

# ABCAS Expands





# Editorial

## New Experiences, New Lessons, and a Generous Spirit



by **Petra Williams**

The past two weeks have been unfamiliar terrain. Acting editor is not a role one eases into gently. It demands pace, judgement, curiosity, and the humility to learn quickly while the paper goes to print regardless.

This short stretch has been an education in motion.

There were systems to understand, rhythms to respect, decisions to make with imperfect information, and a newsroom reality that rewards clari-

ty over comfort. I am deeply grateful for the guidance of the team, whose institutional memory and professionalism kept the wheels steady, and for the confidence shown by management in allowing space to think, shape, and experiment.

Most of all, I hope readers found value in the feel, the thought, and the tone of the paper during this period. That you not only read, but paused, discussed, disagreed, laughed, questioned, and reflected. A newspaper earns its place not by unanimity, but by engagement.

Every day brought something new to learn. Sometimes about process. Sometimes about people. Often about perspective. Stepping out, showing up, and doing the work sharpens the eye in ways theory never can. It reinforces the value of critical assessment, not as an exercise in fault-finding, but as a discipline of improvement. You see more when you are closer to the ground.

The stories themselves formed a quiet conversation.

Regional and international pieces examined how global power shifts land on small states, from visa pressures and migration negotiations to the uncomfortable ways geopolitics now collides with culture, fashion, and ev-

eryday life. Local features grounded those themes closer to home, through lived experiences. Conversations overheard in football stands about travel and access. The real cost of inter-island flights. The weight carried by families navigating health care, education, and mobility.

There were stories of resilience and excellence. Young Antiguan excelling regionally through discipline and support. Educators and institutions adapting to national needs. Health advocates turning survival into service and awareness into action. Community movements that remind us that progress is often built quietly, with persistence rather than spectacle.

Taken together, the pieces reflected a single idea. That Antigua and Barbuda exists at the intersection of the global and the deeply personal. Policy decisions ripple into kitchens and clinics. Education reforms reshape futures. Culture holds steady even as circumstances shift. And good journalism, at its best, helps connect those dots.

This acting role has been temporary. The lessons are not.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for engaging. And thank you for the generous spirit with which this experiment was received.



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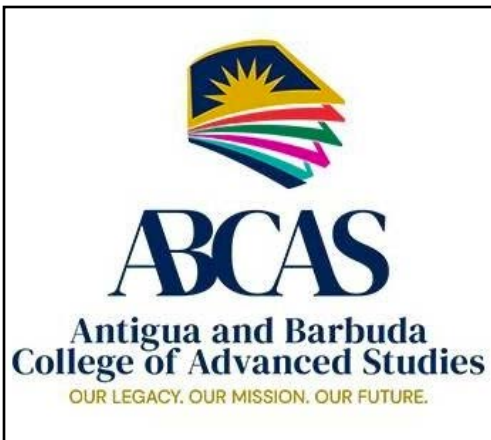
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## ABCAS Expands with Launch of School of Agriculture



The Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies is expanding its academic footprint by introducing a School of Agriculture, signalling a deliberate shift toward specialised, development-focused training aligned with national priorities.

Operations at the new School of Agriculture, to be housed at the former Glanvilles Secondary School, are expected to begin as early as next month.

According to Dr. E. Jonah Greene, President of ABCAS, the curriculum is being developed in close collaboration with local and regional agricultural experts to ensure relevance and practical impact. As an initial rollout, two short courses, crop production and poultry farming, are slated to launch between January and February.

The move follows last year's Cabinet-approved decision to merge Glanvilles and Pares Secondary School, a strategic response to declining enrollment. At the time of the merger,

Glanvilles had 163 students and Pares 178. Students from Glanvilles were transferred to Pares, while teachers were reassigned or retained within the Ministry of Education, allowing the Glanvilles plant to be repurposed rather than left dormant.

Those facilities now form the backbone of the new agricultural programme. Existing infrastructure, including a science laboratory, home economics department, hydroponic unit, animal pens, and farm plots, is being adapted to support hands-on agricultural training and applied learning.

The School of Agriculture becomes the fourth institute under the ABCAS umbrella. The unified institution was launched in September 2025 through



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# Local News

the merger of Antigua State College, ABHIT, and the Hotel Training Institute, with the aim of creating a streamlined tertiary system offering clear pathways from certificates to degrees.

Work is also ongoing to fully integrate the Harrison Centre, formerly ABICE, into the ABCAS framework, further consolidating technical and professional education.

Officials say the establishment of the School of Agriculture aligns directly with the government's broader focus on food security, workforce development, and building local capacity in critical sectors. Beyond credentials, the emphasis is on practical skills, modern techniques, and creating viable career pathways in agriculture.

With classes set to begin shortly, the transformation of Glanville's education plant from a traditional secondary



school into a specialised agricultural training hub marks a notable chapter in the country's evolving education

landscape, one rooted in adaptation, relevance, and national need.



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## Central Board of Health Issues Public Updates on Training and Burial Fees

The Central Board of Health has issued two important public updates affecting food handlers and families accessing burial services, as part of its ongoing regulatory and public health responsibilities.

### Food Handlers' Training Scheduled for February

The CBH has announced upcoming Food Handlers' Training sessions for both new applicants and those seeking retraining or renewal of badges.

All prospective participants are required to register in person at the CBH office on Upper Church Street between 8:30 a.m. and 12:00 noon.

Key requirements include:

- ▶ Two passport-sized photographs for new applicants, or an expired food handler's badge (2018 onward) for renewals
- ▶ A registration fee of \$50
- ▶ A \$25 rescheduling fee for persons who miss their assigned session
- ▶ Sessions are limited to 80 participants

Training will take place at the Multi-Purpose Centre, Perry Bay, on the following dates:

- ▶ February 5, 2026 (New applicants): 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

## FOOD HANDLERS' TRAINING

### TO: ALL FOOD-HANDLERS

The Ministry of Health, Central Board of Health (CBH) wishes to inform all Food Handlers and prospective Food Handlers of the following:

1. Food handlers wishing to access the Food Handlers Training Course facilitated by C.B.H must REGISTER at the Central Board of Health (CBH) Upper Church Street (8:30 a.m.- 12:00 noon).
2. Provide 2 Passport sized photographs if new applicant, or an Expired Badge (from 2018 onwards) if Renewal of Food Handlers Badge.
3. Pay a Registration Fee of \$50.00.
4. A \$25.00 fee will be charged to any person missing their scheduled training and wishes to reschedule.
5. Sessions limited to 80 persons only.

Venue: **MULTI-PURPOSE CENTRE PERRY BAY**

Date/Time: **February 05th, 2026 (New) 9 AM to 2 PM**

**February 12th, 2026 (Retrained) 9 AM to 12:00 PM**

**February 19th, 2026 (Retrained) 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM**



**"NO CHILDREN ALLOWED"!!!!!!!!!!**



- ▶ February 12, 2026 (Retrained): 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
- ▶ February 19, 2026 (Retrained): 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The CBH has also emphasized that no children will be allowed at training sessions.

Revised Burial Fees Now in Effect

In a separate notice, the Cen-

tral Board of Health has confirmed revised public and private burial fees, effective January 5, 2026.

The updated fees for digging a single grave are:

- ▶ \$100 for stillborns or children under three years
- ▶ \$250 for children aged three to under 15 years
- ▶ \$500 for persons aged 15 years and over

For private burial plots containing space for multiple graves:

- ▶ \$300 for the first grave
- ▶ \$50 for each additional grave space after the first

The CBH advises that all payments must be made directly at its Upper Church Street office.

Officials say the adjustments are part of routine administrative updates to ensure the sustainability and proper management of public health services.

Members of the public are encouraged to take note of the changes and make the necessary arrangements ahead of time.

## ATTENTION

### CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH

#### *Revised Public Burial Fees*



#### DIGGING OF A SINGLE GRAVE

A) Stillborn or child under 3 years	\$100.00
B) Child age 3 years but under 15 years	\$250.00
C) Person age 15 years and over	\$500.00

#### CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF GRAVES

Care of a single grave for one year or part thereof	\$150
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#### Care of a Private Burial Place

(containing space for multiple graves)

First Grave	\$300.00
Each additional grave space after the first	\$50.00

#### Notes:

**MAKE PAYMENT AT CBH OFFICE LOCATED ON UPPER CHURCH STREET**

**FEES EFFECTIVE JANUARY 5, 2026**

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OF PRAISE**

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## Excellence Built at Home: Khalique Harris' Rise from CSEC Star to Regional TVET Standout



**Antigua and Barbuda's Khalique Harris of St. Joseph's Academy, was recognized as the Most Outstanding CSEC Candidate in the Region for Technical and Vocational Studies at the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) Regional Awards Ceremony, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on December 11, 2025.**

Antigua and Barbuda's celebration of academic excellence this year carries a powerful reminder. Outstanding results are rarely solitary achievements. They are often the visible edge of quiet discipline, family sacrifice, and sustained belief.

That truth is embodied in Khalique Harris of St Joseph's Academy, who was recognised as the Most Outstanding CSEC Candidate in the Region for Technical and Vocational Studies at the Caribbean Examinations Council Awards Ceremony held in Port of Spain in December 2025.

Harris, who also placed second nationally at the 2025 CSEC examinations, sat an extraordinary 22 subjects and earned 17 Grade One passes. His regional award was conferred for exceptional performance across a wide slate of Technical and Vocational disciplines, including Information Technology, Food, Nutrition and Health, Family and Resource Management, Technical Drawing, and multiple Industrial Technology areas covering

electrical, mechanical, and building specialisations.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries praised his achievement as both a personal triumph and a testament to the strength of Technical and Vocational Education and Training as a pillar of national development.

Behind the accolades, however, lies a story grounded firmly at home.

Khalique's journey has been anchored by consistent family support, disciplined structure, and deep spiritual conviction. His mother, Rita, played a central role in creating the conditions for success, managing the daily details that often go unseen. From meals and uniforms to maintaining a calm study environment, her presence was constant.

"Most of the time, what I would do when he's studying, I would stay in the living room with him, so he doesn't feel alone," Rita explained. "You might not be able to do the physics, you might not be able to understand

the maths, but one thing that you can do is to give them that support, be that strong tower, be that praying person for them."

That emotional grounding was reinforced by firm discipline. His father, Catchet Harris, served as both timekeeper and motivator, ensuring Khalique was the first student through the gates each morning. With a background in construction and drafting, he also helped nurture his son's interest in technical and applied fields, linking classroom theory to real-world purpose.

Now looking ahead, Khalique is already charting his next chapter. He is currently pursuing the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme while preparing for the SAT examinations, with aspirations of gaining admission to top-tier U.S. institutions such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Cornell University.

"I intend to go to a university where I can study electrical engineering and architecture. That's just the first option," he said. "And then I have maybe petroleum engineering in my sights." Despite his standout performance, Khalique's advice to fellow students is notably practical. Excellence, he insists, is less about brilliance and more about consistency.

"Discipline and hard work beat talent all the time. Consistency is very important," he noted. "You could say you're studying for five hours a day, but how much of that time were you actually locked in and knew what you were doing?"

His story is both inspiration and instruction. Academic excellence is built early, reinforced daily, and sustained by families who show up in quiet, faithful ways. In Khalique Harris' case, regional recognition may be the headline, but the real foundation was laid long before the awards ceremony, in living rooms, early mornings, and steady belief.





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- Children under 16 *with valid ID* \$25 at the gate
- Children under 5 FREE (*only for night 2*)

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NIGHT 1 - 7 PM  
NIGHT 2 - 4 PM

### HEADLINER PERFORMANCES

NIGHT 1 - BEFORE 10 PM  
NIGHT 2 - BEFORE 7 PM

### ROAD CLOSURE

- CENOTAPH TO THE ROUNABOUT
- CORONATION ROAD
- OLD PARHAM RD. GRAMMAR SCHOOL WESTWARD TO THE ROUNABOUT

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SATURDAY AND SUNDAY - 10 AM UNTIL BOTH TICKET BOOTHS (OLD PARHAM RD AND INDEPENDENCE DRIVE)



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## More Than Awareness: Antigua and Barbuda's Push Toward a Cervical Cancer-Free Future

Cervical Cancer Awareness Month is being observed in Antigua and Barbuda as the country continues to pursue a national strategy aimed squarely at elimination.

Speaking with the media, Emelda Benjamin, a dedicated healthcare professional and eight-year breast cancer survivor, outlined critical health priorities and lent her voice and lived experience to the global call for action. She noted that the World Health Organization is urging countries to aggressively scale up vaccination, screening, and treatment as part of its strategy to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health threat.

Benjamin provided clear guidance on screening schedules currently recommended for citizens. Women aged 21 to 29 are advised to have a Pap test every three years, while those aged 30 to 65 should undergo either a co-test combining Pap and HPV testing every five years, **or** HPV testing alone every five years.

“These schedules apply to those in general good health,” she cautioned, “but individuals who are immunocompromised or have other risk factors should consult their doctors for more frequent monitoring.”

Ms Benjamin also reminded parents and guardians that teenagers can access free cervical cancer vaccines at any local health centre or clinic across Antigua and Barbuda.

Beyond the clinical guidance, Benjamin underscored an often-overlooked dimension of cancer care: mental health. Drawing from her own journey as a survivor, she explained that anxiety, depression, and fear can directly affect how the body responds to treatment.

To counter the isolation many patients experience, she advocates strongly for talk therapy and peer counselling.



**Emelda Benjamin**

She currently leads the Antigua and Barbuda Cancer Support Community, an arm of the Community Charitable Ministry. The licensed non-profit connects patients with survivors of the same cancer type, whether cervical, stomach, or blood cancers, ensuring no one has to walk the journey alone.

That spirit of solidarity will be on public display this weekend, when Antigua and Barbuda joins the global community on Sunday, January 11, 2026, for the World Cancer Walk. The walk will begin at the Cancer Centre at the base of Michael's Mount, then proceed along Queen Elizabeth Highway, Independence Drive, Redcliffe Street, Temple Street, and Long Street, and return via Factory Road and University Drive.

She encouraged residents to participate in honour of those lost, in support of those currently in treatment, and as a contribution to global cancer research. Registration is free at [worldcancerwalk.com](http://worldcancerwalk.com).

The public advocacy aligns with a broader, multi-pronged national effort. Antigua and Barbuda has positioned itself as a Caribbean leader in

eliminating cervical cancer, supported by technical assistance from the Pan American Health Organization and the WHO.

Key initiatives include the country's HPV vaccination program, launched in 2018 through PAHO access, which targets both boys and girls in schools starting at age 11. The goal is to reach 90 percent vaccination coverage among girls by age 15 by 2030. Screening has shifted toward high-performance HPV testing as the primary method, supported by pilot projects that screened over 1,500 women and identified a 21 percent high-risk HPV positivity rate.

Free HPV screening is available at select clinics for women ages 30 to 59 who have not been tested in the past 3 years.

A national cervical cancer task force guides policy and is supported by the creation of a cancer registry to track progress and gaps.

Challenges remain, including vaccine hesitancy and limited capacity in certain diagnostic services.

Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph repeatedly reminds everyone that cervical cancer remains the second most common cancer and the third leading cause of cancer death among women, underscoring the urgency of the national response. “Our aim is to create a cervical cancer-free future for women in Antigua and Barbuda,” the minister stated, affirming the country's alignment with global elimination targets.

Taken together, the message is clear. Cervical cancer is preventable, detectable, and treatable. With science, community support, and sustained public engagement, Antigua and Barbuda is no longer just raising awareness; it is walking, deliberately, toward elimination.





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**TIAN WINTER - CLAUDETTE PETERS - MR VEGAS - CHRISTOPHER MARTIN**  
**GRAMPS MORGAN - SHELLY & SIGNAL BAND**

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**10<sup>TH</sup> JAN  
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**\$100**

REGGAE  
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**\$375**

TIME:

**8PM**



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# When Opposition Politics Becomes a National Risk

There are moments when opposition scrutiny strengthens democracy. And there are moments when opposition behaviour actively weakens the country it claims to want to lead. On U.S. visas and immigration cooperation issues, the United Progressive Party has crossed that line.

What we are witnessing is not principled accountability. It is sensationalism masquerading as patriotism, misinformation disguised as concern, and a dangerous willingness to erode public confidence in the state for political gain.

Former finance minister, tourism minister, leader of the opposition, and now opposition caretaker candidate, **Harold Lovell**, is at the center of this escalation, making sweeping claims that Antigua and Barbuda is either diplomatically incompetent or deliberately excluded from U.S. decision-making on the visa bond requirement. He then dismisses ongoing discussions with the United States as meaningless because they are “non-binding.”

Both arguments collapse under basic scrutiny.

First, regarding the visa bond requirement. The claim that Antigua and Barbuda should have been warned in advance assumes a level of transparency in the U.S. system that simply does not exist. There are numerous examples showing that U.S. immigration policy is increasingly driven by executive proclamations and domestic political calculations. Even U.S. allies, and at times the U.S. State Department itself, are not always privy to decisions until they are announced.

The U.S. Visa Bond Pilot Programme began quietly in August 2025, initially targeting two African countries. Its expansion caught multiple governments off guard. To suggest that Antigua



and Barbuda somehow failed diplomatically because it was not forewarned is to mislead the public and to absolve Washington of its own communication failures.

That is not analysis. It is narrative-building.

Second, regarding the so-called “non-binding” Memorandum of Understanding, Lovell’s attempt to portray it as either sinister or as evidence of secretive governance deliberately ignores how diplomacy functions. Non-binding agreements are common tools for exploring cooperation, signalling intent, and preserving flexibility. They do not bypass sovereignty, override Cabinet authority, or automatically translate into policy implementation.

What matters is not the existence of dialogue, but how outcomes are managed. The Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party administration, led by Gaston Browne, has been clear that no arrangement will be implemented without safeguards, limits, and national interest at the forefront. That is gov-

ernance. Not secrecy.

What is truly troubling is the opposition’s apparent strategy. Rather than urging calm, seeking clarification through diplomatic channels, or contributing constructively, the UPP has chosen alarmism. Words like “blacklist,” “failure,” and “loss of credibility” are deployed without evidence, feeding public anxiety in an already tense global environment.

This is why the public reaction has been so sharp. Increasingly, citizens are saying openly what many feel privately: the UPP’s current posture seems less concerned with national stability than with political combustion. There is a growing sense that the objective is not to improve the country but to undermine trust so thoroughly that governance itself is discredited.

Burn the nation to the ground and then claim the ashes.

That is not opposition politics worthy of a serious party. It is opportunism at the expense of the national interest.

Antigua and Barbuda is navigating complex external pressures, from shifting U.S. immigration policy to global security concerns that small states do not control. These moments require maturity, restraint, and a working knowledge of how power actually operates on the international stage.

Former ministers should know this. If they do not, then their lectures on diplomacy ring hollow.

The country deserves debate, yes. But it also deserves responsibility. What it does not deserve is a political opposition willing to trade credibility, calm, and confidence for headlines and heat.

Leadership is not proven by who shouts loudest in a crisis. It is proven by who steadies the room.



**TUES - FRIDAY  
11AM - 2PM**



**HOSTED BY  
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# News That Makes You Think, and Smile

by Petra Williams

## Visa Lines, Loud Stands, and the Geography of Reality



The thing about local football matches is that you come for the game but leave with sociology.

There I was, minding my business, half-watching a midfield battle, when two men behind me launched into a full-volume discussion on the state of the world; not tactics, not referees, but Visas.

It started heavy. Real heavy. They spoke of travel restrictions tightening like a vise grip. Of loved ones unable to access overseas medical care. Of missed opportunities, delayed diagnoses, and the quiet humiliation of paperwork that never seems to move fast enough when your health depends on it. It was raw. Emotional. The kind of conversation you don't interrupt, even accidentally, because it is carrying somebody's lived truth.

Heads nodded nearby. A few people murmured agreement. In small places, these stories are never unique.

Then, without warning, the conversation shifted gears. One man, voice suddenly lighter, began outlining future vacation plans. Destinations were named confidently. Dates imagined optimistically. Sun, shopping, relaxation, the works.

That's when the other man paused and asked, genuinely puzzled, where

exactly the passport office is located these days. Not a trick question or being sarcastic.

He had no idea. Never applied. Never needed to. Never been. This plot twist landed quietly, like a bad referee call that takes a second to register.

Moments later came the closer. The other man admitted his biggest overseas trip to date was to Montserrat.

And just like that, the entire visa debate rearranged itself.

This is the Caribbean paradox in a nutshell. We speak fluently about global mobility, sanctions, border tightening, and international inequities, often with deep personal pain attached. Yet for many, the machinery of travel itself remains abstract. Offices never visited. Forms never filled. Processes never learned until crisis arrives.

It is not ignorance but rather access layered with habit and history.

For generations, movement was limited not just by visas but by money, confidence, and the quiet belief that certain doors were simply not for you. So, when restrictions tighten now, they don't just close borders. They expose gaps! Knowledge gaps! Experience gaps! Psychological gaps!

The humour is unintentional because Caribbean people always find humour. A man passionately critiquing visa policy who has never stood in a passport line. Another is dreaming of far-off vacations while his travel history fits neatly inside a fifteen-minute plane ride.

But beneath the chuckle sits something serious. Mobility is no longer optional. It intersects with health care, education, family survival, and dignity. And yet, we are still not preparing people early enough for that reality. Not practically. Not culturally.

So yes, visa restrictions are tightening. That part is true. But so too is this. For many, the real barrier begins long

before the embassy. It starts with not knowing where the passport office is, or believing that Montserrat is as far as life ever intended you to go.

Football ended two-nil that day. Fair result.

The conversation, though, was a draw between laughter and discomfort. Which is often where the most honest truths live.

## Two Pageants, One Region, and the Weight of a Crown

If you ever wanted proof that Caribbean culture does not travel in straight lines, look no further than this week's pageant conversations. On one end of the region, rules were sharpened with surgical clarity. On the other, a crown was contested by exactly two women. Somewhere between Anguilla and St. Croix, the Caribbean quietly reminded us that culture survives through both structure and stubbornness.

In Anguilla, the Miss Anguilla Pageant made headlines not with a sash but with a sentence. Registration notices for the 2026 competition explicitly stated that contestants must be "born female," along with long-standing requirements for age, residency, education, language fluency, and marital status. The organizers' message was clear. This pageant stands firmly within traditional definitions and wants no confusion before heels even hit the stage.

Predictably, the region responded with commentary. Some applauded the clarity. Others questioned the timing and implications in a world where pageants elsewhere are rethinking inclusion. And many simply noted that in small societies, pageants are never just pageants. They are cultural signposts, loaded with meaning far beyond the crown itself.

Then, almost on cue, St. Croix entered the chat.

At the Miss St. Croix Festival Queen



Pageant, part of the Crucian Christmas Festival, there were just two contestants. Two! On seeing the results and probing further, somewhere between a chuckle and a think-piece, I affectionately dubbed the duo Ms First and Ms Last.

The production unfolded in full. Stage. Judges. Lighting. Gowns. Rehearsals. Trophies. The same fixed costs, the same cultural seriousness, the same sense of occasion that has defined the pageant for over seven decades.

When the tiara was placed, Miss St. Croix Festival Queen, sweeping major segments including Best Evening Wear, Best Contemporary Cultural Attire, and Miss Intellect. The first runner-up claimed Miss Popularity. Between them, they carried the entire competitive load, gracefully and without irony.

Taken together, Anguilla and St. Croix tell a single Caribbean story from two angles.

Anguilla shows us boundaries. The instinct to define, preserve, and protect tradition in a time of global flux. St. Croix shows us persistence. The determination to stage culture even when numbers dip, applause is thinner, and participation no longer guarantees spectacle.

Both are acts of cultural self-definition.

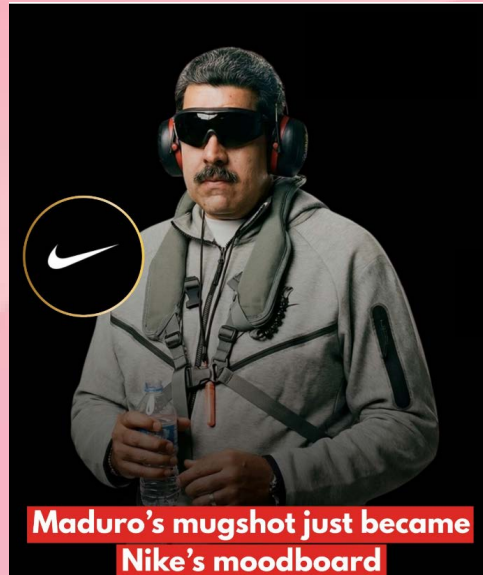
Beneath the humour lies something serious. Youth engagement is shifting. Migration, economics, and evolving social norms are reshaping who steps forward and why. Yet pageants remain, sometimes rigid, sometimes resilient, because they serve as mirrors. They reflect how societies see womanhood, leadership, and national pride at a given moment.

So yes, one island clarified who may enter. Another crowned a queen from a field of two. And the Caribbean, as always, found room for laughter, debate, and reflection all at once.

Because here, culture does not wait for perfect conditions. It adapts. It insists.

And whether contested by dozens or defended by definition, the crown still carries weight.

## When Geopolitics Meets Streetwear Culture



In one of *this year's most surreal cultural crossovers*, a photo of Nicolás Maduro has transformed a routine piece of athletic wear into a must-have "it item" for 2026, and not because of any traditional fashion campaign. The image was shared by Donald Trump on his Truth Social account following Maduro's capture by U.S. forces earlier this month, showing him aboard the USS *Iwo Jima* wearing a grey Nike Tech Fleece tracksuit.

The result? A perfect storm of geopolitics, internet culture, and consumer desire.

Within hours of the photo circulating, online interest in the Nike Tech line, a minimalist, mid-weight athleisure fleece, spiked dramatically. Searches for the tracksuit surged on Google and X, and social media feeds lit up with memes, "steal the look" posts, and tongue-in-cheek reviews breaking down how to replicate Maduro's unintentional aesthetic.

Some sizes of the iconic grey hoodie and joggers reportedly sold out across Nike's U.S. online store, while broader

global demand peaked in parts of Europe and North America as fashion enthusiasts, meme lovers, and the merely curious clicked "Add to Basket."

Online reactions ranged from tongue-in-cheek praise, dubbing the silhouette "Maduro grey", to quick-chat memes remixing the photo into pop culture hits and Halloween inspiration. The trend encapsulates how visual shorthand now shapes global discourse: a single snapshot can make complex geopolitics feel oddly familiar when framed through something as relatable as a tracksuit.

Many users pointed out the intense irony. Here is a long-time critic of Western influence and capitalism, suddenly boosting the profile and bottom line of an American sportswear brand without Nike lifting a marketing finger. For some, it is "guerrilla branding at its finest"; for others, it's a reminder that in the digital age, everything is fodder for culture and commerce.

This unexpected fashion moment lays bare a few modern truths. First, visuals travel faster than analysis; people engage with the image first, then the narrative follows. Second, consumer and cultural conversations blur quickly; a military or political drama can morph into a product trend within hours. And finally, humour and relatability reign; even in serious geopolitical crises, the internet finds a way to make the moment feel accessible and shareable.

In a world where political theatre and social media spectacle are increasingly entangled, this viral spike shows how branding exposure can come from the most unlikely of places: not from planned campaigns, but from unexpected snapshots that capture both global tension and our collective attention. Fashion week this is not. But for 2026? It might just be the most talked-about athleisure moment yet.

Friday entertainment, Caribbean style.

## Fix it or face the law, Kamla tells citizens

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has issued a stern warning to motorists, insisting there will be no reduction in traffic fines despite public backlash over increased enforcement, while announcing proposed reforms to allow time to repair certain vehicle defects before penalties are enforced.

In a statement posted to her X (formerly Twitter) account, Persad-Bissessar said recent events had confirmed her view that widespread lawlessness existed on the nation's roads.

She wrote "Over the last few days my statement that the country is a lawless dump has been absolutely confirmed by the high number of traffic infractions and deliberately lawless drivers being fined. The lawlessness was compounded by the blatant dishonesty on show from many of those ticketed who pretended to have been caught by surprise by the defects in their vehicles or expired documentation.

I want to be clear, their dishonesty and pretense fools no one, the vast majority of citizens who were ticketed knew about their vehicle defects and expired documentation well in advance of being ticketed and therefore ful-



ly deserved their fines for their lawless behavior.

The entitlement, indiscipline and misdirected priorities of some lawless citizens who inconvenience and endanger law abiding citizens will not be tolerated anymore. No discipline will be met with no tolerance. No one will sway me from cleaning up this lawless dump to benefit citizens who try to live decent law abiding lives.

Any citizen is free to mash up the place and misbehave if they want to, but I guarantee that I will continue to meet lawlessness with the swift and brutal retribution that I promised.

Yesterday Ministers Eli Zakour and Roger Alexander provided information to me that a small mi-

nority of traffic wardens, licensing officers and TTPS officers have been abusing the ticketing system and terrorizing law abiding citizens. I cannot let this wicked behaviour continue and must now move to provide protection to law abiding citizens from delinquent drivers as well as misbehaving law enforcement officers."

Persad-Bissessar said that in the coming weeks the government will go to parliament to propose to implement the following reforms to make it mandatory for drivers to be given time to repair defects before the fines are enforced.

Re:- Fixed Penalty Notice Warning System

Offences listed in the ninth

schedule and timeframe to fix are as follows:-

Defective vehicle fittings (such as damaged wind-screens): 7 days

Excessive smoke, sparks or vapour: 7 days

Noisy vehicles: 7 days

Missing or defective lights, mirrors, horn, wipers or silencers: 3 days

Unauthorised lights, letters or figures: 3 days

Missing "left-hand drive" notice: 3 days

Taxi signage and markings violations: 3 days

Public service vehicles without spare tyres: 3 days

Persad-Bissessar said that strict enforcement would continue until the reforms are passed, and warned that the law would be applied equally across the country.

She wrote "There will absolutely be NO REDUCTION in traffic fines and strict enforcement will continue until these reforms are made. The law will be applied equally across the country, it does not matter if you are UNC, PNM or any other grouping, it does not matter if you are rich or poor, if you are from Debe or Diego Martin, if you break the traffic laws, ANYBODY GETS IT !!! (Trinidad Express)



## CXC modifies exams for students scarred by Hurricane Melissa



Signalling its solidarity with Jamaica as the nation recovers from the devastation and dislocation caused by Hurricane Melissa, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) says it will be offering modified exams to students in the seven most impacted parishes.

Addressing a press conference yesterday, CXC Chief Executive Officer Dr Wayne Wesley said the plan of action decided on – in agreement with the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information – is for students sitting the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination in May-June 2026.

“CXC will administer examinations in its normal format for all schools and will offer the flexibility of using the modified approach to those schools negatively affected by the hurricane,” Wesley stated.

He noted that these modifications and adjustments will be facilitated with respect to school-based assessments (SBAs).

Dr Nicole Manning, director of operations at CXC, explained that candidates will be graded on Paper 1 and the SBA if they are selected for the modified approach.

Manning said the organisation is aiming to create equity in its approach

to Jamaica as it ensures a balance of “compassion with the maintenance of fairness in the assessment”.

CXC examinations are administered combining internal SBAs with external exams – papers one, two, and sometimes three.

“We will work with our local registrar to ensure that we can identify these schools, and we will manage accordingly,” she said. “The submissions from the schools will be required by January 14. So by January 14, we will know the schools that will be doing the full, normal assessment versus the modified approach,” Manning said.

Jamaican students will also be given concessions for the SBAs.

She noted, too, that the Ministry of Education has also identified special cases of schools equally devastated that are not in the seven identified parishes.

“And CXC will take that into consideration and offer that provision in terms of the facilitation of the use of the modified approach,” she said.

“Recovery and continuity are two important components for growth. And thus, we at the Caribbean Examinations Council are seeking to support the candidates and their parents in the continuity of their lives and livelihood and, in so doing, the economic growth

of the region,” she added.

More than 600 educational institutions sustained damage during the passage of the Category 5 hurricane, which made landfall on October 28.

Meanwhile, Wesley stated that late registration has been accommodated for candidates from schools negatively affected without any late-fee requirements. CXC will also extend the timeline for submission of SBAs for schools negatively impacted to June 15, 2026 without any late-fee requirements.

Further, all candidates based in Jamaica will receive their results in August 2026 along with the rest of the region. Where candidates register and pay for their examinations but no longer feel ready to sit the examinations, they can seek a refund or defer to another session in 2027.

These measures, he noted, are in line with the regional body’s Disaster and Business Recovery Protocol, which was approved by CXC’s board of governors.

The six-step protocol governs how CXC responds when a participating member state is affected by a disaster, such as a hurricane, flood, or volcanic eruption, or other unusual events such as civil disorders.

Wesley stated that CXC first initiates a response and statement of support for the affected participating state. Second, it then coordinates with the ministries of education in the assessment and recovery efforts. Third, the council engages in wider stakeholder consultations that include parents, teachers, employers, and other crucial stakeholders.

The CXC management then drafts recommendations and action plans for consideration by the board. The board then reviews, ratifies, and approves what CXC should implement in facilitating the region affected by the disaster. Finally, CXC implements and engages in an ongoing evaluation with the affected state. (Jamaica Observer)



# Regional News

## Man arrested in \$7 million overseas employment scam

The police have arrested and charged a 52-year-old man who was wanted in connection with an overseas employment scam that allegedly defrauded more than 200 people of approximately \$7 million.

The accused, Horace Haughton, who the police said is also known as “Dr Perez” or “Dr Maddison” of no fixed address, was apprehended in St Andrew on Tuesday, January 6. He had been featured several times on the Jamaica Constabulary Force’s Wanted Wednesdays campaign.

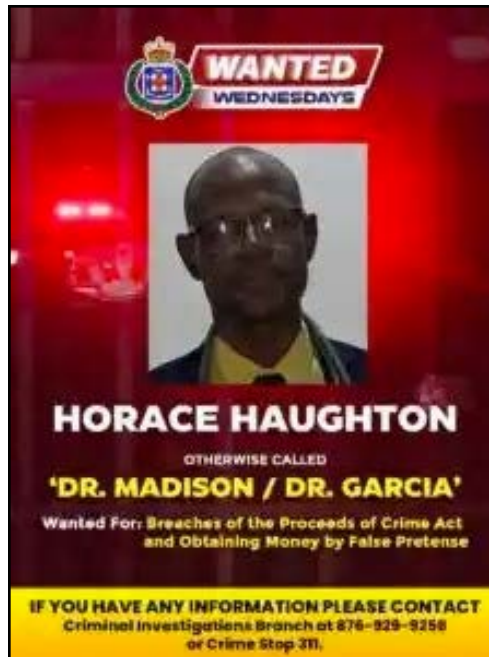
The arrest was carried out by detectives from the Fraud Squad within the Counter-Terrorism and Organised Crime Investigation Branch (C-TOC), in collaboration with personnel from the Half Way Tree Police Station. Jamaica Eye surveillance footage reportedly played a key role in tracking and intercepting Haughton’s vehicle in the Half-Way-Tree area.

Haughton has been charged with multiple offences, including conspiracy to defraud, engaging in transactions involving criminal property, obtaining money by means of false pretence, operating an employment agency without a licence, unlawfully making available device or data for the commission of an offence, and two counts of receiving stolen property.

Investigations have so far revealed that between August and October 2025, Haughton and an associate, Sharlene Edwards, allegedly operated an unregistered business that recruited more than 200 applicants. The pair reportedly collected over \$7 million in fees from individuals seeking overseas employment. A report was made to the police after the promised jobs failed to materialise.

Edwards was arrested in November 2025 and remains in custody. She is scheduled to return to court on January 22, 2026.

Superintendent of Police Victor Bar-



rett of C-TOC said the arrest marks a strong start to the year for the Fraud Squad.

“It is a new year and we are sending a clear message that there will be no safe haven for those who prey on the aspirations of hardworking Jamaicans,” said Superintendent Barrett. “We are intensifying our use of technology and collaboration with our stakeholders to track down those who commit fraud. We will not only seek criminal convictions but will aggressively pursue the forfeiture of assets gained through illicit means,” he added.

The Constabulary Financial Unit of C-TOC is supporting the investigation to treat with the forfeiture of the assets of both accused.

Meanwhile, the public is urged to report incidents of fraud by calling C-TOC at 876-967-1389, the National Intelligence Bureau at 811, Crime Stop at 311, or the nearest police station. (Jamaica Observer)



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# Regional News

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## Pressure Points: How Washington Is Squeezing the English-Speaking Caribbean



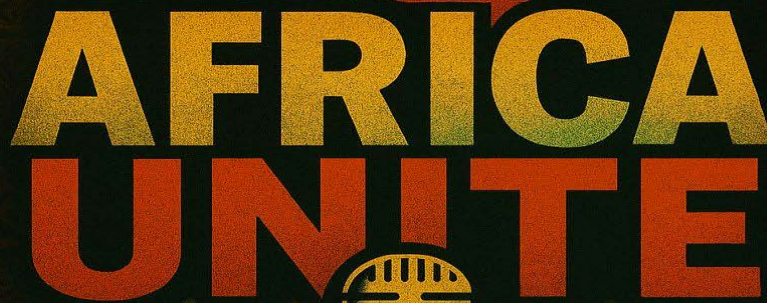
Across the English-speaking Caribbean, a familiar pattern is emerging. Quiet requests. Firm nudges. Public advisories. And, when necessary, pressure applied just loudly enough to be felt, but rarely acknowledged outright.

Under the administration of Donald Trump, Caribbean governments are finding themselves navigating a tightening web of U.S. demands that stretch well beyond diplomacy and into trade, travel, security, and migration.

In Grenada, Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell confirmed that Washington has been pressing Caribbean states, including Grenada, to sign memoranda of understanding on accepting third-country nationals. While discussions have taken place and draft texts shared, Grenada, for now, has not agreed to accept anyone.

At the same time, Grenada has also been quietly sparring with the United States over a request to install U.S. military radar at its main airport, a sensitive proposal that has triggered unease but no public decision.

Former Grenadian Senate President Chester Humphrey has been more blunt. He argues that CARICOM states face coordinated pressure from Washington, citing fish export bans, visa cancellations, travel restrictions, and what he describes as calculated threats meant to force compliance. In his framing, these are not isolated incidents but leverage points.



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# Regional News

That view is gaining traction across CARICOM.

In Guyana, the conversation has taken a different tone. With a growing labour shortage driven by rapid economic expansion, Georgetown has acknowledged “productive discussions” with Washington on a framework that aligns U.S. objectives with Guyana’s national priorities. Foreign Secretary Robert Persaud has confirmed that talks are advanced.

Guyana is now finalising a significant migration agreement that would see it accept refugees and deportees unable or unwilling to return to their home countries. Under the proposed arrangement, the United States would fund the entire relocation process, while Guyana retains the authority to vet and reject individuals, with a stated preference for skilled migrants without criminal records.

Similar arrangements, at various stages, are unfolding or being explored in Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, reinforcing the sense that the region is being approached as a bloc, even if responses differ.

Then came the advisory.

Grenada’s government reacted sharply to a new U.S. State Department travel warning that painted the island as unsafe, cautioning American visitors about violent crime and urging them to “keep a low profile.” The timing raised eyebrows. The response was swift. Grenada’s administration pushed back



**Empty tarmac when US closes its air space**

publicly, reminding the tourism industry and international partners that the tri-island state is among the safest destinations in the hemisphere, home to thousands of U.S. citizens who live, work, study, and invest there.

The message was clear. This was not just about crime statistics. It was about narrative.

Taken together, the signals are hard to ignore. Visa suspensions affecting Antigua and Dominica. Pressure to accept third-country nationals. Requests for military infrastructure. Travel advisories that strike at tourism lifelines. Each move, on its own, is defensible in Washington’s policy language. Together, they form a strategy of incremental leverage.

For small states, this is the real dilemma. Resistance risks retaliation. Compliance risks domestic backlash.

Silence risks being read as consent.

The Caribbean has been here before. What is different now is the convergence. Immigration, security, trade, and travel are being negotiated simultaneously, often under time pressure, often with asymmetric power.

The region’s challenge is not simply to say yes or no, but to preserve agency. To insist on transparency. To coordinate responses where possible. And to recognise that in today’s geopolitical climate, pressure rarely arrives wearing the label it deserves.

In the end, this is not just about MOUs, radar systems, or travel advisories. It is about how small states defend sovereignty in an era where influence is exerted quietly, persistently, and sometimes through the tourism brochure.

The Caribbean, once again, is being asked to choose. (PetraTheSpectator)



**HOSTED BY**  
**VERNON A. SPRINGER**



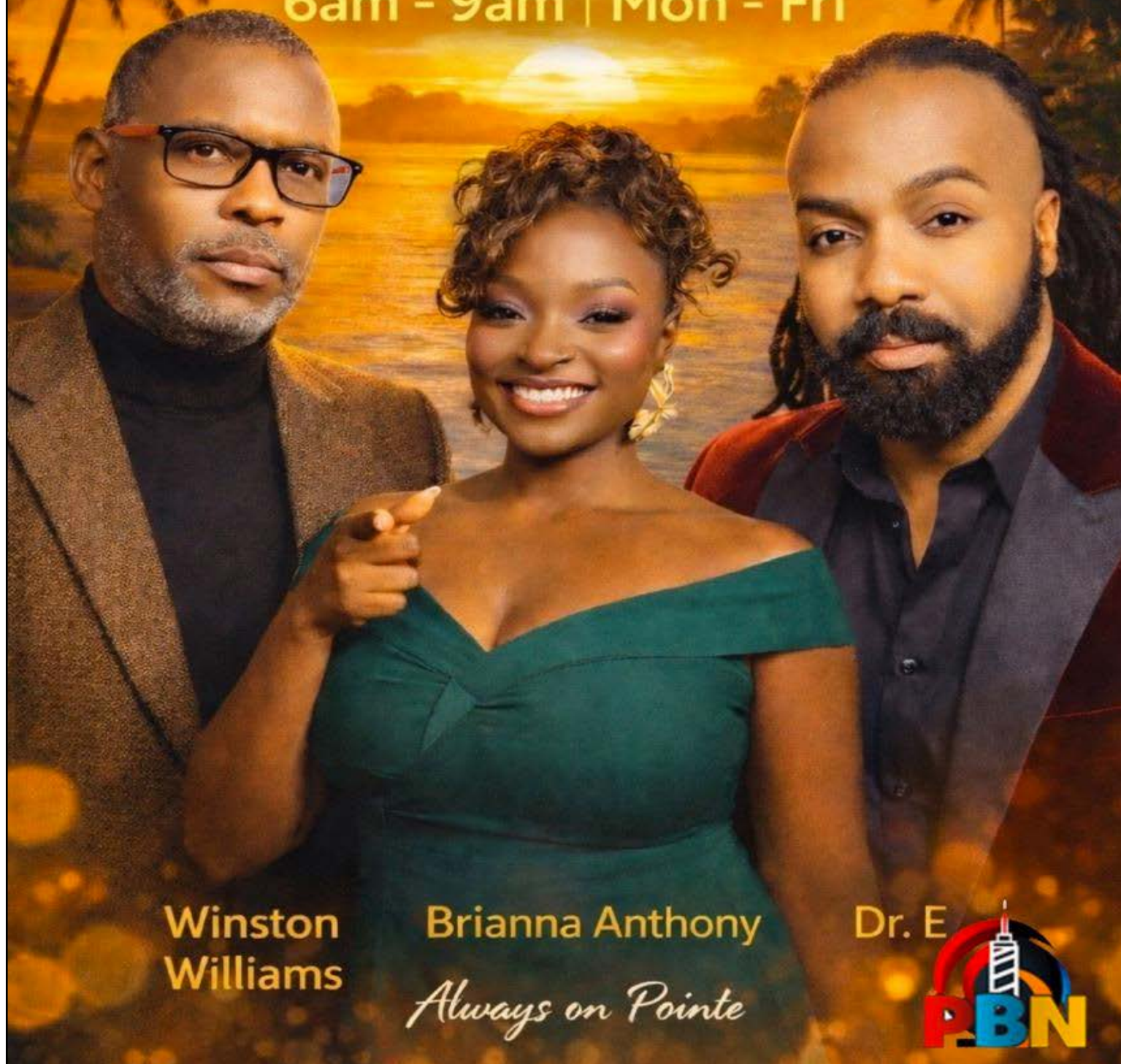
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## Macron accuses US of 'turning away' from allies



French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday that the United States (US) was “breaking free from international rules” and “gradually turning away” from some of its allies.

Macron delivered his annual speech to French ambassadors at the Elysee Palace as European powers scrambling to come up with a coordinated response to US assertive foreign policy in the Western hemisphere following Washington’s capture of Venezuela’s leader Nicolas Maduro and Donald Trump’s designs on Greenland.

“The United States is an established power, but one that is gradually turning away from some of its allies and breaking free from international rules that it was still promoting recently,” Macron told ambassadors at the Elysee Palace.

“Multilateral institutions are functioning less and less effectively,” Macron added. “We are living in a world of great powers with a real temptation to divide up the world.”

Macron said Europe must protect its interests and urged the “consolidation” of European regulation of the tech sector.

He stressed the importance of safeguarding academic independence and hailed “the possibility of having a controlled information space where opinions can be exchanged completely freely, but where choices are not made by the algorithms of a few”.

Brussels has adopted a powerful legal arsenal aimed at reining in tech giants — namely through its Digital Markets Act (DMA) which covers competition and the Digital Services Act (DSA) on content moderation.

Washington has denounced the tech rules as an attempt to “coerce” American social media platforms into censoring viewpoints they oppose.

“The DSA and DMA are two regulations that must be defended,” Macron said. (AFP)

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## NASA considers whether to bring sick crew member back to Earth



Nasa is considering an early return of some crew aboard the International Space Station (ISS) because of a medical issue involving one member of a four-strong team.

The unnamed crew member is described as stable, but the incident has already led to the last-minute cancellation of a spacewalk.

Mission managers are now weighing whether the safest option is to bring the entire Crew 11 team back to Earth months ahead of schedule. Three members of another crew would remain on board.

“Safely conducting our missions is our highest priority, and we are actively evaluating all options, including the possibility of an earlier end to Crew 11’s mission,” said a Nasa spokeswoman.

On Wednesday Nasa abruptly cancelled a spacewalk due for Thursday when two astronauts were set to step outside the ISS and announced that it was because one of the crew was unwell.

“The agency is monitoring a medical concern with a crew member

that arose Wednesday afternoon aboard the orbital complex.

“Due to medical privacy, it is not appropriate for Nasa to share more details about the crew member,” the space agency said.

Nasa is likely to be determining whether the astronaut can safely remain in orbit or should come home early with their crewmates.

“Our top priority is the safe execution of our missions, and we are thoroughly assessing all possibilities, including the option of concluding Crew 11’s mission ahead of schedule,” the spokeswoman added.

The four-person Crew-11 team consists of Nasa astronauts Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Japan’s Kimiya Yui from the JAXA space agency, and a Russian cosmonaut, Oleg Platonov.

They launched to the ISS in August 2025 on a SpaceX Crew Dragon and were expected to remain in orbit for about six months and return around late February 2026, after being replaced by an-

other four person crew a few days earlier.

If Crew 11 leave together, the other crew on board would remain: Nasa astronaut Chris Williams and two Russian cosmonauts, Sergey Kud Sverchkov and Sergei Mikayev.

If the mission were to end early all four astronauts on Crew-11 would be brought home, according to Dr Simeon Barber, a space scientist at the Open University.

“They would all come back together as a team, because, you don’t want to leave one or more team member behind.”

The ISS has basic medical equipment, supplies and communication systems that let doctors on Earth talk privately with astronauts in space, assess their condition and advise treatment, much like a secure video or phone consultation with a GP.

Returning the four-person crew early would delay some experiments and maintenance tasks until the new crew arrive, according to Barber.

“The space station is a big, complex feat of engineering, it’s designed to be operated by a certain minimum level of crew,” he said.

“If Crew-11 were to return early, what the remaining crew would have to do is dial back on some of the more experimental work and focus more just on the house-keeping and keeping the station healthy, waiting for the full complement of crew to be restored.” (BBC)



## Trump announces shock move that will see US leave 66 key international organizations



U.S. President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday that the United States would withdraw from dozens of international and United Nations entities, claiming they “operate contrary to U.S. national interests.”

The decision targets 35 non-UN groups and 31 UN entities, including a crucial climate treaty and a UN body promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. Among these is the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, widely considered the “bedrock” climate treaty and parent agreement to the 2015 Paris climate deal.

This move follows the United States’ absence from the annual UN international climate summit last year, marking the first time in three decades.

“The United States would be the first country to walk away from the UNFCCC,” said Manish Bapna, president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

“Every other nation is a member,

in part because they recognize that even beyond the moral imperative of addressing climate change, having a seat at the table in those negotiations represents an ability to shape massive economic policy and opportunity,” said Bapna.

The U.S. will also quit UN Women, which works for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), the international body’s agency focused on family planning as well as maternal and child health in more than 150 countries. The U.S. cut its funding for the UNFPA last year.

“For United Nations entities, withdrawal means ceasing participation in or funding to those entities to the extent permitted by law,” reads the memo. Trump has already largely slashed voluntary funding to most U.N. agencies.

A spokesperson for U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump’s move reflects his

long-standing wariness of multi-lateral institutions, particularly the United Nations. He has repeatedly questioned the effectiveness, cost and accountability of international bodies, arguing they often fail to serve U.S. interests.

Since beginning his second term a year ago, Trump has sought to slash U.S. funding for the United Nations, stopped U.S. engagement with the U.N. Human Rights Council, extended a halt to funding for the Palestinian relief agency UNRWA and quit the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO. He has also announced plans to quit the World Health Organization and the Paris climate agreement.

Other entities on the U.S. list are the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, the International Energy Forum, the U.N. Register of Conventional Arms and the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission.

The White House said the dozens of entities that Washington was seeking to depart as soon as possible promote “radical climate policies, global governance, and ideological programs that conflict with U.S. sovereignty and economic strength.”

It said the move is part of a review of all international intergovernmental organizations, conventions and treaties.

“These withdrawals will end American taxpayer funding and involvement in entities that advance globalist agendas over U.S. priorities, or that address important issues inefficiently or ineffectively such that U.S. taxpayer dollars are best allocated in other ways to support the relevant missions,” the White House said in a statement.



## Plot to kill Burkina Faso leader foiled, says junta



*Photo caption Capt Traoré seized power in September 2022 and has cultivated an image of a pan-Africanist leader*

A plot to kill Burkina Faso's military leader, Capt Ibrahim Traoré, has been thwarted, the West African nation has announced.

The sophisticated plan had been hatched by Lt Col Paul Henri Damiba, the military officer ousted by Traoré in September 2022, the security minister said in a late-night broadcast.

"Our intelligence services intercepted this operation in the final hours. They had planned to assassinate the head of state and then strike other key institutions, including civilian personalities," said Mahamadou Sana, further alleging that the plot had been funded by neighbouring Ivory Coast.

There has been no comment from either Col Damiba or Ivory Coast.

Since seizing power, Capt Traoré has faced at least two coup attempts and is also grappling with growing jihadist violence that has forced millions from their homes.

Despite these challenges and his authoritarian reputation, the 37-year-old military leader maintains strong popular support and has gained a following

across the continent for his pan-Africanist vision and criticism of Western influence.

Authorities uncovered a leaked video showing the plotters discussing their plans, according to the security minister.

In the footage, they allegedly spoke about how they intended to assassinate the president - either at close range or by planting explosives at his residence - just after 23:00 local time on Saturday 3 January.

Afterwards, they allegedly planned to target other senior military and civilian figures.

Sana alleged that Damiba had mobilised both soldiers and civilian supporters, secured foreign funding - most significantly 70m CFA francs (\$125,000; £92,000) delivered from Ivory Coast - and planned to knock out the country's drone-launch base before foreign forces could intervene.

"We are carrying out ongoing investigations and have made several arrests. These individuals will be brought to justice soon," the minister said on national television.

Sana insisted the situation was under control and urged citizens "not to be misled, out of naivety, into dangerous schemes".

It is unclear how many people have been arrested.

Critics, both local and foreign, have accused Capt Traoré of authoritarianism and say his government suppresses dissent - including arbitrary arrests of military officers and restrictions on the media.

It is not the first time the junta has pointed the finger of blame about foreign interference in its affairs at Ivory Coast.

These continuing internal power struggles will further heighten regional tensions.

Col Damiba served as Burkina Faso's leader from January-September 2022 after seizing power from an elected government.

After being ousted, he went into exile in neighbouring Togo and said in a message published on social media that he wished his successor every success. (BBC)





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## Young Windies soar to Namibia with eyes on the prize

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados – A confident West Indies Under-19 squad departed Bridgetown's Grantley Adams International Airport on Tuesday, bound for the ICC Under-19 World Cup in Namibia and Zimbabwe.

With a clear objective to surpass their previous tournament performance, the team carries the momentum of recent series victories and a unified spirit fostered through innovative preparation.

Drawn in a competitive Group D alongside South Africa, Afghanistan, and Tanzania, the Young Windies will open their campaign against Tanzania in Windhoek on January 15.

The journey to this point, however, has been meticulously planned with only execution left to fulfil the mandate.

Head coach Rohan Nurse struck a tone of ambitious realism as the team embarked. "We're daring to dream," Nurse stated. "The fact that we would have played really well in the last two series has built confidence in the group."

He emphasised the comprehensive preparation led by territorial pathway coaches and franchises, noting the challenge of keeping the squad connected since their series win against England last year.

"We have been innovative with con-



**The West Indies Under-19 squad, along with their coaches, prior to departing Barbados on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, for Namibia ahead of the ICC Under-19 cricket World Cup. (CWI Media)**

tinuous communication, interactions, and online sessions where we share information. Everybody's pretty clear in terms of what the objectives are."

A key objective is clear, and that is to surpass the 2022 squad.

"One of the minimum objectives for us is to ensure that we get into the final stage, which will be bettering the team from the last World Cup," Nurse affirmed, highlighting the desire to carry their winning form directly into the tournament.

Captain Joshua Dorne echoed his coach's confidence, buoyed by series

wins against England and Sri Lanka.

"It gives us a big confidence boost going into the World Cup," Dorne said.

He also highlighted the significant boost provided by the inclusion of Antiguan wicketkeeper-batter Jewel Andrew, who already possesses senior international experience.

"It really means a lot, he has that international exposure, so he can give information at any time," Dorne noted, underscoring the value of Andrew's insight within the squad.





# Sports News

## West Indies pace duo in line for T20 World Cup charge

GEORGETOWN, Guyana – In a major boost for the West Indies' T20 World Cup ambitions, Cricket West Indies (CWI) has confirmed that star fast bowlers Shamar Joseph and Alzarri Joseph are on track to be fully fit for the tournament in India and Sri Lanka.

The update comes directly from CWI's Head of Medical Panel, Dr Donovan Bennett, who provided an overwhelmingly positive assessment on Tuesday, particularly regarding Shamar Joseph's recovery from a shoulder injury.

"The latest that I saw on Shamar is that he is fit and ready to go," Dr Bennett stated. "He was bowling pretty fast, in the 140s (kph) without any discomfort."

This news concludes a nervous period for West Indies fans, as Shamar has been sidelined since September, missing the Test tour of India and the ongoing ODI series against Bangladesh.

His recovery, which included a specialist consultation in England, has proven successful. While slightly behind in his rehabilitation, Alzarri Joseph, who missed the India Tests with a lower-back issue, is also progressing well.

"Alzarri has resumed return-to-play protocols and is currently hitting his required fitness targets," Dr Bennett confirmed, adding, "Based on what I am seeing, both of them should be ready for the World Cup."

Both bowlers last played competitively in September 2025, and their return significantly strengthens the Caribbean attack ahead of the global showpiece.

CWI president Dr. Kishore Shallow revealed that a provisional squad has been selected, with the final 15-man



*Shamar Joseph, left, and Alzarri Joseph*

party to be ratified after the West Indies' T20I series against Afghanistan in India from January 18-22.

The team will then fine-tune preparations with a three-match T20I tour of South Africa in late January.

The two-time champions will begin their World Cup campaign in Kolkata on February 7 against Bangladesh. The West Indies are placed in Group C alongside England, Nepal, and Italy.

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## Australia get over the line in Sydney for 4-1 Ashes triumph



**Australian team celebrate with the Ashes trophy following the final Ashes cricket Test between England and Australia in Sydney, Australia, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026. (AP)**

SYDNEY (Reuters) - Australia had a few nervous moments but safely chased down their 160-run victory target before tea on the final day of the fifth Ashes test against England on Thursday for a five-wicket victory and a 4-1 series triumph.

Seamer Josh Tongue led England's battling rearguard with three for 42, but Alex Carey got Australia across the line with a four through the covers in mid-afternoon in the company of Cameron Green.

"We've played so well as a team," said Steve Smith, who was standing in for Pat Cummins as Australia captain for the fourth time in the series.

England will take credit for making a game of it and not being ground into the Sydney dirt as previous tourists have in end-of-series dead rubbers at the famous old ground.

Without the bowling of injured captain Ben Stokes, however, defending 160 was always going to be an uphill challenge on a good wicket which allowed day-five action for

the second time in the series.

Australia's openers managed to get the target under 100 runs before Man of the Match Travis Head, whose third century of the series underpinned his team's first-innings 567, ballooned a shot to midwicket off Tongue for 29.

Jake Weatherald followed for 34, again caught off Tongue's bowling, to bring up lunch with Australia 89 runs from their goal.

It was 15 years and a day since England won the final test of the 2010-11 series at the same ground by an innings and 83 runs -- the last time they won an Ashes series Down Under.

Khawaja made his debut in that match and got his chance for one final innings before retirement when Smith was bowled through the gate by the spin of Will Jacks for 12 soon after lunch.

Labuschagne had been dropped on 20 off Tongue when Bethell failed to hold onto the ball despite an ac-

robatic leap at backward point. He was unable to make the most of his reprieve, however, running himself out for 37 with 39 runs still required for victory.

Carey, who made 16 not out, and Green, who finished unbeaten on 22, nearly reprised Labuschagne's exit with a classic mix-up after an overthrow but eventually made their ground to secure the victory.

England had resumed on 302-8 but Mitchell Starc struck a major blow to their hopes of setting Australia a testing target when he had Bethell caught behind for 154.

Bethell's superb maiden Test century offered plenty of promise for the future and was essentially the difference between an innings defeat for England and Australia batting again.

Starc (three for 72) returned to remove Tongue for six to end the innings on 342, the left-arm quick later awarded Player of the Series honours for his tally of 31 wickets over the five tests.

In Sydney, Australia were again that bit superior in every department, as they were when wins in Perth, Brisbane, and Adelaide secured possession of the Ashes urn for another 18 months in just 11 days.

England won a lottery of a fourth test in Melbourne -- their first win in Australia since Sydney in 2011 -- but the future of the "Bazball" style of play must be in doubt after a tour that started with high hopes ended in a 4-1 loss.

Despite England's woes, the Ashes remain as popular as ever with the 211,032 fans through the gates over the five days in Sydney, the most ever for a test match at the ground.







## Trendsetters beat Cutting Edge in Women's Premier League



**Players of the Empire Trendsetters women's football team.**

Empire Trendsetters remained in contention to capture the title in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Calvin Ayre Women's Premier League on Wednesday evening.

The Trendsetters strengthened their position to secure the title by snatching a one-nil victory against fellow strong contenders Cutting Edge when both teams clashed in their latest outing at the ABFA Technical Center.

Captain Nafisa Quashie secured their win for Trendsetters by scoring the only goal of the match in the 10th minute.

Meanwhile, struggling TAMO FC recorded a rare win in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's Second Division League on Wednesday.

Jaheim Grant scored all four goals to propel TAMO FC to their second win in six matches with a 4-2 victory against JSC Progressors at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park.

Grant scored in the 10th and 45th minutes to give TAMO FC a two-nil lead at halftime. Grant completed his four-goal blitz with second-half strikes in the 61st and 63rd minutes.

Belmont FC reduced the deficit by scoring two late consolation goals, which were converted by Jahmaya Gilkes in the 86th minute and Egan Samuel in the 90th minute.

Both teams finished the match with 10 men after a player on each side received cards and was expelled from the field of play.

Alex Browne of TAMO FC was sent

off in the 25th minute, while Hayden Adams of JSC Progressors was expelled in the 62nd minute.

The result allows TAMO FC to advance to six points from six matches.

The ABFA's Second Division will continue on Friday with four matches, which are all slated to kick off at 4:15 pm.

Bethesda Sports Club will take on the Young Lions of Old Road at Bethesda, and Blackburn Palace will face the Liberta Blackhawks at the Ford Road playing field.

Belmont FC and Point West Ham will clash at the Cashew Hill playing field, and Police Sports Club will meet Guydadli Jets FC at the St. Johnstone's Village Stadium.



## AGHS and AGS advance to school football league finals

The Antigua Girls High School (AGHS) and the Antigua Grammar School (AGS) have advanced to the finals in their respective divisions in the Ministry of Sports, Cool and Smooth, and Joma Patrick C. Whyte Cup Secondary Schools' Football Competition.

The Antigua Girls High School booked their spot in the final of the Under-16 Girls Division with a 5-0 drubbing of the Ottos Comprehensive School (OCS) in the semi-final at the ABFA Technical Center on Wednesday.

National forward Nafisa Quashie struck a hat trick for AGHS. Quashie claimed the player of the game award with conversions in the second, 13th, and 31st minutes.

The other two goals for AGHS were scored by Na'fireh Wijndaldum in the 59th and 60th minutes.

The Antigua Girls High School will advance to the final to face defending champion Princess Margaret School in the final at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium (SVRS) on Wednesday, January 14, at 4 pm.

The Princess Margaret School qualified for the championship decider



**Nafisa Quashie, right, celebrates with one of her AGHS teammates after scoring in a match in the schools' football league. Quashie scored a hat trick for AGHS against OCS in the semi-final of the Under-16 Girls at the ABFA Technical Center on Wednesday, January 7, 2025.**

by virtue of finishing at the top of the standings at the end of the preliminary stage of the Under-16 Girls Division League.

The Antigua Grammar School booked their spot in the final by pulling off a 2-0 victory against the Sir Novelle Richards Academy (SNRA) in the semi-final of the Under-16 Boys Division.

Player of the match Chase Joseph scored both goals for the Antigua Grammar School with conversions in the 36th and 54th minutes.

The Antigua Grammar

School advanced to the final to face back-to-back defending champions Princess Margaret School, who will be seeking to capture their third consecutive title.

The final will take place at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium on Wednesday, January 14, at 5:30 pm.

Three other semi-finals will take place at the ABFA Technical Center on Friday. Defending champions Antigua Grammar School, which finished second in the preliminary stage, and third-place finishers Jennings Secondary

School will battle in the semi-final of the Under-14 Boys Division at 3 pm.

The winner will move on to face Princess Margaret School in the final for the title.

Defending champions Princess Margaret School, which finished second in the preliminary stage, will tackle third-place finishers Clare Hall Secondary School in the semi-final of the Under-20 Girls Division at 4 pm.

The winners will advance to meet the Antigua Girls High School in the final for the championship.

Defending champions, Princess Margaret School, which finished second in the preliminary stage, will take on third-place finishers the Harrison Center Antigua and Barbuda School of Continuing Education (HCABSCE) in the semi-final of the Under-20 Boys Division at 6 pm.

The winners will move on to tackle the Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS) in the final for the title.

The finals are slated to be played at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium (SVRS) on Friday, January 16.