

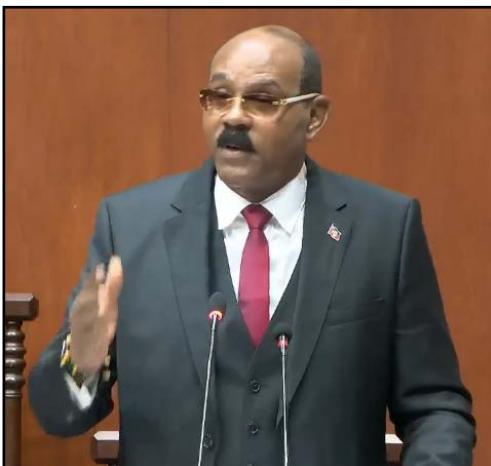
IMF gives the Government top marks

Story on page 2



The IMF says its data indicates the Antigua and Barbuda economy is trending in the right direction

IMF gives the government top marks



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

It was both an unusual as it was a surprising move...the International Monetary Fund (IMF), one of the most dreaded organisations in the world, has highly commended the government for its stewardship of the Antigua and Barbuda economy.

Reporting on a meeting last Friday between the government and the IMF, Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Gaston Browne, revealed that a desk officer who has been responsible for Antigua and Barbuda for many years, has openly commended the government for the way it has managed the economy and the positive moves that it has made that have resulted in positive economic data overall.

The prime minister revealed that other institutions such as the Caribbean Development Bank attended the meeting and it was the CDB's desk officer for the Antigua and Barbuda who expressed the complimentary sentiments.

"The CDB desk officer said that he was very proud to see the transformation that has taken



place and the progress we have made with the country's finances, especially over the past three years. He said he could understand that Antigua and Barbuda which has had persistent deficits and today the country is doing well. In fact, the IMF report was a commendable report overall," he stated.

According to the prime minister the international body has forecast growth at three percent, and even though this is lower than the minimum five percent that the government has forecast, it still is higher than for many Caribbean states.

The prime minister said the IMF was also impressed with the government's success in bringing down debt-to-GDP from over

100 percent, to 67 percent (government's projection is closer to 60 percent).

In addition, the country has also recorded surpluses in several areas, and even inflation is trending downward, the IMF has determined.

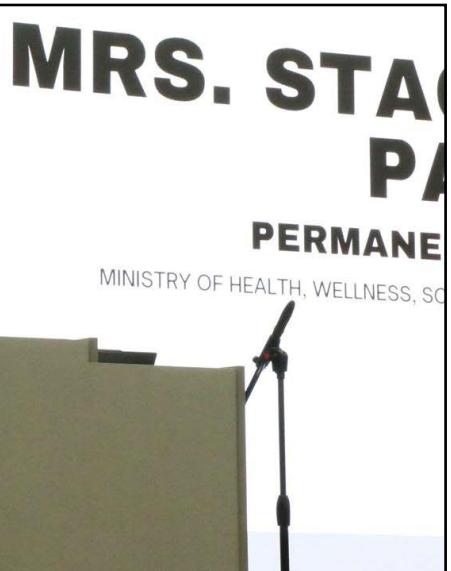
PM Browne however noted that the government still has to deal with the 'Paris-Club Debt', which goes back decades but which nonetheless remains as outstanding liabilities for the government.

"All the metrics, all the variables that they use to determine economic growth and stability are in the positive; the country is doing extremely well," PM Browne declared.

Antigua and Barbuda may turn to Ghana to recruit additional healthcare professionals



Health Minister, Sir Molwyn Joseph



Now that the Ministry of Health has initiated a programme to recruit health care professionals from Ghana, there is every likelihood that this programme may be expanded very soon to include the recruitment of doctors with particular specialties.

The announcement comes from Health Minister, Sir Molwyn Joseph, as he addressed the current batch of healthcare professionals from Ghana who arrived in the country on January 26. The minister addressed the approximately 120 health professionals at the start of a two-week programme of orientation designed to prepare them for

Antigua and Barbuda conditions ahead of them taking up their assignments in the healthcare delivery system.

According to the minister, the government has been trying to recruit a neurosurgeon for the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre with little success. He revealed that the government has had to contract a neurosurgeon from Trinidad and Tobago who visits the country periodically. Sir Molwyn revealed that recruiting a neurosurgeon has been a challenge and he is now turning to Ghana to possibly recruit one for the SLBMC.

"We are going to build a healthcare

system. However, if you are going to build a healthcare system you must start with nurses; so this is not a one-off situation; this is a building process as we may even recruit doctors from Ghana too. Believe it or not, I have started the discussions as some of the specialist doctors that we want may be available in Ghana or West Africa generally," Sir Molwyn disclosed.

He emphasised that it is important for the people of Antigua and Barbuda to understand that some of the best healthcare professionals come from West Africa, including Ghana. He said these professionals populate healthcare

Local News



systems in many developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the United States.

Sir Molwyn also appealed to the people of Antigua and Barbuda rid themselves of the notion of 'low expectation' regarding the Ghanaian health professionals as they come well-trained and experienced and are expected to provide a high service of patient care in Antigua and Barbuda.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Stacey Gregg-Paige explained that the orientation is designed to support their transition into the local health systems, standards, and service environment ensuring that their existing skills are applied confidently and safely within the national health system.

"For these reasons, soft-skills are not supplementary; they are essential competencies. Skills such as communication, team-work, adaptability, leadership and integrity are what translate knowledge into service, and policy into meaningful outcomes for patients and communities.

"This two-week orientation and competency validation programme has been carefully designed to re-enforce these values, affirm professional standards and strengthen the capacity of participants to perform effectively within a dynamic and demanding health environment," Gregg-Paige remarked.

The orientation exercise is taking place at the conference centre at the American University of Antigua near Jabberwock Beach.



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Free weekend HPV testing planned as part of anti-cervical cancer campaign

Cervical Cancer Awareness month may have ended in January, but the Ministry of Health remains resolute in its efforts to reduce the number of women who are affected by the disease.

To this end, the Ministry of Health has announced the commencement of free weekend Human Papillomavirus (HPV) testing as part of ongoing efforts to prevent cervical cancer and promote women's health.

The free HPV testing will be conducted at the Villa Polyclinic on the following dates:

Saturday and Sunday, February 7 and 8, 2026

Saturday and Sunday, February 15 and 16, 2026

Testing will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on each day.

The initiative is open to:

Women ages 30–65 years

Women who have never done an HPV test

Women who have not had surgery to remove the entire uterus

Women are reminded that even if they have previously had a Pap smear, they still qualify for HPV testing.

HPV testing is a critical tool in the early detection and prevention of cervical cancer. The Ministry encourages eligible women to take advantage of this free service, as early screening can significantly reduce the risk of developing cervical cancer.



FREE WEEKEND HPV TESTING

DOING YOUR HPV TEST PROTECTS YOU FROM CERVICAL CANCER!

SATURDAY & SUNDAY
FEB 7TH & 8TH 2026
FEB 15TH & 16TH 2026
9:00AM TO 1:00PM

FEBRUARY

VILLA POLYCLINIC

WHO CAN GET TESTED

- ✓ Women ages 30–65yrs
- ✓ Women who have never done an HPV test
- ✓ Women who have not done surgery to remove the entire uterus

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Doing your HPV test may just save your life

For further information, persons may contact hpvtestingab@gmail.com or call (268) 781-8256.

The Ministry of Health remains com-

mitted to improving access to preventive healthcare services and safeguarding the well-being of women across Antigua and Barbuda.



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Local News

Antigua and Barbuda triumphs at 2026 Caribbean Journal's Caribbean Travel Awards

Antigua and Barbuda is celebrating major wins at the 2026 Caribbean Travel Awards, hosted by Caribbean Journal, claiming top honours across multiple categories. Renowned for its natural beauty, refined luxury, and deeply romantic appeal, the twin-island nation continues to shine as a premier Caribbean destination.

According to the Caribbean Journal, Antigua and Barbuda was recognized as:

- ▶ **Caribbean Tourist Board of the Year** – celebrating Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority leadership, innovation, and success in promoting the islands globally.
- ▶ **Honeymoon Destination of the Year** – highlighting Antigua and Barbuda as the ultimate romantic escape, where couples can enjoy

365 breathtaking beaches, intimate luxury resorts, candlelit dining, sailing at sunset, and experiences designed to celebrate love.

- ▶ **Luxury Destination of the Year** – recognizing the islands' exceptional accommodations, curated experiences, and world-class service for discerning travelers seeking elegance, privacy, and authenticity.

Adding to the celebrations, Pineapple Beach Club was named Pickleball Resort of the Year, underscoring the destination's commitment to wellness and active travel.

"These awards reflect the dedication of the team at the ABTA and the strength of our marketing initiatives, the excellent quality standards and service

of our tourism partners, and frontline teams, and the diverse experiences that Antigua and Barbuda offers visitors," said Colin C. James, CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority. Antigua and Barbuda is truly a destination where romance, relaxation, and service excellence come together effortlessly."

The Caribbean Journal Caribbean Travel Awards are among the most respected accolades in the region, celebrating destinations, resorts, and tourism leaders that consistently deliver excellence and innovation in Caribbean travel. These honors further highlight Antigua and Barbuda's ongoing commitment to creating meaningful, memorable experiences, whether for couples celebrating love, families seeking connection, or travelers in search of luxury and inspiration.



Efforts to diversify tourism source markets now paying dividends



Minister of Tourism Charles 'Max' Fernandez

The concerted efforts by the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism to diversify the country's tourism source markets are now paying off with a growing number of visitors arriving from non-traditional markets in Europe and elsewhere.

Tourism Minister Charles Max Fernandez said ABTA has seized every opportunity to attend tourism promotion conferences across Europe with the team at the UK office in London playing a lead role.



Cherrie Osborne Director of Tourism UK & Europe - Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority

Speaking on the **Browne and Browne** show on Saturday, Minister Fernandez congratulated the team in London and elsewhere for their sustained efforts to keep Antigua and Barbuda front and centre in the eyes of the traveling public.

Small Hotel operator, Donna Chaia, who was also part of the show, revealed that she is now receiving guests from non-traditional sources such as France, Finland and the Czech Republic among other European nations and she asked the minister how has his team been able to accomplish this.

Fernandez credits the team in the tourism establishments for the good

performances being recorded in both cruise and stay-over visitors.

"We have a big social media presence and we also have a very, very good team in the UK that travels to other places wherever there are conferences, trade shows or other tourism-related event. We always try to be involved, whatever it is. We also spend a lot more now promoting Antigua and Barbuda than ever before," the minister explained.

Additionally, he reported that the tourism authority gets a portion of the taxes that the visitors pay and that this goes to fund more tourism promotions. "The better we do, the more we have to spend to bring in more visitors," he added.

The tourism minister also announced that the successes being recorded by Antigua and Barbuda have caught the attention of many in the travel industry as additional airlines have made proposals for inaugurating services to Antigua and Barbuda. These include Air Peace, which has expressed interest in operating three flights weekly between Nigeria and VC Bird International Airport.

Another airline that has expressed some interest is Emirates although those details are yet to be finalized.



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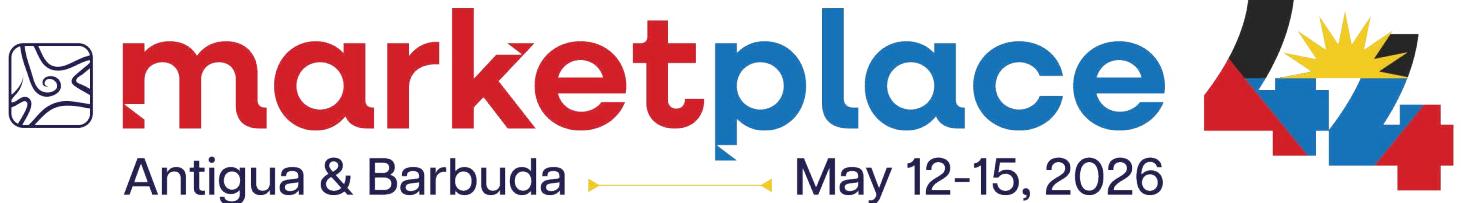
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Roti King, Quintessence Variety Plus (QV+, Friars Hill Road)



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CARIBBEAN TRAVEL



Registration now open for Caribbean Tourism Marketplace in Antigua and Barbuda



Registration is now open for Caribbean Travel Marketplace (CTM) 2026, taking place May 12-15 in Antigua and Barbuda, host destination for this year's event. Presented by the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CTA), CTM is the region's largest tourism forum and a year-round business platform where Caribbean hospitality and tourism stakeholders transform insight, relationships, and regional alignment into measurable commercial outcomes.

Now in its 44th year, CTM con-

tinues to deliver strong value for attendees by offering efficient access to decision-makers from key source markets, all within a single, centralized forum. For hotels, destinations, and tourism businesses, the event reduces the cost and time of global sales outreach while amplifying visibility through the Caribbean's collective presence.

“As we look ahead to Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2026, we are proud to continue our collaboration with Antigua and Barbuda, and build on the momentum

of last year's event,” said CHTA President Sanovnik Destang. “Marketplace remains critical for industry professionals, especially as the region navigates shifting traveler expectations, policy changes, and market trends. Beyond connecting buyers and sellers, we aim to provide attendees with guidance to navigate change and make informed decisions that strengthen the Caribbean's resilience and competitiveness.”

This enthusiasm for continued partnership and regional progress is echoed by the host destination.

“We are pleased to welcome Caribbean Travel Marketplace back to Antigua and Barbuda,” said Colin C. James, CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority. “The event brings direct business to the region while allowing us to showcase the culture, hospitality, and connectivity that define our destination.”

Caribbean Travel Marketplace is made possible by the following Platinum Partners: ABA Global Marketing, Interval International, MasterCard; Gold Partners: Amadeus and Maestro PMS + Silverware POS.

ECSE to host Online DEAP in February 2026

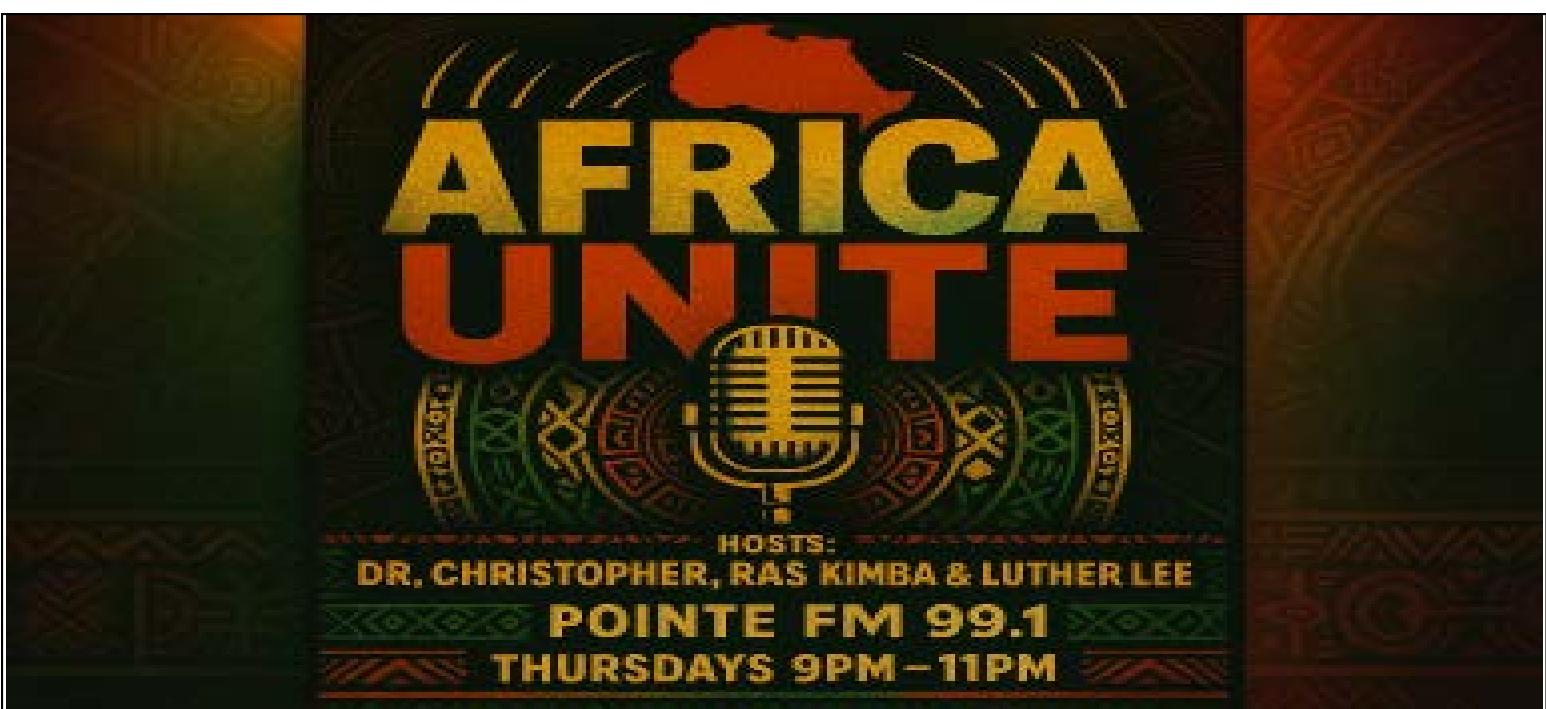


The Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE) will host an online ses-

sion of the acclaimed Directors' Education and Accreditation Programme (DEAP) over the period 23rd – 25th February 2026. The DEAP, which is offered jointly by the ECSE and the Chartered Governance Institute of Canada (CGIC), is an advanced director training course, aimed at preparing directors for the important role that they play in the governance of corporations.

Registration in the programme is open to all directors, corporate secretaries, CEOs, and other senior executives of public and private companies, as well as public sector (statutory) corporations. Legal practitioners, accountants, chartered secretaries, and other professional corporate advisers, as well as persons aspiring to directorships are also invited to participate.

Further details and registration for this programme could be accessed from the ECSE's website at www.ecseonline.com, or by contacting the ECSE by e-mail: info@ecseonline.com; or by telephone: 869 466 7192. Persons are encouraged to register early as spaces are limited.



Three Arrested Following Firearm Seizure in All Saints

Police have arrested three individuals following the execution of a search warrant in the All Saints area early Monday morning.

Officers attached to the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) Task Force Unit executed a search warrant at a premises in All Saints, where a firearm along with several rounds of ammunition were discovered and seized.

As a result of the operation, three suspects were arrested on suspicion of possession of a firearm and ammunition and were taken into police custody. Investigations remain ongoing.

The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda remains resolute in its commitment to removing illegal firearms from communities and enhancing public safety across the nation.

The police continue to encourage members of the public to report any suspicious or illegal activities by contacting the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913 or Crimes-toppers at 800-TIPS (8477).



Meanwhile, two men are currently in police custody assisting with investigations into a reported robbery.

During the early hours of Monday, police officers attached to the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) Task Force executed a search warrant at a property in the Golden Grove area.

Two male occupants were arrested on

suspicion of robbery and subsequently taken to the St. John's Police Station for questioning.

The police will be providing further updates as information becomes available.



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Tribute to the Life and Legacy of Dr. William Warren Smith, CD

Former President of the Caribbean Development Bank (2011–2021)

In Honour and Memory of a Life Committed to Service

It is with profound sadness that the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) joins the regional and international community in mourning the passing of a titan of Caribbean development, Dr. William Warren Smith.

Dr. Smith's tenure as the fifth President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) was defined by a period of unprecedented global and regional volatility. From the lingering shadows of the 2008 financial crisis to the cataclysmic impacts of the 2017 hurricane season and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Warren Smith remained a steady, resolute hand at the helm. He was not merely a financier; he was a visionary architect of Caribbean resil-

ience.

A Legacy of Resilience and Reform

Under Dr. Smith's leadership, the CDB underwent a transformative evolution. He championed the "building back better" philosophy long before it became a global mantra, ensuring that the Bank's interventions were anchored in climate adaptation and sustainable infrastructure. His key contributions include:

Financial Mobilization: Overseeing the approval of over US\$3 billion in regional financing, including significant grant resources for the most vulnerable.

Institutional Governance: The establishment of the Office of Risk Management and the Office of Integrity, Compliance and Accountability, which elevated the Bank's standing with international partners.

Regional Expansion: Successfully overseeing the expansion of the Bank's membership to include Brazil and Suriname, broadening the institution's reach and resources.

Impact on the OECS

For the OECS, Warren Smith was more than a regional partner; he was a steadfast ally of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). He possessed a deep, nuanced understanding of the unique vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

His commitment to our Member States was evidenced by his relentless support for the geothermal energy potential in the Eastern Caribbean and his instrumental role in securing a \$50 million COVID-19 Line of Credit for OECS countries during our hour of greatest need. He understood that for the Caribbean to thrive, the OECS must be stable, integrated, and empowered.





Dr. William Warren Smith

Fifth President of the
Caribbean Development Bank

A Principled Leader

Beyond the balance sheets and policy frameworks, Dr. Smith will be remembered for his integrity and his mentorship. He demanded excellence because he believed the people of the Caribbean deserved nothing less. He was a “distinguished son of Jamaica” who spent his life’s work ensuring that regional institutions were modern, ef-

ficient, and, above all, fully on the side of the Caribbean people.

Expression of Sympathy

On behalf of the OECS Commission and the member states of our Union, I extend our deepest and most heartfelt condolences to his wife and family. We share in your grief and hope that you find comfort in the knowledge that his legacy is etched into the very

landscape of our islands: in the roads he helped build, the communities he helped protect, and the regional spirit he helped fortify.

May his soul rest in eternal peace, and may his life continue to inspire future generations of Caribbean leaders.

Didacus Jules, Ph.D.



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- Antigua and Barbuda National Youth Parliament
- Student of a University or Tertiary Institution
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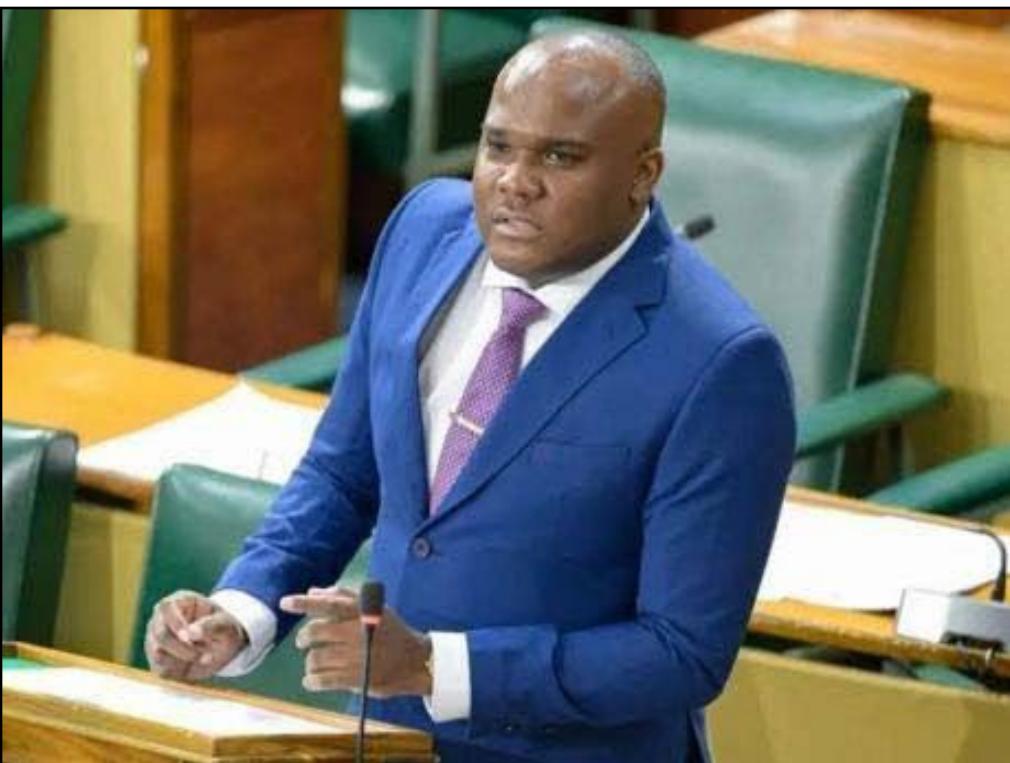
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Regional News

Jamaica records lowest January murder toll in 25 years; Fitz-Henley warns of ongoing threats



While Jamaica recorded its lowest January murder toll in 25 years, Senator Abka Fitz-Henley has cautioned that weekend killings in Manchester underscore that violent crime remains a serious threat.

"No doubt the four murders committed in Manchester over the weekend present a strong indicator that there are gunmen prepared to take on Jamaican citizenry and snuff out Jamaican lives," Fitz-Henley said in a statement.

"There is a long way to go in the fight to bring violent crime to a heel, and it is important that as many stakeholders as possible support lawful efforts to eliminate violent crime in Jamaica."

Fitz-Henley, a state minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, also noted declines in murders, shootings, robberies, rapes, and injuries compared with the same period last year.

Jamaica recorded 33 murders in Jan-

uary, the lowest number of murders in any single month since the country began systematically collecting crime statistics in 2001, the Jamaica Constabulary Force said in a statement on X on Sunday.

The figure also represents a 55 per cent reduction in murders, compared with January 2025, when 74 murders were recorded. "This represents 41 lives saved," the force said.

The data also comes amid a 36 per cent drop in major crimes.

The historic low, however, was overshadowed by a spate of shootings in Manchester, which left four people dead between Saturday night and Sunday morning.

As of the end of the month, three police divisions remained murder-free: St Andrew North, Kingston Central, and Clarendon. For divisions that have recorded homicides, St Andrew South led with five murders, while St James, St Ann, and St Elizabeth recorded four homicides each.

The police have credited the overall reduction to intelligence-led operations, targeted anti-gang initiatives, and enhanced interdiction of illegal firearms. They have also reiterated calls for community partnership to sustain the gains. (Jamaica Gleaner)



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U.S. announces tariffs against countries supplying oil to Cuba, island's gov't responds

U.S. President Donald Trump issued an executive order on January 29, 2026, declaring a national emergency, designating Cuba as an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to the United States.

In the order, the president also accused the Cuban government of taking actions that harm and threaten U.S. interests, asserting that Cuba aligns with hostile nations and terrorist groups, including Russia, China, Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah.

This declaration is the basis of the U.S. government’s imposition of trade tariffs on products from countries supplying oil to Cuba, effective January 30, 2026.

Trump announced that these tariffs would target any foreign government found to be providing oil—either directly or indirectly—to Cuba.

“In my judgment, the tariff system, as described below, is necessary and appropriate to address the national emergency declared in this order,” read the U.S. statement.

This move has been met with strong condemnation from the Cuban government, which issued a statement condemning the escalation as an attempt to impose a total blockade on fuel supplies.

The Cuban “Revolutionary Government” de-



scribed the U.S. actions as aggressive and unjustified, emphasizing that they are responding to a fabricated narrative that depicts Cuba as a threat to U.S. security.

The Cuban authorities condemned the executive order as a violation of international law and a breach of the principles of sovereignty and regional peace, asserting that the U.S. government’s actions threaten stability in Latin America and the Caribbean.

According to the statement, the order itself was justified through a series of allegations that many observers consider false or exaggerated. The text claimed that Cuba poses a significant security threat to the United States, a charge widely regarded as unfounded, says the Cuban government. They argue that the U.S. government is aware of the lack of evidence supporting these claims but proceeds regardless, driven by a desire to justify economic coercion.

“The President himself

and his government are aware that no one, or very few, can believe such mendacious arguments, but they do not care. Such is their contempt for the truth, public opinion, and government ethics when it comes to endorsing their aggression against Cuba,” stated Cuban officials.

Cuba asserts that the order represents a shift towards asserting U.S. dominance through coercion and intimidation, attempting to impose economic restrictions and influence the sovereign decisions of other nations.

Additionally, the response contextualizes this approach as a violation of international norms and regional peace agreements, particularly the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

“The government of the United States has reached this point after 67 years of failing to surrender and destroy a genuine and legitimate political and rev-

olutionary process of full sovereignty, social justice, and the promotion of peace and solidarity with the rest of the world,” said the statement.

Cuba’s government also emphasized that it is commitment to sovereignty, peace, and responsible dialogue with the United States based on international law and mutual respect, affirming that Cuba poses no threat to the U.S. or its citizens and highlighted Cuba’s peaceful nature and its people’s resilience.

The statement underscored that Cuba has always been open to dialogue and co-operation, and it rejected the notion that economic pressure would break its resolve.

The Cuban government also emphasized that imperialist actions aimed at subjugating Cuba are mistaken, asserting that the Cuban people’s determination to defend their sovereignty remains unbroken.

As tensions mount, Cuba’s leadership expressed confidence in the strength of international solidarity and their right to resist unjust aggression.

“We will face this new attack with firmness, equanimity, and the certainty that reason is absolutely on our side. The decision is one: Homeland or Death, We Shall Overcome!”, concluded the statement. (Dominica News Online)

Regional News

Jolyan Silvera, the ex-PNP MP charged with wife's murder, pleads guilty to manslaughter

Former People's National Party Member of Parliament for St Mary Western, Jolyan Silvera, has pleaded guilty to the lesser offence of manslaughter in connection with the death of his wife, Melissa Silvera.

The development took place Monday as the trial was set to start before Chief Justice Bryan Sykes in the Gun Court in Kingston.

Further details about the circumstances surrounding the plea are not immediately available, including whether the prosecution or the court will accept the plea.

Director of Public Prosecutions Claudette Thompson declined to comment when contacted on Monday, noting that the matter is still before the court, and will continue on Tuesday.

The Gun Court Act requires that matters be heard in camera, so media were not permitted to cover the proceedings.

Silvera is represented by King's Counsel Peter Champagnie and attorney-at-law Patrice Riley.



recovered from her body.

Silvera was arrested and charged on January 18, 2024, and has remained in custody since.

The 52-year-old businessman was charged with the murder of Melissa Silvera in January 2024. She was found dead in their Stony Hill, St Andrew home on November 10, 2023.

She was initially believed to have died from natural causes, but an autopsy performed three weeks later revealed she had sustained gunshot wounds, with three bullet fragments

recovered from her body.

Silvera was arrested and charged on January 18, 2024, and has remained in custody since.

The trial had originally been scheduled for January but was adjourned after the defence successfully applied for the examination of critical ballistic evidence that the laboratory had initially resisted providing. (Jamaica Gleaner)

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Bad Bunny makes Grammy history as stars protest against ICE



Bad Bunny has become the first Latin artist to win album of the year in the 68-year history of the Grammy Awards, at a ceremony where dozens of stars railed against the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

The shape-shifting musician beat Lady Gaga and Kendrick Lamar to win the night's top prize for his sixth album, *Debí Tirar Mas Fotos*, a personal and powerful exploration of Puerto Rico's musical history.

The 31-year-old, who will headline next week's Super Bowl half-time show, dedicated the award to immigrants who "leave their home, land, their country, to follow their dreams".

British singer Olivia Dean, who was named best new artist, also used her speech to defend immigrants.

"I'm up here as the granddaughter of an immigrant," said the singer, whose grandmother Carmen was part of the Windrush generation.

"I'm a product of bravery and I think those people deserve to be celebrated. We're nothing without each other."

Stars including Kehlani, Gloria Estefan and Billie Eilish also spoke in support of immigrants, while many musi-

cians wore badges reading "ICE out" on the red carpet.

Meanwhile, other British winners included Lola Young, Yungblud, FKA

Twigs, Cynthia Erivo and The Cure.

Bad Bunny, real name Benito Ocasio, seemed to be stunned when Harry Styles read out his name for the album of the year prize.

He took a few moments to collect himself before walking to the stage, and there were tears in his eyes during his speech.

Earlier, winning the prize for best musicá urbana album, he had spoken more directly about his feelings towards immigration enforcement.

"Before I say thanks to God, I'm going to say ICE out," he said, referencing weeks of tension in Minneapolis, including the deaths of two civilians.

"We're not savages, we're not animals, we're not aliens, we are humans and we are Americans."

International

AROUND THE WORLD

Billie Eilish, winning song of the year for Wildflower, also addressed the turmoil gripping America.

"It's just really hard to know what to say and what to do right now," she said.

"And I feel like we just need to keep fighting and speaking up and protesting. Our voices really do matter, and the people matter."

Wildflower, a sleeper hit from Eilish's 2024 album Hit Me Hard And Soft, became her third track to win song of the year this decade.

She previously won in 2020 for her breakthrough single, Bad Guy, and in 2021 for the ballad Everything I Wanted.

After congratulating Eilish, ceremony host Trevor Noah brought up Donald Trump and his connections to Jeffrey Epstein, after the US president was pictured and mentioned numerous times in files relating to the convicted paedophile.

Trump has consistently denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein and has not been accused of any crimes by Epstein's victims.

Comedian Noah joked that Trump wants ownership of Greenland because "since Epstein's gone, he needs

a new island to hang out".

In response, Trump wrote that he had "never been to Epstein Island, nor anywhere close, and until tonight's false and defamatory, statement, have never been accused of being there, not even by the Fake News Media".

He added: "It looks like I'll be sending my lawyers to sue this poor, pathetic, talentless, dope of an M.C., and suing him for plenty\$... Get ready Noah, I'm going to have some fun with you!"

Earlier in the ceremony, Kendrick Lamar won best rap album for GNX, at which point he overtook Jay-Z as the rapper with the most Grammy Awards - 26 in total.

He later added a 27th trophy to his shelf, winning record of the year for Luther, a soulful duet with R&B singer SZA.

Their victory came after a confusing couple of minutes onstage at the Crypto.com arena in Los Angeles.

Cher, who had just received a lifetime achievement prize, was supposed to announce the record of the year nominees - but she left the stage instead.

After being called back to complete her duties, the star was unsure who had won.

"They told me it would be on the tele-

prompter," she said, before opening the envelope and misreading the card.

For a moment, it appeared the prize had gone to the late soul singer Luther Vandross, who was sampled on Lamar's track.

Lamar took the fumble in his stride, and paid tribute to Vandross on stage.

"I gotta take my time, because [he's] one of my favourite artists of all time," said the rapper, revealing that he had shed "a tear" when he received permission to sample Vandross's vocals.

"They said 'no cursing', though," he recalled. "That was the only thing. We couldn't curse on it."

Lady Gaga's Mayhem was named best pop album, and the star rushed to the stage to breathlessly accept her 16th golden gramophone trophy.

"Every time I'm here, I still feel like I need to pinch myself," she said.

Gaga also used her speech to urge women in music to stand up for their creative vision, noting: "I know sometimes when you're in the studio with a bunch of guys, it can be hard.

"I urge you to... fight for your songs, fight for yourself as a producer [and] make sure that you are heard loudly." (BBC)



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'Superhuman' teen swims hours to save family stranded off Australian coast

A 13-year-old boy has been praised for his determination after he swam through rough waters in fading light to save his mother and two siblings who had been swept out to sea off Australia's coast.

The family had been paddleboarding and kayaking at Geographe Bay in the south of Western Australia, on Friday when strong winds pushed their inflatables off course, police said.

The teenager began to paddle back to shore to raise the alarm but his kayak took on water - so he swam the remaining 4km (2 nautical miles).

"The bravery, strength and courage shown by this family were extraordinary, especially the young fella who swam 4km to raise the alarm," Naturaliste Volunteer Marine Rescue Group said.

The organisation's commander Paul

Bresland described the efforts of the teenager as "superhuman".

"He swam in, he reckons, the first two hours with a life jacket on," he told ABC News. "The brave fella thought he's not going to make it with a life jacket on, so he ditched it, and he swam the next two hours without a life jacket."

The boy was able to raise the alarm by 18:00 local time (10:00 GMT) on Friday evening, sparking a huge search for the missing relatives from Quindalup beach, near Busselton, WA Police said in a statement on Monday.

The boy's 47-year-old mother, her other son, 12, and daughter, eight, were located at around 20:30 by a rescue helicopter clinging to a paddleboard about 14km offshore.

"A volunteer marine rescue vessel was directed to their location and all

three were successfully rescued and returned to shore," the force said.

Insp James Bradley said the incident was an important reminder of how rapidly ocean conditions can change.

"Thankfully, all three people were wearing life jackets, which contributed to their survival," he told local media.

"The actions of the 13-year-old boy cannot be praised highly enough - his determination and courage ultimately saved the lives of his mother and siblings."

The family were assessed by paramedics before being taken to a nearby hospital, police said.

The family were later discharged and visited the marine rescue crew to say thank you, the ABC reported. (BBC)



Argentina fires ravage pristine Patagonia forests, fueling criticism of Milei's austerity



These days, the majestic, forested slopes of Argentina's Patagonia look like a war zone.

Mushroom clouds of smoke rise as if from missile strikes. Large flames illuminate the night sky, tainting the moon mango-orange and turning the glorious views that generations of writers and adventurers imprinted on the global psyche into something haunted.

Vast swaths of the Los Alerces National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site home to 2,600-year-old trees, are now ablaze.

The wildfires, among the worst to hit the drought-stricken Patagonia region in decades, have devastated more than 45,000 hectares (over 110,000 acres) of Argentina's native forests in the last month and a half, forcing the evacuation of thousands of residents and tourists. As of Monday, the inferno was still spreading.

The crisis, with most of Argentina's fire season still ahead, has reignited anger toward the country's radical libertarian president, Javier Milei, whose harsh austerity drive in the last two years has slashed spending on programs and agencies that not only work

to combat fires but also protect parks and prevent blazes from igniting and spreading in the first place.

"There has been a political decision to dismantle firefighting institutions," said Luis Schinelli, one of 16 park rangers covering the 259,000 hectares (642,000 acres) of Los Alerces National Park. "Teams are stretched beyond their limits."

After coming to office on a campaign to rescue Argentina's economy from decades of staggering debt, Milei slashed spending on the National Fire Management Service by 80% in 2024 compared to the previous year, gutting the agency responsible for deploying brigades, maintaining air tankers, purchasing extra gear and tracking hazards.

The service faces another 71% reduction in funds this year, according to an analysis of the 2026 budget by the Environment and Natural Resources Foundation, or FARN, an Argentine environmental research and advocacy group.

The retrenchment arrives at a time when climate change is making extreme weather more frequent and se-

vere, increasing the risk of wildfires.

"Climate change is undeniable. This is us living it," said firefighter Hernán Mondino, his face smeared with sweat and soot after a backbreaking day battling blazes in Los Alerces National Park. "But we see no sign that the government is concerned about our situation."

The Ministry of Security, which assumed oversight of firefighting efforts after Milei downgraded the Ministry of Environment, did not respond to a request for comment.

Milei's deep spending cuts have stabilized Argentina's crisis-stricken economy and driven annual inflation down from 117% in 2024 to 31% last year — the lowest rate in eight years.

His battles against government bloat and "woke" culture have helped him cozy up to U.S. President Donald Trump, whose own war on federal bureaucracy has similarly rippled through scientific research and disaster response programs.

After Trump announced last year that the U.S. would leave the Paris climate agreement, Milei threatened to do the same. He boycotted the U.N. climate summit and referred to human-caused climate change as a "socialist lie," infuriating Argentines who understand that record-breaking heat and dryness, symptomatic of a warming planet, are fueling the fires in Patagonia.

"There's a lot of anger building up. People here are very uncomfortable with our country's politics," said Lucas Panak, 41, who piled into a pickup truck with his friends last Thursday to fight the blazes enveloping the small town of Cholila after municipal firefighting brigades were sent elsewhere.

When lightning started a small fire along a lake in the northern fringes of Los Alerces in early December, firefighters struggled to respond, limited by the remote location and lack of air-

craft to transport crews and douse the hills.

The initial delay forced the resignation of the park's management and led residents to accuse them of negligence in a criminal complaint as flames leapt across the ancient mountains.

But some experts argue the problem wasn't inaction after the fire erupted, but long before.

"Fires are not something you only fight once they exist. They must be addressed beforehand through planning, infrastructure and forecasting," said Andrés Nápoli, director of FARN. "Prevention has essentially been abandoned."

On top of its cuts to the National Fire Management Service, Milei's government ripped tens of millions of dollars from the National Park Administration last year, leading to the dismissal or resignation of hundreds of rangers, firefighters and administrative workers.

As more tourists descend each year on Argentina's parks, forest rangers say that cutbacks and deregulation measures also make it harder to monitor fire dangers, clear trails and educate visitors on caring for the park. Last March the government scrapped a requirement for risky tourist activities such as glacier treks and rock climbs to be overseen by licensed guides.

"When staffing is reduced, control is lost. Visitor safety is compromised," said Alejo Fardjoume, a union repre-

sentative for national park workers. "The impact of these decisions is not always immediate, but it is cumulative."

A 2023 National Park Administration report recommends a minimum deployment of 700 firefighters to cover the land under its purview. The agency employs 391 now, having lost 10% of staff as a result of layoffs and resignations in the last two years under Milei.

Budget cuts to the National Fire Management Service have scaled back training capacity and reduced available equipment, firefighters say, leaving many to rely on second-hand clothes and donations.

Authorities at Los Alerces this weekend insisted that the fiscal shock program had no bearing on firefighters' efforts to combat the ongoing blaze.

"You cannot overcrowd dangerous terrain with people using cutting tools," said Ariel Rodríguez, the interim park superintendent.

But national firefighters pushed beyond the brink of exhaustion said their ranks are constantly thinning, if not due to layoffs then to resignations over poverty-level wages that have failed to keep pace with inflation.

The average firefighter in Patagonia's parks earns \$600 a month. In provinces with cheaper living costs, the monthly wage drops to just over \$400. A growing number of firefighters say they've been forced to pick up extra work as gardeners and farmhands.

"From the outside it looks like everything still functions, but our bodies bear the cost," said Mondino. "When someone leaves, the rest of us carry more weight, sleep less and work longer hours."

For a month as the forests burned, Milei said almost nothing about the fires and carried on as usual. Last week, as provincial governors pleaded with him to declare a state of emergency in order to release federal funds, he danced onstage with his ex-girlfriend to Argentine rock ballads.

The split-screen image supplied his critics with powerful political ammunition. "While Patagonia burns, the president is having fun singing," said centrist lawmaker Maximiliano Ferraro. Left-leaning opposition parties staged protests across provinces.

On Thursday Milei relented, decreeing a state of emergency that unlocked \$70 million for volunteer firefighters and announcing "a historic fight against fire" on social media.

At the base camp where bleary-eyed firefighters recuperate, some expressed hope this weekend that more relief was on the way. Still, they couldn't help but dwell on what had already been lost.

"It hurts because it's not just a beautiful landscape, it's our home," said Mariana Rivas, a volunteer organizing impromptu massages and medical checkups for exhausted firefighters. "There's anger about what could have been avoided, and anger because every year it gets worse." (AP)

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Sports News

Tigers get first win in ABCA Two-Day Championship

Jennings Tigers claimed their first win during the third round of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Two-Day Championship over the weekend.

The Tigers crushed Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles by an innings and 128 runs at the Pigotts playing field.

The victory was set up by Deran Benta's unbeaten double century and a century by Matthew Miller in the Jennings Tigers' first innings of 370 for five declared in 51 overs after winning the toss and opting to bat.

Benta struck 200 not out off 138 balls, including 11 sixes and 17 fours. He shared an unbroken sixth-wicket partnership of 274 runs with Matthew Miller, who struck 100 not out off 83 balls, including nine fours and three sixes.

In reply, the Golden Eagles tumbled to 62 all out in 23 overs in their first innings. Zavier Freeland grabbed six for 11, and captain and left-arm spinner Glenton Williams claimed three for 15.

Asked to follow on 308 runs behind, the Golden Eagles were dismissed in their second innings for 180 in 37.1 overs. Mbeki cracked 80, and Tayari Tonge made 50. Freeland bagged four for 40, and Williams took three for 51.

The Pigotts Crushers and WES Rising Sun Spartans also recorded their first win in this season's competition.

The Pigotts Crushers pulled off a seven-wicket victory against the All Saints Pythons at the Mock Pond playing field in All Saints.



Deran Benta of Jennings Tigers

The Pythons won the toss and batted, scoring 181 all out in 32.2 overs. Captain Kenrick Scott struck 41, and Michael Marcellin hit 37, while Emroy Lee claimed three for 39.

In reply, the Crushers were dismissed for 254 in 56.4 overs. Captain Kadeem Henry struck 73, and Xaveek Toppin scored 60. Raneico Smith bagged five for 65.

Facing a deficit of 73 runs, the All Saints Pythons were dismissed in their second innings for 187 in 39.3 overs. Scott slammed 62, and Smith scored 54. Jalen Harris snapped up six for 27.

Set 115 to win, the Pigotts Crushers achieved victory by scoring 117 for three in 18.3 overs. Opener Uri Smith hit an unbeaten 55, and Carlton Tuckett made 40.

Rising Sun Spartans snatched a two-wicket win against Tertiary Institutions and Schools at the Rising Sun playing field.

Scores: Tertiary Institutions and Schools 106 all out in 24.5 overs (Xanden Hobson 31; Trevorson Atley 5/22) and 306/9 declared in 59.5 overs (Kaivalya Mishra 76, Damel Evelyn 68, Hosea Roberts 50; Ryan Bandoo 5/93).

Rising Sun Spartans 211/8 declared in 32.2 overs (Jeremiah Louis 106, Junior Henry 47; Kaivalya Mishra 3/73) and 203 for eight in 33 overs (Junior Henry 55, Kerry Mentore 45, Jeremiah Louis 42; Kaivalya Mishra 4/79).

The other two third-round matches ended in draws. Four-peat defending champions PIC Insurance Liberta Blackhawks and Empire Nation fought to a draw at the Antigua Recreation Grounds.

Scores: Empire Nation 227 all out in 47 overs (JQuan Athanaze 65, Mavendra Dindyal 59, George Elvin 38; Rahkeem Cornwall 3/26) and 116/3 in 25.1 overs (Zianni Da Silva 48); Liberta Blackhawks 341 all out in 82.5 overs (Kofi James 98, Michael Greaves 69, Hayden Walsh Jr. 68, Rivaldo Clarke 34; JQuan Athanaze 4/34).

The Bolans Blasters and CMW New Winthorpes Lions played to a draw at New Winthorpes.

Scores: New Winthorpes Lions 277/8 declared in 67 overs (Ian Euzebe 95, Alzarri Joseph 50, Demari Benta 39; Dimitri Adams 4/79); Bolans Blasters 175 all out in 53.3 overs (Gershun Phillip 33, Mikyle Louis 30; Zishan Motara 6/57) and 173/5 in 42 overs (Mikyle Louis 55, Dimitri Adams 48).

Sports News

Winning start for Flyers in defense of ABBA Division One league title

Back-to-back champions EZ Fit Flyers made a successful start in defense of their Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) First Division League title on Sunday.

The Flyers launched their title defense with a hard-fought 94-88 victory over Lava Smoke Elite Stingerz in the second game of a Division One double-header at the JSC Sports Complex to begin the 2026 ABBA domestic season.

TJ Williams and Xavier Meade each produced 20 points; Kenya Ahcon converted 14 points; Marlon Charles sank 11 points and grabbed 13 rebounds; Javonte Daley also scored 11 points;

and Adonis Humphreys chipped in with 10 points and seven rebounds for the Flyers.

Joshua Minner shot a game-high 27 points and snatched 11 rebounds; Brycen Thomas sank 26 points; Keroi Lee had 10 points and nine rebounds; and Darnell Azille chipped in with eight points and nine rebounds for the Stingerz.

The Ottos Full Throttle also got off to a winning start, snatching a narrow one-point victory against Da Project in the opening game of Sunday's double-header.

Nick Strawter produced 18 points, seven rebounds, six assists, and four

steals to lead the Ottos Full Throttle to their 67-66 victory against Da Project.

In support, Morlon Davis sank 12 points; Christian Walker contributed 11 points, 14 rebounds, and five steals; and Pindo Drammeh converted eight points and grabbed 17 rebounds for the Ottos Full Throttle.

T-Shawn Lewis shot a game-high 26 points, grabbed 12 rebounds, and snatched seven steals to lead Da Project.

In support, Malik Moore produced eight points, eight rebounds, and seven assists, while Sadiq Phillip and Amare Browne chipped in with eight points apiece.

ABCAS senior girls among winners in School Basketball League

The senior girls of the Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS) were among the winners during the latest round of matches in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex.

The Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies surged their way to a convincing 37-20 victory against Clare Hall Secondary School in their Senior Girls Division encounter.

Jodaliah Constant and Ayana Jack each produced 14 points, and Shakorah Prince converted nine points for ABCAS.

However, Princess Margaret School pulled off an 18-9



Jodaliah Constant, left, and Ayana Jack of ABCAS

victory over St. Joseph's Secondary Division Academy in the Mini Boys

Ereka Daniel sank six points, and Kevani Whyte and Jude Bailey each scored four points for Princess Margaret School.

There were wins as well for T.N. Kirnon, Post Millennial Academy, and St. John's Catholic in the Mini Boys Primary Division.

Arik Adams converted nine points to lead T.N. Kirnon Primary to a 15-0 drubbing of J.T. Ambrose Primary.

Aiden Osborne scored all the points to propel Post Millennial Academy to a 9-0 victory over Villa Primary.

Jasiel Henry scored 10 points as St. John's Catholic prevailed 18-4 over Sea View Farm Primary.

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Sports News

CWI and Macron unveil official playing kits for 2026 T20 World Cup

Cricket West Indies (CWI), in partnership with technical partner Macron, has officially unveiled the new playing kits to be worn by the West Indies Men's team at the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup, celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the historic sweep of global tournaments in 2016.

The launch celebrates the rich legacy and global impact of West Indies cricket, one of the most successful teams in the history of the game, with an outstanding list of accolades that includes the first two ICC Cricket World Cups, two ICC Men's T20 World Cups, and one ICC Champions Trophy.

The new kit reflects this powerful sense of regional unity and pride, prominently featuring the iconic maroon base, complemented by yellow and light-blue trim on the V-neck collar and sleeve cuffs.

A striking graphic on the front reinterprets palm tree leaves, an enduring symbol of the Caribbean, in an abstract yellow design with light-blue detailing, representing strength, identity, and togetherness.

Rupert Hunter, Chief Commercial Officer of CWI, said, "This new kit represents far more than match apparel; it represents the collective passion and 'Maroon Spirit' of 15 Caribbean nations under a single sporting 'flag'. It is a symbol of regional pride and its unmatched cricketing legacy.



Captain Shai Hope, left, and Roston Chase in the official West Indies kit for the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup. (CWI Media)

"Our partnership with Macron continues to deliver world-class designs that honour West Indies' heritage, connect with the passionate global fan base, and support our teams as they compete at the highest level.

"We are excited for the debut of this new kit at the eagerly awaited ICC Men's T20 World Cup in 2026, recognising the 10-year anniversary of our historic triumph in 2016, and are confident in the team's ability to do the region proud yet again."

As a thank you to its loyal fans around the world, CWI has launched a special World Cup offer, with individuals who purchase the new official jersey from

now until the conclusion of the World Cup tournament on March 8 being automatically entered to win one of two available prizes – a signed jersey and a signed bat, featuring signatures from every member of the 2026 squad.

Gianluca Pavanello, CEO of Macron, commented, "Our partnership with Cricket West Indies, which began in 2023, marked a defining moment for Macron and our entry into elite-level international cricket. Working alongside one of the most historic and influential teams in the game allowed us to bring our vision, expertise and values onto the world's biggest stage.

"Today, being present at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup with four national teams confirms Macron as the most represented brand at the tournament and reflects the strong trust placed in us by our partners.

"The new West Indies kits combine respect for heritage with contemporary design, technical performance and sustainability, supporting the players at the highest level while celebrating the identity and traditions that have made this team an icon of world cricket."

The West Indies will play a warm-up game against Afghanistan in India on Wednesday and will begin their T20 World Cup campaign against Scotland at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Saturday.

Saturday 7th February 2026, 05:30
ICC Men's T20 World Cup, 2026 - Match 2

Eden Gardens, Kolkata

WEST INDIES

SCOTLAND

T20
ICC MEN'S T20
WORLD CUP
INDIA & SRI LANKA 2026

Sports

TUESDAY 03RD FEBRUARY 2026

POINT EXPRESS
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

United go joint-top in Premier Division League

Defending back-to-back champions All Saints United returned to the top of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division League on Sunday night.

All Saints United moved into joint first place with Sandals and APUA Inet Jennings Grenades by recording their 10th win in 13 matches with a 2-0 victory against the bottom team, Sir Molwyn Joseph Jennings United, in the second game of a triple-header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Following a goalless first half, goals by Zafique Drew in the 55th minute and Raheem Deterville in the 67th minute secured victory for All Saints United.

The result allows All Saints United to join Grenades at the top of the 12-team standings with place with 32 points apiece. However, All Saints United

boasts a superior goal difference.

Jennings United remains in the cellar with three points after crashing to their 12th defeat in 13 matches.

The Potters Tigers and the Pigotts Bullets picked up important wins in the other two matches to maintain their perfect starts in the second round of the Premier Division League.

After pulling off a shocking 5-1 victory against FC Aston Villa Lions in the previous encounter, the Potters Tigers notched up their fifth win in 13 matches with another surprising 2-1 win over fourth-placed Old Road FC in Sunday's opening game.

Shakore Simon gave Old Road FC an early lead with a third-minute conversion, and Javorn Benjamin equalized for the Tigers with a strike in the eighth minute as both teams reached halftime deadlocked at 1-1.

Kelvin Carr snatched victory for the Tigers by scoring the winner in the 55th minute. The Potters Tigers advanced to 19 points, while Old Road FC remains on 26 points after suffering their third loss in 13 matches.

The Pigotts Bullets notched up their eighth win in 13 matches by claiming a 2-0 victory against the Villa Lions in the last game on Sunday.

Both teams failed to score in the first half, but the Pigotts Bullets scored twice after the interval to snatch victory. The goals were scored by Sujae McBean in the 49th minute and Javier Wilmott in the 56th minute.

The result allows the Pigotts Bullets to move on to 24 points, while the Villa Lions slipped from second to third place with 27 points after slumping to their fourth defeat in 13 matches.



A starting XI of the All Saints United football team