalize and salvage the draw for Bolans FC.

The result allows Golden Grove FC to remain as leaders of the First Division League by advancing to 20 points, one more than the Freemans Village Scorpions, who have two games in hand.

Bolans FC moved on to eight points after salvaging their fifth draw in nine matches.

Parham FC notched up their fourth win in nine matches by snatching a 3-2 victory against Empire FC at the ABFA Technical Center.

Dondre Houston had a double conversion, and Trevaughn Harriette scored once for Parham FC. Markens



Players of the Golden Grove football team

Dorisca and Nicardo Lindsay each scored once for Empire.

The result allows Parham FC to advance to 15 points, while Empire FC remains on 14 points after suffering their third defeat in nine matches.

Alva Guishard Jr. scored twice as Bendals FC notched up their first win in 10 matches by snatching a 4-3 victory against the Cedar Grove Blue Jays at the Cashew Hill playing field.

Guishard Jr. scored with strikes in the 23rd and 58th minutes. Bendals FC also benefitted from an own goal scored by Emanuel Joseph in the 13th minute. Ronaldo Christian converted the other goal for Bendals in the 11th minute.

The goals for the Cedar Grove Blue Jays were scored by Kishorn Hamilton in the 21st minute, Ti-Zone Matthew in the 70th minute, and Rodrique Barnes in the 83rd minute.

Despite the result, Bendals FC remains in the cellar with five points,

while the Cedar Grove Blue Jays remain on six points after suffering their sixth loss in eight matches.

Shumba Thomas struck a hat trick to propel FC Master Ballerz to their second win in nine matches with a 4-1 drubbing of English Harbour FC at the Radio Range playing field in Ototos.

Thomas converted a penalty kick in the 27th minute and completed his hat trick with strikes in the first minute of added time in the first half as well as the 85th minute. Robert Jeffery scored the other goal for FC Master Ballerz in the 87th minute.

Akeem Weekes scored a consolation goal for English Harbour by converting a penalty kick in the seventh minute.

The result allows FC Master Ballerz to advance to nine points, while English Harbour FC remains on 12 points after crashing to their sixth defeat in 10 matches.